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“Sarcastic and Strong Approaches on Social Elements in Nissim Ezekiel’s Poetry”

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ABSTRACT:

The poems of Nissim Ezekiel mostly deal with the social elements that he happened to approach at his life time. Though brought up in India as an Anglo-Indian poet, his approaches on the Indian soil about India is very much original and mostly reflects its originality. The poems of Nissim Ezekiel prove something different from other poets. As it has been written in the **Holy Bible**, “He that rebuketh a man afterwards shall find more favour than he that flattereth with the tongue” [Proverb 28:23]

His works are appreciated and apt for the sentence above mentioned. To make the reader enjoy and at the same time be pierced in thoughts and be provoked against the present circumstances that lead a hypocritic society as an acceptable one among the many, it has been clearly exposed in each of his poems. As a well wisher of the social welfare his poems stand as an indirect moral and can be even called poems of morality. He gave anew thought and a new outlook to Indian English Poetry and is universally recognized and appreciated as being one of the most notable and accomplished Indian English language poets of the 20th century. The present paper analyses the Sarcastic and strong approaches on social elements in the poems of Nissim Ezekiel.

KEYWORDS: Nissim Ezekiel, Poems, India, Woman, Beautiful

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INTRODUCTION:

Nissim Ezekiel born in Bombay in 1924 to Jewish parents, grew up in the metropolis loving its streets and crowds, and yet, finding his solitary space for poetry. He had an excellent academic record, winning the R.K. Lagu Prize for holding the first rank in M.A English Literature from Bombay University in 1947. From late 1948 to 1952, he lived in England studying theatre, cinema, psychology, philosophy and even modern Indian culture. In the meanwhile, he steadily wrote poems, and by the time he left England, his first collection of poems, “**A Time to Change**”, had come out in 1952. He pursued various professions like literary journalism, advertising, broadcasting and teaching. For some time, he was an editorial staff of **The Illustrated Weekly of India**. In 1953, his second collection, **Sixty Poems**, came out. When **Quest**, the pre-eminent literary journal was founded in 1954, he became its first editor.

In his inaugural address at the PUCL National Convention held in Bombay on October 31 and November 1, 1992, his words on societal consideration are noteworthy:

“Activists will have to think of remedies Activists always have to think of remedies, but the editor I am quoting adds without demolishing the walls lock, stock and barrel, respect for rights and liberties will remain a distant goal”. This is followed by the last sentence of the address. Nothing short of a philosophical revolution can bring about a change, and for that we need to have iconoclasts, not status-quoists and constitutional experts.

In the poem **Healers** – in the opening line, ‘The unplanned city has a death-wish;’ he clearly points out his feelings on the society that has never had a moral for their lives. Their effects of incantations are revealed as, “Their incantations hang in the polluted air” where the surrounding lacks its originality the inhabitants of the same can never be made whole or perfect. The one who likes to come out of such evils should never be desired to settle down in the same. Also in the following line, “Sex is prohibited or allowed Meat and drinks are prohibited or allowed” reveals the realism of the exposed falseism. The outer man walks among the grouped society and it shows himself or herself as the perfect nature and embodiment of the real human but the inner one likes to be mingled with the evils and the unwanted. These pretensions of the mob are strongly condemned by the poet. Their outward morality is sarcastically attacked in the next line: “..... Give up everything or nothing and be saved” Even the system of social behaviour in marriages is indirectly attacked by the poet. “It does not matter if your marriage is arranged. It does not matter if you cannot love your wife.”

The word ‘arranged’ and the phrase ‘cannot love your wife’ expose the systems of society that often opposing the real will and wish of the individual and that has hurt on the soft inner man. Even though the desires are left behind, the systems teach them to live a life pretending as a family

and make the public to approve and the government to proclaim them as the pair meant to live as husband and wife bound by the law and the society but not by the mind or love. These strong approaches of the poet reveal his real being and the greatest desire for the longing of good being.

Even the same point is expressed in the poem '**Minority**'. He says: "It's not the mythology Or the marriage customs that you need to know"

Though the poet's view of the lines deals with the life of a saint, the words related to the marriage is compared with the mythology and equated to that meaning that reveals that they are just the imaginative and never bring a piece of bread to the satisfaction of man's life.

When he talks about his own marriage ceremony in "Jewish Wedding in Bombay", "..... mostly, we were Amazed, and so were the others, Who knows how much belief we had?" In the lines "..... The game delighted all then neighbour's children, who never stopped staring at me, the reluctant bridegroom of the day" he explains how the position of a bridegroom would be on the day of wedding as each and everything deals plainly with rituals. But the real love lies, he says, in "Aside". One cannot imagine Elephants making love, But it seems they do. So also tortoises And snails, Or even other men With women doing What it seems they do. No, one cannot imagine it, Except as a song In which we the lovers Are sung and saved From too much separation Love is the ultimate reparation.

In "**Hang Over**", when the poet talks about the family system, his sarcastic talent is clearly expressed through his comparison. "Five-child local family staring at one-child American family". His attack on Indian society extends to the highest level whenever he talks about the poverty that rules the country even from time memorial.

Even when Ezekiel talks about select centered politics of the country, he never forgets to point out the fate of poverty. "Long walk to Church gate between pavement sleepers" The great role of poverty in Calcutta at where he witnessed a lot it's role overflows in his poems. In the poem "**In India**", this can be clearly seen. "Always, in the sun's eye, Here among the beggars, Hawkers, pavement sleepers Hutment dwellers, slums,"

One can say that as the one witnessing the same every day; it has made a great impression in the poet's mind. The word 'always' strongly supports that point, whenever the poet starts his thought to go around, he could travel only with these powerful figures. He says in his own sarcastic way,

"Here among the beggars I ride my elephant of thoughts, Ezekiel is not sarcastic when he talks in "**Woman and Child**" I stop when a child crawls on hands and knees across our way. He's beautiful, naked and funny. We smile at him, he's amazed. His mother, selling oranges seated by a wall, smiles at us. These lines express the condition of poverty

Ezekiel's sarcasm and sound attack on poverty is clearly seen in the poem **“From Edinburgh Interlude”** under the heading **‘Beauty and Poverty’**: From the squalor of a narrow lane leading to slum, she walked out – like one of the Maharaja's air-hostesses. She stepped briskly over pools of gutter-water and dog-shit. All I was left with was this song about beauty and poverty. - Beauty and Poverty What lies special in the poems of Nissim Ezekiel is the attachment on the public even himself when he happened to see them not heeding to the cry and lamentation of the poor. It deals with the negligence of the society to uplift the down trodden. It never lies in the words. When he talks in minority poem, he says, “It's the language really separates, whatever else is shared, on the other hand Everyone understands Mother Teresa; her guests die visibly in her arms.”

It is the poets sentimental and sound attach on the person pining on poverty and needy just through words.

In “Entertainment”, Ezekiel sympathetically expresses the idea that how the longing of the down trodden and the forgettable of the public on their daily family running depend on others. Nissim Ezekiel is explaining about the monkey-show done by a ‘patient girl’. Their trials and pains are clearly depicted by the poet. The monkey-show is on: patient girl on haunches holds the strings, a baby in her arms. Two tiny monkeys In red and purple pantaloons prepare to dance. Crown collects, forms a circle. Naked to the waist, The Master pf Ceremonies Drums frenzy, cracks whip, calls the tricks All those troubles continue just for their livelihood as it is explained in the line: “to earn applause and copper coins” In the middle of the poem, the poet sarcastically mentions the words: “..... The untouchable women Smooth their hair.” and strongly insists about the evil that runs long in the society. The lines: “only the monkeys are sad, the baby begins to cry Anticipating time for payment” clearly expose the conditions of the neglected. Their innermost feelings are originally expressed in these lines: “Anticipating time for payment, the crowd dissolves. Some in shame, part With the smallest coin they have.” pours the mournful events occurring in the society. The final line: “The show moves on” is the one that expresses their continual life of monotony without any spring in the life.

The society in general is very much induced by hypocritical and gloomy theories that spoil the whole human community. The types of nature are strongly utilized by the poet by his sarcastic and strong expressions. In ‘In India’, he talks about the religious hypocrisy that runs among the public. Though to the outer world they pretend themselves perfect and noteworthy, their inner life and their personal thoughts stink and produces bad odour.

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