

Chapter—IV

Ezekiel's World of Imagery

Phase I (1952-1958)

The poetic image as per C.D. Lewis's definition "is more sensuous picture in words, to some degree metaphorical, with an undernote of human emotion in its context, but also charged with and releasing onto the reader a special poetic emotion or passion" (Lewis. 1947. 22.). These word pictures "illustrate, illuminate and embellish his thought" (Spurgeon. 1935. 9.). This "primary pigment" (Kermode. 1971. 152.) of poetry is found in plenty in the British and American poets also. In the ancient Sanskrit mythologies there are plenty of images. In the Greek mythology the marriage of Apollo and Theitis is expressed through the relation of the Sun-setting and the sea. There are a number of personified images here. In Kalidas a cluster of epithets forms the basis of imagery. In *Meghdut* the mountains are the breasts of Mother Earth.

The Elizabethan used emotional and sensuous images. The caroline poets used sharp and precise images. The Romantic poets were interested in sensuous and mystic images as noticed in William Wordsworth:

A violet by a mossy stone
 Half hidden from the eye!
 From stare, when only one
 Is shining in the sky.¹

The Victorian poets ushered in a new tradition of the Pre-Raphaelite cult in imagery. The modernist poetry of Eliot and Auden take a strange turn from the tradition of imagery. They inherit imagery from the French poets, the late Elizabethans and the

metaphysical. The modern Indian poets writing in English are mainly concerned with the complexities and hard realities in life. Self-introspection is a favourite tool in their hand. Spurgeon feels that images reveal a poet's "innermost likes and dislikes, observations and interests, associations of thought, attitudes of mind and beliefs" (Spurgeon. 1935. 4.). So M.K. Naik nicely sums up, "the imagery of a poet is a true index to the quality of his sensibility, and the Indian poet's imagery should bear the hallmark of the individuality of his experience" (Naik. 1980.39.).

The Indian writers writing in English in the post-Independence period set up a new tradition of imagery. Nissim Ezekiel like A.K. Ramanujan is regarded as a meticulous artist in the field. The journey of Nissim Ezekiel in the domain of the Muse is really a poetic pilgrimage – a search for inner horizon of the poet, which has been nicely expressed in his abstract and concrete images. The poet is always torn between an existential enigma and emotional perception resulting in an endless conflict of soul. He has tried to knit a chord between art and existential enigma. His venture is not always effectual. But his sincere efforts are worthy to be appreciated by an impartial reader.

In the vast body of his poetry Nissim Ezekiel remains inconsistent for a long time. The images employed by him show the dichotomies of human life. He does not remain a passive observer of the ongoings of life but takes an emotional plunge into life at random.

He makes his imagery a sophisticated tool to expose the inner recess of his mental make-up. The Ezekielian images are not merely decorative but highly ornamental and they convey more than what C.D. Lewis thinks about an image, "An epithet, a metaphor and a simile may create an image or an image may be presented to us in a phrase or a passage on the face of it purely descriptive but conveying to our

imagination something more than the accurate reflection of an external reality”.

(Lewis. 1965. 4) Some images in Ezekiel’s poetry have overtones:

The darkness has its secrets

Which light does not know. (CP: 223)

The images of Ezekiel are mostly multidimensional and their nature is akin to the view expressed by C.D. Lewis in the following flowery language:

Images are like a series of mirrors set at different angles so that as the theme moves on, it is reflected in a number of different aspects. But they are magic mirrors; they do not merely reflect the theme, they give it life and form; it is their power to make a spirit visible. (Lewis. 1965. 80.)

Several influences shaped the consciousness of Ezekiel. Hence, the major Ezekielian images crop up. Ezekiel did not ignore the principles of the Imagist group flourished in America. A study on the images of Ezekiel shows that Ezekiel follows the following principles of the Imagist group.

- (a) A literary artist should use the language of common speech and employ the exact word.
- (b) He should create new rhythms instead of imitating old rhythms.
- (c) A poet should be given full freedom in the choice of subject.
- (d) A literary composer should present an image in order to avoid formalities.
- (e) He should present clear poetry.
- (f) A poet should follow the dictum that concentration is the very essence of poetry.

While dwelling on the different aspects of his imagery it is seen that the images in the poetry of Ezekiel are the direct result of the psychological crystallization of his poetic self. The poet can feel his poetic process in a note of confession, “I have written

poems in different ways but I don't rely on any one method. In a particular case I could analyse the *creative process* whether it was quickly over or very prolonged but I have not decided that in advance. If a poem seems to take long in the writing, I give it all the time it requires unless I lose faith in it. If it comes quickly, I don't hesitate to let it come that way though I may reject the poem later, when I judge it. What matters is all that I do to keep poetry in the centre of my life reading it, thinking about it, occasionally trying to write it. A mixture of memory, observation and imagination finally make a poem what it wasn't and so it's unlikely to be successful. (Chindhade. 1996. 155)

The journey of the images in the Indo-Anglian poetry starts with a metaphysical concept and hinges on physical plane nowadays. Nissim Ezekiel stands on the way to give an impetus to the tradition of the images employed by the other Indo-Anglian poets like a magnetic polarity. He laid emphasis on the images of sensation as well as the images of perception. He revealed "The Jekyll and Hyde of functioning of our cognitive machinery" (Alam. 1995. 8.). Regarding the nature of Nissim Ezekiel's images Qaiser Zoha Alam in his book, "The Dynamics of Imagery" states that the images of Nissim Ezekiel are attractive and concrete:

I ride the elephant of thought

A cezanne slung around my neck. (CP: 131)

and excel in familiar symbols like darkness (ignorance) and light (knowledge).

Anisur Rahaman in his well-known treatise "Form and value in the poetry of Nissim Ezekiel" located and discussed only three sets of images in Ezekiel's poetry relating to woman, city and nature. But it seems that Anisur's observation is an incomplete survey of the nature of Ezekiel's images. His images are also based on man, environment and his poetic entity or self.

The wide spectrum of his imagery can be classified into three periods with a view to analyzing them properly. The images spanning the period between 1952-1960 (A TIME TO CHANGE, SIXTY POEMS, THE THIRD) dwell on man, women, created creatures of the world. Doubt and confusion reign supreme in the domain of images in the period. There are flashes of the autobiographical images during the opening phase of his poetic career.

The images ranging between the period 1960 & 1980 (THE UNFINISHED MAN, THE EXACT NAME, POEMS, POEMS WRITTEN IN 1974, HYMNS IN DARKNESS) are Bombay-oriented in particular and India-oriented in general. Far-fetched images like the metaphysical poets are also observed in the poems included in "Hymns in Darkness" (1976). Suspicion, conflict, interrogation, sensory or extra-sensory experiences reign supreme in these images.

The images covering the period of 1982-1998 (LATTER DAY PSALMS, POEMS 1983-1988 etc.) are partly experimental and partly sublime. The poetic pilgrimage culminates in the Biblical as well as the Upanishadic images after a bit of modifications. His symbolic impressionist outlook fosters the depiction of hostile forces of positive and negative elements in the paradoxical world around him.

Nissim Ezekiel was deeply conscious of the daily episode going around him and fashioned images accordingly. Paradox and contrast are two common tools of decorating images. The following few lines show the perceptive power of Ezekiel as a poet and his image-making craft.

When kisses called the blood,
 To act again the ritual of morality,
 And variously remember. (CP: 107)

W.B. Yeats hardly makes any distinction between images and symbols. He says that an image enters into the arena of symbol when it is frequently repeated. In Ezekiel images cross the frontier of literary demarcation and attain the status of symbol. Symbols and images are associated terms and they recur in the poems of Nissim Ezekiel inviting a special discussion on them. Symbol is an object, animate or inanimate, which stands for something else. An image represents objects, actions, feelings, ideas, and thoughts beyond immediate experience. A symbol directly represents the thought of the poet in a clear cut way.

Corrupted by the things imagined

Through the winter nights alone

The *flesh* defiled by dreams of flesh. (CP: 3)

The “flesh” written in italics stands for human beings because a human being is fashioned with flesh and blood. The word “dreams of flesh” is an image associating different thoughts on the flesh.

Nissim Ezekiel's images in the first phase of his poetic career are mainly functional, suggestive and symbolic. On rare occasion, he uses them for ornamentation but his ornamentation is natural and disciplined. Every day life, Nature, flora and fauna, his professional life are the main sources of his images.

In 1952 Ezekiel published his first book “A Time to Change”. Images are found in plethoric abundance. ^{here.} But the influence of Rilke, Eliot, Auden, Donne, Yeats and Hughes are powerfully felt. Even Ezekiel acknowledged his debt to the literary giants without any hesitation:

Rilke, Yeats, Lawrence, the English poets of the thirties and forties (Auden, Spender, MacNeice, Day Lewis), the English movement poets of the fifties, the whole American poetic tradition from Pound and Eliot to Frost and

William Carlos Williams etc. Many European poets in translations, Pasternake to Yevtushenko among the Russian ones for example, on the whole my weaker poems are those in which an influence can be traced, except the poems in the Exact Name which are under the influence of the movement but not bad because I feel my own voice is quite clear in them. (Chindhade. 1996. 157.)

What Ezekiel said about his thematic pattern of poetry; the same may be said about imagery of Ezekiel. The sensual imagery of Ezekiel strikes striking semblance with that of Donne to the fullest extent. Sensual images abound in "The Great", "To a Certain Lady", "Preferences", "A Time To Change". They also abound in "Two Nights of Love", "Marriage poem", "Song for spring", "Nakedness", "The Female Image", "Episode".

His sensuous images mostly centre on man and woman relationship. Though his images are sensual in "A Time to Change", but they are sublime. They do not cross the frontier of decency at any cost:

Sucking like a leech upon the flesh,
 Crude acceptance of the need for one another,
 Tasteless encounters in the dark, daily
 Companionship with neither love nor hate
 By an image are redeemed. (CP: 29)

OR

Change is permanent and real,
 But the dancing moments of a kiss,
 Are real too. (CP: 27)

Sublimity in sensual images got wings with the publication of "Sixty Poems" (1953) and "The Third" (1958). Here the images are violent and carry the fire of passion. The

female images are expressed in terms of anatomical details. Morality or no morality Ezekiel projects woman-images with their pornographic details. Larkin's observation that "Life is an affair of being spoilt in one way or another" (Larkin: 1983:65) left a permanent impression on Ezekiel's psyche. So "Sixty Poems" and "The Third" project different images of female and the sensual description of the female body and love. The recurring images in these two volumes are "bone", "blood", "thigh", "marrow", "lips".

His contemporary poet A.K. Ramanujan too presents woman-image. But there is no criticism or sensuousness in them. The Hindu culture and the old values illuminated his mental horizon in such a way that Ramanujan glorified woman in the traditional Indian way of woman-worship in 'Prayers to Lord Murugan', 'Still Another For Mother'.

Ezekiel's presentation of woman as a seductress and man as a defiled creature found expression in *At the Hotel*:

On the dot she came and shook her breasts

All over us and dropped

The thin transparent skirt she wore.

Was not this for which we came? (CP: 112)

The vitriolic laceration on the fair sex by means of sensory imagery is not the ultimate aim of Ezekiel. Under such vulgar images there is an under current of sublime thought and pure motives.

The first three volumes offer different, contrasting images of woman. The pagan woman is the symbol of defilement. Perhaps Ezekiel was deeply aware of "the flesh, its insistent urges, its stark ecstasies, its disturbing with the mind". (Iyengar: 1962: 657)

To the present researcher the image of Ezekielian woman is an essential unit of living world. She is a necessity of the real life. Woman's existential utility is the desired image of woman-as projected by Ezekiel. So there is no hesitation but bold confession:

That women, trees, tables, waves and birds,

Buildings, stones, steam rollers,

Cats and clocks

Are here to be enjoyed. (CP: 96.)

OR

She lied to be with me

I lied to myself

We sought romantic restfulness.

God sent three beggars.

We went back to our separate bonds. (CP: 99)

Yeatsian influence is discerned in these "cameo-like" images.

Ezekiel's sensuous images in the first phase of his poetic development are akin to the images employed by Eliot, Keats and John Donne with a slight variation. Eliot in "The Fire Sermon" presents mechanical image of sex, which is in tune with the Ezekielian image of sex and love in "For Love's Record" and "At the party", "The men were nice as satellites" (CP: 98). Donne spiritualises love on a higher level in "The Good Morrow" and "The Anniversary". But Ezekiel looks at them with a utilitarian motive as in "The Case Study" and "Paeon".

Ezekiel discovers the philosophy of life from the stark realities of life. But his philosophy of life does not adhere to a particular philosophy. He has a philosophy of the hour. To him:

The true business of living is seeing, touching, kissing,

The epic of walking in the street and loving on the bed. (CP: 97)

In "A Time to Change" (1952), "Sixty Poems" (1953), "The Third" (1958), Ezekiel presents a number of bio-images. They abound in "The worm", "The crows" and "Squirrel". Ezekiel is never consistent in bio-images. The created beings are the symbols of bubbling energy. They are struggling hard for their survival in the hard world. The poet appreciates the worm's "astounding strength", "ingrained vitality" and looks askance at man's "the cunning subtleties". (CP: 10)

In the field of bio-images Ezekiel had drawn shocking images as seen in the poem "The crows". The black bird has been described as "faints of heaven". In such images dissociation of thoughts runs chaotic. The bio-images in Ted Hughes are fierce and terrifying whereas Ezekiel's bio-images at the initial stage remain passive and sublime.

The gamut of bio-images is vast and varied. They present and project the poet's psyche in a variable degree. The bio-images in "Squirrel" show vitality of the animal with several other images. The nimble animal is "an agile flick of grey and brown". (CP: 62) It is a living embodiment of life, leaping and jumping in the open face of nature:

To sport with leaves and Sun,

Indifferent to bait.

Fearing fingers of the watching child. (CP: 62)

The crows, squirrel, owl, lizard, bird, insects run and rush in the poetry of Ezekiel. It is very hard to correlate the bio-images of Ezekiel with that of Ted Hughes because of their difference in nature. Ezekiel's animals and insects strive for life but unfortunately fall prey to the needs and emotions of human beings.

Ezekiel's bio-images do not portray only the agile activities of animals but carry a note of their primal activities:

Which is to fly and then to mate,
 Aroused to build with twig and leaf,
 A nest sufficient for the need. (CP: 103)

The poet comes close to the metaphysical poets when he creates far-fetched images like "worms" to signify the thoughts of philosophers.

The bio- images, though comparatively less in number, are seen to be the integral parts in the basic instincts of life.

The facts—the mating and the nest
 Primeval root of all the rest. (CP: 104)

Sometimes Ezekiel presents bio-images amidst a cluster of other (visionary) images shaking the sequence of images. Here the bio-images lose their entity. "Birds" and "Cats" lose their original identity in the following cluster:

Women, trees, tables, waves and birds,
 Buildings, stones, steam rollers,
 Cats and clocks
 Are here to be enjoyed. (CP: 96)

Kaa Naa Subramanyam says that the Indian mind thinks in terms of symbols and metaphors and he observes that the Indo-Anglian poets have a peculiar speech to express something in terms of number. The numerical assertions are not entirely without value. They serve the purpose of extended hyperbole and a peculiar effect of tang in the poem. They lay scattered in the writings of Nissim Ezekiel, R. Parthasarathy and other contemporary Indian writers.

The word "Three" as a numerical image recurs in his poem. It recurs in "Episode" with symbolic connotation:

God sent three beggars.

We went back to our separate bonds. (CP: 99)

These numerical images are sometimes used for the sake of emphasis, sometimes as an exaggeration. Strangely enough these numerical images are used to denote uncountable numbers indicated below:

Collected all our years and they were cold,

Among the voiceless millions of the dead. (CP: 7)

These numerical images are generally not the statistical record of any fixed number. They symbolize a good many numbers:

But secretly rejoice,

When fifty thousand Chinese have been killed. (CP: 8)

In W.B. Yeats we have the uses of numbers. Of course in W.B. Yeats the numbers have their occult meanings.

Auden, Larkin, Eliot, Hughes employed such images as are akin to the images employed by Nissim Ezekiel. But they used numerical images rarely. In Ezekiel such images are used in abundance. In most cases they are used to tone up the imaginative faculty of the poet:

A dozen unborn children wait

For love to make them live,

A score of voices are repressed,

A hundred nightmares press upon his soul. (CP: 16)

It is not a truth but a poetic truth when the poet reconciles with "Twenty thousand abysses" (CP: 50) and

When the politician boasted

How he had made two hundred speeches,

'No, Tom' his wife declared,

You made the same speech two hundred times. (CP: 89)

In the first phase of his poetic career i.e. from "A Time To Change" to "The Third" the numerical images "three", "thousand" and "millions" recur. Sometimes they stand for symbolic meanings and sometimes they stand for embellishment.

Apart from these major images the poet dwells on abstract images in "Prayer", "A word for the wind", "The Great" and autobiographical images in "Advice", "Commitment", "A poem of Dedication".

It is true that the Eliotian hang over is present in his poetry but the poet's own voice is perfectly distinct. The same thing is true about his imagery. From the very beginning the poet dwells on the frontier of imagery to widen its horizon. Love is traditionally expressed in terms of red rose but Ezekiel in "Marriage Poem" uses "White Rose" to symbolise quieter aspect of wedded love. The image of earth is traditionally round-shaped but Ezekiel compares the earth with a river in "The Prophet" (CP: 33). His innovativeness in the field of imagery shows the poet's creative craft.

At this stage his images are mostly simple though there are flashes of complex touches. The poet frequently uses the consecrated images of "Moon", "Rose", and "Hills". Sometimes the poet is gay to combine *abstract* feeling and *sound* with a single stroke of an image, as it would be revealed in the word "Whisper" of the following poem "History":

The Image

With its freight of dreams is always near,

Whispers to the air a formless language. (CP: 12)

Sound and sight are compressed in the image of “hurricane” as the concluding lines of the poem “Episode” show:

And on my lips a hurricane

Of Helen’s kisses. (CP: 69)

Transfer of feeling to an object in an unlikely way is a special function of an image and this trait is known as synaesthesia. The image “sky-sobbing” in “Episode” (CP: 68) is such an example. Sobbing is generally associated with a child or a human being who is sad at heart. But the feeling of sadness is transferred to the sky. The quality of a living thing is transferred to a non-living one. The “wailing wood” is that type of image. Images are also helpful to open up a new horizon in the field of grammar. Any parts of speech have tremendous potentiality to form an image. Similarly an image conveys the sense of any parts of speech or transfers the power of any parts of speech to other parts of speech. Verbs are often used metaphorically and consequently they are regarded as image-making verbs. These image-makers have great connotative power:

A metaphor

Leaping from the sod. (CP: 5)

OR

To suck life from life leaving you and me

Corrupted. (CP: 7)

At the initial stage of development Ezekiel not only uses images in abundance but also traces the growth and origin of images:

I have seen the mask

And the secret behind the mask

I have felt the mystery of the image being born,
 Establishing it's dim but definite
 Identity. (CP: 106)

Ezekiel makes an analytical study on images in "What frightens me", "The Female image", "Sonnet". His contemporaries like Kamala Das, R. Parthasarathy, and A.K. Ramanujan remain surprisingly reticent in this regard. But Ezekiel is striving "to shape one's inner image silently" (CP: 100) and sets his goal at "gropings of the inner light" (CP: 97).

In the poem "Episode" (CP: 98), the poet creates an atmosphere of "romantic restfulness" and at the same time presents "whining howling beggars" who represents the unromantic model of life. Thus dualistic approach, opposite polarization are found in the corpus of the poet's verse pageantry. The image pageantry of Ezekiel is almost like a multistoreyed pyramid. The further it gets stripped off, the better would be the thematic depth of his image.

The Ezekielian images at their infancy evoke graphic pictures of human life. Ezekiel invited the symbolic tradition of Mallarme, Valery, Lafarge and the Imagist tradition of Eliot, Pound. The texture of his imagery automatically gets complicated. Ezekiel expresses the same idea with a symbol-cum-image oriented couplet:

The *spider* does not rest,
 Until the *web* is finished. (CP: 17)

At the initial stage of his poetic development, Ezekiel lays emphasis on the sense organ to register the images. He paints objects mostly with visual imagery and it is cardinal to Ezekiel's mode of communication. Both Wordsworth and Shelley

delineate Skylark with powerful imagery. Shelley's "Skylark" appears as a visual object and disappears:

Higher still and higher
 From the earth thou springest
 Like a cloud of fire;
 The blue deep thou wingest,
 And singing still dost soar and soaring ever singest.³

Even Keats studies the visual imagery with deep analytical power and visionary outlook. "Season of mist" is such a visual image which is further enriched in:

Half reap'd furrow sound sleep
 Drows'd with the fume of poppies.⁴

Visual images in Ezekiel in the first phase do not go beyond the horizon of sense appeal. "Voice-less millions" (CP: 7), "warlike faces" (CP: 7), "marshes-drained", "wine-dark sea" (CP: 21), "funeral bird" (CP: 41), "Samson, blind" (CP: 73) are copied from the rocky realities of modern age.

Ezekiel uses colour to create visual images. In the tradition of Post-Independence poetry he is a master artist in the said field. This type of visual image is also found in Shakespeare. For example Pious Desdemonia is a symbol of purity and chastity:

Nor scare that whiter skin of her that snow,
 And smooth as monumental alabaster. (5.2)⁵

Ezekiel's colour imagery is more intellectualized than the ordinary usual imagery:

An agile flick of grey and brown
 And he is gone, like a thought. (CP: 62)

Most of the Romantic poets prefer auditory images. In Thomas Gray and P.B. Shelley auditory images are found in plenty. Gray records:

The curfew tolls the knell of parting day

The lowing hard wind slowly over the lea.

...

The cock's shrill clarion or the echoing horn.⁶

Likewise Ezekiel's auditory images are also numerous, "creaking mud", (CP: 63) "dropping branches" (CP: 63), "sky sobbing" (CP: 68), "wailing wood" (CP: 73), "sunlight sprouting greenly" (CP: 57).

These are partly traditional but mostly innovative images. Like Donne, Ezekiel hardly obeys the theory of analogy in the formation of auditory images.

Ezekiel is basically a sensuous poet. So he has to depend, to a large extent, on tactual imagery. He delineates Cameo-like pictures through such imagery:

The yellow blondes declare

Upon the screen, and even stroked my hair.

But hates me now because I did not kiss. (CP: 11)

The poet writes that a good poet waits for words. But it seems that Ezekiel waits for tactual imagery, which is so pervasive in the gamut of his poetry.

From the functional point of view dynamism is one of the features of a good image. Ezekiel employs dynamic images frequently. Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao have already enriched Indo-Anglian fiction with such imagery. Mostly these dynamic images combine different feelings of living beings. Perhaps Ezekiel intends to "find in motion the very essence of life" (Spurgeon. 1935. 56). "Movements of heart" (CP: 11), "Weaving Shuttles" (CP: 15), "Winding wind" (CP: 27), "Putting Mist" (CP: 57), "Sleepy waters" (CP: 69), "fabric slyly plopping" (CP: 98) not only

encompass human feelings but also register the vast vista of nature. Ezekiel highlights the feeling of Wordsworth through such images as Wordsworth feels:

A motion and a spirit that impels
 All thinking things, all objects of all thought
 And rolls through all things.⁷

Notes and References

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PHASE-II

(1960-74)

Ezekiel was at his best in the second phase of his poetic career both in terms of subject matter and imagery. The images of "The Unfinished Man" and "The Exact Name" are more mature and varied than the images of the earlier phase. Ezekiel is seen to utilize the Indian culture, heritage, Indian milieu and exploit the same with a view to presenting them in their artistic and literary production. The Eliotian obsession is markedly seen in the poems of Ezekiel in this period. Ezekiel's projection of Bombay as a fallen city, its stark reality, spiritual bankruptcy is akin to the images of life presented by Eliot in "The Cantons" and Larkin in the poem "The Building".

In the second phase of his poetic career, Ezekiel excels in Indo-images, sex-images, abstract images and philosophical images. Besides there are organic, religious and autobiographical images in Ezekiel's verse.

The most dominating image of the period is Indo-images. Ezekiel presents the sullen and rapidly changing face of India by means of a number of imagery. The post-Independence India is the very base on which he knits the fabric of his images. Ezekiel candidly confessed:

I am conscious of my very special situation in relation to India, as a poet, but as a person and citizen I identify myself completely with the country. Its politics, social life, civic problems, education, economic difficulties, cultural dilemmas are all part of my daily life. I would like that identification to be fully expressed in my poetry but it is perhaps only partially so. (Chindhade. 1996. 156.)

The poet wants to present India through Bombay and its associated urban images. Ezekiel relies on whatever is offered by the observation of common life and the

business of daily existence. The “barbaric city” does not symbolise ‘Bombay’ only. It also presents the picture of urban life in India which is full of “sound and fury signifying nothing”¹.

Ezekiel depicts the gloomy picture of his native city:

Barbaric city sick with slums,
 Deprived of seasons, blessed with rains,
 Its hawkers, beggars, iron-lunged,
 Processions led by frantic drums,
 A million purgatorial lanes,
 And child like masses, many-tongued,
 Whose wages are in words and crumbs. (CP: 119)

K.D. Verma thinks that Ezekiel’s “Barbaric city” shows “an organised form of anarchy where the human will degenerates and finally succumbs to the collective will as a matter of social and psychological necessity”. (Verma. 1976. 233)

Verma’s view seems to be on the right path. Nissim was deeply concerned with the human predicament. His sensibility was like that of Spender:

The slums have their poetry, which makes people weep
 for them when they are bombed, factory yards, suburban
 building estates and all dwelling places have associations
 capable of producing feelings of tenderness and joy and
 regret . (Spender. 1942. 81)

He looks at the poverty-stricken and problem-ridden modern India:

Here among the beggars,
 Hawkers, pavement sleepers,
 Hutment dwellers, slums,

Dead souls of men and gods,
 Burnt out mother, frightened
 Virgins, wasted child.
 And tortured animals,
 All in noisy silence
 Suffering the place and time. (CP: 131)

Reflection of the external reality of “the beggar” is poverty; that of “pavement sleepers” poverty-ridden people sleeping on footpath; “frightened virgins” panic-stricken girls for preserving chastity; that of “wasted child” stands for “fondling”. These symbols are from an image of poverty-ridden India in the post-Independence period.

The poet abruptly cuts the string of images when he presents an image through a clause “A Cézanne slung around my neck” (CP: 131). The poet suddenly alienates his self from the Indian ethos and hinges on the western art form. So the images of “elephant” and “Cézanne” stand incongruous. The harmony of images is not maintained here.

The “bosom-semi bare” (CP: 132) stands for the lightly dressed modern Indian women and “men in grey or black” symbolises neatly dressed Indian men on the occasion of festival. The colonial torture on the Indians by the white boss is still present and has been nicely recorded in a number of images:

The struggle had been hard,
 ...
 Certainly the blouse
 Would not be used again.
 But with true British courtesy

He lent her a safety pin

Before she took the elevator down. (CP: 134)

The Indo-images in the second phase of his poetic career are sarcastic. They are oblique criticism of social norms. No such vitriolic criticism of social manners is found in the earlier images.

Ezekiel prefers to compose poem in a mode of conflict and contrast. Perhaps he was aware of the view of William Empson, "A poet must always be concerned with some difference of opinion or habit between different parts of his community, different social classes, ways of life or modes of thought that he must be several sorts of man at once and reconcile his own person" (Empson. 1961. 112.).

The superstitious India is portrayed nicely in the images of "powder, mixture, herb and hybrid"; the fatalistic Indian society is portrayed in "Your next birth", "The sum of evil", "buzzed the name of God", the social panorama of India has been projected in the images of "swarms of flies", "giant scorpion shadow", "the holy man perform his rites". The poem also records the traditional image of an Indian mother with her unique affection. Ezekiel does not excel in urban images but he epitomises "rural India" by means of his unique Indo-images: "diabolic tail", "sun-baked wall", "groaning on the mat", "the sum of good" etc. The web of images does not suffer from disharmony. The scorpion-stung mother glorifies the image of woman, which has been repeatedly tarnished by Ezekiel.(CP: 130).

Ezekiel is guided by an inner urge to present the rural and urban images of India. In these images there are collocation clashes. These collocation clashes in terms of images portray the post-Independence Indian scenario. Thus Ezekiel fulfils his commitment because:

India is simply my environment. A man can do something for and in his environment by being fully what he is, by not withdrawing from it. I have not withdrawn from India. (Shahane & Sivaramkrishna. 1980.88.)

The post-colonial Indian milieu as well as traditional India gets full projection in:

Three times the crow has cawed

At the window ...

Filling the room with voice and presence.

Three times I got the message,

To cope with the visitor. (CP: 137)

The cawing of a crow vividly suggests the Indian concept that a visitor is likely to visit home. The images as reflected here give this piece of poetry vitality. The concept is at once local and universal. The Indian traditional belief is subtly blended with the rich imagery and the theme of the poem gets locked in the domain of numerical images. Such blending of theme and images is one of the very vital features of the structural pattern of Nissim Ezekiel's images. Thus the Indo-images in "The visitor" and "Night of the scorpion" present superstitious and traditional ethos of India.

Ezekielian sex imagery abounds in "The Unfinished Man" (1960), "The Exact Name" (1965-1974) and "Poems Written In 1974". Ezekiel maintains dualistic approach even while going to delineate the image of woman by means of his amorous images. These amorous images, structurally speaking, are kinetic also. The scope of sex-imagery in the poetic domain of Ezekiel is really vast and it carries the faint echo of Philip Larkin's voice that "life is an affair of being spoilt in any way or another." (Larkin. 1942. 65)

Prof. Surya Nath Pandey in his scholarly paper "An Approach to Nissim Ezekiel's poetry" has the following observation, "Ezekiel's picture of woman as a seductress, a

cheat and a defiled being has invited adverse criticism from the advocates of feminism. In quite a few poems he presents woman as an object of lust instinctively incapable of anything serious and significant. From maidservants and lowly woman as in "Ganga" and "The Truth About Dhanya" to those of high societies as in "Love sonnet" he harps exclusively on the weakness of the fair sex. He presents them as mean, selfish and unrelenting for their misdeeds and their sexual activity with male Partners has received an erotic and excessively pornographic treatment in Ezekiel's poetry.... There are Poems like "Description" which hinge on a single image of hair and achieve thematic excellence in Ezekiel's hands". (Pandey: 1998:78)

The sex-images in "Love Sonnet", "Marriage", "A Woman Observed" and "Three Women" support the view of the scholar. This paper aims at showing that the image of woman revealed through images is not monocentric but polycentric. This polycentric image of woman is generally neglected. Woman is not always a "defiled" being. Ezekielian images show realistic image of woman—either highly charged idolising or biased defilement of the fair sex.

Sometimes the sex-images transcend the boundary of visual appeal. It is a unique innovation of Nissim Ezekiel—a step towards widening the horizon of the dynamics of imagery. "Swelling her erotic lines" (CP: 140) is such an image. Apart from being an innovative sex-imagery, it is also a Kinetic image.

In Nissim Ezekiel's sex-images organic images are found in plenty. They give dynamism and living spirit to such amorous images. The images in the first stage were mostly sensuous but at the second stage they are mostly complex. At this stage the sex-images present a search for the root of life, "the seed and source" (CP: 140) and "sensual movement bursting through the dress"(CP: 140). Far-fetched sex-images

are found also in this period: “Ebb-flow of sex” (CP: 138), “storms of love” (CP: 142).

Ezekiel employs heavily sex-images as core-images. His sex-images are so powerful that they cast their shadow over other images. Other images lay recessive in the penumbra of sex-images. These images do not always project woman as harlot. Man is equally responsible for the defilement of woman; man seems to be more submerged in the ocean of evils in this regard.

Symmetrical or unsymmetrical the images in Nissim Ezekiel in general and the sex-images in particular stand totally interlinked. Barring a few poems this feature is found all pervasive in the Ezekielian images.

Different feelings, passions of heart get appropriate expression by means of several images. In the Poem “Motives” the feelings of sight and touch (tactical) are powerfully combined. Here stands the image while combining two feelings—the feeling of sight as well as touch (visionary and tactile imagery):

My motives are sexual,

...

To bed with you

your skin is white

But black or grey

Would do just as well.

(CP: 154)

A Poet who projects images from perception is naturally a poet with philosophical outlook. C.E.M. Joad and others enlightened Ezekiel’s mental horizon at Birbeck College where he studied philosophy. It is striking to note that the philosophical images pervade the poetry of Nissim Ezekiel. The poet presents individual philosophy as well as universal philosophy through such images. Not so prominent in “A Time to

Change" (1952), "Sixty Poems" (1953), the philosophical images are highly suggestive in "The Unfinished Man" (1960) and "The Exact Name" (1965). The Words may be repetitive but they convey philosophical ideas—"wrong place", "wrong sense" as reflected in "The Poet Contemplates His Inaction" (CP: 173).

The images echoing the philosophy of the poet show that the philosophy of Nissim Ezekiel is in a state of flux and it has kaleidoscopic changes. Rabindranath Tagore presents mysticism in his images. Wordsworth preaches pantheism with his images, Shelley knocks at the frontier of injustice and social tyranny. Therefore while the traditional poets like Wordsworth, Shelly, even Indian poet Rabindranath present images in a centripetal way to convey a single philosophy, Nissim Ezekiel, being a neo-modernist poet, presents the images in a centrifugal way to convey his changing philosophy like a fickle-minded artist. The poet seems to be under the influence of such conception that no single philosophy is the ultimate expression of life. That is why the poet's philosophical images are so diverse and multidimensional. They pick up the flux of life and register them in his poems. Life changes; poetry changes and the images too.

There are philosophical images as "Home is where we have to earn our grace" in "Enterprise" (CP: 117), "primal fall", "Mark of Cain" in "Marriage" (CP: 124) "The mills of God", "The Sad eye of Time", "final formula of light", in "Philosophy" (CP: 129), "The sad illusion of perpetual light" in "Perspective" (CP: 134) "The dead is buried in his mind" in "Paradise Flycatcher" (CP: 140). "Transcending Consciousness falling like rain" in "In the Theater" (CP: 152), "Stripped off a hundred Veils" in "Theological" (CP: 156).

These philosophical images hinge on "the riddle of existence," "practical wisdom of the world," "the ways of God," "the business of the daily life." In some cases the

Ezekielian philosophical images hinge on the traditional religious tenets. The title of the poem "Theological" stands for philosophical image and a number of images are in the form of mystery, dogma, God's existence and the Gita-philosophy:

Your truth
 Is too momentous for man
 And not always useful
 I have stripped off a hundred veils.

...

why are you so elusive? (CP: 156)

Standing face to face on the corridor of this enigmatic world the poet feels delighted to bask in the rays of this long-drawn riddle of life. The images nicely present the contradictory elements. The confusing condition of life is unveiled through the philosophical images:

Of doctrine and dogma
 Of pure sensibility consuming
 The world with fire
 And leaving it ashes.
 Of categories and labels

...

of the divisible and the indivisible (CP: 157)

The poem "Philosophy" is full of philosophical images and mostly phrases carry them. "Not by planning", "but by flow", "mills of God" suggest that human beings are puppets at the hands of God. All events in this world are just like a passing phase:

A million stars are blotted out ...
 Historic passion as a blink ... the sad eye of

Time. (CP: 129)

Everything slowly runs at the target:

As darkest myths meander through the pain

Towards a final formula of light. (CP:129)

The concluding quatrain suggests the sacrifice of small abstract ideas for the sake of greater ones with the help of a few selective image-making clauses:

Common things become an argument against the nakedness

That dies of cold to find the truth it brings (CP: 129)

The philosophical images, sometimes, associated with other images, form a sort of association. At the initial stage of "Enterprise", there are a number of visionary images but the poem is concluded with the philosophical image:

When, finally, we reached the place,

We hardly knew why we were there.

The trip had darkened every face,

Our deeds were neither great nor rare

Home is where we have to earn our grace. (CP: 118)

In the earlier phase Ezekiel presents physical and platonic aspects of love with the help of such images as "fantastic dreams", "whisper love", "regions far beyond our eyes", "Beauty of a distant world". (CP: 83)

The same concept is echoed in "platonic", "drab exchange of tongues", "repeating parables of hell" and "perennial dawn on your face". (CP: 145)

Technically speaking the images in the middle period are more complex. There are recurring images in the beginning like "basement room", "marrow" having symbolic connotation. The image of Bombay is expressed with the help of "Barbaric city" in *A morning walk* (CP: 119) and "the barren city" in "Notes" (CP: 172) without any

change of meaning. Both the images present the bleak picture of Bombay. Ezekiel widens the horizon of images in the middle period. Accordingly "our love has formed like dew on summer nights" (CP: 120).

The comparison of "love" with "dew" is not conventional. Though unconventional the image is not beyond the scope of perception. Ezekielian images in the middle period are subtler than the images of his earlier phase. The poet tries to assimilate multiple feelings in contrasting images. "Saints their martyrdom and press the accelerator" is such an example. (CP: 121)

The images spreading over two periods show the journey of the poetic self of Ezekiel. So the autobiographical element recurs frequently. A.K. Ramanujam cannot forget to present his life in India in "The Striders", "Relations". R. Parthasarathy shares his experiences in "Home Coming". Only among the contemporary Indo-*Anglian* Poets, Arun Kolatkar does not decorate his poems with autobiographical images. The tradition of employing autobiographical image was present among the Indian writers in English in the pre-Independence period and it exists in the post-Independence period. Ezekiel contributes to the tradition only. In this context he is a tradition bound artist.

The Ezekielian images stand on different poles and this polarization of his images is partly responsible for his deracinated sensibility and the influence of the western writers like Rilke, Auden, Yeats and Eliot on him. During the early phase of his poetic career Ezekiel was under the influence of the impressionist cult and so the Eliotian hangover is all pervasive. His images, to a certain amount, are mimetic—veiled mimetic. He grapples with the environment around him and feels deeply for the quantification and objectification of life.

I am corrupted by the world, continually

Reduced to something less than human by the crowd (CP: 7)

The protagonist looks at India through scattered and harrowing images—"the beggars", "Hawkers", "Pavement sleepers", "Hutment dwellers" and "Frightened virgins". The western art form (in the form artist Cezanne) alienates him from the cultural ethos and social milieu of India. Here his images stand on contrast and juxtaposition. It seems that Nissim Ezekiel suffers from the anxiety of influence. Though he categorically refuses the romantic images of Sarojini Naidu and Tagore, their influence is discernable in his poem. Nissim categorically refuses any influence of Sarojini Naidu on him. Rather he satirises her sensuous imagery. Perhaps what American critic Harold Bloom has to say about "anxiety of influence" is true in the present context. Nissim is Bloom's "belated poet" who wants to castrate Sarojini Naidu "the precursor poet" to get an entry into the literary arena of Indo-Anglian poets.

As the days roll Ezekiel's perceptive power becomes keener. He registers his images accordingly. That's why in the concluding part of his poetic career the imagery of Nissim Ezekiel hinges on extra-sensory Perception.

Pure sensibility consuming

The world with fire

and leaving it ashes. (CP: 157)

Ezekiel experiments with his image and his personality is powerfully projected in his imagery. Adil Jussawalla makes a judicious analysis on the images of Parthasarathy, "The strength of his poetry lies almost entirely in its visual juxtapositions and the startling image. His lines don't sing. He cultivates the deliberately prosaic style, an undertone of rhythm itself. So at their best, his Poems become memorable individual images themselves". (Jussawalla: 1973.83).

The comment is equally appropriate for the images of Nissim Ezekiel.

On a comparative study of the Ezekielian images in the phases it is observed that the Ezekielian images are partly original and partly unoriginal. The images of unit I, unit II, unit III and unit IV in "Hymns in Darkness" are fashioned in the model of T.S. Eliot's "East Coker". Besides unit No. XVI suggests that the influence of "Rock choruses" and "Four Quarters" was deep on it. Philip Larkin uses the image of 'hired-box' to suggest death; 'fusty bed' to suggest isolation and 'frigid wind' to denote sterility. There lurks a temperamental semblance between Larkin and Ezekiel in the field of suggestive imagery.

Larkin hinges on social surrounding, common observation and humdrum affairs of life. He uses images sparingly but in most cases they are fundamental. Similarly Ezekiel registers his milieu and the changing world around him. He fashions his images with modern outlook. Under the images lie deep, multidimensional strings:

Scattered with my kisses

All over the barren city

The pity of dissipation

Sprouts in my moods. (CP: 173)

The Indo- Anglian writers present feeling through the movement of body. The Indo- Anglian novelists heavily employed such images showing bodily movement as in "The vast sheet of water, which swished like a snake and spilled the white foam of its poison" (Narayan. 1952. 276.) and "She picked up the cat and waltzed him round the room". (Malgonkar. 1964. 124)

Ezekiel gives touches on such motor images. He made them flexible and compress different feelings in such imagery:

Of transparent existence

Which has its own

Absolute and innocent movement

Like the flight of a migrating bird. (CP: 151)

In this stage the poet draws analogy between different dissimilar objects, “Chestnut nut.... Thoughts” (CP: 144), “Storms of love” (CP: 142), “Chestnut wings” (CP: 140), “Craned like a nagging woman” (CP: 137) and “an image fell/like silver coin upon the floor”. These are, no doubt, startling images but “his images and cadences at first puzzle the reader and assume meaning only gradually” (Verghese: 1971. 69).

Compared to the images used in the first phase, images in the second phase are deeply connotative and abstract. A few images like “angelic wings”, (CP: 136) “restless flight” (CP: 135) recur but with different connotations. Pre-modified images are also discerned— “actor- bridegroom” (CP: 137), “Sleep-walking” (CP: 137), “middle-aged...rigmarole” (CP:153) and “beggars ... iron lunged” (CP: 119).

Lewis says, “An image may be presented to us in a phrase or passage on the face of it purely descriptive but conveying to our imagination something more than the accurate reflection of an external reality” (Lewis: 1947. 18.). As a perfect imagist Ezekiel grows mature, as the quatrain is not his confession but the meta-text of imagery:

God grant me certainty

In kinship with the sky,

Air, earth, fire, sea—

And the fresh Inward eye. (CP: 122)

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THIRD PHASE

(1976-98)

The images he cannot find

Haunt his unrevealed subconsciousness,

A plain language lets him down. (CP: 233)

It is obviously very hard to present the images of Ezekiel in the third stage consisting of "Hymns in Darkness" (1976), "Latter-Day Psalms" (1982), and "Poems" (1983-1988). Though Ramanujan's imagery shows a sort of centripetal growth in the advanced stages, the Ezekielian images show a multi-forked linear growth. At this stage his image hinges on religion, philosophy, sex, Indian milieu, autobiography and God.

J. Middleton Murray observes that the uniqueness of imagery does not lie in the use, however, beautiful and revealing, of isolated images but in the harmonious total impression produced by a succession of interrelated images. Ezekiel is sometimes consistent in his approach to "subtly related images" and sometimes he is not. Regarding his images of sex, city, woman, nature, basement room he is consistent. Otherwise he is to some extent bohemian — a flux of change is a remarkable feature in terms of the structural unity of a poem.

The opening poem "Subject to Change" is studded with a number of figures of speech, simile and metaphor. There are abstract images like: "Shore of memory", "fevers of a future night", "like nightmare graves" (CP: 177).

While going to explain the concluding quatrain of the poem a researcher writes that Ezekiel appears to be searching for the objects and their exact description. To a

common reader the last line may appear to be hyperbolic or startling but it is definitely a very apt description of the geography of Bombay which is so inescapably surrounded by the sea-water.

The poet's journey was down the memory lane. "I was on the move, foresaw the fury of my inner law", "a new lace" (CP: 177) show that the poet is not concerned with the geography of Bombay. The falling and rising waves symbolise two phases of life— life visible, life invisible. The deep connotative meaning is further developed with: "The sky is smaller than this open eye". (CP: 177) The phase of sensory perception is over and the phases of "Hymns in Darkness" and "Latter Day Psalms" begin. At this advanced stage of Ezekielian image, the observation of Middleton Murray is very significant. He feels that all metaphor and simile can be described in the form of an analogy by which the human mind explores the universe of reality and charts the non-measurable world of these indefinite qualities. Many are capable of direct sensuous apprehension while only a faculty of sensuous apprehension can grasp other. It is of the qualities of the visible, audible, tangible world. It is also of the spiritual qualities of the more recondite world of human personality.

The images connote a number of meanings. Here are a few multidimensional images in "India":

Unsuitable for song as well as sense

The island flowers into slums

And sky scrapers, reflecting

Precisely the growth of my mind. (CP: 182)

The barren image of Bombay and the flowering of the poetic self are juxtaposed here. The "slums and sky-scrapers" stands for the spiritual bankruptcy of Bombay life. The image-making verb "flowering" defines the protagonist's flowerlike virtues

and at the same time it is a subtle image of poetic growth. A cluster of images is let loose here and all of them don't have the same harmony. They hang in the poem like multicoloured flowers in a garland. The images project "The Island" in different directions. This is also present in later poems.

Ezekiel is not a religious poet in the traditional term but religion leaves a deep impact on the psyche of the poet. His religious ethos is formed on the basis of Judaic influence, Biblical allusions, predominating Hindu culture and religious rites. Ezekiel confesses:

I am not a religious or a moral person in the conventional sense. Yet I have always felt myself religious and moral in some sense.

I always veered the Hindu view of life which I consider mystically, religiously and metaphorically right though I do not accept its ethics and social code.¹

Ezekiel's religious images do not portray God as per traditional Hindu God or Jewish God. "Actually Ezekiel's God has a much more common, unpedigreed denomination to Him in His presence as a kill-all, cure-all pop-God, a metropolitan Bombay God, an urban contemporary without hang-ups about origin. He may be addressed with reasonable familiarity".² Ezekiel's deity is a humanized divinity.

The dominating Ezekielian, religious images at this stage are found in "Guru", "Sai Baba", "Gita Classes" and "Meditation". They portray the post-Independence socio-religious life of the Indians:

Time is ripe for Sai Baba.

Time is ripe for Muktananda.

Let father go to Rajneesh Ashram.

Let mother go to Gita classes.

What we need is medication.

Need to find our root, Sir.

All of us are sick, Sir. (CP: 243)

The images are guru-oriented here. Rajneesh typifies a modern cult of religion; so also Sai Baba and Muktananda. Formal images of religious affairs are revealed with the help of the “Gita classes”. Dismal aspects of Guru-cult are reflected in the lacerating lines of the poem “Guru” (CP: 192). “The Saint” directly asserts the image of purity, spirituality. But the poet jostles with the traditional concept as he places the contrasting image—“life of sin” (CP: 191). So this dualistic nature of image has been nicely created by the poet. This concept has been, later on, extended by the images, which are not religious at all. The religious images of “the life of sin” have been set up with the image of “dropping our follies like old cloths or creeds” (CP: 191).

So Nissim Ezekiel like an iconoclast breaks with the traditional concept of images and makes newer ones. He presents a keenly sensitive register to pick up the realistic episodes from the general drama of life.

The gurus are spiritually defunct but materially conscious. The money-consuming gurus have bidden farewell to the traditional concept of God-worship or devotion to divinity. Standing on the ivory tower of imagination, the poet does not knit his images but of course he knits them with the help of realistic fibre. With the growth and development of Ezekiel’s poetic career, his images are complex both thematically and structurally. The web of Nissim Ezekiel’s images is definitely complex – whatever may be the type of image. His images are polychromatically juxtaposed with amorous elements and social problems. All the religious images are not sarcastic. Some of the images are genuine images reflecting Indian ethos:

The vices I’ve always had

...

the virtues I've never had

...

From this human way of life.

Who can rescue man

If not his maker? (CP: 212)

The religious images at the initial stage remain inclined to sensory level. On the advanced stage they become finer and finer. They tend to be specific rather than being general.

They are plethora of images in "Latter Day psalms" (1982). "Kundalini", "Immature self", "Nada" (Dhani), "Meditation" (Dhana), "Mouna" (Silence) are some of the religious images scattered in the various poems of "Latter Day psalms". Really speaking these images are transcendental by nature. Such images occupy a large part in the vast domain of Ezekiel's religious images:

And you grasp your self.

What you have eaten.

Is merely unripe fruit.

So, now, learn to fast,

Do without, be absent,

Keep the eyes closed.

Keep the mind steady

What you will see

You will also understand. (CP: 229)

All the means and ways noted above are the means of self-realisation. An extra-sensory awareness is necessary to perceive these images fully. The "unripe fruit",

“eyes closed”, “mind steady” are the component parts of Ezekiel’s transcendentalism in the field of images.

As the poet dwells on further with religious images, he directly refers to the religious terms and phrases, which are typically Hindu religious ideology and evoke images accordingly.

The poem “Healers” highlights the same in a typical way. Here the images are more explicit:

Know your *mantra*, meditate
 Release your *kundalini*,
 Get your *Shakti* awaking,
 And float with the spirit
 To your destination. (CP: 232)

The doctrine of the Vedas and the Upanishads has been expressed in the images of “mantra”, “kundalini” and “shakti”.

India is a land of diverse religions and cultures. The poet has presented a number of images of Jewish origin scattered through out in “Background, Casually”, “Jewish wedding in Bombay”. The words “Synagogue”, “Mosaic Law”, “The Sabbath” are the direct reflections of a Jew in an over whelming non-Jewish environment.

In India different religious sects are deeply religious. There is religious disharmony in the post-Independence India:

I went to Roman Catholic School,
 A mugging Jew among the wolves,
 ...
 A Muslim sportsman boxed my ears.
 I grew in terror of the strong

But under nourished Hindu lads,
 One noisy day I used a knife. (CP: 179)

The religious images presented earlier are in harmony with the images in the phase of maturation. They present the varied religious fabric of India and the relationship of different religious sects:

The Roman Catholic Goan boys
 The white washed Anglo-Indian boys.
 The muscle bound Islamic boys.
 Were earnest in their prayers. (CP: 132)

The art of polarization in the field of images goes on as usual as nicely shown in “Cleaning up” (CP: 283) and “Death of Hen” (CP: 288). The images “instrument of fate”, “Prince of Darkness”, “God of inscrutable purposes” pave the way for doom for the innocent creatures. The dismal picture of life is further elaborated in the images of a dead lizard. But this is not the end of all. The poet presents a bright aspect of life amidst ruins. These dead creatures herald good news for a vulture. The picture of merriment is found later on. The image “funeral magic” suggests so:

Outside crows, pigeons, sparrows,
 And a single unexpected vulture
 Provide the *funeral music*. (CP: 284)

This type of polarization of imagery gives a peculiar tang to the thematic affair of a poem.

In “Death of Hen” (CP: 288) there is a dismal picture of a hen, which is unfortunately run over by a passing car. In the second stage the image of joy comes out in a pleasant way. The visionary images are very powerful and explicit here:

A lot of crows

Came upon the corpse.

And cawed to celebrate the event.

Chance had offered them an early gift. (CP: 288)

The crows, squirrel, owl, birds, flowers, insects run and rush in the poetry of Nissim Ezekiel. Ezekiel's bio-images are not fierce like the bio-images of Ted Hughes. His animals and insects strive for life but unfortunately fall prey to the needs and emotions of human beings. Ezekiel presents plain, simple and direct images of natural flora and fauna.

The tree-imagery in Ezekiel though philosophical is highly guarded. It is not unveiled like Ramanujan:

The root is the mouth

Of the tree: pour water there

At the bottom

And, look, it sprouts green

At the top⁴

Even in the 15th chapter of the Gita an invert Peepul tree stands for a superior consciousness. "This tree of *Samsar* branches down into the more inferior forms of existence that operate with the *body-mind-intellect-equipment* in a world of *perception-emotion-thought*. The leaves constitute knowledge that vitalize all physical existence and the secondary roots are the *vasanas* or individual tendencies that entrap man in the world of physical reality". (Chinmayananda. 1971. 67.)

Ezekiel ensnares even the creator in the tree-imagery:

God grant you trees

To live among,

...

trees of such variety
 and beauty
 that you cannot help
 loving yourself
 among the trees. (CP: 282)

Ezekiel's tree imagery is not always philosophical but smacks of erotica also, "buttocks seen as fruit" (CP: 249) and "things as tree-trunks" (CP: 249). No higher adoration for soul! Ezekiel discovers the glory of soul in the debris of senses.

The Ezekielian images are functional. They are used to convey deep philosophy with the help of a single stroke of an image or a number of images: "I wax old as a garment as a vesture I am changed". (CP: 259)

The poet is deeply connected with the creatures of the world. Here are the wonderful strokes of imagery:

I am like a pelican of the wild-
 erness, like an owl of the de-
 sert, like a sparrow alone
 Upon the house top. (CP: 259)

At this stage he has used a number of farfetched images like John Donne, "Wine of astonishment" (CP: 256) and "the bread of sorrow" (CP: 268).

The evocative power of Ezekielian images is shown in "Warning", "Two Sonnets", "Furies", and "Nudes 1978". Here the images are presented in a confessional manner. Abstract and concrete images run parallel though most of them have some jostling feeling:

I love
 Your body too, though you're hardly

My cup of tea.

(CP: 247)

The poet was quite at home in decorating landscape images. The American poet Walt Whitman presents mostly Eastern images and mystic symbols. He is also a perfect artist in landscape images. Like Whitman Ezekiel presents:

Hills, valleys, swelling river-banks,

All those *landscape images*;

Praise of breasts and buttocks

Seen as fruit, thighs as tree-trunks;

Flower, moon, fire, bird

of desire, fish of sex

remotely tell a small

Fragmented part of the story.

(CP: 249)

The gamut of Ezekielian images is mainly complex. That's why besides landscape images sensuous and natural images are seen here. Technically speaking these images are remarkable for the laconic precision.

The images in "Monkey Show" register the common people's attitude to the performer of a monkey show. Similarly "The Truth About The Floods" registers the present scenario of India with flood-stricken rural men and corrupted officials. Even then students do not render any service to the flood victims. Here the images serve the purpose of vitriolic satire:

I arrived at Arda

But the village wouldn't talk to me

till I told them *I wasn't a government official*. (CP: 187)

Ezekiel uses colour images but sparingly. "On Bellasis Road" (CP: 188-89) is a wonderful creation in this regard. Here partial images, "purple sari", "yellow blouse",

“green bangles”, “orange flowers” form a total image of a woman. The image of a woman is the central image and the associating images spin round it and the total harmony of the images is also wonderfully symmetrical.

At first the woman-images exist in a concrete form — “I sense her as a woman / bare as her feet”. (CP: 189) Later on the image develops into an abstract shape and gets “cabined and confined” to the heart of the poet:

I see her image now
 As through a telescope,
 Without a single
 Desperate moral
 To keep it in focus,
 Remote and close-up. (CP: 189)

Such type of metamorphosis (abstract to concrete or vice-versa) is a striking feature in the dynamics of Ezekielian images.

In the domain of Indo- Anglian imagery Ezekiel has brought tremendous tempo and dynamism. There are a number of kinetic images in his poems. They combine different feelings:

An image fell
 Like silver coin upon the floor. (C.P. 136)

This type of audible image gets equal treatment by Ramanujan. “Their Hisses” (Snakes), “a clock work clinking in the silence” (Snakes), “to croak out a prostitute song” (small scale reflection on a great scale) are some of the acoustic images.

Technically speaking Ezekiel adopts the Eliotian method of condensing images. His treatment to sensory perception through images is vast and varied. In a synaesthetic imagery Ezekiel transforms one kind of feeling to another one. “I listen

to the buzzing air" (CP: 231) Here the tactile feeling is converted into an auditory feeling. Ezekiel employs simple colour-images like "white", "red", and "black" and makes them complex by absorbing different feelings "gleaming white", "glistening white" and "bloody red".

Freud has opened up a new vista in the field of psychology. By imbibing Freudian psychology James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, and Richardson have enriched the realms of English novel. Similarly by employing psycho-images of Eliot, Ezekiel has made his verse finer and finer. That's why his poetry abound in abstract images:

of poetry direct and oblique

of statement plain and symbolic

of doctrine and dogma

...

of categories and tables.

And of that which is beyond

of the divisible and the indivisible

of the many

And even, yes,

of the one. (CP: 157)

There are Ezekielian images which recur a number of times in his poetry. There are the images of poetic self, the woman, the city, marrow, swinging thigh, basement rooms and the number "three". In the recurring images there are marginal differences in their meaning but no major changes.

It is admittedly true that Ezekiel expresses his self through "metaphors and images". He also admits in an introduction to "Sixty Poems" that scores of his poetry are written for personal therapeutic purposes. In "Enterprise" he "smelt the sea" and

discovered "Home is where we have to earn our grace" (CP: 118). This image of the journey of self is repeated in "an English cargo-ship" and "learned to laugh again at home" (CP: 180).

The poet has a deep sense of alienation. That's why his "home" symbol at the first stage symbolises ideal homeland for the Jew. In "Background, Casually" he finds his home in Bombay, the place of his living. Thus the same image has different connotations in the Ezekielian world of verse.

In the domain of Ezekiel's poetry the image of woman is repeatedly referred to. In most cases the image of woman is full of sensuality. In "Ganga", "Night of the scorpion" he presents the images of an ideal woman but the image of woman as sex-doll dominates other images of woman. "The couple" (CP: 183), "Poem of the Separation" (CP: 95), "Tone Poem" (CP: 203), "A woman observed" (CP: 140), "Passion poems" (CP: 214), "Hymns in Darkness" (CP: 217), "Nudes 1978" (CP: 245), "Poverty poem" (CP: 230), "Poet, Lover", "Bird watcher" (CP: 135), "Description" (CP: 48), "Delighted by Love" (CP: 82), "At the party" (CP: 98), "Progress" (CP: 141) record the seductress images of woman. Ezekiel echoes Donne in his sensual poems.

The physical organs of woman such as hair, breasts, buttocks, and thigh are recorded in his poems. The recurring images of "threshing thigh", "thighs are full", "swinging breasts", "buttocks", and "stripped bodies" are the different dimensions of erotic female image. Like Shiv Kumar and Kamala Das, Ezekiel presents the spirit of Indian sexual manual "Kamasutra" in free verse. He has changed the dynamics of imagery by adding different adjectives to the same image-making words as in "popping breasts" (CP: 98), "swinging breasts" CP: 220) and "breasts small" (CP: 203).

The fallen city of Bombay and its related images are given fullest attention by Ezekiel. Ezekiel is at his best to present the recurring images of the fallen city Bombay. To the poet Bombay is his *spiritus mundi* and at the same time it is a banal city "unsuitable for song" as well as sense (CP: 182). The poems "Urban", "A morning walk", "Case Study" record the image of Bombay as a spiritually banal and defiled city.

The image of *basement room* is another recurring image in the world of Ezekielian world of imagery. He makes an anatomical analysis of basement image in "Background, Casually" and "London". His *basement room* becomes a part of his existence as an artist. The image recurs in "First Theme and Variations" (CP: 76) also. Finally it becomes a metaphor of the poet's restless struggle of his poetic pilgrimage. It is a sort of home where he can create without any problem of distractions. The poetic existence of the poet is deeply linked with basement room as the poet confesses:

Harlots, basement poets, and fools,

At first I merely looked at them and wondered. (CP: 18-19)

Thus the recurring image of basement room has harmony in different phases of images. Besides the images of "marrow", "three", "God", "dream", "light" recur in his poetry with symbolical implications.

From the functional point of view it must be said that the Ezekielian images stand for economy of word and they vivify a great object or sense in a lucid way. He delineates the image of a ladylove with the help of the following images:

"a shower of letters", "a photograph" and "a smell at night". The images convey more ideas depending on the perceptive power of the readers. The poet duly acknowledges this trait of an image:

The image

with its freight of dreams is always near,

whispers to the air a formless language. (CP: 12)

Yeats used to say that a poem must have some sort of organizational unity. Eliot maintains organizational unity in his poems. Ezekiel employs major images to maintain organizational unity in a poem. "On Bellasis Road" is a typical example in which Ezekiel maintains organisational unity with the help of a cluster of images. The visual images of phase no. 1 match well with the last unit of the poem. The images of "yellow blouse" are complementary to:

I see her image now

As through a telescope. (CP: 189)

In this way Ezekiel maintains "some sort of continuity" in his poems.

Ezekielian images combine different feelings in a compact way. No amount of description is sufficient to combine different feelings at a time. In this context Ezekiel is a perfect artist:

Change is permanent and real,

But the dancing moments of a kiss

Are real too. (CP: 27)

The single image of "dancing moments of a kiss" combines the feelings of joy, union, touch, and dynamism at a time. A stroke of image stands for multiple feelings. Ezekiel compresses visionary, acoustic, gustatory and colour images with a single stroke:

Yellow green crinkly-skin oranges. (CP: 266)

In the Ezekielian world of imagery metamorphosis of images is markedly noticeable. The imagery at the initial stage gets altered in the concluding part of the poem. Such transformation of imagery helps to develop the theme of a poem. "Water, wind and season's breath" (CP: 56) gets transmuted with "sense-explosions, agitations of the mind and marrow" (CP: 56).

Ezekiel has done a very commendable job in the field of imagery by widening the horizon of the dynamics of imagery. Following the footprints of Donne, he employs a number of unconventional images. They are startling images but not out of the context.

"White Rose" (CP: 46) is such an example. Rose is traditionally associated with "red". But Ezekiel Portrays "quieter passion" of wedded love that is better expressed with "a white rose". Another unconventional image is "the sky sobbing" (CP: 68). The transfer of human feeling to the sky is the most appropriate one and it matches with the context. The imagery gets finer shape here.

Of course the Ezekielian world of imagery suffers from serious set back when the poet employs bizarre images:

Stern questions to your feelings, facts

Which ossify the spirit's bones. (CP: 53)

Here thoughts expressed in the poem are not related. The ossification of "spirit's bones" is a misguided venture into the field of imagery.

Symmetrical or unsymmetrical images in Nissim Ezekiel in general and the sex-images in particular stand totally interlinked. Barring a few poems, this feature is found all pervasive in Nissim Ezekiel.

A close look at the imagery through out Ezekiel's poetry reveals the structural pattern of juxtaposition and contrast. On an advanced stage they are replaced by multiplication.

In the poem "Episode" (CP: 89) the poet creates an atmosphere of "romantic restfulness" and at the same time presents "whining, howling beggars" who represents the unromantic model of life. Thus dualistic approach and opposite polarisation are found in the corpus of the poet's images.

The image-pageantry of Ezekiel is almost like a multistoreyed pyramid. The further it gets stripped off, the better would be the thematic depth of his images.

"Cleaning up" (CP: 283) poses at the initial stage the feeling of disgust on the part of the protagonist and ill luck for the insects as they are being cleaned up!

In the second stage a sort of fatalistic image is pictured by means of "instrument of Fate", "Prince of Darkness", "God of inscrutable purposes". (CP: 283)

In the third stage a tragic gloom pervades following the death of a lizard and really it is "not a pretty sight". The chord is well set!

And then comes the bang. Most unexpectedly the poet blows bugles amidst ruins! The gloomy image gets glittering with sunny images. At last the dead lizard becomes a source of joy to the unexpected vulture. This twist and turn of the tempo of images match well with the previous images.

Middleton Murray repeatedly lays emphasis on the "harmonious total impression" of images. Though there are polarization and deconstruction of images, Ezekiel tries his best to maintain harmony with the help of correlated images. The images of "marrow", "pagan woman", "nature", "basement room", "poetic self", "God" are finely blended. Ezekiel, does not pay heed to Pound's advice "to present one image in a lifetime" (Lewis: 1946:25) but presents plethora of images as Ezekiel confesses,

“There is in each line, a phrase, an idea or image which helps to maintain some sort of continuity in my life”. (Kurup: 1996: 35)

The creativity of the poet is abruptly stopped following Alzheimer’s disease in 1994. The vibration of “unvarnished verses” is nicely recorded in the symbols and images employed by Ezekiel. He concludes “Concluding Latter-Day Psalm” (CP: 261) not with an anatomical search for imagery but with a final version of the genesis of Ezekielian imagery:

The images are beautiful birds
 And colourful fish: they fly,
 They swim in my Jewish Consciousness.
 God is a presence here
 And his people are real
 I see their sins. I hear
 His anger.
 Now I am through with
 The psalms; they are
 Part of my flesh. (CP: 261)

Notes and References

1. Quoted by V.A. Shahane in "Voyage". *Contemporary Indian Poetry in English*. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors. 1996. 76.
2. Gieve Patel ed. Nissim Ezekiel. *Collected Poems 1952-1988*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press. 1989. XVIII.
3. Quoted in Surya Nath Pandey's *Studies in Contemporary Poets*. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors. 1998. 74.
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