CONCLUSION

It is important now to investigate and find out the exact extent to which Ezekiel has successfully realised his ideals of poetry. Has his concept and vision of poetry been translated into his compositions? How effective has been this attempt? It is by now a much reiterated point that Ezekiel is a staunch believer that the art of poetry; the poetry-discipline is an exacting one which requires a number of important points like talent, dedication, adherence to craftsmanship, an eye for details and most importantly, a relevance to the human situation. A large number of his poems illustrate the fact of these concepts, being successfully achieved. As far as the poet is concerned, his prolific output—at least the bulk of them, clearly indicates that his talent does make an impression. And when this is combined with the other requirements which the poet has detailed, the final outcome is more than acceptable,
And this is not surprising.

His poetry which may be classified into various planes - personal, social and spiritual. His moving into these planes is executed with ease and spontaneity. And it is not very easy to decide in which sphere he is at his best. Of course the degree of involvement varies and he is more involved in the sphere of the personal and spiritual poetry. The language, style, diction, all merge together to form a harmonious type of verse. And thinking and feeling are quite carefully blended together to create the right effect. Elsewhere this deft combination seems missing.

Many of his poems are in a direct, conversational style. Ezekiel wields the casual tone in his poetry brilliantly. He has consciously or otherwise been a sort of a pioneer in creating a new trend in poetry. This is a specific area in which he merits not only critical attention but also lavish praise. And in this area he has unconsciously perhaps set a precedent.
It is possible for new poets to tap this field and unravel deeper possibilities.

His 'Very Indian Poems in Indian English' are not merely hilarious but also reveal his skill and precision in reconstructing the manner in which English is spoken by a particular section of North Indians – the Gujrathi community. The use of the present continuous tense, articles either wrongly used or omitted and the quaint usage of words and expressions are conspicuous in these poems. Khuswant Singh states that when he read these poems aloud on a few occasions, there was great hilarity and sense of enjoyment. These poems are certainly another significant point of achievement. In 'Goodbye Party for Miss Pushpa T.S.' his skill is revealed.

You are all knowing, friends, who
What sweetness is in Miss Pushpa
I don't mean only external sweetness
but internal sweetness
Miss Pushpa is smiling and smiling
even for no reason
but simply because she is feeling.
Similarly 'The Patriot' deals with the typical expressions of the speaker who is not well accustomed to the manner of expressing his thoughts in English. The effect is truly amusing.

Other day, I'm reading in newspaper (Everyday I'm reading Times of India)
How one goonda fellow
Throw stone at Indirabehn
Must be student unrest fellow, I am thinking
Friends, Romans, Countrymen, I am saying (to myself)
Lend me the ear
Every thing is coming --
Regeneration, Rejuvenation, Contraception
Be patiently, brothers and sisters.

It is imperative to realize that humour alone is not Ezekiel's motive in writing these poems. They also indicate a sense of irony by which he parodies on the expression of some speakers of the English language. Although these poems have encountered unfavourable critical comments, they are certainly not without their special merits. They establish the poet as a keen listener with subtleties of expression that are impressive, appealing and hilarious.
Leading a multi-faceted professional life, Missim Ezekiel has richly developed as a writer, poet, theatre personality and Professor of English Literature. He has successfully combined these activities, though poetry is his first preference. He has always maintained a lofty view of poetry for it encompasses a gamut of possibilities and affords scope for deep exploration.

If we evaluate his poetry in terms of form and content, we find that his concept of poetry which is expansive has achieved a great measure of success. At the same time it is important to bear in mind that this success is the result of conscious and determined effort. The perfection in verse did not simply happen to him.

A definite point where he scores effortlessly over all the other poets is in his approach to the concept of poetry. It is this vision and approach that singles him out from the galaxy of India English poets. He can today, with a legitimate pride, regard his mission as a fruitful one. And the greater part
of his prolific output bears testimony to the fact.

As a poet with an academic background, Ezekiel has undertaken a conscious study of various poetic movements and in doing so seems to have become more aware of his own originality in the art. This despite the fact of having been influenced by many poets.

Beginning his poetic career with comparatively simple poems, he has carefully worked his way to the more complex ones. Success has been his in this uphill task. The distinction he has achieved may be attributed to a number of reasons - his instinctive talent, conscious effort which has expressed itself in excellent verse forms and above all to a shrewd and critical intellectual mind which deftly organises his medley of views, attitudes and hopes. His craftsmanship is matched with an intellectual process and the finished product that finally emerges is laudable by any standard of critical appraisal.
Immense is the responsibility he shoulders owing to his true commitment to the art. An indisputable fact is that Ezekiel has been constantly working at attaining finer modes of expression. There are various technicalities to be adhered to if a certain finesse is to be achieved. Like a genuine artist, he understands and appreciates the value of cultivating refinement of expression. It is interesting to note that

If we look at a manuscript left by any well-known poet, we shall nearly always find that the poet has made many erasures and alterations before arriving at the final version. This process of polishing is very important. During the polishing, the poet is usually dealing with individual words — poetry is made of words and obviously the choice of words is important in poetry; indeed in a sense, it is the whole art of writing poetry.

Immature styles of expression, elaborate ornamentation and contrived feelings are castigated by the poet, for thereby the art of poetry is subject to degeneration. What Peter Schjeldah says in 'A Younger Poet' is similar to Ezekiel's own views,
No more exercises of style for him
---

The tricks and glories of favorite past masters
He has either assimilated or must discard now
His mode, for better or worse seems set
He can now set about evading self-parody
How to be true to, though disappointed in his art
Has become his major care.

As a craftsman, Ezekiel is fastidious and understandably so. Hence he selects with great accuracy and precision the exact word, the right phrase, thought, imagery, sound and rhythm. So as to arrive at the desired result. To a large extent, these factors, are instrumental in translating his ideas and experiences into poetry. Words singled out by him convey a distinctive meaning and serve a specific purpose in the meaning.

"When Mallarmé said that poetry is not made with ideas but is made of words, he was regarding poetry as an art of verbal expression and not primarily as a valuable vehicle of thought. He was throwing emphasis on Form at the expense of content just as Fort Hadox Rueffer does in his definition of poetry "one unusual word following another unusual word."
To appreciate a poem fully, it is essential to read it several times, so that its completeness is arrived at. It facilitates, besides, a comprehensive understanding of the poem. The poem is an expression of an experience — intense or trivial and as such reading it thoroughly is important, Marjorie Boulton says,

The most dangerous enemies of poetry in general or of particular groups of poets are those usually well meaning people who go about saying, "what does it mean?" Such people are trying to divorce the mental form or rather a small part only of the mental form from the totality of the poem, the unique whole that it is made up of; the mental and physical ingredients. You cannot take an egg out of a cake that has been baked.

It is necessary to bear in mind that a good poem is not merely an emotional outburst of an intense moment or the expression of a poetic sentiment. It should involve all the processes that are vital to its composition, like a deliberate choice of a particular word, a deft portrayal of imagery, a rhyme that is befitting and other such technicalities that are
indispensable for a poem to be considered qualitative. Ezekiel is an adept in handling different verse forms as his many poems well illustrate. Anicur Rahman says:

He (Ezekiel) is capable of turning words into a metaphor, image or symbolism as the situation demands. It is only rarely that we come across poetic counters of expression but there is a strong under-current of poetry in the seemingly prosaic words. Verily the poet employs language as a fit instrument for poetic communication. The poem is brilliant not alone for its technical finesse but also for projecting an inclusive view of time and reality.

Thus has Ezekiel consciously worked at and thereby evolved a distinct style that is singularly his own unique one. This coupled with his intellectual prowess accounts for the success of his poetry. Sophistication of expression is however one of his strongest assets.

As F.W. Bateson says, "style is not confined to poetry, but except in metaphorical extensions of the word, it is confined to literature. And even when applied metaphorically as to a stylish stroke in tennis
The creator of poetry even if he is not a good one but provided he is authentically a creator and not merely an imitator is bound to see poetry as knowledge in his own special way— it gives pleasure, it heightens awareness, it makes us familiar with a mood. In the sense in which I have described it, for one who has learnt to live with poetry, and not merely to read it or occasionally perhaps to write it, to write about it or to teach it, not in all these, but in learning to live with it, poetry becomes knowledge— There is of course much knowledge even in the conventional sense of the word, that poetry includes, facts, principles of conduct, action, insights into character, natural laws, scientific data moral and social instruction, philosophical concepts and the truths of history. Only the naive go to poetry for such knowledge or quote it to illustrate an argument.
Just as it was said of Goethe that he was the last great poet who struggled to save the life of poetry and the poetry of life, so too it may be said that Ezekiel maintains a firm stand in his view and practice of poetry. His zealous patronage of poetry is truly to be extolled. A champion of poetry, his prolific output signifies that there is an allegiance to the exacting standards he has set for himself in this discipline the making of poetry out of existence is the highest synthesis possible and this is what Ezekiel declares himself to be aiming at.

All the facts presented hitherto reiterate the fact of Ezekiel's obsession for the poetic art. However, all his lofty declarations of dedication to the art would seem meagre, even pale into insignificance when one considers his most vital credo "Poetry illustrated in superlative terms in one of his best compositions 'Poet, Lover, Bird-watcher' which exposes in detail the intricacies of the art. Indeed it contains the crux of his faith in poetry."
To force the pace and never to be still
Is not the way of those who study birds
Or women. The best poets wait for words
The hunt is not an exercise of will
but patient love relaxing on a hill.

To note the movement of a timid wing;
until the one who knows she is loved
No longer waits but risks surrendering
In this the poet finds his moral proved
who never spoke before his spirit moved.
--- and sense is found
By poets lost in crooked, restless flight
The deaf can hear, the blind recover sight.

That the poem is an illustration of his artistic
finesse is clear; it is his masterpiece not alone for
its technical excellence but for stating, in no uncertain
terms, his faith and devotion to the art. Sophistica-
tion of expression attains a culmination in the poem.
With an unmistakable sense of finality, he states a very
fundamental trait, indispensable to the art of poetry—
extreme caution, discretion and patience. Tireless
endeavour can ultimately be a pay-off. The poem
is outstanding by any standard of critical appraisal,
for his perception and expression are rooted here in his
commitment and with a fresh and remarkable originality
of insight, he appears to have arrived at the truth behind the success of all poetry, the thought has been efficiently executed. When Ezekiel likens the poet to a lover and a bird-watcher, we learn that the poet is expected to be cautious and sensitive in the handling of his art. So too we are aware that in order to master the intricacies or the finer aspects of poetry one is obliged to be more demanding on oneself.

At this juncture, it is interesting to trace the growth of his skill which is a gradual process. Consider the following lines taken from his first volume of poetry *A TIME TO CHANGE* which throw light on the quality of his art.

The great can never know how much I love them Every day they live and die in me but still They cannot make me great, I am alone The great are greater in me as I love With their words and do the things they say Aught to be done for love but still I am Exposed to life and knew it quite alone.

Not only are the lines quite sloppily constructed and even immature but it is also a clear illustration of
expression over-riding thought thereby delimiting it to an insignificant place. It is within the realm of possibility to reconstruct the same idea more effectively and more impressively. A few poems with similar flaws are present in **SIXTY POEMS**. The apologetic 'Forward to this volume makes it obvious that it is an interim collection of weak poems. "What is one to do with the poems one writes and more so with the weaker ones?" says Ezekiel.

Such depreciatory remarks in the evaluation of his own work undoubtedly stood him in good stead for they were like spring boards that subjected him to a rigorous discipline in the interest of attaining a near-perfect verse form. His most recent volume **'LATTER DAY PSALMS'** for which he received the Sahitya Academy Award clearly reveals that he has struck a perfect balance and acquired a harmony between intricacy of thought and sophistication of expression.

How long are we to rely on those marvellous things in **ancient Egypt**? Tell me of the
marvellous things in Nazi Germany
Even with manna in our mouths
We are not estranged from our lust. 13

Ezekiel has delved deep into the possibilities of poetry. He is aware of the importance of the exact word (in arriving at the right word, he is fastidious) — after all has he not said "the best poets wait for words" — its varying connotations, its phonetic association and its inner potency. Ezekiel says

Tone, vocabulary, diction, sound all need precision in a poem if the form as a whole is to be strong and not an approximation of some casual sense of it in the poem. 14

The exact word is quite often elusive but a true and meticulous poet like Ezekiel captures the right word and portrays it effectively. Sheer grit and determination also enable him to achieve the right effects in a poem. Being fastidious, he would gladly labour with the specific objective of attaining a superlative mould for the expression of his thoughts. Hence it is
befitting to consider him a consummate artist — the appellation is one he truly deserves. Far from being complacent with the theme or content of a poem, he would envisage a poem in its totality with all its ingredients present. Hence the essential and indispensable components of a good poem are included with great precision. This accounts for the quality and excellence of his poetry.

Ezekiel has used both the free and the conventional forms of verse with equal ease and spontaneity. He is in the habit of resorting to any kind of verse forms. He says "To use a traditional form is not to be outdated or old fashioned. I try to use the contemporary idiom in whatever form it comes at the time of writing."  

When questioned about his interest in pursuing poetry in terms of time and attention to the craft, Ezekiel stated, "Yes, I expect now to spend more time writing poetry and less on evaluating the works of others. It isn't always a question of time but of need. My critical articles and reviews must remain unculled. I stand only by my poetry."
It is a pertinent fact that while some of Ezekiel's single poems like "Poet, Lover, Birdwatcher," "Terse of a Woman", "Underground" and "Dilemma" to mention a few are brilliant, there are a few in his compositions that are not satisfactory more in terms of craftsmanship than in terms of ideas, nuances and experiences. There is a dryness too in a few of them. Such liabilities render his poems flawed and unimpressive. Perhaps they could have been deleted from his published collection of poetry for they could adversely affect the final appraisal of the poet's output in terms of totality of effect. Maturity of outlook and craftsmanship assist a poet in realising his talent.

Evaluating his own work, rather dispassionately (or at least as dispassionately as is possible in the circumstances) Ezekiel says, "Looking back at my early poems, I don't repudiate them. In a sense they provide the continuity with my later work — — — But I would now retain fewer poems from each volume. I do find weaknesses — weak lines, throw-away images, careless construction. In those days I was anxious to complete
the poems. I don't know why I was in such a hurry. I suppose everyone is at that stage. I've more patience. I'm willing to revise more thoroughly. The poem has to grow. I give it plenty of time.17

Perhaps if he were to advise a group of young poet, aspirants, he would certainly warn them against undue haste in achieving a prolific output for ultimately what is of import is the quality of work.

To achieve excellence in any field an aptitude or a potential is a basic pro-requisite. This talent may over the years be perfected and chiselled so that the end product is guaranteed to withstand, not merely the evaluation of critical standards but more importantly the test of time. It is said that Michael Angelo laboured to such an extent over the statue of Moses that his creation seemed to come alive and Angelo himself struck it and commanded it to speak. This is the peak of perfection in art—the work appears to come alive.
Similarly the work of a true artist—poet, painter, musician or playwright—becomes relevant and effectively only when it is deeply rooted in reality. A truly great piece of art lends itself to diverse interpretations and yet continues to intrigue readers and onlookers. It is no exaggeration to consider Ezekiel in this category of artists whose work has a captivating effect and will continue to do so in the time to come.

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NOTES

4. The poetry Anthology, P. 506.
7. Anisur Rahman: Form and Value in the poetry of Nissim Ezekiel, P. 86.
9. QUEST, No. 76, P. 45.
11. ISAL, P. 14.
12. Nissim Ezekiel: Foreword to SIXTY POEMS.
17. Ibid, P. 5.