Chapter VI

Conclusion
Ezekiel treats poetry as a lofty vocation, a serious and effective medium of self-realization. Poetry, according to Ezekiel, is not a gift to be adorned but a craft to be studied with systematic efforts. He bears the capacity to use unique phraseology and an innovative diction. The scheme of diction in his poetry puts a ‘stamp of his own’ on his poetical works. Ezekiel encompasses varied experiences of life. The feeling of an outsider or a foreigner in him is responsible for creating an attitude of a detached attachment in his poetry. He is able to look at any situation with a detached attachment. This capacity of the poet makes him mature as his poetic journey gradually proceeds further. He is endowed with a new outlook for analysing the psyche of the Indian Individuals.

Apart from this, his diction has a special charm. Though simple looking, it is penetrating and brings out new vistas for the reader. The images like ‘Jungle growth’ conveying the tremendous expansion of corrupting influences or ‘geometry of love’ conveying sexual relationship are highly suggestive and strictly Ezekielian. Ezekiel has practised to bring idiom of poetry closer to the day to day language in use in practical life. The only aim of the poet seems to write clear and direct poetry. He touches and celebrates the most
ordinary and commonplace situation with ease and perfect sense of irony.

Nissim Ezekiel generally deals with the themes of city life, sexuality, problems of marriage, the need to overcome alienation and other related issues. In fact his poetry is endowed with ironic, purpose, a multiplicity of tones and timbers, the artistic distancing of emotion and expression, there is, however, a new personality expressed and explained in the voice, theme and technique. Life as portrayed in his poetry seems a quest for self-realization, rather a spiritual voyage.

R.S. Pathak (In Avadesh Kumar Singh (ed.) 2003: 37) rightly says:

“The discovery of the self is an important motif in Indian poetry in English. The choice of language and idiom is only one aspect of it, but it is surely significant aspect of it.”

In the present research work an attempt has been made to study images in Nissim Ezekiel’s poetry by categorizing them as physical or material images, spiritual images and psychological images. Physical images constitute a huge part of Ezekiel’s poetic corpus. It includes all the things that come under the domain of the palpable world. He is especially regarded as a Bombay poet. The material world in the city has a deep and everlasting influence on the poet. He looked at Bombay from all possible angles. For him, it is a centre of corruption, defilement, moral bankruptcy, artificiality, extravagance etc. Here, the poet has made a sincere effort to
juxtapose the two worlds in his poetry, that is, the World of Nature in its virgin form on one hand and on the other hand, the world of artificiality of the urban world. Ezekiel seems to be disquieted with the corrupting influence of the city. The opening lines of the poem 'Double Horror' evoke this sense:

“I am corrupted by the world, continually
Reduced to something less than human by the crowd.”
(Ezekiel, 1989:7)

The set of images in this poem pertain to the physical world around him and convey the poet’s ironical purpose. The images like 'News Papers', 'Cinema', 'Radio', 'Speeches', 'Posters featuring health' etc. are evocative of a typical material city culture which depicts a world trapped in the cage of materialism. It also evokes a sense of the general monotony of the day to day city life. The superficial existence of the city people is exhibited through this.

In the next part the poet describes the mandatory material obligation which is pressed upon him. The images like shops, cinemas and business houses acquire a quality of the day to day humdrum of the city of Bombay. When we analyse Ezekiel’s city images, we find that the purity of the poet's being is contaminated to a large extent. A survey of other images associated with the physical images is the major concern of the third chapter on the physical images.

Ezekiel being the poet of most contemplative turn, we find a fine combination of psychological images in his poetic texture. The
mind, the thinking process, the psychological preoccupations such as disappointment, failure, nervousness, despondency, disillusionment, despair, hatred, jealousy, faith and all other psychological feelings are evoked through most of his poems. The prime purpose here is to come to terms, a self-realization or a faithful reconciliation. Most of the times we find that Ezekiel is troubled with a sense of frustration and nervousness and thinks that the same feelings are there in his past: The poet says:

"At night, returning home, I bring
with me the darkness and the old
voices that once had made me sing
My faith and patience growing cold."

(Ezekiel, 1989: 113)

The poet almost screams out to escape from the frustrated desires, emotional turmoil, and disillusionment and longing. He remembers the old by gone romantic days at that hour of night and his faith has turned cold. A.N. Dwivedi (1979: 281) rightly says: "His sense of frustration and uncertainty is complete and the collection is with pessimististic attitude towards his life and the world before him."

In the next chapter, the critical survey of the images from the spiritual world is made. The author's spiritual journey is not a general matter, it is strictly personal. It is not the part of the material world. It transcends the material world. It is a journey from the physical to the metaphysical, from the world of the known to the unknown, from the concrete to abstract. Through this, the author establishes a relationship with the sub-conscious. He creates a
counter world to the existing one. The poet's personal experiences are the major source of the spiritual images. We tend to apprehend it but cannot be one with the author's perception. We cannot even enjoy the heavenly bliss as the author can. The poet remains in a constant dialogue with the absolute- which is the creation of his own making. The poet's quest in this matter is always for the absolute. For example, it may be truth, God, beauty. As Gandhiji has identified truth with God, these ideas are elevated to that status. The poet reaches a state where he claims a union with the ideal- he has chosen. The spirituality exists beyond the level of perception. It may be abstract- it is an enticing experience.

The poet starts his spiritual journey. With him the dawn of the post-colonial era begins which mirrors the image. It is identified with the educated Indian masses. According to the poet, the art is the outcome of secular, moral conscience, its hopes and desires. As the poet says:

"For hours and days
The singing voice
To utter praise
A bit of land
A woman too
Grapes or figs
And metaphors
Insight illumination
Secret faults concealed no more."

(Ezekiel, 1989:6)

The spiritual images in the above lines convey the poet's spiritual journey amidst the 'primeval jungle'. As the hours and days creep, he establishes a kinship with humanity. As he grows more
and more secular and moral, he expresses a desire to have some minimum hopes and obligations. He doesn’t want to keep secrets.

What is special about Ezekiel is that he doesn’t hide the facts. His choice of images brings out the poetic reality. S.C. Narula (In Vijay Singh Bahri, 1985:181) rightly says; “What gives a distinct character to the poetic reality in each is his choice of images, the vehicle for the emotional and Cerebral spin off the experience of the living and which they develop from poem to poem so that they become conductor of thought and emotion.”

Ezekiel has been treated as an existential poet whose journey is a metaphorical journey or a journey into self. There are certain poetic lines where the poet conveys a tough choice one has to face while dealing with the problems of life. As the poet confesses:

“I have made my commitment now
This is one to stay where I am,
As others choose to give themselves
In some remote and backward place
My backward place is where I am.”

(Ezekiel 1989:181)

Ezekiel’s poetry is a battle field for there is a deep rooted clash of opposites. There are two opposite poles in his poetry- life as a pilgrimage away from home and the actual milieu. Thus the image of home received many spiritual connotations in his poetry. Home in his poetry is the metaphor for ‘self’. The poet could achieve redemption through one’s own psyche. According to the poet, these two realms, outer and inner, are essential for the
achievement of ultimate goal in life. Twinkle B. Manvan (In Dhondia Jaydeep Singh K. 2000: 26) rightly observes:

"Both these realms outer and inner are essential to human growth and fulfilment. Such a pilgrimage leads one from the outer to the inner; from the physical to the spiritual; from the intellectual discussion to the inner illumination and from the disintegration and chaos to order, discipline, and self control."

Ezekiel's clash of the opposites is the major concern of his poetry. His failure to adjust with the life in active involvement and his desire for detachment from life makes his poems more dramatic. There seems a constant attempt of the poet to synthesize the outer world and the world of his being. He tries to establish a harmony by juxtaposing poetry, art and life. It seems, unfortunately, that the poet could not achieve it. It remains an utter failure on his part which leads him to a feeling of disillusionment and spiritual emptiness.

It is found that Ezekiel badly lacks the imaginative power in some of his poems where he expresses contempt for the misuse of English by Indians. Ezekiel feels that poetry is superior to science and philosophy. According to the poet, poetry unveils the mysteries which philosophy and science could not do. Ezekiel is faithful and direct enough to expose the follies, foibles, weaknesses and deficiencies of the Indians. Most of his poems deal with the weakness of Indians in tackling their problems efficiently, their clinging to superstitions and their poor use of English language.

These themes are conveyed with a skilful use of images. This use of images is wise, artistic and perfect.

Thus, Ezekiel's poetic texture is woven finely with the images of different kinds. The physical or material images, the spiritual images and the psychological images pervade the volumes. It is with Ezekiel's apt imagery, the reader can trace unlimited treasure of meaning from the poetic stuff. Every image used by Ezekiel is packed with meaning. The present study which has been undertaken for its analysis will facilitate the reader to bring out the different shades of meanings from a work of art. It becomes easier for the reader to comprehend the meaning of the poems through the description of images. His religious or spiritual imagery tackles the different commonplace situations in Indian civilization. The religious imagery brings out enlightenment of the soul in the Indian context.

However, the web of imagery with which he has woven the texture of his poetry is remarkable and true to the Indian sensation. The images in his poetry rejuvenate his popular themes of psychological turmoil, existentialism, spiritual degeneration, alienation, failure in the marriage, quest for identity and so on. His images are like the convex mirror. In conclusion, it can be stated that what is striking in Ezekielian images is his matter of fact expression of the ordinary human situations to sing the 'hymns' and 'psalms' of human life as a whole.