

Nissim Ezekiel as an Indian poet writing in English

Nissim Ezekiel is said to be essentially an Indian poet writing in English. He expresses the essence of Indian personality and is also very sensitive to the changes of his national climate and he voices the aspirations and the joys and sorrows of Indians. It has been opined, that the Indo - Anglian poets are of two factions. The neo-modernists and the neo-symbolists. The outlook of the former is coloured by humanism and irony and that of the latter is imbued with mysticism and sublimity, but a perfect blend is achieved by the two groups in the realms of beauty. A perfect example, of an Indo - Anglian poet, who was able to arrive at a synthesis between the two factions of poetry, is none other than Sarojini Naidu, for she took her stance in the neutral, middle ground, between the sacred and profane sphere of poetry⁴ she was at home in both the worlds and found them united in the realms of poetry.

Its possible to gain a proper perspective of the development of Indian feminine poetic tradition, only if it is considered with reference to the changing position of women in India. The very term Women poets implies an attempt to isolate women poets from men poets, and consider them in a group only on the basis of sex, some critics have wondered as to whether there is anything like feminine sensibility, feminine experiences and feminine ways of expression. The feminine character is made up of certain psychological traits as well as certain socially conditioned ones. All these features set them apart as a group. They moreover do not accept the duties which are traditionally allotted to women, in the male dominated society, and assert their new identity as independent, individualistic and conscious participants in experience. Thus these women poets do mark' the evolution of the Indian feminine Psyche from the tradition to modernity.

Nissim Ezekiel occupies an important place in post-Independence Indian English literature. He has wielded a great influence as a leading poet, editor and an occasional playwright. Besides, he is a well-known critic. Sometimes he also emerges as a politician in the guise of a fighter for cultural freedom in India. Ezekiel held many important positions. He was for many years a Professor of English in Bombay University. He is a noted name in the field of journalism. In this capacity he was editor of many journals including Poetry India (1966-67), Quest (1955-57) and Imprint (1961-70), He was an Associate Editor to the Indian P.E.N., Bombay.

As a man of letters Nissim Ezekiel is a 'Protean' figure. His achievements as a poet and playwright are considerable. K. Balachandran writes, "The post-Independence Indian poetry saw its new poetry in the fifties. Among the new poets A.K. Ramanujan, R. Parthasarathy, Shiv K. Kumar, Kamala Das, Monica Verma, O.P. Bhatnagar, Gauri Deshpande, Adil Jussawalla, Ezekiel occupies a prominent place. His versatile genius can be found in his poetry, plays, criticism, journalism and translation." Nissim Ezekiel

has done a good work in Indian writing in English. He has written many volumes of poems—A Time to Change (1952), Sixty Poems (1953), The Third (1959), The Unfinished Man (1960), The Exact Name (1965) and others. His plays Nalini, Marriage Poem, The Sleep-Walkers, Songs of Deprivation and Who Needs No Introduction are already staged and published. He has also edited books Indian Writers in Conference (1964), Writing in India (1965), An Emerson Reader (1965), A Martin Luther King Reader (1965) and Arthur Miller's All My Sons (1972). His literary essays published in magazines and papers are innumerable. The notable among them are 'Ideas and Modern Poetry' (1964), 'The Knowledge of Dead Secrets' (1965), 'Poetry as Knowledge' (1972), 'Sri Aurobindo on Poetry' (1972), 'Should Poetry be Read to Audience?' (1972), 'K.N. Daruwalla' (1972), 'Poetry and Philosophy,' 'Hindu Society' (1966). He has written essays on art criticism 'Modern Art in India' (1970), 'How Good is Sabavala?' (1973), and 'Paintings of the Year 1973' (1973). His essays on social criticism Thoreau and Gandhi (1971), 'Censorship and the Writer' (1963), 'How Normal is Normality' (1972), 'Tradition and All That a Case Against the Hippies' (1973), 'A Question of Sanity' (1972) and 'Our Academic Community' (1968) are varied and auto telic of his wide interest.

Ezekiel is an editor of several journals encouraging writing poetry, plays and criticism He also asked many writers for translation, affecting the theory and practice of the young poets. The writers like Rilke and W.B. Yeats influenced Ezekiel. Like Yeats, he treated poetry as the 'record of the mind's growth.' His poetic bulk indicates his growth as a poet-critic and shows his personal importance. Chetan Karnani states, "At the centre was that sincere devoted mind that wanted to discover itself. In the process, he managed to forge a unique achievement of his own."

The poet Ezekiel has already published several volumes of poems. A Time to Change (1952) was his first book of poems. For him poetry-writing was a lofty vocation, a way of life. He treated life as a journey where poesy would be the main source of discovering and organising one's own self. In a sense, poetry to Ezekiel became a way for self-realisation. He calls life a texture of poetry. He identifies himself with poetry. So all of his volumes of verse are well-knit and they are in the poet's view, a continuation of each other. Ezekiel's experiments in prose rhythms and his fine sense of structure and metrical ability. The verse rhythms of T.S. Eliot seem to haunt his mind. Ezekiel's Sixty Poems (1953), his second volume of poems was published in 1953. But these poems are loose in structure and they are less appealing.

THE ABOVE MATERIAL HAS BEEN COMPILED FROM DIFFERENT OPEN SOURCES.