



## Dimension of Nissim Ezekiel's love poetry: A critical discourse.

Narayan surjit  
behera

lecturer in English F.M (jr) College Balasore Odisha

### ABSTRACT

*Love is one of the recurrent themes of Indian English poetry. Poets have been dealing with love since the birth of this genre. Nissim Ezekiel is one of the supreme love poets of modern times. Nissim Ezekiel lends new dimension to Indian English love poetry. He not only activates modern temperament in Indian English love poetry but also saturated it with new themes and style. Unlike his grand predecessor, like Tagore and Aurobinda, who harnessed their poetic fancy in delineating romantic and spiritual aspects of love, Ezekiel projected genuine human issues like sex and sensuality in man and woman, nudity and nature of marital love in his love poetry. When Tagore and Aurobinda meditated on the union of soul in love Ezekiel traverses physical side of love. Celebration of flesh in all its varied style is the nucleus of his poetry. The current paper endeavors to reflect on the dimension of the Nissim Ezekiel's love poetry*

**KEYWORDS :** recurrent, dimension, saturated, Sensuality, nudity celebration of flesh, traverses and nucleus.

### Introduction:

There are different categories of love such as ideal love, spiritual love, platonic love and physical or sexual love. The first three kinds of love seem to have lost its significance in the modern day writings. Sexual and sensual love dominates modern literature. In Indian English poetry, with the emergence of 'new poets', daring treatment of sex, sensuality, nudity and conjugal discord finds its way to Indian English poetry. Nissim Ezekiel, the fore runner of this new trend acts as a liberator of Indian English poetry from its romantic past and puritanical trappings.

### Discussion:

Nissim Ezekiel writes about the **physical urges of the body, its stark reality and the strength and weakness of conjugal love in a living language.** Keki. N. Daruwalla finds a "rodent like explorations of the various aspects of love- the celebration of flesh, breakdown of married love and transformation of sex to blessedness". Shaila Mahan in his book, *The Poetry of Nissim Ezekiel*, observes that "Ezekiel positively and unequivocally indicates in his poetry- mans eternal passionate interest in woman. In the poems written by him woman is viewed in the usual roles of beloved, wife, mother, whore, sex object and a seductress. The capacity of woman in arousing mans desire and focusing all his sensuous reactions on certain areas of the woman's body is highlighted in many of his poems." (P.74, 5)

### Ezekiel's *A Time to Change*, which happens to be the first significant poetical collection carry the essence of modernism.

The title poem, 'A Time to Change' reflects his personal experience of love, sex and marriage. The poem depicts a journey of human life. The speaker, undoubtedly the poet who is in his prime of youth and his friends were deeply obsessed with the thought of sensual pleasures. The pull of the flesh shakes the mind of the poet and makes him unfit to achieve his goal hence he utters:

Debtors to the whore of Love,  
Corrupted by the things imagined  
Though the winter nights, alone,  
The flesh defiled by dreams of flesh,  
Rehearsed desire dead in spring,  
How shall we return? Collected Poems : 3

The poem ushers the dawn of a new tone and temperament in its affinity towards confessional poetry. The poet, here, realistically ventilates the mental imbalance of a young man. This is clearly a departure from the grand themes of Sri Aurobinda. In another poem from the same volume Ezekiel projects the harsh reality of conjugal love. The graph of conjugal love does not always move straight. A time comes when there exists no love between the husband and wife:

then, absences and quarrels, indifference  
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 CP:29

The poems with its apt image of 'leech' not only convey the discord between the couple that arises in their relationship in concrete terms but also heightens the effect of the poem. The use of 'leech' image reminds of John Donne's, 'flea' conceit. 'Marriage' another important on the theme of marriage explores the early excitement of the wedded couple in soft flowing words.

Lovers when they marry face  
Eternity with touching grace.  
Complacent at being fated  
never to be separated.  
The bride is always pretty, the groom  
A lucky man. The darkened room  
Roars out the joy of flesh and blood.  
The use nakedness is good. CP: 123/4

Like majority of modern poets Ezekiel talks of Sex and Sensuality as a reality of life. A keen exploration of human passion for body and the celebration of flesh is vividly projected in a number of poems. In 'Nudes 1978' (2nd section) a woman's sexual and sensual behavior is highlighted:

I love undressing, she has to say, As she undress. The verbal  
And the visual join in her.  
Is this a part of you? she asks, As she holds it, stares at it.  
Then she laughs. 'Put your finger  
there,' She pleads, as if  
I need instructions. It's only  
Impatience, though, becoming Frenzy  
as I penetrate. 'Now', she claims,  
You are within me. Aren't you  
Within me? And she makes me say, 'I am'. (C.P246)

Enactment of sex is vividly presented here. The woman takes the lead and ignites the physical passion of the man for sex. The strength of the poem lies in its conversational tone. The woman speaks out every act of her sensual and sexual drama in clear terms. The woman's love for nudity "I love undressing", and the typical way of inducing the man for sex is purely sensual. The texture is loaded with vulgar and obscene dialogues followed by sex "becoming Frenzy As I penetrate". No poet prior to Ezekiel has dared to express the sensual proceedings of woman in such an open manner.

The same sort of sensuality is visible in, "Monsoon" the second poem of "Passion Poems".

Here Ezekiel picturizes a woman who appears totally drenched and her sari clinging to all her sex organs before her lover. The sensual sight of the drenched woman ignites him and he puts a kiss on her

lips first and then no part of the body left under cover:

You arrived  
With sari clinging to your breasts and hips  
I put a kiss upon your lips.  
No part of you  
Could hide  
as you dried. CP: 214

Ezekiel has a penchant for female body. In a number of poems he dwells on the erotic fragrance of female body particularly those trigger male erotic desire. A learned critic observes, Ezekiel "Particularizes those parts of the female body which fires up both his loins and lively imagination"( Elzie,page-32) A finest example in this context is 'Motives' where the poet dwells on the different organs of the woman's body :

My motives are sexual  
---

The eyes are large,  
So are the breasts—  
Your thighs are full and round,  
thin and flat I'd love them too. CP:154  
'Description' projects the growth of hair in different parts of woman's body in sensual term:

I will begin, but how should I begin,  
with hair, your 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

The subject of the poem is a mere hair but the way Ezekiel imparts vitality to it is exceptionally new. The image of hair is associated with sensuality. It clearly connotes the sensual delight man extracts by touching, smelling and seeing the growth of hair in different parts of the woman's body. The expressions like , 'touched', 'smelt', 'lying silent there' and 'a wonder of silent hair lying beneath the thighs' is definitely modern.

Portrayal of the corporeal aspect of love with idioms connoting pure physical action is another marked feature of Nissim Ezekiel's love poetry. 'Lines' is a brilliant example of this type of poetry.

Unmask the mind, know the  
hardness Of the hidden and oppressive bone,  
Locate the source of shallow breath  
Hear the throb of loins in love.

.....  
Accept the long tormented breath  
And tremble in the thick of love. (*Collected Poems* 43)

Nissim Ezekiel's love poetry is undoubtedly carved by meticulous scrutiny of the reality of the contemporary society.

**REFERENCES**

V. Kavitha Elzie, Ezekiel and the Feminine Figure: A reading of his Poetic Erotic, included in Indian English literature, vol.7 Ed. N. Basavraj(Delhi : Atlantic,2007)32. | Ezekiel, Nissim, *Collected Poems (1952-1988)* Delhi: Oxford India Paperbacks,1992 | Mahan, Shaila. *The Poetry of Nissim Ezekiel* (Jaipur: Classic Publications, 2001) 193. | Keki.N. Daruwalla (ed.) *Two Decades of Indian English Poetry 1960-1980*( Sahidabad:Vikash

building House,1980) 56. |