



INDIАНNESS IN NISSIM EZEKIEL'S SELECTED POEMS

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ABSTRACT:

This paper focuses on the depth of Indian mother's love and neighbours love. Initially I wish to bring the poem 'The Night of the Scorpion' and latter 'Goodbye Party for Miss Pushpa T.S' by Nissim Ezekiel to your note. In the poem, 'The Night of the Scorpion', author shows some Indian superstition. When the scorpion stings the mother, She is groaning and tried to come out of her pain. Her neighbours talk about rationalism but her husband tried to cure her pain by using herbs, paraffin and powder etc., And also the holy man did some incantation for the pain. Though she is experiencing the pain to a great extend, she said that she is feeling happy now, that the scorpion sting only her but not her children. Here we can realize the depth of Indian mother's love. In the next poem, the speaker of the poem and his colleagues were downhearted, because Miss Pushpa who is their colleague is going to depart to a foreign country. Because of their love on her, they set out the Goodbye party which is not common in Indian tradition. Here the indianness reflects, Indians not only love their family members but they also love their neighbours.

Keywords:

Ezekiel, Indianness, Mothers love, Neighbours love, Superstitions.

Nissim Ezekiel(1924-2004) an Indian Jewish belongs to an Bene-Israel family and his residency is in Bombay. He completed his under graduate in Bombay. Later, he started to enhance himself in literature. He calls himself a 'good native' and protests that he "cannot leave this island/I was born here and belong". The upshot of this is the final cry of despair: 'My backward place is where I am'. Ezekiel planned to write an autobiography, 'A Thousand

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Failures' (Rao, 2000, 345). Later he was considered as poet, actor, playwright, editor and art critic. He was awarded Sahitya Akademi Award in 1983 and Padma Shri award in 1988.

Ezekiel contributed many to the world of literature through his literary works. His poetic career continued for more than three decades and he published *A Time To Change* (1952), *Sixty Poems* (1953), *The Third* (1959), *The Unfinished Man* (1960), *The Exact Name* (1965), *Hymns in Darkness* (1976), *Latter-day Psalms* (1982), and his *Collected poems* (1952-1988). In his poems, *Hymns in Darkness* and *Latter-day Psalms* are delivered with the negative note.

Nissim Ezekiel's works are mostly based on love, Realism, Indian identity and superstition. He exhibits love in his literary works not to the confined area, but to the large circle. For example he asserts the need for love and considers it to be of prime importance in his poem 'In Emptiness',

"But this, I am sure, can never be ,

That I should shut the door on gods,

.....

And make no rendezvous with love

I would rather suffers when I" (collected poems 50)

He not only love to write about human affection, but he also extends his imagination on songs, stars, winds and violins in his work *Sixty Poems*. In tribute, he shows innocence and gaiety of his love in the poem lines of *A Time to Change*.

"I followed her, we joined the crowds,

We drove the tandem cars, we cast

A penny in the slot and won,

Hung about and left the fun-fair last."

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The above lines clearly shows, how the author presents his sincerity and candour in deep love through this poem.

In “Night of the Scorpion”, the poet recalls his past. Because he cannot forget that scared moment, when his mother groaning with the pain. At that time, they lived in a mud house. One day, there was a heavy downpour throughout the night. So, the venomous scorpion searching a shelter to stay. Unfortunately, it got a shelter in poet’s house. Due to heavy rain, there was no electric facility too. With the help of lamps and lanters they chatting among their family members. At that moment, the scorpion stung his mother, so she shouted and cried. In this poem, the tail of the scorpion is flashed by the word “diabolic”. By this word, we can realize the scorpion as a “Symbol of Evil”.

Then the villagers rushed to his mud house like flies, which made them puzzled. Panicly they start to call their God. In this poem, the first letter of the word ‘God’ is written in Uppercase. This shows that their God is living still. Because, though his God Jesus died for everyone’s sins and he resurrected and still he is a living god to save everyone.

“The peasants came like swarms of life”(Ezekiel 8)

Neighbours carrying the candles, lanters and searching for a venomous scorpion to kill it. Here, the villagers forgot to do the first aid for her, inspite of that they were searching for scorpion. They said, that the poison of the scorpion moves into mother’s blood. They are trying to console her and starts to talk about superstition and they said, this suffering and pain will burn away all her sins and gives her a rebirth.

“May he sit still, they said

May the sins of your pervious birth” (Ezekiel 18-19)

The mother groaned and twisted in mortify pain, so her husband was tried to cure her by using powder, herb and hybrid. He poured paraffin upon the bitten place and put a match on it.

“I watched the flame feeding on my mother.

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I watched the holy man perform his rites to tame poison with an incantation.”(Ezekiel 40-41)

The above lines shows their superstitious rites which gives relief from evil. They called the holyman and do some rites, without holyman they don't even starts their work. This reflects, though the villagers believe in God and they strongly rooted in Superstition.

After their rites and incantation, the mother's pain was stopped and she felt happy.

“My mother only said

Thank God the scorpion picked on me

And spared my children.”(Ezekiel 44-46)

The above lines shows, the love of the mother towards her children. When the venomous scorpion stung her, she didn't worry about herself but the mother's heart thinks about her children. So, she thanked God that the scorpion stung her and spared her children.

This paper presenter selected this poem for highlighting the Indian mother's love. The last three lines show, What the Indian mother's love is? We cannot see such a wonderful motherly love and care in other countries. It is overwhelmed only in Indian mother's, and such a love has been peaked in every Indian women through their gene. It is one of the hearty feel that everyone should have throughout their lifetime.

“Goodbye Party for Miss Pushpa T.S” the title itself shows about Indian speech. Because the word “Goodbye party” is used here, instead of ‘farewell party’. The speaker of the poem called all his colleagues as ‘friend’. But when he called Miss Pushpa we have to notice the usage of word ‘Dear sister’. Here the indianness had started in the very first line of the poem. The poem line is

'friends

our dear sister'(Ezekiel 1-2)



The line shows how the Indian make mistakes while they talking. Indians are not the native speakers of English. When we starts to learn a new language, surely the mistakes will happen. Indians will never mind mistakes of their words. They just compose their feelings in a simple way. Here the speaker feels about his sister's depart and he just brought out his feelings and expressions without thinking about his mistakes.

'is departing for foreign

in two three days

and' (Ezekiel 3-5)

Usually in those days, Indians will not gather for Goodbye party. But here, her colleagues gathered for Miss Pushpa's depart. They gathered and feels about their sister's depart. None of the countries, had the same feelings. It is a special thing to take ones feelings and realize it in their life. Here they gathered to bless and wish her journey.

'We are meeting today

to wish her bon voyage' (Ezekiel 6-7)

Then they start to talk about her sweetness what she had done in her field. No one is liked by all. But, Indians when the particular person is going to depart they feel for them and tells their sweetness to others.

'You are all knowing, friends,

what sweetness is in Miss Pushpa' (Ezekiel 8-9)

Always we heard the word 'smiling' and some says 'keep smiling', 'Positive thinkers can smile always'. Here, the heroine of the party Miss Pushpa she always used to smile in all aspects of her life. .

The speaker says that Miss Pushpa comes from high family and his father was an advocate in Bulsar or Surat. Though she is in rich family she won't show it to others. Normally

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some rich people in India will not show their wealth to others because those days they lived as a family.

When the speaker went to Miss Pushpa's home he chatted with her family members and enjoyed a lot, and he liked their hospitality. For Indians, hospitality is very important in their society. We can't see such a hospitalities in many developed and developing countries. This shows how the Indians mingled with others in easy manner.

Next the author says that Miss Pushpa is always ready to help others. When someone asks for a help, she never refused to do that. Here we can see the helping tendency of her. Indians also never refused to help others, because they thought helping others is equal to doing things to God and they don't bothered about the receivers. The author also adds that helping is a good spirit.

Finally, the author concluding the speech and blessed her to improve her prospects and to have a happy journey. The quality of Indianness reflect through many functions such as marriage, birthday and new-born child etc. Here, Indianness reflects through their blessings for others. In functions usually the elders bless the hero/heroine of the function. Blessing others is also a good habit. Blessing others is a tradition in India. But in other countries they just leave a word or sentence according to their situation. But Indians bless and gave some valuable suggestions to them to lead a happy life.

This paper presenter explains that Nissim Ezekiel's poems not only presents Indian tradition, superstition, rationalist and culture, but it reflects the Indianness through love and emotions.

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