

**THE IMAGES IN NISSIM EZEKIEL'S POETRY:
A CRITICAL STUDY**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF
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Under the Supervision of
Prof. B. K. Banerjee

Submitted by
Pabitra Das Baksi

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
University of North Bengal
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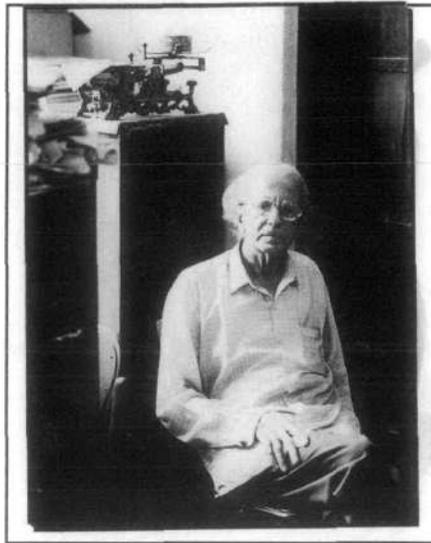
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Bency K. Banerjee

**Professor B. K. Banerjee
Former Head of the Dept. of English
University of North Bengal**

DEDICATION

**To Hiya and Priya in the hope that
their inquisitive mind^s may reach
the pole star.**



NISSIM EZEKIEL: (1924-2004)

*I CANNOT LEAVE THE ISLAND
I WAS BORN HERE AND BELONG (Island)*

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It is really exciting to work on a living author since one is privileged to interview him or her, to hear his or her voice. To receive letter in reply to enquiries on several matters in author's own handwriting is really stimulating.

Before his sudden illness, Professor Ezekiel rendered an invaluable help to me and here I humbly accord my heartfelt gratitude to the mute Muse of Mumbai.

When I decided to carry on my Ph. D dissertation on Nissim Ezekiel the poet was alive but he was in a "life in death" state.

The irony is this, when I write this 'Acknowledgement' following the completion of the thesis, the poet is ^{no} longer in his mortal frame. I really feel very sad about it at the outset. I pay my humble homage to the departed soul of the poet and express my words of gratitude to him for the inspiration I received from his poetry.

It gives me immense pleasure to record my obligations to Professor Benoy Kumar Banerjee for the stimulating discussions that I had with him and his encouraging guidance till the completion of my research.

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INTRODUCTION

My inspiration behind this humble dissertation is a small poem, "Beauty" composed by Nissim Ezekiel. Both the theme and its imagery moved me so much that I began to think whether in future I could work on Ezekiel.

Meanwhile I read a good number of his poems and had correspondences with him exchanging my views and ideas on some of them. The more I read him, the more I was drawn to his poetry. Hence stands this present dissertation.

The Indian writers writing in English, are traditionally looked down upon. Maccutchion observes, "There is little that is specially Indian in the background and imagery; the rivers and mountains are all generalized, and international flowers are preferred ... The predilection for apples, which few Indians can see growing, let alone live with, also suggests literary sources. The themes and attitudes too are modern European. Alienation and resentment, hatred of a machine age ... This is the modern world... increasingly standarised in every country. It is understandable that Krishana and Rama, so overplayed, find no place here but much more significant than that, the great God Shiva, so Indian and still so alive receives no more than a passing reference" (Mccutchion. 1969.97).

Groping in the socalled arena of darkness, it seems to me that the Indian writers writing in English are neither imitative "Pygmies" nor "Matthew Arnold in saree!" A. K. Ramanujan throws illuminating halo in the area of darkness, "I don't know whether Indian English poetry has a distinct tradition or not. There is not enough of it. For us to speak about its tradition is wrong. We are trying to write instant history. I think we can wait. I think we need poets with a whole body of poetry. I think Nissim Ezekiel has built a body of poetry. It is a great thing". (Jha: 1980:20)

Ezekiel forsakes the influence of Cubism, Futurism, Impressionism, Surrealism, Dadaism and gradually stands on his own feet. He has a commitment to fulfil, “Miles to go” and “promises to keep”. The poet acknowledges:

The Indian landscape sears my eyes,

I have become a part of it.

To be observed by foreigners.

They say that I am singular

Their letters overstate the case

I have made my commitments now.

This is one: to stay where I am. (CP: 181)

Such commitments, such emboldened steps naturally draw me to explore the mine of gold. The intricate nuances of poetry lie locked in the images of a poem. In this regard Ezekielian imagery is highly potential and akin to the images employed by the Sanskrit poets. He is candid about his poetic obligation to the Sanskrit poets:

How freely they mention

Breasts and buttocks.

They are my poetic ancestors.

Why am I so inhibited? (CP: 214)

The paper aims at showing the revival of ancient Indian imagery by the poet. The Ezekielian imagery evolves through a particular route by assimilating the Indian sensibility; incorporating the Western impressionism; Sanskrit aesthetics and unearthing the cave of his thought. His is a world, vast and voluminous. So a broad chapter wise division is worthwhile.

1. INDO-ANGLIAN POETRY: A STUDY IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE.

2. BACKGROUND REVIEW.
3. NISSIM EZEKIEL: A BIOGRAPHICAL OVERVIEW.
4. EZEKIEL'S WORLD OF IMAGERY:
 - A. EARLY PHASE.
 - B. MIDDLE PHASE.
 - C. PHASE OF MATURATION
5. EZEKIEL AND OTHER INDO-ANGLIAN POETS: A COMPARATIVE APPROACH IN IMAGERY.

The first chapter introduces the objective of my thesis. It studies the historical account of Indo-Anglian poetry vis-à-vis Ezekiel's poetry. This study shows that the images in the Indo-Anglian poetry stem from metaphysical concepts and hinge on physical planes. Nissim Ezekiel spearheads the new Indian poetry in English. It is Ezekiel who has wielded his influences over the new Indo-Anglian poets. He laid emphasis on both the images of sensation as well as the images of perception. He revealed the Jekyll and Hyde functioning of the cognitive machinery of human beings.

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)

The second chapter informs the world of the scholarly work on Nissim Ezekiel's creative oeuvre. They are exhaustive and innovative. Linda Hess, Birje Patil, Gieve Patel, P.K.J. Kurup have surveyed the various facets of the poet. Even special emphasis is given on the domain of Ezekielian imagery by P. Narendra Lal and Anisur Rahaman.

They made subjective and partial study of the imagery of Ezekiel. But the structural developments of such images are not focused properly. This thesis shows the lacuna in this regard and calls for a deeper probe. The poet primarily depends on his milieu and the large social atmosphere in and around him. Life and art are deeply knit and a poet is an antenatal body sucking his sustenance through the umbilical cord of the surrounding life. A hunt for the images is on and Ramanujan traces the origin of imagery in the following way:

Images consult

One

Another,

a conscience –

stricken

jury

and come

slowly

to a sentence¹.

The poet shuns a settled life and oscillates between fact and fancy. His addiction to narcotics, his private life of romance-cum-reality, Linda-Daisy conflict, make their inroads in the *spiritus mundi* of Ezekiel. These images come up from the vast domain of his experience enriched with innumerable episodes in his life. Caroline Spurgeon feels that the images mould the personality of the poet, his “innermost likes and dislikes, observations and interests, associations of thought, attitudes of mind and beliefs”. (Spurgeon. 1935.4)

Ezekielian imagery has been thoroughly scrutinized both thematically and structurally in third chapter. The images are discussed period wise. The images

spanning the period between 1952-1960 (*A Time to Change*, *Sixty Poems*, *The Third*) dwell on man, woman, created creatures of the world, doubt and confusion in maker's set-up and they are finally coloured by autobiographical images.

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, interrogation, sensory or extra-sensory experience reign supreme in these images.

The images covering the period between 1982-98 (*Latter Day Psalms*, poems 1983-88) are partly experimental and partly sublime. The poetic pilgrimage culminates in the Biblical as well as the Upanishadic images after modifications. His outlook as a symbolist and an impressionist, fosters the depiction of hostile forces of positive and negative elements in the paradoxical world around him.

The concluding chapter deals with a comparative study of images employed by different contemporary writers like A.K. Ramanujan, Kamala Das, Jayanta Mahapatra and R. Parthasarathy. Nissim Ezekiel claims that the contemporary writers influenced him least. But on a closer scrutiny, it is revealed that the Indian writers make a tradition of Indian images jointly. Hence the recurring images found in them, are often common.

Most of the modern poems are psycho poems. In order to reach the epi-centre of a poem, one has to peel the layers off frequently. The poet's mind often lies locked in symbols and images. Ezekiel's experimentation on common images like "rock", "marrow", "basement room", is vast, varied and changing by nature. In his mature phase Ezekiel is seen at his best to deal with double-string-of images.

At one stage there is a cluster of imagery revealing a particular idea and on the other side there is reverse idea. Thus reverse polarisation in imagery has given his poetry a peculiar status.

Ramanujan adopts an expressive device in the handling of imagery but Ezekiel deals with them to some extent in a different way. Ezekiel's forte, in the domain of imagery, is of a multiforked linear development. His recurring images hinge on love, social reality, Indian milieu, self-search and philosophical meditations. What Ezekiel says about his creative process stands equally true in the context of imagery, "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 is. I sense it coming from the depths or realize that it won't and so it's unlikely to be successful". (Chindhade. 1996.155)

Finally for Notes and References, Works Cited and Bibliography, the instructions given in the latest MLA hand book are strictly adhered to.

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Chapter – I

INDO-ANGLIAN POETRY: A STUDY IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Not constancy nor charity nor fear.

But as it were, a preparation,

Willingness to come to this.

...

There is a way

Emerging from the heart of things

...

The end does not matter,

The way is every thing, (CP: 14)

Sir Thomas Roe's presentation as an English ambassador to the court of Mughal Emperor Jehanjir for trade permission was an epoch-making episode not only in the political history of India but also in the history of British education in the country.

The enlightened Indians went on spreading English education not only in Bengal but also in other parts of India. Educational and social changes went together in Bombay. The Prathana Swamaj was set up in Bombay. The young people under the influence of English education welcomed the liberal views and reformative zeal of the West. Anne Basant set up the theosophical society at Adyar in 1875. Basant and a few other native intellectuals promoted western thought and the English education in Madras. The Renaissance in the 19th century left an everlasting influence in India. Under the influence of the spirit of the Renaissance, Raja Rammohun Roy and Henry Vivian Derozio took active role to shake off the orthodox superstitions and spread English education. It was Derozio who advocated the setting up of a tradition in writing or composing poems in the English language. It was a new offshoot in the

channel of Indo-English literature. The fusion of Indian thought and European language is reflected in the following lines:

Expanding like the petals of young flowers,
 I watch the gentle opening of your minds,
 And the sweet loosening of the spell that binds
 Your intellectual energies and powers,
 That stretch like young birds in soft summer hours
 Their wings to try their strength.¹

Under the leadership of Derozio the members of Young Bengal went on criticising the age-old tradition of India. The Academic Association fostered a new growth in progressive thought. The result was a revolution in thought. The Renaissance flourished as a result of a number of factors. The educated middle class came in contact with the western education and culture and adopted liberal views. The English education knocked down the barrier of the East and the West. The Indians lacked rationalism in their thought. The Indian culture lacked the liberal culture of the West. The educated class studied the writings of Bentham, Mill, Rousseau, and Voltaire and so they were led by an inquisitive search for knowledge. The clash between the orthodox Indians and the liberal Indians was inevitable. A group of educated Indians wanted to reform the Indian society in terms of her culture and social evils. The other group wanted to set up a progressive, new society by demolishing the old infrastructure. So it was a phase of clash and conflict—a phase of transition.

The Christian Missionaries went on launching attack on the Hindu religion and culture. The westernised India posed a challenge to the cultural tradition of India. A leading group of the Indians tried to save the Indian society from the direct impact of the western education. So the enlightened Indians were channelled differently. As a

result of cultural conflict, some took to the promotion of oriental learning; some devoted to the development of western education; some others devoted to the spread of religion.

Many British settlers in India like Sir William Jones, Edwin Arnold, Reginold Heber, David Hare, D.L. Richardson, H.H. Wilson, John Leyden started developing a type of literature called Indo-English literature. William Jones, Edwin Arnold tried to revive the glories of Sanskrit literature in English.

The Indian intellectuals imitated the spirit of the intellectual Englishmen. They aimed at setting up Indo-English literature (now-a-days called Indo-Anglian literature). The role of Raja Ram Mohan Roy for the promotion of English writings as well as western education was of no mean importance. The arrival of the English in India heralded the opening of the English education in the country:

It becomes us to state here that although the Anglo-Indian school is partly assisted by public contribution yet the greater portion of its expenses is paid by one of the most liberal and enlightened of native gentlemen—one whose name has been long before the world, whose talents are surpassed by his worth only and whose efforts to ameliorate the intellectual condition of his countrymen can never be too highly appreciated. As the founder of the institution, he takes an active interest in its proceedings and we know that he is not more desirous of any thing than of its success, as a means of effecting the more and intellectual regeneration of the Hindoos. We were sorry to learn that indisposition prevented his witnessing that success yesterday; but whatever may be stated; he must feel the satisfaction that every benevolent mind enjoys for having been useful to mankind—and it must always be to him a pleasing respect that when millions yet unborn shall hail the return of knowledge to this

country, they will associate that circumstances with the name of Ram Mohan Roy (Sinha.1987. 36.).

Thus the Indo-Anglian literature was going to blossom from the days of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, David Hare, Sir Edward Hyde East and Macaulay. Many factors were responsible for the successive growth and development of such literature. The Renaissance in the 19th century was a very vital factor. As a result of the Renaissance, the intelligentsia gave up the backdated mediaeval thought and welcomed the new thought. This search for the new indirectly laid the foundation of the Indo-Anglian literature.

Educated in English schools and colleges, the young educated class did not return to their native villages. They preferred the urban joys. They lost contact with the masses. They went on expressing themselves in English particularly in the field of English journalism. The English educated class wrote a number of essays in English. It is the zeal of self-expression that leads to the new branch of Indo-Anglian literature.

The great English literature was so vast and varied that it ignited the fire of new learning among the young Indian intellectuals. The influence of Shakespeare and Milton was too impressive on a number of families in Bengal. The culturally enriched families— like the Dutt family of Calcutta and the Ghosh family, went on imitating the western writers. So the petals of Indo-Anglian literature were gradually blossoming particularly in the field of Indo-Anglian poetry. Soon it became a prosperous field with the contributions of Derozio, Kasi Prasad and a host of other aspirants.

The contribution of the British people settled in India was a very important factor for the progress of Indo-Anglian literature. Sir William Jones, Edwin Arnold, David Hare, D.L. Richardson, John Leyden, H.M. Parkar, Warren Hastings were drawn to

the mythological store-house of the Sanskrit literature. Jones brought the wealth of the Upanishads and the Mahabharata to the western world by means of his erudite essays. The Asiatic Society of Bengal revived the glorious Indian literature in terms of English. Like William Jones, Sir Thomas Munro contributed heavily to the field concerned. He translated into English *Abhigyan-Shakuntalam* and *Hitopadesha*. His rendering of the great Kalidasa-drama was warmly appreciated in Europe. Thus the Indologists paved the way for Indo-English literature in a different way. They not only translated the great dramas of Sanskrit literature but also translated the great verses of Sanskrit Literature. H.H. Willson translated the Sanskrit verse into plain English. His English rendering of *Bhavabhuti*, had Miltonic fervor and metaphysical illumination. Thus the Britishers like William Francis Thompson in "The Jogi's address to the Ganges", William Jones in "ode to Narayan", Warren Hastings in "ode on Burke", H. H. Parker in "The Adjutant Bird", David Richardson in "Lines to the memory of David Hare", John Dunbar in "The Adjutant bird and the crow" contributed heavily to the growth of Indo-English poetry in particular and the Indo-Anglian literature in general.

Thus the Indo-Anglian literature was born and grown. It was streamed into different channels like poetry, drama and fiction. Drama and poetry flourished in the pre-Independence period, fiction went on developing in the post-Independence period. Since the paper hinges on "Nissim Ezekiel's images", it intends to confine its discussion to Indo-Anglian Poetry only. But soon it comes to light that the Indian writers writing in English were not "Indian in blood and colour" only but "English in taste in opinions, ... and intellect" also (Macaulay. 1968. 2.).

Historically speaking William Bentinck introduced English on 7th March 1835 as per Macaulay's Minutes (1835). But the English educated Indian gave vent to their

creative expression by imitating the English poets particularly Milton, Wordsworth, Browning. The Indo-Anglian Poets composed plenty of sonnets, elegies, ballads, and odes during the Period of 1820-70. Henry Derozio published his volume of poems in 1823. Thereafter in 1830 Kashi Prasad Ghosh published *The Shair and the other poems*.

Kashi Prasad Ghosh and Henry Derozio were the trendsetters in Indo-Anglian literature. They could not get rid of the Western Poets but their writings were illuminated with flashes of originality. Kashi Prasad Ghosh had acknowledged the haunting influence of English literature in an autobiographical note:

I have composed songs in Bengali but the greatest portion of my writings in verse is in English. I have always found it easier to express my sentiments in that language than in Bengali but whether it is because I prefer the associations, sentiments and thoughts which are to be found in English poems to those that are met with in Bengali Poetry, I cannot decide. I can only say that I have bestowed more time and attention upon English Books than any others (Sinha 1987. 108-9).

The poets during the period exercise traditional images and show wonderful technical perfection in terms of the employment of imagery. Moon has been expressed in terms of traditional images like —“liquid silver”, “Gem of night”, “orb of gentle light” etc. Images are heavily employed in “The Moon in September”, “Song of the Boat men to Ganga” and “Kali-Puja”.

A highly gifted poet of the genre was Derozio who took up death, futility, melancholy, love and other romantic affairs as his pet subjects. He had wonderful power of linking and transferring human feeling to the elements of nature. Like Mon Mohan Ghosh, Derozio could not avoid the inevitable influence of the Romantic

writers of the West but injected Indian spirit into the fabric of his writings. While going to set up a tradition, the influence of the predecessor is quite natural and Derozio could not resist that influence. Derozio's poems are bold and explicit. In "The Harp of India" he expresses symbolically the low state of the Indians under the British yoke. The harp symbolises the low slavish conditions of the Indians:

Thy music once was sweet— who hears it now?
 Silence has bound thee with her fatal chain;
 Neglected, mute, and desolate art thou,
 Like ruined monument on desert plain.²

Modern Indian scholars are rather sceptical about the literary merits of the poetical production of two pioneers. Shirish Chindhade writes, "Kashi Prasad is not even as Indian as Derozio. Both, however, fill the gap in literary history. This is what Indo-Anglian Poetry was like in its initial stage much inferior to and imitative of English poetry and purely puerile in spirit" (Chindhade. 1996. 21.).

Though imitative to some extent, Ghosh was not at all lacking originality in terms of employing powerful and rich imagery as expressed in the following lines:

Orb of gentle light!
 For still resplendent moon! Whenever we see
 Thy placid face and fondly gaze on thee
 Its gentleness upon the wounded soul,
 Everts a healing power and calm control.³

In the pre-Independence period the Anglo-Indian literature flourished mainly in the form of poetry and partly in the form of prose writings and fictions. Rich Indian cultural heritage helped Indian writers to write fictional works in volumes. Ramesh Chandra Dutt wrote *History of civilisation in Ancient India, Economic History of*

India and, India in the Victorian age. Aurobinda wrote *The Life Divine, Essays on the Gita, The synthesis of Yoga* in chaste English. Though thin and bare in the pre-Independence period, the Indo-Anglian fiction bore fruit abundantly in the hands of Sudhin Ghosh, Raja Rao, Nayantara Singhal, Sashi Despande, R.K.Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Monohar Malgonkar, Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Arun Joshi, Ahmed Ali, Vikram Seth, Shoba De. The major preoccupation of these writers was reality as experienced in India. They use the Indian heritage, culture, and the Indian milieu and exploit the same for evoking a typical Indian response. Very often nature provides for these writers background for their writings. Naturally their images are associated with flowers, breeze, sea, rain, water, plants, heavenly bodies, rural scene, natural surroundings, lights and colours. Even the Indian fiction writers have used forms of India for their image formation. In this connection Nancy William Rose has nicely observed, "When one closes the pages of the *Serpent and the Rope*, the image that comes to mind is that of a mighty river like the Ganges, along whose shores and in whose waters life and death meet and commingle in one eternal rhythmic continuity" (Rose. 1963. 1).

Thus the images in Indo-Anglian fiction are ever expanding. The Indo-Anglian poets did not lag far behind in this regard. English language got its moorings in the soil of Indian subcontinent. So the postcolonial Indo-Anglian poets like P.Lal, Kamla Das, R.Parthasarathy, A.K.Ramanujan, Nissim Ezekiel, Keki Daruwalla, Joyanta Mahapatra infused Indian sensibility in their writings and went on developing a new genre in the field of Indo-Anglian poetry. Though they have individual differences, they have some common features, which are reflected in the "Kavita Manifesto" published by P.Lal. They are as follows:

1. We affirm our faith in a vital language as sufficient to write in. A vital language may be in modern idiom or ancient but it must not be a total travesty of the current pattern of speech.
2. We think that poetry must deal in concrete terms with concrete experience. That experience may be intellectual or emotional ... but it must be precise and lucid and tangibly expressed.
3. Poetry must be free from propaganda.
4. We claim that the phase of Indo-Anglian romanticism ended with Sarojini Naidu.
5. We condemn all forms of imitation (Lal. 1958. 31).

One of the leading poets in the post-Independence period is Dom Moraes. As a prolific poet Dom Moraes has employed a number of techniques in his poetry and his influence on the postcolonial Poets like Nissim Ezekiel, is really deep and impressive. His poems are abstract by nature. There are plenty of common symbols in his poems like *The Island*, *The Visitor*, *The General*, and *A Man Dreaming*. He started the tradition of employing concrete images in Indo-Anglian poems.

P.Lal is the most illustrious writer of the period and is regarded as the voice of the postcolonial Indo-Anglian poetry. His poems are full of the descriptions of birds, bees, roses, flora and fauna. P.Lal admits that all art must come out of the natural milieu and they must flicker with a spirit of place. The poet admits, "It is essential that we write about life and values around us—what we see and what we feel, what gods and goddesses excite our conscious and subconscious. Toru Dutt...Sorojini Naidu and Sri Aurobindo—whatever their weakness—have their great strength in common, though in varying degrees. They have Indian responses to life and things. What these responses consist of, I may not be able exactly to pin down but they are palpable

enough to be immediately recognizable. What a sense of myth is, is hard to define—but without it creative writing becomes thin and merely slick” (Iyengar. 1962. XXXVII.).

A.K.Ramanujan is a diasporic poet and his poems are true syntheses of the East and the West. His “Hindu mind” is only *spritius mundi* from where most of the images are born. His poetry manifests the quest of the modernist. In Ramanujan familial relations knit the fabric of the entire gamut of his poetic world. His images are amphibian by nature—though the Indian folklore and the Hindu tradition are always predominating.

Another illustrious writer of the period is Kamala Das. She is a nostalgic poetess. She is pathetic enough to register the unfathomable gulf between the rich and the poor. Her deep social concern is reflected in “the House Builders” and “the Fatalists on Stone Benches”. Her poetry grows as a sort of evolutionary process. Her emotional outburst and sexual adventures ultimately result in despair. The poetess is deeply aware of her role as a female writer and her mission of defining herself as a woman artist.

Gieve Patel says that the Indo-Anglian poets have ignored rural images. It is admittedly true. They are mainly concerned with urban themes and images. The fiction in Indo-Anglian literature is close to Indian reality. Surprisingly enough, most of the Indo-Anglian poets depend on the urban life. They sometime, stray into the world of nature but forget nature next time. This phase was almost like “a wagon hitched to the engine of English poetry” (Gokak 1970. 22.).

An outstanding poet of this period is Nissim Ezekiel who does not follow the English poet blindly. According to Mehrotra, Nissim Ezekiel is “the first modern poet” (Mehrotra 1992. 9.).

John B. Boston made an elaborate study on the works of Nissim Ezekiel. He made an analysis of Ezekiel's Poems. Bombay is the epicentre of his poems and India is the every *spiritus mundi* from where he gets the sustenance of his writings. Boston has mentioned the poet's own confession which clearly indicates Ezekiel's position in the Indo-Anglian tradition of Poetry:

I believe there is a distinct tradition of Indo-Anglian Poetry and that I've tried to relate myself to it critically, accepting what is useful and relevant in it, rejecting the rest. When I began during the Second World War, as a student, I was influenced by only one Indo-Anglian Poet and that was Armado Menezes. I outgrew that by 1947 when I did my M.A. In the years that followed, I was influenced only by English and American Poets and by some European Poets in English translation such as Rilke, Valery and Lorca.

In the 50s, Dom Moraes came along, and Ramanujan. I liked their work and I suppose I responded to it rather than was influenced. By the sixties and seventies there was much new and serious Indo-Anglian Poetry and I always kept myself related to it but also knew that I had to go my own way. The critics suggest how I fit in and relate. In my reviews of the new Indo-Anglian Poets and occasional articles, I was more concerned with describing and evaluating them than in showing where I belong in that company (Chindhade. 196. 156)

P.K.J. Kurup has done an exhaustive thematic analysis of Ezekiel's Poem in his research Paper entitled "Contemporary Indian Poetry in English". The poems contained in "A Time to Change" record the growth of the poet's sensibility in relation to the postcolonial India. Hope, despair, unrequited love reign supreme in these poems:

But who can say:

There shall be no more surprises,

Discovery of cities fresh as brides

Bright legends of a recent birth

New orchids or unimagined seas? (CP: 4)

Accordingly “Sixty Poems” deals with stark reality. The journey of the poetic self gets widened at this stage. The poet is with two polar dimensions in these poems. His quest for hard reality and metaphysical existence jostle each other leaving a peculiar tang in his poems. Bone and blood, body and soul run together. Man-woman relationship gets tinged with satire. Life stands enigmatic to the poet. So like a true voyager he goes on exploring further. Not only the “Sixty Poems” but also “The Third” is a record of such stormy voyage.

His poems present superstitious India and changing pattern of Postcolonial life in a graphic way. The Poet’s philosophy is not too deep for tears. Small, fragmented incidents are as important to him as the everlasting ones. Ezekiel’s voyage meets the harbour when he tests the religious reality in a mock-serious manner:

To tempt God and seek to

prove him is sheer folly.

If that’s what our fathers

Did, I’m sorry for them,

I suspect they merely voiced

A doubt or two, which our

Psalmist—exaggerates as usual (CP: 258).

Another scholar writes that Ezekiel meanders through the course of life to pick up divergent elements in his register. A close survey of his poems from “A Time to

Change” to “Latter Day Psalms” shows that really speaking the poet “starts his journey from home in quest of meaning of life and poetry, takes different routes towards different selves, core of visible and tangible things and bewildered by them and bemused by the love for home returns back to the original abode where he started, as it were, he never started at all”(Mohanty 1982. 29.).

Ezekiel strives hard to present his self-image as a Jew in an alarming non-Jewish environment. Ezekiel has written a number of Indian Poems – perhaps to the general features of Swadeshi Angrezi. In spite of faulty use of indefinite article, using present continuous tense in place of simple present, he intends to set up Indian English rightly suitable for the common Indian people. English suited for Great Britain need not necessarily be suitable for the sub-continent. Some scholars say that “Very Indian Poems” composed by Nissim Ezekiel is meant for caricatures. But it is not actually so. Ezekiel intends to show flexibility of the language in India. The English language needs to be modified as per the milieu of India:

Pushpa miss never saying no

whatever I or anybody is asking

she is always saying yes.

And today she is going

To improve her prospectus

And we are wishing her bon voyage (CP: 191)

Paradoxes and inversions are the common modus operandi of Nissim Ezekiel. Traditional religions and faiths are put to question again and again. Even God has been humanised by him as expressed by Gieve Patel in his critical observation on the poet. His treatment to God as well as to man is ever changing. Vasant A-Shahane and

Chetan Karnani highlight these aspects of Nissim Ezekiel's verse-galore. The probe into the goldmine of Ezekiel is on and it is still going on.

From 1990 onwards a few scholars focused on the image-analysis of Ezekiel's Poem. K.D. Verma, of course made a partial survey of imagery in a critical reading entitled "Myth and Imagery in the Unfinished Man" which was published in Journal of South Asian Literature, spring-summer in 1976. The scholar has appreciated the value of image:

Whatever the enigma,
The passion of the blood
Grant me the metaphor
To make it human good. (CP: 122)

So according to the scholar, "The crucial part of the prayer appears in the last stanza of the poem where Ezekiel boldly defines the moral function of art: he asks for the gift of metaphor which will transmute the 'passion of the blood', man's untamed energy into human good" (Verma. 1976. 235.).

This piece-meal analysis does not correlate all the images which are woven in his poems. Besides Ezekiel has a number of poems other than *The Unfinished Man*. Though K.D. Verma hints at the images employed by Ezekiel a vast domain of images still remain unexplored in the poetry of Ezekiel

Nissim Ezekiel is, however, quite reticent about the images in his poetry. He has written a number of essays on poetry and its allied issues but he has not discussed elaborately anything on images. He has, however, admitted that there are a number of images in the domain of his poetry. In an introductory note to "Sixty Poems" the poet has confessed that there is in each line or phrase an idea or image which helps him to

maintain some sort of continuity in his life. And the creativity of Ezekiel is manifested in his poetic praxis.

The poems of Ezekiel are partly based on “flesh” and partly on “fancy”. They are also directly linked with the life of the poet. According to a critic, “The quest for a possible metaphysical truth and the harsh empirical reality jostle with each other in his poetry and gives his poetry its peculiar tang” (Sivaramakrishana. 1976. 11). So a probe into the two polarities of his poetic life is necessary. A study of images is of great help in this regard.

The poet cannot solve the tangle. He is, to some extent, puzzled in this regard:

I am tired,
 of irony and paradox
 of the bird in the hand
 And the two in the bush
 Of poetry direct and oblique
 Of statement plain or symbolic
 Of doctrine and dogma. (CP: 157)

In the opinion of Zoha Alam, Ezekiel records every tremor of experience like a seismograph. Since he makes an in-depth study of the image in Indian English language, he hardly gives an elaborate discussion on Nissim Ezekiel’s employment of images. He dwells on the attractive and concrete images of Ezekiel in truculent and unequivocal statements.

This work studies only familiar symbols like darkness and light as shown in the following couplet:

The darkness has its secrets
 which light does not know. (CP: 223)

The author has primarily concentrated on three sets of images relating to “woman, city and nature” (Alam. 1994. 131.). Hence it is an incomplete survey of the wide spectrum of his images. A more elaborate analysis may open up a new horizon in the critical literature about Ezekiel. So the study of images is of absolute necessity. This dissertation is an attempt to focus on the universe of Ezekiel through the atom of imagery.

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Chapter—II

BACKGROUND REVIEW

The song of my experience sung,

I knew that all was yet to sing. (CP:180)

Nissim Ezekiel is synonymous with modern Indian English poetry. His first publication "A Time to Change" published by Fortune Press, London in 1952, left no sensational impression on the intelligentsia. His second publication "Sixty Poems" published in December, 1953 contained a number of fine verses and naturally the attention of Linda Hess, Birje-Patil, M.K. Naik was drawn to the literary merits of his verse galore. Strand Bookshop, Bombay in 1957, published "The Third" and the fourth one "The Unfinished Man" was a step further towards maturity. The next volume "The Exact Name" (writers' workshop, Calcutta) was published in 1965. "Hymns In Darkness" and "Latter-Day-Psalms" (OUP, Delhi) were published in 1976 and 1982 respectively. They project the astonishing creativity of Ezekiel. So Vilas Sarang, Bruce King, Surya Nath Panday, P.K.J. Kurup, Shahane and others are eloquent about the literary merits of Ezekiel. Obviously his poetry is not an obscurity syndrome. His poetry is indeed divested of formal beauty. In the opinion of Bruce King, "Ezekiel created a body of work of international standard" (King 1991.61). Vilas Sarong eulogized Ezekiel whose poetry seemed to be "essentially the poetry of statement". (Sarong.1973.19).

Not only these critics but also there are a number of scholars who tried to unveil the inner horizon of Nissim Ezekiel's poems in a number of ways. Hence the critical works on Nissim Ezekiel are present here chronologically with a view to correlating the tradition of different research works. Linda Hess appears to be the first exhaustive

scholar who has highlighted the aspects of Ezekiel's poetic horizon in *Quest* in 1966. Linda asserts that Ezekiel hinges on his metaphoric journey into the root of self. He is astoundingly aware of the psychological and theological paradoxes of life. Ezekiel observes the activities of the life in and around him in an ironical way. Hess makes a record of the poetic growth of the poet in terms of poetry. In Ezekiel poetry and life are inter-woven in a golden wire. Linda Hess has observed Ezekiel, "As endless explorer of the labyrinths of the mind, the devious delvings and twistings of the ego and the ceaseless attempt of man and poet to define himself to find through all the myth and maze a way to honesty and love". (Hess. 1968. 65).

An aspect of Linda Hess's work is akin to this proposed thesis. The poet is in search of an ideal image that is hardly found. He draws no conclusion about the image of woman. The ironical woman image is presented in the following lines:

Thus ended what was ill begun,

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)

OR

That women, trees, tables, waves and birds

Buildings, stones, steamrollers,

Cats and clocks

Are here to be enjoyed. (CP: 96)

Along with a partial image analysis Linda Hess tried to expose the thematic dilemma of Ezekiel's verse. Being extremely conscious of the Indian milieu, the poet sketches his poetic fabric. His life and poetry sometimes do not run parallel and his

observations stand static. According to Linda Hess, “The extreme difficulty of maintaining such a state of open awareness may cause it to degenerate to more insidious habits – the formation of pattern and categories which stand between the poet and his experience of life, making his response to some extent mechanical” (Hess. 1966. 33).

Linda Hess’s critical review was published in 1966. Ezekiel published, “Hymns in Darkness” and “Latter-Day-Psalms” in 1976 and 1982. So it was not possible for Hess to encompass some of his finest poems. Hess lays emphasis on the urban complexities in Indian life. She has no exploration in the inner horizon of Ezekiel. Such probe is necessary when one dwells on the study of symbols and images in Ezekiel.

During the same period Rajeev Taranath, Meena Belliappa, and Chetan Karnani did splendid work on the works of Nissim Ezekiel. Rajeev Taranath and Meena Belliappa made a thematic analysis of the poems of Nissim Ezekiel and pointed out divergent strands in them. According to their view, the poet maintains an elaborate register to pick up the Bombay-life in particular and the post-Independence Indian life in general:

Always in the sun’s eye
 Here among the beggars,
 Hawkers, pavement sleepers,
 Hutment dwellers, slums,
 Dead souls of men and gods,
 Burnt out mothers, frightened
 Virgins, wasted child
 And tortured animal,
 All in noisy silence. (CP: 131)

Under such circumstances Rajeev Taranath and Meena Belliappa had the following observation:

A substantial part of the verse had a life residing outside the process that the poem was. The movement towards the urban is also a movement towards anonymity in this context. The modern metropolis could be seen as a process of the loss of the typical/exotic (Taranath & Belliappa: 1966. 11-12).

The scholars and critics in the sixties pointed out only collocation clashes in the poetry of Ezekiel. Too much emphasis has been given on the external affairs of the poems. These scholars have unconsciously or consciously avoided the internal explanation of the poems of Ezekiel. They surprisingly enough remain reticent about the employment of images by the poet.

The period (1970-1980) was a fruitful one in the multifarious studies about Nissim Ezekiel. Many scholars with their published works tried to strip off the layers of Ezekiel's verse. A probe into the inner horizon was also marked in the period.

Vasant A. Shahane tries to find out the horizon of Nissim Ezekiel. With an open mind he comes to terms with life. Poem after poem the poet lays emphasis on the physical union of lovers. Sex and sensuality are the part of life and Ezekiel faces them without any moral hesitation or something else. Shahane finds out the traits of Donne in the poetry of Ezekiel and examines man-woman relationship from different angles. "A Time to Change" registers such an account of consummation or unrequitement of love. In a clear-cut language he asserts his view:

Ezekiel's earlier verse is marked by an awareness of physical passion, sexual impulse, intermingling of the corporeal and the spiritual and a sensitive reaction to objects of sensory pleasure or pain. The promptings of the spirit are audible through the limbs of the flesh and the consequential significance of

intellectuality and abstraction are obtained and realized only through the emotively stimulating effect of the human body (Shahane. 1989. 22.).

Shahane is absolutely right as the poems of Ezekiel mostly make post-mortem survey of the female body:

I will begin-but how should I begin?

With hair, your hair,

Remembered hair,

Touched, smelt, lying silent there

Upon your head, beneath your arms,

And then between your thighs a wonder.

Of hair, secret

In light and in darkness

Bare, suffering with joy

Kisses light as air.

(CP: 48)

Shahane lays much emphasis on the domestic game of a man but he forgets to discover the marvel of metaphoric allusion and the beauty of imagery contained in the lines cited above. Further Shahane remains silent on the literary merit of "kisses light as air" and such other metaphoric references. Ezekiel was altogether not a poet of flesh but his later poetry seems to be centring on the religious and philosophical strain. Though Ezekiel was born in the Bene-Israel Jew family, the engulfing Hindu environment influenced him deeply and he could not avoid but surrender to the Hindu thought while going to decorate his poems. According to Shahane the environmental influence coloured the poet's psyche and so stands the "Prayer Poems". Even Ezekiel could not but confess them, "I am conscious of my very special situation in 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 life” (Chindhade. 1996. 57). The classical Hindu view of life is recognizable in *Latter-Day Psalms* and sometimes he exposes it in an ironical way:

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 meditation.

Need to find our roots, Sir.

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

The study of Shahane on Ezekiel is exhaustive. But he is satisfied to judge Ezekiel on the basis of surface-study only. Ezekiel is such a poet as likes to present the poem in the form of juxtaposition, hyperbole, and paradox. Shahane has not discussed such intricate affairs and as a result, any researcher has enough scope to dwell on the unexplored horizon of Ezekiel’s poetry.

Shahane rightly asserts that he is a reflective poet. He noted down “religious philosophical strain” in the following poems:

“Choices”, “Transparently”, “Process”, “In The Theatre”, “The Egoist’s Prayers”, “Hymns in Darkness”, “Latter-Day Psalms”, “Blessings”. V.A. Shahane has tried to correlate the life of the poet with that of his works. Hence his work is of no mean importance in the field of scholastic investigation. He nicely records the fluctuations in Ezekiel’s poetry:

The poet has achieved a new faith in a process that can perform such miracles. In April 1967 Nissim Ezekiel had his first LSD trip, which he would like to describe as

the voyage of discovery. This happened during his second visit to the United States. He explained to me an aspect of this experience in a letter 'I came out of that with my philosophy turned inside out in eight hours and become a believer in God, religion, the metaphysical nature of the universe and life E.S.P. etc.' This entirely new change in Ezekiel's mode of thought and values is a basic shift from his earlier rationalist atheist phase reflected in his early poetry (Shahane. 1976. 25.). Bruce King in his book *Three Indian Poets* has expressed the similar view.

During this period K.D. Verma did a laudable work. He is the first scholar who made an in-depth study on Ezekiel eliciting the poetic self after stripping off his shell systematically. His is the work that does not reflect merely upon the external aspect of the poems of Ezekiel. K.D. Verma in his well-written essay "Myth and imagery in the Unfinished Man: A Critical Reading" notes the dominating voice of Ezekiel's verse galore. Poetry is no longer the subjective description of any matter. It goes beyond physical plane and becomes a journey of the poetic self through the slings and arrows of life. Deeply rooted in the tradition of Eliot and Auden, Ezekiel gives vent to his poetry by means of image formation and ironic myth-oriented touches mostly hauled from the post-Independence milieu of India.

Sometimes the poet in the first person narrative presents the images of man, woman and urban India. He keeps Bombay as his epicentre. Sometimes the poet testifies the old traditional values in the light of modern ideas and concepts. His sceptical temperament is enriched with binary images. In order to realize the nature of the myth, the structure of imagery and Ezekiel's vision in "The Unfinished Man" the following few lines are significant:

We find that although the modern myth like the Romantic myth is man-centred, the image of the man as here is neither a Titan nor a Don Quixote, we

can attribute this picture to the modern psyche crushed and disintegrated by the pressures of the city which the hero is expected to build despite his inevitable pathetic destiny. That he, like Ezekiel's "Unfinished Man", is a weakling and perishable creature, who is easily defrauded by the tyranny of the city or by his own capacity, is in tune with the facts of modern existence. Ideally men strive to build a community of beings but the city actually turns out to be a fallen city with all the symptoms of a mass-culture that devours its own creator. The central power that lends order to life and the city is love but the city is lifeless, indifferent and inhuman. As a kind and affectionate mother, nature is in harmony with man and helps to recreate his vision but nature either does not nourish the city or is preeminently hostile to it. In a sense, the modern myth is antiheroic and this quality of the myth is in keeping with the myths of irony and the character of irony and the character of the modern man (Verma. 1976. 23).

Verma noticed and pointed out a number of symbols and images used in *The Unfinished Man* and tried to show their relevance in the text. According to the scholar, the images of hills, river, sun, rain, beach, tree and stone are the life symbols of man's ideal dream of the city. Ezekiel does not bid farewell to traditional symbols like dawn and night symbolizing light and darkness. The stone is traditionally regarded as the symbol of "A dead object" or "A meaningless ideal" but in *The Unfinished Man* it is a living embodiment of a communal temple and it is linked with the hills. The tree and the river assumed greater dimensions. The river stands for

- (i) Flowing and creative life
- (ii) Communal consciousness

And the tree stands for

(i) Communal sanctity

(ii) Harmony

(iii) Growth.

In most cases the poet creates such images as are ironic and ambiguous. These images collectively suggest a spousal relationship with nature and with what man loves and creates, his city, his cosmos. No image is really isolated. Each image is related to other images. But unfortunately Verma throws no light on the function of images, structural pattern of the images leaving a scope for others to dwell on the same. However his contribution to the study of images cannot be gainsaid as the following few lines testify:

The image of the world of illusion to which Ezekiel repeatedly and fondly returns in his poetry is rather ambivalent: in one sense, the sympathetic portrayal of the persona and especially the pilgrimage and its object, suggest Ezekiel's close affinity with the fallen polios, but in another sense the sardonic irony and satire reveal his strong criticism of the inhuman and mechanical environments which continue to cripple our existence. Thus after the illusory and fretful journey the pilgrims find that "Home is where we have to gather grace" (C.P. 118.) "Home" is used here only metaphorically as another image of the city and although it is supposed to be a place for the mind to achieve a delicate balance and harmony, the image as such still refers to the another plane of illusion in the stages of a mental journey. The painful discovery that the purpose and goal of the pilgrimage remain unknown is as ironic as the inference that Home is where we have to gather grace (Verma. 1976. 232.).

The period (1980-1990) earned massive progress in the field of the critical study about Nissim Ezekiel. Subtler approach was carried on to unmask the mature poems

of Ezekiel during this phase and Anisur Rahaman among others, has done this job quite well. He intends to examine the nature of images and symbols in the poetry of Nissim Ezekiel and wants to assess the nascent poetic sensibility in those poems. Rahaman shows that an image is formed slowly after a lot of initial stage operations. We experience it in the poem "An Affair" where, an image is developed to its rounded completion:

And then she said: I love you, just like this
 As I had seen the yellow blondes declare
 Upon the screen and even stroked my hair,
 But hated me now because I did not kiss. (CP: 11)

Anisur Rahaman states nicely, "She characterizes the world she represents in all its fulness and the images do the work admirably well. There is a close link between the images of the world spread outside and the inwardness with which the poet apprehends their reality. The other allied images- "Yellow blondes" and "Screen" - define the lady in precise terms. The stroking of hair suggests the lack of warmth and love. Ezekiel achieves singular success in creating sharply defined images as also in juxtaposing the two sets of imagery for his poetic purposes" (Rahaman. 1981. 43.).

Such subtle and collective images lie locked in the poems of A. K. Ramanujan also:

I see him turn,
 The green white of his belly
 Measured by bluish nodes, water-bleached lotus stalk
 Plucked by a landsman hand.¹

In the image pageantry of Ezekiel the image of woman as seductress appears frequently. He dwells heavily upon breasts and thighs, flesh and hair, belly and hair,

bone and marrow, lung, liver, eyes, lipstick. These scattering images are directly linked to a central image of "Woman". These associate images are parts of the central image. In the poem "To A Certain Lady" the image "Leech" stands for hunger of sex and "tasteless encounters in the dark" stands for the futile exercise in sex. He switches over to abstract form from concrete images from time to time as the line stands in support:

"... a hurricane
of Helen's kisses" (CP: 69)

Voluptuousness knows no limit in the amorous images of Ezekiel:

She lies, the female image
on the lonely pillow, in the single room,
Incessantly reborn, rolling the senses
Down through several circles to the solid ice;
And empty places of fancy rise for her,
This harlot of a dream.
Shall her belly know the lust of man? (CP: 68)

The Ezekielian imagery finds a vibrating echo in the erotic imagery of Kamala Das:

You were pleased
With my body's response, it's weather, its usual shallow
Convulsions.²

The quest is for exploring the labyrinth of human passion. After the publication of "The Exact Name" the poet's expression in sex imagery becomes more direct. Earlier passion was expressed in terms of "Smell of myrrh", "cinnamon", "frankincense", "breasts like roes", and "Such eyes". The images get subtler and subtler thereafter- "A Hurricane of Helen's kisses", "Harlot of dream", "solid ice", "erotic lines".

In the passion poems the images employed by Ezekiel are concrete and graphic.

Here is a passion-poem entitled *Quarrel*:

All night I talked to you,

A troubled dream

of many words

And not a single kiss.

Let us not quarrel again

So I may never dream

In arguments alone.

(CP:214)

Here visual and conceptual images are combined to give a peculiar tang to the poetry of Ezekiel. The images are sublime. The poet personally feels, "My technique was to write each poem at some length and then to cut it drastically till only an image remains" (Ezekiel: 1975. 51.)

Then Rahaman goes on dwelling upon the city-images scattering in the poems of "The Unfinished Man". His city images are bleak and dull. They invite negative responses from the readers' end.

The city images are mostly associated with slums, hawkers, beggars, processions, drums and purgatorial lanes. The city stands like a hell with its deceased garbage. The city images epitomize the post-Independence India on a larger canvas—a sardonic view indeed!

Barbaric city sick with slums

Deprived of seasons, blessed with rain,

Its hawkers, beggars, iron-lunged

Procession led by frantic drums,

A million purgatorial lanes.

(CP:119)

OR

The long evenings
 in the large apartment
 with cold beer and western music
 lucid talk of art and literature
 and of all the change India needs. (CP:133)

The images come in quick succession to form a complete image of India. They not only project a city but also project the pattern of life. Anisur dwells upon the images relating to woman and city. Surprisingly enough he has ignored the images of the poetic self, bio-images, dream-images which form a bigger part of his poetic corpus. Therefore Rahaman's scrutiny on the imagery of Ezekiel seems to be an incomplete survey leaving a scope for the researcher to discuss the untouched affairs.

Another Ezekiel scholar Emmanuel Narendra Lall has done a commendable but controversial work in the paper *Nissim Ezekiel: Images of Women*. His criticism or presentation of woman images is not so vitriolic. He intends to present woman with their natural feminine virtues and vices. The opening lines of *To a certain lady* do not necessarily project a woman in her bestial form but present her as a coy girl. Lall writes that the poem opens with "A description of the wife's virginal coyness as well as the persona's definition of life within this new relationship" (Lal: 1983. 69.).

K.D. Verma mostly presented woman with her negative role but Narendra Lall presented woman both with her positive and negative roles. Man-woman relationship in the modern world is highly complex. The image of woman as mother, wife, mistress, seductress, whore, and sex-idol has been portrayed in "Sixty Poems", "Exact Name" and "Hymns in Darkness". The poems "Ganga", "A Woman Admired",

“Night of the Scorpion”, “Minority Poem” and “Cows” stand for woman for their role as creator, protector, integrator.

In the poem “Marriage” Ezekiel gives an account of the joy and sorrow of married life:

Why Should I ruin the mystery
 By harping on the suffering rest,
 Myself a frequent wedding guest? (CP: 124)

The Protagonist stands like a wedding guest and anticipates sadly the ironic picture of a protagonist. The protagonist has no affinity with the wedding guest in “The Ancient Mariner”. Narendra Lall surprisingly enough tries to correlate the above lines with:

He went like one that had been stunned
 And is of sense forlorn,
 A sadder and a wiser man,
 He rose the morrow morn.³

Such type of association, really far-fetched one, mars the value of critique!

The quantum of critical works on Ezekiel in the current decade (1990-2000) has been increasing to a great extent.

The *Dynamics of Imagery* written by Zoha Alam is a splendid work in the horizon of imagery with reference to the Indo-Anglian poetry. According to Alam, talking metaphorically or obliquely is generally held to be natural with The Indians. The Indo-Anglian writers are primarily concerned with reality as experienced in India. Alam is very particular about categorization and classification of images. Accordingly the imagery used in the Indo-Anglian Poetry has been categorized into three groups:

- (i) The Phase of Decadent Romantic Image (1827-1885)

- (ii) The Phase of Mystic Image (1885-1947)
- (iii) The Phase of Temporal Image (1947 onwards).

The type of classification in imagery has little relevance in the poetry of Nissim Ezekiel. Ezekiel was at liberty to use the mystic image as well as the temporal image. So any chronological image division seems to be superfluous in the poetic gamut of Ezekiel.

His image-analysis is not exhaustive. He writes, "Ezekiel's images are attractive and concrete" (Alam. 1994. 129.).

In case of Ramanujan, the images are concrete but vivid. In Mahapatra and Parthasarathy, the images are mostly graphic and vivid. Kamala Das dwells too much on sensuous and autobiographical images. However Ezekiel deals with urban imagery in an attractive way.

Alam tries to trace out the source or root of the Ezekielian images. So he cites examples from the text of Ezekiel:

The images are beautiful birds

And colourful fish; they fly;

They swim in my Jewish consciousness. (CP: 261)

Alam's scanty discussion cannot encompass the vast canvas of the Ezekielian images. He does not discuss the innovative skill of Ezekiel in the field of images. He is also reticent about the literary implications of images. Therefore Alam's study on Ezekiel's poetic images is far from being adequate.

Mafizar Rahaman has carried on a penetrative probe. Modern critics say that poetry is an imaginative reconstruction of reality and images are of vital significance in this connection. Rahaman intends to show that images convey meanings in a number of ways. Sometimes they convey literal sense which is completely set aside;

some are used to shift literal meaning. The sense or meaning expressed through images may be perceptible or may not be perceptible. An example may be cited from his poem *In India*:

The Roman catholic Goan boys
 confessed their solitary joys
 confessed their games with high-heeled toys
 and hastened to the players. (CP: 132)

The toy image loses its importance and suggests a different meaning, the modern girls on high-heels. Similarly the “island” in the following lines becomes useless if taken literally:

Unsuitable for song as well as sense
 The island flowers into slums
 And skyscrapers. (CP: 182)

“It suggests the isolated growth of Bombay-culture which is for its unique character, different from the traditional culture for the country” (Rahaman. 1997. 63.).

In the Post-Independence Indo-Anglian poetry the bleak picture of metropolitan cities is pictured by post-Ezekielian Indo- Anglian poet:

The city that bred culture once
 Now breeds poisonous smoke.
 Better to be exiled
 Than be in Calcutta.⁴

Mafizar seems to be contended with the explanation cited above. Besides the meaning cited above, the images suggest more meanings also. Here the word “flowers” is an image-making verb with a great connotative power. The image suggests the poet’s delicate and lovable attitude. Slums and skyscrapers stand for the spiritual bankruptcy

of the modern men. Mortal millions in the great cities live alone. So, Bombay stands like an island. The poet is drifted into the island concurring with the poetic confession. He says, " I feel I am a Bombay city poet, cannot imagine living long anywhere else... I am oppressed and sustained by Bombay" (Chindhade. 1996. 157.).

Ezekiel is a perfect artist to shift meaning by means of employing images. In the poem "Marriage" Ezekiel writes, "Then suddenly the mark of Cain / Began to show on her and me" which has been nicely touched by Rahaman. According to Rahaman Cain's fratricidal nature is brought here to show the quality of their mutual relationship. Besides this craft Ezekiel enriches images by means of association. For example:

I ask the prophet in me

To say where I must go next. (CP: 294)

Here the images do not stand for the great prophets like Christ, Moses or any other. It is meant to show the authority of the poet's conscience. Here images are transferred images with respect to their meaning. This is the way in which Mafizar Rahaman has made a critical survey on the images of Nissim Ezekiel.

Scholars as mentioned earlier, have done wonderful works in unfolding the mystery of images employed by Ezekiel. But none of the scholars appears to have done a complete survey. Mafizar Rahaman lays emphasis on the comparative study of images among Ezekiel, Kamala Das and Jayanta Mahapatra. K.D. Verma dwells upon "The Unfinished Man" and ignores the other poems. Likewise Anisur Rahaman studies on the thematic value of images.

These Ezekiel experts do not venture into the literary function of images. They do not even try to correlate one image with another. They remain surprisingly silent about the organic, tactual, tactic, synaesthetic images. Ezekiel goes on coining new

images. How far they are appropriate to the context, are not highlighted by any scholar. Life and poetry are intricately interrelated and modern poems are mostly psycho-poems. In order to unveil the maze and myth of the poetic horizon, an in-depth analysis of the poetic psyche, which shapes the images, is absolutely necessary. Hence the images of Ezekiel need a thorough study. It is true that the thematic spectrum in Ezekiel solely hinges on the structural pattern and functional values of Ezekielian imagery.

Like Yeats Ezekiel is fond of wearing mask. He wears the mask of Donne, Eliot, Auden and Rilke as a means of camouflage to invite readers' participation in the poem. It is a sort of poetic strategy rather than a purely empirical reality.

Without a proper analysis of the myriad images, Ezekiel cannot be understood. His kaleidoscopic scale is complex and scattering. Under the influence of the Imagist School like Ezra Pound and Eliot, Ezekiel composes an image-oriented poem "Two Images":

From the long dark tunnel
 Of that afternoon, crouching, humped
 Waiting for the promised land,
 I peeped out like a startled animal
 And saw a friend flapping his angelic wings
 ...
 Dragged out with the greatest ease
 By any fluttering fly
 At the end of a hook. (CP: 143)

On a superficial study critics say that the first image invokes the image of a prisoner struggling for release and the second one stands for the image of a free

person yielding to bondage. "Long dark tunnel", "crouching", "humped", "startled", and "fish-soul" are all image-makers. The images also show the materialistic pain of a mortal and his pining for freedom. They record the varied connotations of the images. The scholars often fail to find out the underlying structural unity in the *Two Images*.

Ezekiel has his own view in this regard. "Their clarity does not, in my view, diminish their meaning, because it is a crystallization, not a thinning out. My technique was to write each poem first at some length and then to cut it drastically till only an image remains". (Das. 1994. 65.)

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Chapter—III

Nissim Ezekiel – A Biographical Overview.

I've stretched my two dimensional
Nudity on sheets of weeklies, Monthlies,
Quarterlies, a sad sacrifice¹.

It was Coleridge who said that poetry is great but life is greater. The relationship between art and life is defined in terms of umbilical cord. The relationship between art and life is universally accepted though critics inform that an artistic creation is not often the by-product of existential chronicle. The chequered life history of Alzheimer's disease-ridden poet Nissim Ezekiel shows that his life history is an amalgamation of anecdotes, experiences, education, perception and his Jewish entity. It is deeply entwined into the network of his artistic production. Whatever may be the mask of the poet, the poet is never unaware of his biological self, barring a few visionary poems. The development of the poet is always against the background of the fluctuating Indian scenario. The Jewish entity, the politics of M.N. Roy, bohemian life spirit, Daisy-Linda oscillation, experiments with LSD and sex knit the gamut of his existence as well as his poetic life. Sometimes like a detached observer, he looks at the amusing ongoing of his life in "Jewish wedding ceremony" and at times he takes a dip into the life of his own and narrates the story of his life in a subjective vein in "Background, Casually".

Be it a first person mask or a third person mask, the personality of the poet mostly peeps in like the shining sun through the patches of the cloud. The private sensibility is so powerful in his poems that the poet himself has to say that his poems mostly are composed for his personal therapeutic purposes. His poetry seems to be an artist's

dive deep into psychosomatic panorama of existence. The Fullbright scholar Linda Hess sketches Ezekiel as “an endless explorer of the labyrinths of the mind, the devious delving and twisting of the ego and the ceaseless attempt of man and poet to define himself to find through all ‘the myth and maze’ a way to honesty and love” (Hess. 1966. 30-31.).

Throughout his life Nissim always tries to knit a bond of balance between art and life, however, ineffectual is his venture. Another scholar Michael Garman is more explicit in this regard and he remarks, “His poetry and his life are inextricable and whole purpose in writing is to make a harmony of life poetry out of purely biological fact (existence)” (German. 1976. 209.).

Nissim has no sense of Diaspora as it haunts Ramanujan. He is deeply rooted in the soil of India. The images employed by Ezekiel are springing out from the *spiritus mundi* of the poet. But the inner recess of his poetic self is not a void affair. But it is shaped and shared by environment, biological facts, experience, education, observation, and other factors. The recurrent images of Bombay, are directly drawn from his experiences in life. An experience remains dormant in the heart of a poet. It has a lot of metamorphosis. It is soaked into poetic imagination and ultimately comes up as a poetic image. The images are very important since they show the growth and development of his poetic self. And Ezekiel’s poetic self is basically contradictory and complex. According to R. Raj Rao, Ezekiel being a Jew grows up in a non-Jew atmosphere. He has complex marriage relationship with his wife. All these factors make his poetic self basically contradictory and complex. His mental alienation and stay in complex urban society are mainly responsible for such complexity in his poetic craftsmanship. He has candidly confessed:

I have heard the endless silent dialogue

Between the self – protective self

And the self naked.

I have seen the mask

And the secret behind the mask (CP :106)

The poet observes any object with naked eyes and transmutes the same in the domain of the Muse. After a series of mental transformation, the object comes out as a poetic image. So mental colour seems to be a shaping factor in the image formation. Without a minute analysis or study of the images in Ezekiel, it is wellnigh impossible to get in touch with the poetic development of the poet. So many events pass through the life of a poet like a phantasmagoria. Some of them are retained in the poet's mind and images are directly or indirectly associated with the retentive experiences of the poet. These experiences may grow, may alter till they take the shape of an image. Veiled or unveiled, even his camouflaging self is based on subjectivity that the poet acknowledges a number of times. The poet himself acknowledges the fact that his poetry is based on the life in and around him. He could not get rid of the environmental influence. Following an interview to the Gentleman the poet plainly states:

To start with, my own inspiration is and always was 'my inner life'. And writing is, for me a way of coping with tension between my inner life and the outer life. Looking back this from the earliest days seems to be the main source of my writing. Every other source is somehow related to it, even the experiences of other people. My poems are often introspective and therefore, express self-criticism and self-doubt. I also write about my relationship with other people: love, sex, the individual in society etc.²

Even ultra modern literary theories like 'Phenomenology' also support the view that the literary artist's 'consciousness' is not an airy substance but based on a number of factors. Northrop Frye in his *Fables of identity: studies in poetic Mythology* (1963) tries to reconstruct the poet's consciousness in relation to time, space, nature and society—of course milieu predominating.

Nissim Ezekiel's biographical details percolate through his poetic self. The poet aims at maintaining a balance between his poetic self and the worldly self ineffectually and finally he presents a complex spectrum of life-poetry. R. Raj Rao in his *Nissim Ezekiel – the Authorised Biography* has tried to highlight the career of Nissim Ezekiel in an exhaustive way. Nissim was born at a Chawl near the Byculla Bridge, Bombay in the month of December 1924. His parents Moses and Daina belonged to the Bene-Israel community who migrated to India nearly two thousand years ago following a ship-wreckage. Regarding his birth and belonging the Poet states:

I am an Indian national. I was born in India, my tribe of the Jewish community has lived in India for 2000 years. If I had rejected my Indianness, which some Indian writers obviously have done and if I had decided that I am so much of an outsider that I have to settle down in London or New York and then if I did write about India, I don't know if I could be regarded as an Indo-English writer.³

Nissim's parents – Moses and Diana injected a spirit of discipline among their children in terms of scientific attitude towards life. Nissim's father was a professor of Botany and his mother was the head of a Marathi language primary school. Born and bred in an orthodox Bene-Israel atmosphere Nissim could not totally ignore the environmental atmosphere. As the days rolled on, Nissim accepted only the logical

things instead of being a blind follower of the Jewish culture. That's why he would never wear the tzitzit which is generally associated with the orthodox Jew people.

Though Nissim had tried his best to overcome the religious customs of the Jewish-Bene-Israel community, he had to yield to a number of ceremonial norms that affected his poetic self deeply. It was the *Hath Boshi* or the ceremony of kissing the hand. Shirley Berry Isenberg in her *Indian's Bene Israel: A comprehensive inquiry and source book* gave a good account of the said ceremony practised at the synagogue: A senior person thumbs uppermost, approached a junior, took the junior's hand in both of his/her own hands, while the junior placed his/her remaining hand on the outside of the hand of the senior: then both released hands and immediately, putting the tips of their respective fingers to their mouths, kissed their own fingertips: then they proceeded to repeat the process with another person until the entire congregation (if possible) had thus greeted each other (Isenberg 1988. 49.).

This ritualistic convention is very predominating in Nissim's life as well as his poetry. Here is Nissim's own version of the kissing ceremony reflected in *Nudes – 1978*:

You haven't learnt to kiss, she said,
 'Open your mouth a little, yes,
 That's the way.' I was quite ashamed
 But quick to learn – or so I thought.
 Is this all you want, you funny boy?
 I waited and my wanton friend
 Displayed her body, turned around,
 Her laughter filled my basement room. (CP: 246)

Not only this particular ceremony but there are a number of ceremonies which Nissim has obeyed like a docile social man. When Nissim was thirteen years old (1937), Bar Mitzvah ceremony was solemnized at the Rodef Shalom Synagogue. Being a father Nissim could not give up the practice. He used to take Elkana, his son to Rodef Shalom Synagogue for the practice of Bar Mitzvah.

During his childhood days Nissim dressed shabbily. He showed his poetic genius even at the age of seven. Perhaps he had a dishevelled and shabby image of a poet in his mind's eye and nurtured this habit till now. Even in his prime days of youth Nissim had shown a stoical attitude to his appearance. The Bene Israel people have wavy black hair, brown eyes, oval face and pointed nose. Nissim had oval face and pointed nose but the influence of the surroundings was so powerful that he was like a parse not like a typical Bene Israel person. The poet left no opportunity to jot down the record of life in the pages of a poem, "Background, Casually":

The song of my experience sung,

I knew that all was yet to sing.

My ancestors, among the castes,

Were aliens crushing seed for bread. (CP: 180)

Nissim's parents were not well-to-do. Diana went on teaching at a Marathi primary school and Moses at Wilson College as a lecturer. Moses would accompany Nissim to his educational trips that prompted Nissim's curiosity. In his own confession Nissim was more attached to his mother than to his father.

His first schooling was started at the convent of Jesus and Mary in 1930. Having completed standard one and two at the convent of Jesus and Mary, Nissim went to study at Antonio D ' Souza High school in 1934. He was a mediocre student and used to participate in all extra-mural activities of the school. During the years (1934

to 1940) Nissim had sweet bitter experiences with the Hindu, Muslim and Christian students. It was his school days that prompted him to ponder over:

I went to Roman Catholic School,
 A mugging Jew among the wolves.
 They told me I had killed the Christ,
 That year I won the scripture prize.
 A Muslim sportsman boxed my ears. (CP: 179)

Therefore, the image of the post-colonial India that Nissim freely delineates is due to his experience, observation and perceptive power. During his school days he was weak in subjects like science. At the age of seventeen he passed the matriculation examination (1941). From the very beginning of his life Ezekiel nurtured a socialistic attitude. He never led a luxurious life and would prefer to spend extra money on charity. He had a Shavian mental make-up.

Nissim's life was centred on Bombay and his poetry also revolves round Bombay life. How his "Psyche" was formed slowly, had been nicely stated by R. Raj Rao in *Nissim Ezekiel: The Authorised Biography*:

A sense of roots and belonging is perhaps essential to every poet, because in the last analysis, it gives him the terms of reference for his writing. Nissim's roots are in Bombay; Bombay is the city where he belongs. He was born in Bombay, has always lived here and always came back to Bombay, where he went. The longest time he was away from Bombay was between 1948 and 1952, when he was in England. But even before he went to England, he decided that Bombay was his home and once in England, he made up his mind to return to Bombay and spend the rest of his life here. Nissim's years in England coincided with the time the Jews in India started emigrating on a

large scale to the newly formed nation of Israel (from 1949 onwards). Though he took interest in this development, he rejected the Zionist notion that Israel was the Promised Land to which all the Jews of the world must return. This is because he thought of himself as an Indian. (Rao. 2000. 30.)

It was absolutely right that he was born in Bombay and belonged to the city:

I cannot leave the island,

I was born here and belong. (CP: 182)

His college years were really glorious. The poet was admitted to the Presbyterian Wilson College. He said that he applied his mind to studies seriously. He won a scholarship there throughout his four years and graduated in English literature with a first class. This inspired him somewhat for his master's degree.

In the early years of 1940s, the college magazine published the poems of Nissim Ezekiel. This prompted him to send poems to "The Thought" and other journals. During his college days he became well-acquainted with the works of T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound. Apart from literary pursuits he was interested in M.N. Roy's Radical Democratic party. Later on realizing his forte lies in poetry, he gave up politics at the cost of poetry.

Having graduated from the Wilson College, he joined the M.A. classes in English there. He started teaching at the Hansraj Morarji School for a while. He took keen interest in Eliot, Pound, Joyce and Yeats. That's why an Eliotian hangover was markedly present in the early poems of Ezekiel. Even his images at this stage were mimetic by nature.

In 1947 Nissim passed the M.A. Examination in English as a University topper and won the R.K. Lagu prize for his laudable feat. Thereafter he worked as a lecturer at Khalsa College during June 1947 to June 1948. He gave up his jobs and went on

freely contributing to *The Times of India*, *Free Press Journal*, *Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan Journal*. During this period Donne's echo is found in Ezekiel's "Nakedness I", "Nakedness II", "Two Nights of Love", "Description", "The Recluse", "Delighted by Love", "At the Party and Progress".

In November, 1948 Alkazi helped him financially to go to England for higher studies. A twenty-six days voyage in the *Jal Azad* took him to London. He got a clerical job in the Internal Affairs Department of the High Commission. Meanwhile Nissim enrolled himself in Chinese, Western Philosophy, Art Appreciation and other subjects. He went on studying B.A. course in philosophy at Birbeck college. Though he did not complete the course, he got acquainted with the legendary philosopher like C.E.M. Joad. Poetry and philosophy ran parallel to his life. He confessed the fact a number of times how he spent his London days. He admitted:

... my experience in England, studying, working, shutting myself up in an underground room for hours together and thinking and writing poems ...yes, that's when I take a drastic decision; I resign the job at India House and take to full-time writing, earning a pound here and a pound there. (Rao. 2000. 72.)

Here the Fortune Press published his first book of verse *A Time to Change* in 1952. The task was not easy because "In some senses I would discover that we had internalized some of the attitudes of our erstwhile rulers. The attitude of many editors and publishers towards poetry in English written by an Indian was one of disbelief and disorder. The word post-colonial had been coined and I could not use it either as a weapon or an excuse when I went with my manuscripts from publisher to publisher or looked in vain for review space" (Panday. 1994. 72.).

During the period Nissim was almost penniless. A certain ship carrying ammunition to Indo-China was desperately looking for new sailors. Nissim and his

friend Paigankar joined the staff. They had to “scrub desk and carry coal”. His experience at the ship was marvellous. He earned the certificate of an able seaman. Nissim could not forget the experience of his life as an able seaman. He remembered:

So in an English Cargo ship,
 Taking French guns and mortal shells.
 To Indo-China, scrubbed the decks,
 And learned to laugh again at home. (CP: 180)

Here the poet is *prima facie* talking about his self.

Nissim was on the wrong side of thirty when he passed through several experiences in his life. They left a lasting impression on the mind of the poet. The concrete experiences which made their inroads in the deep of his mind, found abstract shapes in the form of images. So Nissim’s direct experiences bear semblance with his biographical account and his images point out the growth of his poetic self. Having returned to India, Nissim started his career as a sub-editor of the Times of India. His life as a sub-editor was a sort of routine life. His association with the Illustrated weekly of India widened his scope of work experience. On 23rd November, 1952 Nissim and Daisy were married at a Synagogue called Magen David Synagogue. The poem *Jewish wedding in Bombay* gives a good account of Nissim’s wedding which was solemnized in terms of Hindu rituals and the traditional Bene Israel norms:

Her brothers hid a shoe of mine and made me pay
 To get it back...
 we are wed and truly married
 According to the Mosaic Law. (CP: 243)

Ezekiel went on leaving one job to join the other. Thus he joined an advertising agency as a copywriter and at the same time went on editing the magazine “Guest”.

During his job at the Shilpi, Nissim got an opportunity to visit America nearly for one and a half years. Nissim was emotionally inclined to an American Fulbright scholar Linda Hess. His career record at the Shilpi showed that Ezekiel was not at all serious about his job but he was nurturing his bohemian self. Poems written in this period fully expose the poet's mental make-up.

V.S. Shahane writes, "Ezekiel's earlier verse is marked by an awareness of physical passion, sexual impulse, intermingling of the corporeal and the spiritual and a sensitive reaction to objects of sensory pleasure or pain. The promptings of the spirit are audible through the limbs of the flesh and the consequential significance of intellectuality and abstraction are obtained and realized only through the emotive stimulation effect of the human body." (Shahane. 1989. 22)

The women to whom he desired most remained a distant illusion always. The poet felt pain to realize:

The pure invention or the perfect poem,

precise communication of a thought,

Love reciprocated to a quiver,

Flawless doctrines, certainty of God,

These are merely dreams. (CP: 5)

The poet presented finely tuned images, which are mostly sex-images during the period. Woman after woman had entered his life. That does not mean that he was a womanizer. Khorshed Wadia Ezekiel had observed the poet from a close angle. She had seen the vicissitudes in the life of Ezekiel; how Ezekiel was drawn to Daisy and Linda Hess. His daily bazaar trip to Grand Road from Marine Lines and up the hill to Daisy's house was a common man's riddle. Yet he had done that; his love, which remained always unrequited, enriched his poetic sensibility and perception to create or

compose better poems. Daisy out of her wounded pride regarded Nissim to be a monster who ruined her life and Linda always appreciated the poetic craft of Ezekiel in the supportive tone. Sandwiched between two extreme poles, Nissim was always mentally alienated. That's why his poems are mostly the songs of lamentation. In each of his images a nidus of pain is echoed powerfully:

Men are lost

Who wanted only quiet lives

And failed to count the growing cost

Of cushy job or unloved wives. (CP: 121)

Going through the vicissitudes of Nissim's life it seemed to the researcher that the poet had loved his poetry (creation) better than his life. In other words the poet started neglecting his self to nourish his soul (poetic). In Khorshed Wadia Ezekiel's view: "...he was very shabbily dressed, reluctant to bathe, reluctant to change his clothes, have them washed etc. I had to talk to him, trick him into getting all this done. Also Ezekiel men have a pathological fear of doctors and dentists. Hannan has managed to get himself out of this grip but Joe too was most reluctant to visit a medico. Nissim is even afraid of getting his nails cut and probably also frightened of the razor". (Rao. 2000. 374)

His poems are on the march as life shows on. They turn and twist following a mysterious circuit. No longer he looks at the sun as bringing light bug, he looks at it with a luminous halo: "White wings of morning" (CP: 20) and "Sunny boy" (CP: 284). Nissim's association with literary journals grew stronger as he joined the PEN and his literary pursuit became stronger. In 1953 he published his second collection of verse entitled *Sixty Poems* consisting of moral, metaphysical, religious, philosophical

poems. The business of common life becomes his forte: the study of hour becomes his poetic sustenance. He is, now, a mundane man, humanly balanced:

I don't want the Yogi's concentration,
 I do not want the perfect charity
 Of saints nor the tyrant's endless power,
 I want a human balance humanly
 Acquired, fruitful in the common hour. (CP: 40)

Subjective confession of self is a common feature with the other Indo-Anglian poets. Kamala Das also feels:

An empty cistern, waiting
 Through long hours, fills itself
 With coiling snakes of silence.²

The influence of the poetry of John Donne, W.B. Yeats, T.S. Eliot, W.H. Auden, Rilke and some other American poets become inaudible gradually in the poetry of Ezekiel. The Anglo-American influence is over and Ezekiel sings his own song. His own life becomes the nerve centre of his poetry. The texture of his verse is highly charged with the images of India, the reality of love and life. The world around him becomes his *spiritus mundi* from where he draws all his images – centripetal or centrifugal.

The "Sixty Poems" was published in 1958 followed by "The Third" in 1958. Ezekiel writes in the introduction to the collection (Sixty Poems), "There is in each line, a prose, an idea or image which helps to maintain some sort of continuity in my life" (Kurup. 1996. 35.). The poems "Question" and "Report" were composed in 1945-48 years. During the period (1950-51), "Speech and Silence", "A Short Story", "Penitence" were composed. Later on between the 1952-53 years "The portrait", "For

William Carlos Williams”, “The old Abyss” were composed. The “Sixty Poems” according to the scholars, is not so powerful collection of poems like his previous one i.e. “A Time to Change” which records the successive development of the poet as a creative writer as reflected in his autobiographical poems – “A short story”, “First Theme and Variations”, “Background, Casually”, “A visitor”, “The visitor” etc.

Prof. Indernath Kher observed that the volume hardly represents any major thematic development. The subjects mostly occupy Ezekiel’s mind are love and sex, poetry and existence, body and mind, flesh and spirit, private meditation, day to day affairs, self-identity and concern for others. However, a greater involvement in the theme of human passion and sexuality and a suggestion concerning the possible relationship between the female form and poetic creation are seen here. The “Sixty Poems” is inferior to “A Time To Change” in many respects. Many poems in the volume suffer from loose structure and confused imagery.

The poet led a turbulent life during the decade. The wedding ‘exploded well’ and landed them in Panchagani. But his professional life was really a stressful one. Nissim left the Illustrated Weekly of India to join Shilpi. In 1954 his one time political mentor M. N. Roy passed away leaving a void in his mental horizon. The poet developed a sort of gnawing doubts about the teachings of M. N. Roy, yet Roy’s death had some bearing on his mind due to his long association with Roy. Indeed Roy was a father figure in his life.

The poet’s attitude towards life is changed. He oscillates between the rules of morality and the force of temptation. He speaks in terms of simple images and the complex feelings of his heart:

I have learnt to reveal in the stone,
Hard, cold, heavy, shapeless, solid stone,

To turn away from all that seems to flow

Elusively: time, water, blood around the bone. (CP: 40)

The vicissitudes of Nissim's life in the decade are as follows:

Nissim joined the editorial staff of 'The Illustrated weekly of India' and worked there nearly for four years. He broadcast on AIR, Bombay for 10 years (1952-1962). In 1955 he became the editor of 'Quest' and in 1957 he had an American tour. He returned to college teaching in 1959.

In 1958 Nissim published his third collection of poems called *The Third*. It was published by Strand Book Shop Bombay and "The Unfinished Man" was also brought out in 1959. These poems record the moral acts and pains of an Indo-Anglian poet in an Indian city.

The poet asked about the irony in life with a sense of humour. Looking at his personal life in this decade (1960-1970), the poet seems to have encountered through failures in life. His matrimonial life is on the verge of ruin. He cannot form a matrimonial alliance with Linda Hess. He is also a failure in terms of profession.

At this stage Nissim's concern with animal life is seen as in the poems "Sparrows". In the "The Cur" Nissim Ezekiel does not follow the strain left by Ted Hughes. There is no fierce attitude in them. His animals are submissive and docile. His common animal images are "agile flick of grey" (CP: 62), "Sniffed at fish" (CP: 66), and "restless flight" (CP: 135).

Besides this the poet starts searching for the soul analysis. He hinges on the philosophy of life in such poems like "Case Study" and "Morning Prayer". There are flashes of travel and tour in his poems. His trip to Rangoon becomes highly productive in terms of poetic craft:

Saffron monks with heads clean shaved

Trishaw (cycle rickshaws)

Taxis are jeeps

Whole market for gewgaws.

Pavements unpaved.

And refuses in heaps. (CP: 108)

The erstwhile bohemian poet is, after this stage, somewhat regulated now. The poet joined Mithibai College in 1961. Nissim enjoyed teaching in close association with R. Parthasarathy, G.D. Antarkar, M.K. Kutty and Srinivas Rao. It was a sort of hereditary occupation for him. He rose to the post of Vice-Principal in Arts section. The creative poet found to his utter dismay that even M.phil students preferred readymade notes on Octovio Paz or Pablo Neruda. His life at Mithibai College has been described by his two colleagues (Pramod Kale and Victor Gikwad) in the following language:

Nissim was full of life and very encouraging. As far as teaching was concerned, he was very accommodating. Both *Romeo and Juliet* and the *History of Mr. Polly* were on the syllabus. At first Nissim taught the *History of Mr. Polly* and I taught *Romeo and Juliet*. After a few years Nissim suggested that we should exchange texts so that the students would have the benefit of both the teachers. Nissim encouraged me to write poetry and even published one of my poems in the *Illustrated Weekly of India* (Rao. 2000.148.).

One of his students (Dr. Ershad Ahmed, teaching at Govt. College, Darjeeling, W.B.) recalls that Ezekiel as a teacher was stimulating. He was highly conscious of being a poet. He repeatedly used to say to his students that he is a poet and he knows it well. Though he had good relationship with other colleagues, the popular Marathi poet Mangesh Padgaonkar bore grudge against him.

Nissim as a teacher was highly innovative. He explained the poems in terms of Indian surroundings and milieu. Other teachers used to explain the same in an orthodox way. But Ezekiel, in those days, explained poem in relation to India. The job at Mithibai College was not so time consuming. That's why he published reviews on four books in the Imprint and other leading magazines in India.

During this period a number of friends encircled him. Among them are ... Kamala Das, Kersy Katrak, Keki Daruwalla, Gieve Patel, Adil Jussawalla, Eunice De Souza. Nissim and Kamala shared a sort of love-hatred relationship. In 1964 professor Jeffares invited Nissim to the University of Leeds as a visiting lecturer. Accompanied by Daisy Nissim set sail for England. Nissim delivered fourteen lectures on the Indian writing in English in Leeds. Having completed the task, he returned home and resumed his normal duties at Mithibai College.

It was definitely true that all contemporary events did not affect the poet. Nissim left the issue of war consciously. So the China war 1962 and Pakistan war 1965 got a lukewarm response from him. He did not care to compose poems on such contemporary events.

"The Unfinished Man" (1960) and "The Exact Name" (1905) came to light. It is P.Lal who on behalf of the writers' workshop published "The Unfinished Man" and "The Exact Name". The former contained only ten poems while the latter contained only twenty poems. The first book contains seven philosophical poems – "Enterprise", "Love Sonnet", "Commitment", "Morning Prayer", "Event", "Marriage" and two poems centring on Bombay – "Urban" and "A Morning walk", an autobiographical poem – "Jamini Roy".

Raj Rao considers these poems to be veiled autobiographical poems. He writes, "Finally I argue that although the images in the two poems seem allegorical, the

poems are specially about Bombay if we take into account the manner in which Nissim stands in relation to the images weaving into them autobiographical facts from his life. To support my contention I refer to his use of the 'Barbaric' to describe Bombay (which of course), coincides with novelist Raja Rao's description of the city in *The Serpent and the Rope*, published in the same year as "The Unfinished Man" (Rao. 2000. 167).

The poet wears a third person mask in "Case Study". Now he writes the history of his unhappy married life, occasional quarrel with Daisy and Toni Patel's influence on his life. The following lines are indeed Nissim's autobiography in verse:

He came to me and this is what I said:

The pattern will remain, unless you break

It with a sudden jerk, but use your head.

Not all returned as heroes who had fled

In wanting both to have and eat the cake.

Not all who fail are counted with the fake. (CP: 125)

Linda Hess occupied a greater part of Nissim's life. Hess was emotionally drawn to Nissim. Ranjit Hoskote observes, "Linda Hess must have represented to Nissim everything that his own conservative wife was not: beauty, brains and liberation. She enabled him to live the way men in the '60s wanted to – with a dutiful wife at home and a liberated girl friend outside. Nissim has always oscillated between the conservative and the bohemian, and the presence of Linda Hess in his life would be considered a good example of his bohemianism. Besides, both of them would have seemed exotic to each other". (Rao. 2000. 171)

Linda sits in the hinter land of Ezekiel and as a result some of the finest images are born in this period like “Love reciprocated to quiver” (CP: 5), “drop your fear” (CP: 27), “Dream-window” (CP: 47) and “light of love” (CP: 153).

In the epi-centre of his mind Linda sits and arrests the attention of other women. That’s why women images are so frequent on the string of music. He perceives the women through his mind’s eye: “burnt out mothers”, “frightened virgins”, “Sacrificing mothers”, “women of semi bare bosom”, “wives of India”, “wooden wives sitting in disarray”, “women as object of study”, “nagging women”, “naked blazing animals”, “unhinging speech and bone”, “pregnant women”, “sensual movement”, “breast of sex”, etc. All the woman images do not necessarily focus on Linda but his woman images mostly centre on Linda Hess and Elizabeth, the basement girl. He refers to Toni Patel, Minakshi Raja, Gauri Deshpande in sublime way whereas Linda, Elizabeth and Daisy get a flowery treatment at the hands of Ezekiel.

Meanwhile his involvement with the P.E.N. was cemented. He took active part in the spread and promotion of the Indian PEN and at the same time he took LSD, which affected his creative horizon. Nissim heard a lot about LSD in America where writers and artists in general used to take LSD to expand their mind. After a lot of hesitations he became habituated to drug taking. Nissim confessed his own experience in the “DRUGS: A Personal Footnote”:

In a more limited way, I’ve found marijuana also immensely useful. My appreciation of music and art was broadened and intensified. I increased my capacity for concentration, my love of silence. I had glimpses of my true self, which I had never dreamt existed in such depth and complexity. My understanding of philosophical, metaphysical and religious questions became

keener and acquired greater immediacy. I also saw the limits of my abilities more clearly and developed a sense of destiny. I owe more to LSD and marijuana than to my reading, though perhaps without it I may have benefited less from them.⁵

Huxley's *Doors of Perception* influenced Ezekiel. In the post-LSD period Ezekiel was seen to have used conglomerate images like "promised land", "angelic wings", "parables of hell" etc.

That Ezekiel hinged on perception is reflected in a letter dated 15th April, 1984 to the present researcher, when asked about the influence of Tennyson and Wordsworth on the poem "Beauty", Ezekiel writes, "Thank you for your interest in my poem *Beauty*. Your interpretation of it seems to me to be on the right lines. I did not, though, have Wordsworth and Tennyson in mind only my own perceptions are expressed in the poem". In his professional life Nissim went on riding higher and higher. In 1972 he joined the Bombay University as a Reader in American Literature and later became a Professor of English till his retirement in 1985. Meanwhile he won the Sahitya Academy Award for "Latter Day Psalms" in 1983.

Vrinda Nabar observed Nissim Ezekiel closely as a colleague and said that Nissim inspired other would-be writers to write poems or creative composition. Nissim was, in her version, an innovative teacher and he always invited students to take part in the art of teaching poetry or drama.

Fortune smiled on him in the decade of seventy. The Oxford University Press came to publish his poems. He became a literary figure on the T.V. Screen. He wielded an impressive influence in the academic and cultural domain. Nissim made two short foreign trips on the Inter-cultural encounters and the cultural exchange programme of the Government of the United States.

So far Nissim remained surprisingly reticent about religious affairs with the publications of "Hymns in Darkness" (1976) and "Latter-day Psalms" (1986) Nissim changed his attitude to life to a great extent. Nissim came out of that philosophy. The Oxford University Press, New Delhi, published these books. He turned his inside out in eight hours and became a believer in God, religion, the metaphysical nature of the universe and life, ESP etc. The religious-cum-philosophical quest haunts the poet in the period that follows. Nissim's God is not a Jewish God. His God is not invariably a Hindu God. He is, according to Gieve Patel, a metropolitan *Bombay God* (CP:XVIII). His treatment towards God is not uniform. He remains always sceptic about the doctrines of religion and traditional religious credo. He writes:

The ungodly are in the same con
 dition, No more like the chaff
 Which the wind driveth away
 Than the godly. (CP: 253)

OR

humanises God:
 The vices I've always had
 I still have.
 The virtues I've never had
 I still do not have.
 From this Human way of Life.
 Who can rescue man
 If not His Maker?
 Do thy duty, Lord. (CP: 212)

Ezekiel was a moralist to the core. His social concern was too deep. He did not divorce Daisy for his deep moral concern. It is his deep social concern that prompts him to share everything with the people living in and around him. He is not a synagogue going bigot but a human being “humanly balanced”.

Ezekiel is set to test the religious codes of the Bible in the light of modern paradoxes and complexities in life. So religious theme predominates in “Hymns in Darkness” and “Latter-Day Psalms”. “The Sixteen”, “Hymns in Darkness”, “Guru”, “Rural Suite”, and “Tribute to the Upanishads” show his growing interest in religion. At the same time he realises his bond with his birthplace, society, country --- and the metaphoric city Bombay.

Like W.B. Yeats the poet wears a third person mask and goes on telling the story of his life in the poem, “Background, Casually”. He tells the story of his life in a sing-song way:

Twenty two : time to go abroad.

First, the decision, then a friend.

To pay the fare, philosophy, three

Companions shared my basement room. (CP: 179)

His biographical records show that he went to England at the age of twenty-five (Poetically twenty-two) and a friend Ibrahim Alkazi paid his sea-fare. The opening couplet in the poem proves the affinity with life and poetic art in a clear cut way.

An encircling gloom has wrapped the poet in 1978. Separation with Daisy has already taken place. His emotional gap has also surfaced with Linda Hess. But Ezekiel also needed a woman around him to look after him – be it his mother, daughter, lover or any woman admirer. Without their presence Nissim cannot stand and compose his verse properly. He beats in the void. Ezekiel tries to tackle the void

by wearing a mask but fails miserably to do so. Sitting in Bombay the poet through his mind's eye feels in a nostalgic vein the presence of California-based Linda Hess:

Ten thousand miles away,
 You become a shower of letters,
 A photograph, a newspaper cutting,
 Underlined, with penciled comments,
 And a smell at night. (CP: 195)

The images of "a shower of letters", "photographs", "newspaper cutting", "a smell", form the multidimensional entities of Linda Hess. Nissim himself vehemently correlated his life to poetry. Regarding the genesis of "Latter Day-Psalms" he says that the origin of the poem is the poetry festival in Rotterdam. At the hotel he reads the Guide on The Bible and the Old Testament. He completed the, "Latter-Day Psalms" in Rotterdam in June 1978.

In 1980s the poet made a lot of experimentations in the field of poetry. He deals with Poster Poems and invents Zen telegrams. He talks to his biographer Raj Rao, "In 1971-72 I was looking for new source of information in life and literature. I read a book of American Indian songs in translation. All of them were short, compressed, and highly poetic. There was a kind of communal feeling in them. The poet is a member of the tribe, capable of embodying its feelings. All these things came together in my mind with the idea of an exhibition of poster poems. One tends to stumble on the next development. It's a twin of events...you rely on the fact that you are talking listening, reacting. A recent unexpected development for me was Zen telegram. While recovering from a surgical operation, I read a book called as Therapeutic Experience. One of the articles described a therapist's use of Zen Telegram to help his patients. I took a ball point pen and paper and did nine telegrams in the spirit of the original Zen

telegram, as a spontaneous expression. The next day was a Sunday. I saw no reason to follow the traditional format of Zen telegram. So I lay in the bed the whole day, thinking about the form, completing each in my mind and wrote/drew a few in twenty four that day. I had both the visual and verbal very clearly in the mind when I did each. A number of them reflect the after- illness state of mind". (Rao. 2000. 247)

In 1988 Nissim was conferred on Padma Shri. Next year the Oxford University Press published: *Nissim Ezekiel: Collected Poems 1952-1988*. Recognition, award, and honour come in quick succession but, Nissim becomes an isolated individual on the front of family life. Elkana, his son, is far away from his life like his mother Daisy. Kavita is an occasional visitor. On this drama of life he becomes a painfully isolated individual catering to the mundane needs of Daisy who lives in a self-styled exile status. Nissim spends a greater part of his life in the PEN office—dusty, dingy PEN office praising some works, thereby earning life-long friends and criticizing bogus poems, there by earning life-long foes:

Do not be satisfied with the world
that God created. Create your own.
Be voracious with your eyes and appetites:
the will to see, the passion in the act of love
or learning lead to brighter prospect. (CP: 205)

After retirement (1985), Nissim went on a number of foreign trips. In 1985 he went to Salburg, Germany and next year he attended Frankfurt Book Fair. In 1987 he went to Hong Kong. He read his poems at the Adelaide Book Fair and the New Zealand International Festival of Arts in 1988.

He was an outright reviewer of books. He supported the ban on the *The Satanic Verses* in India because the book, according to him, crossed the limit of an artist's

freedom. A decade ago he was also highly critical about Indira Gandhi's imposition of emergency in India.

The poet has frankly expressed his view on the importance of images in poems. In his view the absence of imagery makes a poem weak. In 1989 he published a drama *Don't call It Suicide*. In 1990 he acted as a literary advisor to Rupa and Co. and a number of Indian and foreign publishers like Orient Longman, the Macmillan, and the Oxford University Press.

The decade following (1990-2000) is the most unproductive period in terms of poetry but it is a fertile period in terms of critical writings and book reviews. In 1992 he attended the international conference on the contemporary literature and language Studies at Jamaica. He got warm appreciation there. In the same year The Oxford University Press published Nissim's prose writings *Nissim Ezekiel: Selected Prose*. It was divided in four sections "On Poetry", "On Art and Culture", "On Life and Thought" and "On Books". In 1993 he witnessed with a heavy heart the riot in connection with the demolition of the Babri Masjid. Regarding Taslima Nassrin's *Lajja* he remarked: "All you have done is, provoked some extremists within the community to attack you". (Rao. 2000.331)

In 1994 Nissim was showing the signs of Alzheimer's diseases. His daily life was spent partly in the PEN and partly in The Retreat. Nissim cooperated R. Raj in writing his *Authorised Biography*. Having attained seventy years of age, Nissim's admirers celebrated the occasion. Gieve Patel, Adil Jussawalla, Imtiaz Dharker appreciated Nissim's rhythmic chant of "Night of the Scorpion". Nissim gave a number of interviews to newspapers also.

In 1995 Nissim decided to write the story of his life entitled *A Thousand Failures*, which never bore fruit. During his old years Nissim spent time by telling anecdote to

his close friends and associates like Gieve Patel, Adil Jussawalla. In 1996 the creative sun of Nissim Ezekiel was on the western horizon. The poet went on prostate operation. In 1997 Nissim published an article in the Sunday Times. It was an autobiographical writing and Nissim went on writing on contemporary national events.

The poet was seen in the vortex of family scrambles. Like a stoic he was indifferent to all the stresses and storms in life. The poet's health went on deteriorating in such a way that he collapsed at an AJJDC meeting and was admitted to the Shashrush Nursing Home at Dadar. The Doctors of the clinic revealed that he had been suffering from Alzheimer's disease. The ailing poet was shifted to A. J. Dias Nursing Home at Turner Road, Bandra for better treatment. Visitors went on visiting the Alzheimer's disease-ridden poet. He could partly recognize some of his friends like Jussawalla and Minakshi Raja.

In the month of December 1999 Nissim was put on Exelon, the American wonder drug but had no effect on the Poet-turned-patient. Nissim always preferred to remain reticent about his productive years. Even in his bed-ridden condition, he cherishes a wish:

I will read the book by and by. There is a lot to read. After I read them, the books are taken away. Otherwise there would be no space. There's an institution next door. There's something happening there all the time. I was there before you came. There's something going on all the time. (Jussawalla. 1999. 3)

Nissim Ezekiel is not in fine fettle now. Nowadays the poet stands as a Totem-pole. He is at the end of his tether — a static statue — “Hair: Close — Cropped, grey brown. Eyes: Spectacled, greyish. Smile: gentle... Shirt: Blue grey...”. (Rao.1999. 13)

As a poet he has read the pages of poetry and life, life and poetry in a better way.

His death-in-life state still haunts the lover of his biography:

My neighbour says, you are Parsi?

No, I say genially, acknowledging his interest, Zoroastrian.

He leaves the subject along.

The train has stopped between stations.⁶

Now the poet is physically no more. He left his earthly abode on 9th January 2004. Dom Moraes, a contemporary poet, has paid tribute to Nissim Ezekiel in the following few lines:

On January 10, one of the first mornings of a new year, *The Times of India* told me that Nissim Ezekiel was dead. He had survived nearly 80 mostly tranquil years. But in the last few of them he suffered from Alzheimer's disease. It was a savage way for him to die, for he had always treasured the real world, and for the last few years his illness took it away from him. I did not see him often in these years. The last few times we met, he knew my face but could not place me. I had known Nissim, when he died, for more than half century. (Moraes. 2004. 74)

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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 undertone 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

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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-scrappers" 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.

There 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)

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Chapter—V

EZEKIEL AND OTHER INDO-ANGLIAN POETS:

A COMPARATIVE APPROACH IN IMAGERY.

I know I shall say it

gratefully, as persistent and poetic

as the grass that grows

between Bombay's pavement tiles. (CP: 295)

In the post-Independence era there comes a host of neo-modernist poets who not only focus much on the contemporary Indian issues but also knit the fabric of images either in centripetal or in centrifugal way. P. Lal comments that they set up the tradition of Indo-Anglian literature. It is admittedly true that this neo-modernist school in Indo-Anglian poetry set up the tradition of Indo-Anglian imagery also. Though different poets have dealt differently, their objectives were the same. As a result of differences in their approach, a multi forked linear growth in Indo-Anglian imagery is seen in this period.

Ezekiel's contemporary A.K. Ramanujan stands identical with Ezekiel in the field of image-formation and experimentation though they differ on many occasions. All the images employed by Ramanujan spring from the psyche of the poet which is basically enriched with personal, familiar past.

In Ezekiel's case, the Ezekielian images are formed due to the momentary reactions to the environment and milieu of India. Ezekiel partially whores after "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” (Chindhade: 1996. 157.).

So his images are at times extra-territorial though there is a dominating Indian sensibility in the Ezekielian imagery. Ramanujan, primarily relies on Indian culture, Hindu epic and mythology and family-remembrance as the tools of his imagery.

Ramanujan was not vocal about the cult of romanticism in his poetry. Though Ezekiel was vocal about the anti-romantic cult, he had to hinge on the cult of reverse romanticism. Sorojini Naidu, Rabindranath Tagore created the tradition of nostalgic images which were further cemented by Ezekiel and Ramanujan. “The striders” records such artistic craft of Ramanujan as an image-maker:

And search
 For certain thin-
 Stemmed bubble-eyed water-bags
 See them perch.
 On dry capillary legs
 Weightless.
 On the ripple skin
 of a stream.
 No, not only prophets
 Walk on water. This bug sits
 On a landslide of lights
 And drowns eye
 deep.
 Into its tiny strip
 of sky.¹

Ramanujan employed “bubble-eyed water bags”, “capillary legs”, “ripple skin”, “landslide of heights”, “tiny strip of sky ” images. These images are subject-oriented but the image of “prophets walk on water” stands for mixed sensibility i.e., —the Hindu and the Christian sensibilities.

Ramanujan’s imagery bears the stamp of mixed or multiple sensibilities in “Poona Train window”, “The opposite Thumb”, “Snakes”, “Striders”.

In the tradition of Indo-Anglian imagery the tradition of employing the images of “mixed sensibilities’ has been further extended by Nissim Ezekiel. Particularly they are the double pillars of maintaining the flow of mixed sensibilities intact.

In the Ezekielian imagery these mixed sensibilities are of different types—his alienation-problem, the problem of rooted rootlessness, racial minority, Jewish background, cultural differences etc. In the Ezekielian world of imagery only analysis of images is found and he leaves the onus of synthesis on the readers:

The sour grapes were just as firm,
 And round as those I loved, smooth skin,
 Reflecting light, flesh soft within. (CP: 143)

The images of “Sour grapes” and “Smooth skin” stand for the contrasting emotional thoughts. The contrasting images meander in—

A lizard, poison in its belly,
 Lay belly-up, white and bloated,
 Not a pretty sight. I looked away. (CP: 283)

Or

The darkness has its secrets.
 Which light does not know. (CP: 223)

Self-laceration, inner-scrutiny, existential dilemma are some of the common features of Ezekiel's and Ramanujan's imagery. Ezekiel tries his best to relate his self to the social set-up of India but Ramanujan suffers from the diasporic existence. Though a natural outsider, India to Ezekiel becomes almost a native land whereas Ramanujan looks at India through his inner telescope. Being an expatriate Ramanujan had suffered from the conflict of Indo-American set-up, the East-West cultural crisscross. His problems like the problems of thousands of diasporic writers are presented in the selected images of Ramanujan. He paints the poetic predicament in the following way:

I must seek and will find
 my particular hell only in my Hindu-mind,
 must translate and turn
 till I blister and roast
 for certain lives to come 'eye-deep'
 in those boiling crates of oil.²

In his poetic pilgrimage Ramanujan fashioned new images—"eye-deep", "shop-windows", "well-known laws of optics" in order to project the inner horizon of the post-modernist group. "In course of this journey the poetic self entrusts itself with many a missions: making of poetry out of existence, envisioning a state of harmony between the fountain of inner life and the landscape of outer life, seeking a resolution of the tension caused by opposing forces in the nature and in the heart of man". (Kurup:1996:102)

The images employed by Ramanujan purely project the varying moods of the poet in different circumstances. Viewed in this point Ezekielian imagery portrays the

varying moods of his self. Self-portrayal of Ezekiel is partly autobiographical; is partly the synthesis of complex stream of consciousness:

The images he cannot find
 Haunt his unrevealed sub consciousness
 A plain language lets him down.
 The cross he carries to no crucifixion
 Is merely middle age. (CP: 233)

Equally at home is Ramanujan:

I dreamed one day
 That face my own yet hers,
 With my own nowhere
 to be found; cut
 Loose like my dragnet
 post.³

The images of Ezekiel and Ramanujan stand identical as they present Indian sensibility to a great extent. Ramanujan never connives at the Indian social reality. The myths of Hindu rituals are subtly described in "Questions", "Astronomer", "Death and the good citizen", "pleasure", "A minor sacrifice", "Looking and Finding", "At Forty". Here the images of ugliness, dilapidation surpass the pleasant Indian sensibilities. There is a peculiar tang in the images of Ramanujan because Ramanujan's body was in America but his mind was deeply rooted in the soil of India. The dominating native elements always percolated into the horizon of Ramanujan from which all the images crop up!

The Ezekielian images are open and centrifugal. Though Ezekiel is born in the Bene-Israel Jew community, in India he is deeply under the impact of multi-religious

impacts of Indian culture. Ezekiel writes that he is conscious of his very special situation in relation to India as a poet but as a person and citizen he identifies himself completely with the country. Its politics, social life, civic problems, education, economic difficulties, cultural dilemmas are parts of his daily life. He added more that he would like that identification to be fully expressed in his poetry but it is perhaps only partially so. Metaphor, simile, extended parts of speech are, structurally speaking, the warp and woof of Ezekielian imagery. Both of them use a number of homespun images but these images contain native as well as western sensibilities.

Both Ezekiel and Ramanujan are candid regarding the source of the images. Like Ezekiel, Ramanujan clearly says, “English and my disciplines (linguistics, anthropology) give my outer forms—linguistic, metrics, logical and other such ways of shaping experience and my thirty years in India, my frequent visits and field trips, my personal and professional preoccupations with Kannada, Tamil, the classics and folk lore giving me my substance, my inner forms, images, symbols” (Parthasarathy. 1976. 96.).

Both Ramanujan and Ezekiel employ a strange poetic technique of employing the images and symbols as the projections of their own self. With the help of the plastic power of poetic fancy they transform the material objects into psychic images. R.N. Millinger throws light in this regard:

Introversion is, if one may so express it, the ‘style’ of the East, a habitual and collective attitude just as extra version is the ‘style’ of the west. Simply put, the introvert is mainly concerned with his inner life...the introverted attitude ‘calls forth the characteristic manifestations of the unconscious ...the sense of indefiniteness, timelessness, oneness’. As Jung puts it, for the Eastern mind

the psyche is all-important. All existence emanates from it and all separate forms dissolve back into it. (Millinger. 1975. 324.)

The semblance of imagery employed by Ezekiel and Kamala Das is very slender. Kamala Das opens up a new vista in the arena of modern Indo-Anglian imagery laying much emphasis on abstract and multidimensional images.

Ezekielian numerical images are vivid and concrete. They present the traditional customs and superstitions of India:

Three times the crow has cawed

At the window...

Three times I got the message. (CP: 137)

Numerical images convey abstract concepts in Kamala Das:

I am a million, million silences

String like crystal heads

Onto some one else's song.⁴

Like Ezekiel, Kamala Das decorates her images with the help of similes and metaphors and most of her images are traditional:

The sun swells then

Swollen like a fruit.

It runs harsh silver threads

Lengthwise my afternoon

Dream.⁵

Enmeshed in metaphor and abstract concepts Das's imagery runs parallel like that of Ezekiel. Das tries her best to go beyond the plane of the physical:

Madness is a country

Just around the corner

But if you go there ferried by despair

The sentries would ask you to strip.⁶

Ezekielian images also run spiral:

Whatever the enigma

The passion of the blood

Grant me the metaphor

To make it human good. (CP: 122)

Colour imagery both in Ezekiel and Das is traditional and recurring. "Yellow" recurs in Kamala Das' poetry and it stands for "old", "diseased" in most cases:

She floats in her autumn,

Yellowed like a leaf

And fire.⁷

At times Ezekielian images are traditional but sometimes Ezekiel tries to break the traditional symbols and images with new connotation. He presents "white blue sea", "white wine" with a view to developing synaesthetic effects on images. Kamala Das hardly tries to enter in such literary pasture! Sex-images of Ezekiel and Das are powerful, and vivid. Through the sex-images Ezekiel presents the faithless, frivolous nature of woman. His images are powerfully projected (presented) to pinpoint the weakness of fair sex. Ezekiel makes a piece-meal analysis of body or limb and presents life in terms of lust and sex. His sex-images are dominating and they are presented with paradox, anti-thesis, laconic and witty epithets.

His sex-images abound in the metaphorical and the literal mix-up. As a result of such synthesis they imbibe several feelings. Kamala Das, on the other hand, is vocal against the male *chauvinism* and domination.

Das lays emphasis on body relationship in terms of sexual relationship. Her approach is almost like that of Donne:

You are pleased usual shallow
 With my body's response its weather, its
 Convulsions. You dribbled spittle
 Into my mouth, you poured
 Yourself into every nook and cranny
 You embalmed
 My poor lust with your bittersweet juices.⁸

Ezekielian images are equally amorous. The poet makes an anatomical survey of physique in a Donne-like manner:

Ethereal beauties may always be,
 Dedicated to love and reckless shopping;
 Your midriffs moist and your thighs unruly
 Breasts beneath the fabric slyly plopping. (CP: 98)

Thus Das and Ezekiel in their own way set up and enrich the multi-linear growth of Indo-Anglian imagery. Though their methods are not always identical, they break away from tradition to develop an authentic Indian sensibility.

Kamala Das and to some extent Mahapatra are only two artists who have shown the fast changing Indian society. So writes Kamala Das:

The intensive cardiac care unit
 Is where each lies in his own white tent
 Under harsh desert moons,
 Buried only neck deep in sleep,
 So that with unhooded head

He awaits his execution ...

And moody as distant drums sound the heart beat.⁹

Her confessional tone matches well with images. Anne Brewster cuts appropriate comment in this regard:

Two different constellations of imagery stand out as central moving in the work. The image of the house and that of the body define the two worlds the poet moves within... The house is also a symbol of the traditional Indian way of life that Das was brought up in as a child, a tradition that has been modified as she grew older. (Brewster. 1980. 100.)

Both R. Parthasarathy's and Nissim Ezekiel's approach to the growth and development of Indo-Images is more or less the same. They have expressed dilemma, inner quest and conflict in the same way. It seems to the researcher that their quest is partially identical.

A sort of mutation is noticeable in the poetic image of R. Parthasarathy. The poet is particularly aware of cultural crisscross and presents heterogeneous elements in image-formation. His images are changing and hybrid by nature:

In a basement flat, conversation
 Filled the night, while Ravi Shankar,
 Cigarette stubs, empty bottles of stout
 And crisps provided the necessary pauses.⁹

Both Ezekiel and Ramanujan have expressed the images of tree in the light of the Indian philosophy preached in the Gita. Parthasarathy delineates tree in terms of language:

You learn roots are deep.
 That language is a tree, loves colour

Under another sky
 The bark disappears with the snow,
 And branches become hoarse.¹⁰

The image of tree is not traditional. The tree is suggestive of the poet's mother. The bark of the tree is shedding. To compare language with that of tree is typically Indian but the transplantation, on the whole, is successful.

Such topographical accuracy is akin to Browning's poetic craft:

Will, less is more, Lucrezia: I am judged
 There burns a truer light of God in them.
 In their vexed, beating, stuffed and stopped up brain
 Heart or whatever else than goes on to prompt
 This low-pulsed forthright craftman's hand of mind.¹⁰

Like Parthasarathy Ezekiel presents different elements in images. By presenting heterogeneous elements in images, Ezekiel develops the art of linear growth in images:

The long evenings
 In the large apartment
 With cold beer and western music,
 Lucid talk of art and literature
 And all the changes India needs. (CP: 133)

The Indo-Anglian poets have tried their best to develop the structural pattern of imagery by the way of multi-forked linear and branching growth.

Identity crisis afflicts both the poet. Parthasarathy observed:

He has spent his youth whoring
 After English gods.

There is something to be said for exile.

You learn roots are deep.¹¹

According to M. Sivaramkrishna “another sky” stands for another culture. The interpretation of the scholar is only superficial. A poet’s poetic entity gets metamorphosed in new atmosphere. His perception spreading like branches also goes on changing. Ezekielian images echo the same feeling particularly in the poems like “Background, Casually”. Ezekiel, Ramanujan, Mahapatra, Mehrotra, Shiv Kumar have consciously avoided the issue of creative medium but Parthasarathy, Keki Daruwalla and Kamala Das feel perturbed by the issue. Parthasarathy is deeply absorbed in any dominating problems and it will definitely percolate into his consciousness. When the consciousness becomes dynamic, images automatically come out.

This is particularly noticeable in Ezekiel and Parthasarathy. Ezekiel is torn between his poetic entity and Jewish consciousness. Similarly Parthasarathy is deeply torn between the dominating Tamil culture and English as a creative medium. On the basis of such strong foundation images are formed. They are the soul of a poet. When Parthasarathy is framing images like “tongue hunchbacked”, “skeleton of your Brahmin childhood”, “iron of life’s ordinariness” – he is being haunted by some pivotal issue:

As I walk, my tongue hunch backed

With words

...

Turn inward. Scrape the bottom of your past,

Ransack the cupboard

For skeletons of your Brahmin childhood

You may then,

Perhaps, strike out a line for yourself

From the iron of life is ordinariness.¹²

When the Ezekielian images are cropping up, they primarily rely on the pivotal issues of Ezekiel. The multi-layered new-fangled images like “elephant of thought”, “shore of memory”, and “leaves of my pity” are hardly impersonal. The issues of the nature of the two poets may stand poles apart but the nature of their images stands identical:

Unsuitable for song as well as sense

The island flowers into slums

And sky-scrappers, reflecting

Precisely the growth of my mind

I am here to find my way in it.

...

I cannot leave the island,

I was born here and belong. (CP: 182)

Ezekielian images like the images of Parthasarathy depend on the problems of existence and diasporic self. The same feeling has been accentuated by A.K. Ramanujan also. “Iron lunged”, “many-tongued”, “purgatorial lanes”, “noisy silence”, “island”, “flight of birds”, “million words” unify the divergent strands of Ezekielian inner horizon. Ezekiel portrays the fabric of Indian society with the help of multiple images:

A poet-rascal-clown was born,

...

A mugging Jew among the wolves. (CP: 179)

Some of the Ezekielian images record the cultural dilemma as a critic Shyamala A. Narayan has nicely put it:

Ezekiel's best poems show his struggle to come to terms with himself and India. In the poster poems Ezekiel makes use of both Judaic-Christian and Hindu-traditions to examine his relationship with God. (Narayan. 1977.85)

In both cases Parthasarathy and Ezekiel record the journey of the poetic self in their abstract images. In their sex-images, they are to some extent similar. However Parthasarathy's eroticism is not so disgusting:

The body sputters, your flesh
Was the glass that cupped its head
Over me.¹³

Ezekiel's eroticism is really disgusting in "Two Nights of Love", "Description", "Nakedness I and II", "The Recluse", "Delighted by Love", "At the Party", "Progress", "To certain Lady", where he has mostly used Carpediem theme. Eroticism is naked in the following images — "Stripped bodies" (CP: 82), "Breasts Swinging", (CP: 220), "Smell of flesh" (CP: 112) and "Thighs as tree-trunks" (CP: 249).

Like Ezekiel Parthasarathy uses far-fetched imagery. He compares his past with an old umbrella and extended the images with an antecedent "Octopus".

I have put aside the past
In a corner, an umbrella
New poor in the ribs;
Curled around me
Are not the familiar arms,
But an Octopus past, blurring
The plate-glass of my days.¹⁴

In the Ezekielian manner Parthasarathy creates multiple images by mixing the metaphors:

The son of a bitch
 Fattens himself on the flesh of dead poets,
 Lines his pockets with their blood.
 From his fingertips ooze ink and paper,
 As he squats on the dungheap
 Of old texts.¹⁵

As Ezekiel does in the following:

God grant me certainty
 In kinship with the sky,
 Air, earth, fire, sea
 And the fresh inward eye.
 Grant me the metaphor.
 To make it human good. (CP: 122)

'Stone' image is traditional in Parthasarathy signifying "dead block" — "like the stone branches in the park" and

My past is an imperfect *stone*:
 The flaws show, I polish
 The *stone*, sharpen the luster to a point.¹⁶

Ezekiel has used stone imagery with different connotations — in "The old woman" (CP: 25), a structural element in "Subject of Change" (CP: 177), living in "The stone" (CP: 40).

As Ezekiel describes "Bombay" not as a mere city through several images, similarly Parthasarathy describes India as a metaphysic in "Homecoming" and "Towards

understanding India" with the help of a number of images. "The plate-glass of my days", "an imperfect stone", "safe planets", "Night curves" are fashioned in the Ezekielian manner. Though Parthasarathy is not experimental in nature, he as well as Ezekiel sets up the tradition of Indo-Anglian imagery in the right direction.

The most striking similarities and dissimilarities existing between Ezekiel and Dilip Chitre are their approach to imagery. Both are the typical Bombay poets and true artists of urban imagery. Both of them are noted for their complex and amorous images.

Hailed from Baroda and settled in Bombay, Dilip Chitre often laments that his transplantation in imagery has failed to a great extent. But such 'a bootless cry' is not justified always. Indian sensibility is found in plethora not only in the poetic images of A. K. Ramanujan and Nissim Ezekiel but also in the fiction of Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan, Bhabani Bhattacharya and other Indo-Anglian fiction writers. They culled images from the mythologies and the Purana. In Raja Rao's "*Kanthapura*" a host of Indo-images showing Indian sensibility, are shown.

The Indian sensibility in Dilip Chitre is hardly noticeable. His sensibility is extra-territorial, though he could not deny the dominating influence of Indian epics:

Watch going into flames like Krishana
 Playing his flute
 Unrecognized by cows and the
 People of Vrindavan.¹⁷

From territorial level his images have risen to the level of surrealism:

Measuring the raging distance
 Between me and me
 Performing

My own autopsy.¹⁸

Ezekiel's concern is mainly with the daily business of living, day to day mundane irritations, large and small angers, common enjoyments of life, different types of conflict, philosophy of the hour and the piece-meal analysis of the body. Occasionally his images are surrealistic:

We took our coffees seated in the shade,
 She had no axe to grind but knew her trade,
 And turned the conversation when I sighed,
 To what I loved in secret but denied.
 And then the chips are down—I recognize
 The haze of self-deception in our eyes. (CP: 43)

Ezekiel follows a kind of system or technique in his imagery. Then he goes on cementing it. This type of images like "Basement" and "Marrow" recur in his poetry.

Like Ezekiel, Dilip Chitre follows the same technique. "Empty self" is such an image. It is not a mere recurring image. In "From Bombay" Dilip uses the image of "empty self" at first stage and makes the image more powerful in the concluding lines:

In the middle of my life,
 I have come to a white page
 In which I must live.¹⁹

The image of "empty self" and "a white page" are correlated and they present the loneliness, sordid condition of the poetic self.

Chitre's image-pageantry is replete with bird or animal imagery.

My senses are beasts without forests,
 My soul is a bird without sky.²⁰

Likewise Ezekiel uses a number of images in the same vein but with deep connotation:

I only fear

Their cries of hidden duty's world,

Unwelcome, loud, funeral bird.

But, saints of heaven on mango-tree.

...

Join the birds of June, I say,

And caw in distant branch or breeze. (CP: 41)

Sex-imagery of Chitre and Ezekiel are shamefully sexual and they follow the footprints of John Donne closely. Nakedly and shamefully Ezekiel presents coital and post-coital experiences through the imagery of "threshing thighs", "singing breasts" (CP: 47), "flow of muscle" (CP: 60), "Harlot of a dream" (CP: 68), "rolling the senses" CP: 68), "a hurricane of Helen's kisses" (CP: 60), "swelling her erotic lines" (CP: 140) and "sensual movement bursting through the dress" (CP: 140).

Dilip Chitre does not lag behind in the portrayal of sex-imagery and compares *death* with a *genital*.

Like Donne, far-fetched imagery is created here. Death is linked with coital experience – a far-fetched concept has been fused here. Abstract and concrete images run parallel in Chitre. Colour-images abound in the following images:

"Tunnel of light", "grey rain", "window pane white as winter", "white page", "public hair already graying", "white bandage of winter", "white bed". All the images are simple and traditional.

In Ezekiel such images are found in plenty: "white foreigners" (CP: 231), "red light district dancer" (CP: 232). In the first and second stages of his poetic

development, Ezekiel has used them with deeper connotation. Initially they had no such deep meaning. They have been used on traditional method. Instead of using blue before the sky, Ezekiel employs “wine-red sky” and widens the scope of Indo-Anglian imagery.

Violent images are sparingly found in Ezekiel. They are not so violent as compared with other Indo-Anglian poets. Ezekiel has used the violent images in a contrasting mode. In “Beauty” and “Hen”, “the marrow in my bone” and “funeral celebrations” are such contrasting and violent images.

Chitre’s violent images deal with the elemental things in life. “We are on a suicide course”, “quick knives curving into the core”, “forests burning”, “the quietness of an emptied vein” are such images. Dilip slowly develops an image by employing it in a number of times.

Ezekiel expresses his existential dilemma. Like Dilip Chitre he has expressed his existential dilemma. Kamala Das, Ramanujan — all share such sensibility:

Back home in Bombay, we have one single millipede,

Walking towards the city, every morning.²¹

He never gives up Indian sensibility whatever may be the charge levelled against him:

A guru

Or a yogi, a gigolo, a snake charmer or a cork,

Of clandestine curries instead of being a poet.²²

Ezekiel is an outsider. Still he has the feeling of poetic aphasia.

Ezekiel *wears a mask willingly in order to arrest the attention of the readers!* So his confessional note regarding his poetic activities is far from being genuine. Like Ramanujan Chitre registers Indian scenario:

Defecate along the stone wall of Byculla

Goods Depot.²³

Ezekiel does not depict the scene of defecation in his poetry. He, rather, registers monkey-show, purgatorial lanes, sky-scrapers and other things. Both Chitre and Ezekiel have epitomized Bombay from different angles. Bombay to Ezekiel stands for a flower going to be blossomed always. Dilip Chitre has treated Bombay as a wasteland. To Ezekiel it is a sort of an active Island:

...the island flowers into slums! (CP: 182)

With the help of a number of images Ezekiel presents the wastelandish image of Bombay: "A barbaric city sick with slums", "burnt out mothers", "waste child". A spiritual sickness afflicts the city.

In the post-Independence period cities grow rampantly. Ezekiel and Chitre both present the city in different dimensions. The city grows. So grow the poetic entities of Ezekiel and Chitre.

But basically Ezekiel presents Bombay as an area of darkness as V. S. Naipaul presents India. But analysing the images of Ezekiel it seems that what Ezekiel says about V. S. Naipaul is equally true of the poet himself:

He writes exclusively from the point of view of his own dilemma, his temperamental alienation from his mixed background, his choice and his escape. That temperament is not universal, not open to all, the escape for most is not from the community but into it. (Ezekiel. 1989. XXI)

Chitre is uprooted in the metropolitan but Ezekiel is deeply rooted in the soil of Bombay. The poet cannot leave the island.

The post-modernist groups are keen to set up the tradition of Indo-Anglian images presenting autobiographical images. It is one of the features of Indo-Anglian images.

Kamala Das, Ramanujan, Ezekiel and Chitre — all have created such autobiographical images. Chitre uses autobiographical images in “The House of Childhood”, “Father Returning Home”, “The Feelings of the Banyan Tree”.

Ezekielian images in this regard are as follows:

“Philosophy, poverty & poetry shared basement rooms”, “crashing seed for bread” and “ambiguous voice”.

The Indo-Anglian poets are deeply conscious of the images having mixed sensibility. Ezekiel and Ramanujan are the pathfinders in this direction. In “The striders” Ramanujan writes:

And search
 For certain thin –
 Stemmed bubble-eyed water bugs.
 See them perch
 On dry capillary legs
 Weightless
 On the ripple skin
 Of a stream.
 No, not only prophets
 Walk on water.²⁴

Here the image “prophets walk on water” combines the sensibility of Hinduism and Christianity.

Chitre has the same feeling.

Back home in Bombay, we have one
 Single millipede walking towards
 The city every morning.²⁵

And the image “millipede walking towards the city” not only suggests the destination bound workers, it at the same time stands for the hectic Bombay city.

Similarly stands the Ezekielian images of “million words” and “flight of birds” in the following lines:

... A flight of birds

Fills the sky with a million words. (CP: 177)

Chitre tries his best to articulate Indian sensibility through his images but never goes deeper like Arun Kolarkar. Chitre registers Westernised India and India on the wheel:

In the distance the caterpillar of an

Electric train

Crawls towards Bombay.²⁶

The Ezekielian images are deep and impressive. Since he is not satisfied with external reality of object, he peels it for a great connotation. Herein lies the great appeal of the imagery of Ezekiel. The images of “sky-scrappers” and “slums” record not only the spiritual decay of Bombay but the poet’s horizon too.

...unsuitable for song as well as sense

The island flowers into slums

And sky-scrappers, reflecting

Precisely the growth of my mind.

I am here to find my way in it.

I cannot leave the island,

I was born here & belong. (CP: 182)

Ezekielian imagery is indeed multidimensional!

Donne introduced the tradition of far-fetched imagery in English poetry. In India it has been used by Ezekiel in Indo-Anglian poetry.

Of course far-fetched imagery *was* also found in the works of Sydney and Shakespeare. But John Donne widely used the poetic ornament in “The Song” and also in “The Anniversary”. In “The Sun Rising” the protagonist declares that he intended to extinguish the Sunbeams with a wink but would not forget his beloved for a moment at all. His beloved represents both the East Indian and the West Indies because his ladylove’s *fragrance* is like spices and bright like diamonds. There are incongruous images in “Twickenham Garden” also.

The far-fetched images – “two better hemisphere”, “declining west”, in “the Good Morrow”, and “twin compasses” in “A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning” are highly intellectual and therefore they are highly complex.

Because of such incongruous images Donne’s poetry remained obscure for a long period. But in the field of Indo-Anglian poetry Ezekiel widened the scope of incongruous images in such a way that they do not suffer from the problem of academic acceptability. Incongruous imagery of Ezekiel makes his poems complex. The pre-Independence Indo-Anglian poets traditionally present the Sun as “the golden disc” but Ezekiel uses unconventional imagery in “white wings of morning” (CP: 20) in order to express more power and vitality in the sun. Similarly not only the English poets but also the other Indo-Anglian poets have used conventional “red rose” imagery but on most of the occasions Ezekiel is seen fond of using “white rose” (CP: 46) imagery. In order to show purity in marriage the poet has used such an image.

In the Bengali language *Maner Janala* (mind’s eye) is frequently used. But Ezekiel treats the image in a better way in “the dream window” (CP: 47). The dream-window has a better psychological appeal. Such innovative images lie scattered in his poetry:

“Spirit’s bones” (CP: 53), “Virgin dawns” (CP: 57), “bone not bountiful” (CP: 60), “Fearing fingers” (CP: 62), “The wailing wood” (CP: 80), “geometry of love” (CP: 92), “oblique light of mind” (CP: 96), “Sea moan” (CP: 103), “liquid dreams” (CP: 110).

Ezekielian imagery suffers from a major setback in the prose poems. A poetic image should be emotional and his images lack such quality. Besides such images hardly conform to the poetic qualities of earlier images. The dynamism of such imagery is also lacking. “Illegitimate shabby children of the gutters” (CP: 33) is such an image.

The Ezekielian imagery is deep and impressive. It has dominating influence on the imagery of the later generation Indo-Anglian poets particularly Shiv Kumar, Keki Daruwalla, Gieve Patel and Arvind Krishana Mehrotra. Except Arvind Krishana, all the post-Ezekiel poets have acknowledged their debt to Ezekiel. And Arvind, according to Bloomford, has been suffering from the anxiety of influence. That’s why he denies the influence of Ezekiel on him.

Ezekiel has introduced the rain-imagery a number of times. Like Ezekiel Keki Daruwalla writes:

Next morning she is a coriander leaf,
Newly plucked.
Rain washed.²⁷

and symbolises “desire” as rain.

In Ramanujan and Ezekiel tree-imagery has some religious implications. Daruwalla’s tree-imagery is mostly concrete:

The country pushed root, prepared to fling
An arc of branches, yet I know nothing today

of feeling or intellect that condensed to form

Nineteenth century grain.²⁸

With a view to presenting Indian sensibility, Ezekiel has expressed it with the help of metaphorical images. So does Mahapatra in the blending of metaphorical images:

It was hard to believe the flesh was heavy on my back.

The fisherman said: will you have her,

Calmly, training his nets and his nerves,

as though his words sanctified his purpose

with which he faced himself

I saw his white bone thrash his eyes.²⁹

Ezekiel has vituperative attack on the embellishing and romantic imagery by pre-modernist Indo-Anglian poets. According to Sri Aurobinda, the true purpose of poetry is:

A divine Ananda, a delight interpretative, creative, revealing, formative — one might almost say, an inverse reflection of the joy which the universal Soul has felt in its great release of energy when it rang out into the rhythmic forms of the universe the spiritual truth, the emotion of things packed into its original creative vision such spiritual joy is that which, the soul of the poet feels and which, when he can conquer the human difficulties of his task, he succeeds in pouring also into all those who are prepared to receive it. (Aurobinda. 1980. 10)

Ezekiel denies the mantra theory of Aurobinda but follows submissively the theory that a good poem consists of *rhythmic* idea and the vision of higher truth. The homespun imagery of Ezekiel is meant to record the philosophy of the hour —the day-

to-day dilemma. Ezekiel's "Poet, Lover, Bird-watcher" is a step towards unfolding the influence of rhythm:

The slow movement seems some how to sky much more
 To watch the rarer birds you have to go
 Along deserted lanes and where the rivers flow
 In silence near the source or by shore
 Remote and thorny like the heart's dark flow
 And there the women slowly turn around,
 Not only flesh and bone but myths of light
 With darkness at the core, and sense is found
 By poets, lost in crooked, restless flight.
 The deaf can hear, the blind recover sight. (CP: 135)

The comparative study carried out here shows the striking similarities and dissimilarities raging in the poetry of Indo-Anglian poets. All of them have jointly tried to set up the Indo-Anglian tradition of imagery – not truly imitative, not fully westernized! As per the flight of poetic fancy Ezekiel creates images. But they are not altogether complex. There are consecrated images like "Moon" (CP: 249), "Rose" (CP: 46), "Hill" (CP: 249), "Stone" (CP: 5) and "River" (CP: 39). They do not pose any problem of comprehension to the ordinary readers. The Ezekielian imagery abounds in such consecrated imagery!

In the next stage he created many images on the basis of external reality. These are sensory images. They do not create any problem at all. In the poem "A woman observed" sensory image is focused through:

The life
 in the woman's belly,

Swelling her erotic lines,

Depresses me, the seed

And source. (CP: 140)

“Chestnut wings”, “tints of green”, “mask of black” (CP: 140), “like silver coin” (CP: 136), “artificial lake” (CP: 48), “basement room” (CP: 76), “bone marrow” and “lonely pillow” (CP: 68) are such images.

From this lower level, Ezekiel rises higher and makes the images to some extent complex and spiral like the bond of chain in organic chemistry.

In such images impressions have been created. Different feelings are pressed into a single image. Metamorphosis of thought is a special culture of such images.

Touch, smell, sound play vital role in such images. “Darkness” standing for ignorance and “light” standing for knowledge don’t just have symbolical overtures.

They have more implications! Even ignorance is bliss. It has some merits and it is not always confusing:

The darkness has its secrets,

Which light does not know. (CP: 223)

Only a few words cannot totally project a full concept. In the poem ‘Two Images’ the image making words – “dark tunnel”, “angel wings”, “fluttering fly” are not enough.

All words are complementary to the formation of images. This is not a mere act of angling. The protagonist’s quest for an ideal land (paradise) and suffering of another fellows are being reflected here. When the circle is over, the protagonist leaves this mundane world and takes shelter in the Promised Land. In the first poem:

Saw a friend flapping his angelic wings

I welcomed him. (CP: 143)

And in the second part of the poem:

“By any fluttering fly,
At the end of a hook”. (CP: 143)

are concomitant to each other.

Ezekielian images at this stage are mature. They are philosophical by nature. In order to express anger the poet has employed innovative images like “in my bones the marrow stirred”, and ultimately shows the existence of good and evil by means of “fine-bird”, “dead lizard” images in “Beauty”. Such images widen the scope of *critical study of poetry*.

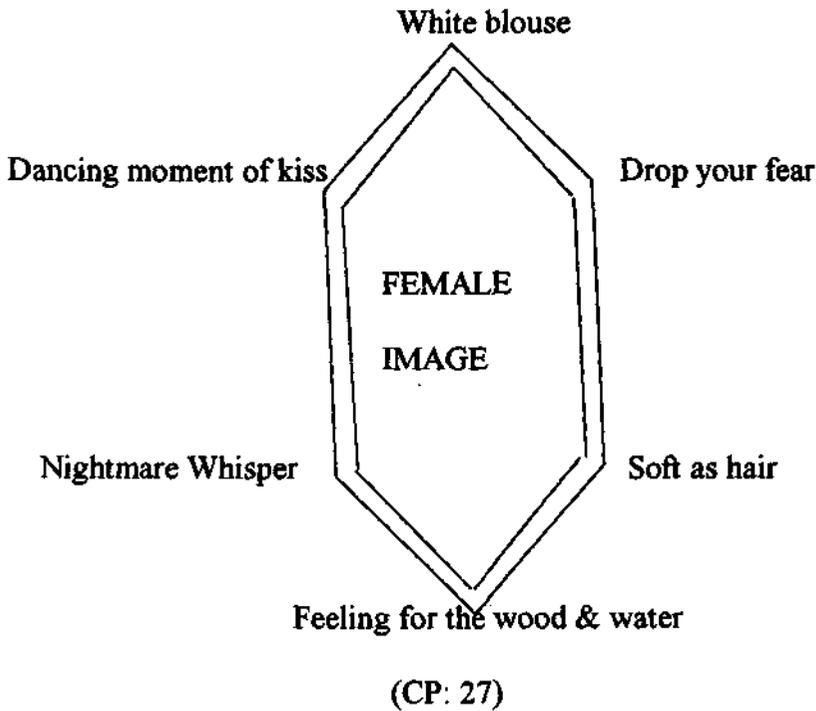
In the phase of maturation Ezekiel utilized the images as the tools for the impersonation of self. The personality of the poet is veiled in the images of “Instrument of Fate”, “Prince of darkness” and “God of inscrutable purposes” (CP: 283). This faculty is seen in Keats and Shakespeare also.

The *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Upanishads* cut deep furrow in the psyche of Ramanujan. He accepts what Radhakrishnan observes:

Just as a person casts off worn-out garments and puts on others that are new, even so thus the embodied soul casts off worn-out bodies and takes on others that are new. (Radhakrishnan, 1993, 108) But Ezekiel tests the religious wisdom in the light of day-to-day existence. He admits “his leaf must wither” (CP:253), but he questions:

The pure invention or the perfect poem
Precise communication of a thought,
Love reciprocated to a quiver,
Flawless doctrines, certainty of God,
These are merely dreams; but I am human
And must testify to what they mean. (CP: 5)

As elements of a compound are arranged in organic chemistry through several bonds, similarly Ezekielian images are arranged to form the complex spectrum of imagery.



In the vast domain of imagery Ezekiel seems to be a prolific artist. But he has some limitations. In the poetry of Ezekiel the imagery in relation to Science, technology is surprisingly lacking. Ezekiel claims that he has a commitment to uphold the tradition of Indo-Anglian culture in the post-Independence India. But he is partially successful in his mission. Kamala Das, Jayanta Mahapatra have utilized technological imagery. Ezekiel avoided it even in this age of science. It seems to be one of the limitations in the Ezekielian stock of image-pageantry.

Even Ezekiel lags far behind to *project India on the wheel. Instead of bullock carts, Maruti Zens are seen plying in the village of India now-a-days. Traditional ploughs have yielded to the sophisticated tractor and power-tillers. Ezekiel has not registered such vast changes.*

So the later generation poets get opportunity to pick them up. This study on the Ezekielian imagery shows that the poet is partially effectual in his mission to project India in the post-Independence period.

The present study shows Ezekiel's skill in the field of thematic and structural pattern of imagery. Ezekiel is an experimentalist. He widens the horizon of imagery by inventing new images. From the frontier of traditionalism Ezekielian imagery leaps into the pasture of neo- images.

Already Donne has paved the way for far- fetched imagery. Ezekiel plods wearily in the same meadow:

“Ossify the spirit's bones” (CP: 53), “Half the gallivanting mind and art” (CP: 63), “traffic dreams” (CP: 42), “virgin clowns” (CP: 57), “flow of muscle” (CP: 60), “the touch of spring” (CP: 64), “flick of grey and brown” (CP: 62), “the sleepy waters” (CP: 65), “flesh and fancy” (CP: 79), “the regions far behind our eyes” (CP: 83), “geometry of love” (CP: 92), “shore-beyond the sea” (CP: 94), “oblique light of mind” (CP: 97), “fabric-slyly- plopping” (CP: 98), “a fallen tree” (CP: 100), “flash of wonderment” (CP: 102). When the poet writes:

I sat upon a rock,
 Heard the sea moan,
 Felt the inner block. (CP: 103)

it may sound untraditional because the roaring sea is quite common. But the personified sea's moaning is also quite acceptable academically. But the poet is not always successful in his venture. His intuitive perception does not go well always. The image of “clouds of drum-emotion” is an example of such incongruous imagery! The following lines do not match well with the theme of “The Recluse” – Not sharing with the crowd:

The daring stream of common passion

Sought in common and desire

Clasped with arm and breast and thigh. (CP: 80)

The image of "The clouds and drum" is a stumbling block to the comprehensive study of the poem. Such obscure images are responsible for making the modern poem highly complex. When the creative sun of the poet was on the western horizon such bizarre images creep in his poetry.

This type of bizarre imagery is jolting but not altogether out of context. "Unearthing thoughts instead of worms" (CP: 104) is such an image. Birds generally unearth worms for the sake of their survival. But what is about "thought"? It is an abstract idea! But if the philosophers are referred to, the relevance of the image seems to be on the right way. The philosophers often unearth thought as the sparrows unearth worms. So "unearthing thoughts" is an image on higher plane. This type of imagery is found in plethoric abundance in Ezekiel.

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CONCLUSION

The foregoing chapters record the successive developments of Ezekielian imagery passing through several phases. Regarding the source of imagery it has been stated that the artist's mind is the cave of thought which Bacon says *specola idola* from which different imagery spring up. Different episodes, incidents, experiences pass through the subconscious mind of the poet and take the form of imagery. A writer's Oeuvre can be judged best from his own statements and critical review. In 1977 Ezekiel said that his interests and concerns are to be judged from the whole or a substantial part of his poetic production. With the help of Austin Warren's and Rene Wellek's extrinsic approach, Ezekiel can be studied properly. At the background of each artistic work lies a deep inner background which can be unveiled by means of the study of imagery and symbol. The study of Ezekielian imagery is an intrinsic study to the creative and critical aspects of Ezekielian poetry. Though Ezekiel "created a body of work of international standard" (King: 1991: 65), Ezekiel never represents India as a whole. The predominating urban images stand incongruously with scanty number of rural images. Ezekiel vociferously repudiates the same, "I am conscious of my very special situation in relation to India, as a poet, but a person and citizen I myself completely identify with the country. Its politics, social life, civic problems, 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)

Linda Hess, Birje Patil, Vilas Sarang, Bruce King, A.K. Mehrotra have repeatedly referred to the Indian sensibility in the poetry of Ezekiel. But such observation is partially true. Admitting the major influence of Indian culture and environment, he resists to be a mere cultural imitator. He has fulfilled his obligation:

I have made my commitments 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. (CP: 181)

He pined for cultural synthesis. He was not unduly ostentatious about his Indianness. Though laconic he presents Miss Puspa “departing for foreign”, (CP: 190), the angry mob of Arda being cool “till I told them I wasn’t a government official” (CP: 187) and dispersing mob after the monkey show to highlight the Post-Independence India. It is not “nocturnal lamentation” (CP: 17) of the poet but the metaphysics of his poetic art. Authentically he was a creator. He created a vast body of imagery with the help of contrast and paradox. His images contain mixed feelings. They are the amalgamation of the *Gita* and the *Genesis*:

No Lord

Not the fruit of action

Is my motive

But do you really mind

Half a bite of it?

It tastes so sweet

And I am so hungry. (CP: 212)

Ezekiel discerns eternity in the flux of fleeting episodes in and around him. His images are, truly speaking, moment’s monuments.

A broad exhaustive study on how the images reveal the personality of the poet is made in the early chapter. On a number of occasions Ezekiel has done the sin of seeing the drama in its nakedness. After the publication of “The Exact Name” (1965),

the nature of his images goes on changing and they hinge primarily on the metaphysical theme. Thereafter the edge of his home-spun imagery gets blunted. Sometimes his images are denting on the literary frontier of decency to find out its acceptable method. Keats and Shakespeare's images are not so voluptuous as that of Ezekiel. Even Kamala Das's approach to sensuous imagery is mostly camouflaged:

The ladies sun themselves on the lower

In the afternoons

With their graying hair

Newly washed,

Left undyed.

Who can say looking at them

That they are toys

Fit for the rouging nights.¹

Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand have widened the horizon of Indo-Anglian imagery by frequently referring to the field of history. Ezekiel never lags behind in this respect. He selects "bombs burst in Kashmir" (CP: 195), "marvelous things in Nazi Germany" (CP: 257), "philistia triumphs" (CP: 256), "Pakistan behaving like this" (CP: 238), "China behaving like that" (CP: 238).

Like historical allusions, the Indo-Anglian Writers started the tradition of employing literary allusions in images. The language in these writings is sometimes overburdened with similes carrying literary allusions. These are sophisticated images directly borrowed from literature though these have not been used on a large scale. At times the literary references are directly named by way of a simile but at other place the readers are simply reminded of certain literary piece or character etc. The readers on these occasions realized that certain pieces of literature must have been at the back

of the writer's mind. Ezekiel frequently uses literary pieces and figures to enlarge the scope of using such literary images. Some relevant examples are: "For God's sake" (CP: 29), "like Samson, blind" (CP: 73), "Blind as Homer" (CP: 21).

However the study is not exhaustive at all. The paper does not focus on the major flaws in the Ezekielian imagery. There are a number of bizarre images in Ezekiel. They are not highlighted properly.

Ezekiel was also an active member of the writers' workshop *which was* set up by P. Lal. He is a source of inspiration to many young practitioners in English verse in India like Keshav Malik, Rakshat Puri, Gauri Pant, Suniti Namjoshi, Vinela Rao, Malathi Rao, Meena Alexander and Eunice de Souza. The present study is a step towards unfolding the great treasure of Ezekielian imagery. Future scholars should step in with the rainbow colours of their sweet dreams and soaring visions to probe deeply in the unexplored horizon of Ezekiel because:

In ten minutes how can I sum up
 This life, this voyage on uncharted
 Sea, this light over, radarless ports,
 This endless worship at plundered shrines.²

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c/o the P.E.A. All-India Centre, Theosophy Hall,
40 New Marine Lines, BOMBAY 400020. 5/1/83

Dear Mr. Bakshi,

Thank you for your interest in my
poem "Beauty". Your interpretation of
it seems to me to be on the
right lines. I did not, though, have
Wordsworth and Tennyson in mind, only
my own perceptions as expressed in
the poem. Best wishes, Yours Sincerely
Hussain Ezzah

EZEKIEL ON THE POEM "BEAUTY."

20/3/2002

Dear Mr. Day Bakshi,

Thank you for your
letter that I received
very late for I
was not here. Hence
my delay in reply back.
The poems you have
quoted are not haikus.
They look like but they
are not.

Haikus are blind forms
& the rhyme scheme
is not 2 direct.

Yes, it is possible
to compose poems with
images.

Best wishes,

Sincerely
Niranjan Mohanty