

SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN POST 1970 INDO ENGLISH POETRY

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CHAPTER 1

SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS DEFINED

Social consciousness, broadly speaking, means consciousness of the social, political and economic occurrences and situations having a direct effect on the society. Man is a part of society, and society is the ultimate outcome of human associations and relationships. When people come in contact with one another, they are bound to react and influence one another. Customs, traditions and festivals are the result of human associations.

Poetry, according to Prof. H.S. Bhatia, on the second plane, (the first being the expression of some inner voice audible to decide some values which are universal and human), "becomes the reflection of discernible social, economic and political happenings and situations which are further the result of traditional, civilizational, cultural and even geographical factors which act, react and interact among themselves and through evolution pointing towards some surmisable direction."³

The desire to overshadow, dominate, impose, rule and assert superiority is a part of human nature and this desire has given rise to complexities in human relationships. A poet is a keen observer more than anybody else, and when he finds things happening in society which should be taken note of and brought to light and put before the society at large, he reacts forcefully and presents it through his chosen medium, i.e. poetry.

Social consciousness in relation to poetry is not just the plain statements dealing with the happenings in a particular society, its ways and methods, customs and traditions, festivals and manners of worship. A person walking to his office, a child going to school, a man selling his things, a farmer returning from his field, a mother feeding a child, a doctor attending to a patient, a marriage being solemnised, a festival being celebrated, flowers being offered to the Lord and a funeral being performed are, of course, an integral part of society. However, there is nothing unusual, striking or startling about these happenings. To describe them in plain terms is the business of prose and not of poetry.

Multifarious problems and situations arising out of human relationships and complex ways of society cause suffering to the people, particularly the common lot. India being a very large country, poverty-stricken and with hungry masses, faces innumerable problems. When such a situation arises, the black sheep of society take full advantage of it and exploit the situations. Consequently the common people suffer immensely and immeasurably. Hunger, poverty, squalor, blackmarketing, hoarding, smuggling, exploitation, corruption, pseudo-religiousness, political hypocrisy, prostitution, unemployment, over-crowding, superstition, false education, inequality, injustice, communal disharmony, barbarity, arson, riots, violence, atrocities, murder, rape, torture, terrorism and massacre are rampant in the modern Indian society. Consciousness of all these happenings and their depiction in strong terms with the weapon of irony and satire so as to stir the conscience of the people is real social consciousness in relation to Indo-English poetry.

Social consciousness, to quote H.S. Bhatia again, "is virtually a study Of man in his social milieu, as a dynamic creature, some times alive and active, sometimes passive and tolerant, but sometimes volatile and aggressive and sometimes pursued and persecuted"⁴ .

However, to be exact, social consciousness is the portrayal of the dark side of life which results in making life miserable, unbearable, depression-ridden and sorrow-laden. One aspect of poetry is a reaction against such disturbing forces.

Thus, social consciousness does not stand for the portrayal of the bright side of life. On the contrary, it is the representation of those aspects of life which cause suffering and pain and disturb the smooth flowing of the stream of life. It stands for the depiction of misery, poverty, exploitation, illiteracy, unemployment, the plight of the down-trodden and the like. A socially conscious poet is different from a mystical, philosophical and religious poet. His heart bleeds to see so much of misery around him. India is such a vast country with so many religions, castes, customs, languages, tribes, regions etc. that it provides unlimited material to a socially conscious poet to think, feel, ponder and dwell on the subjects. Social consciousness in Indo-English poetry is a study of Indian life in its social milieu. It is a reaction against the existing state of affairs, which makes life unbearable. A true poet is the creature of his time and cannot afford to be consciously blind to the misery of life he finds himself surrounded by. All the poets who flourished in Pre-independence India ignored the picture of Indian life the way they should have depicted it. Hence they were not socially conscious poets. It was after Independence that Indo-English poets became conscious of the prevailing conditions and the problems which the people of our country began to face.

Indo-English poets became conscious of such situations after Independence, but only a few of them like Dorn Moracs and Nissitn Ezekiel took a note of it. After 1960 Indo-English poets became more and more conscious of the tragic happenings in the Indian society and a number of poets, great and small, raise their voice against it in their poetry.

A number of Indo-English poets who have flourished after 1970 are 'Zeitgeists' (those who represent the spirit of the times).

Chapter 2

TRENDS IN INDO - ANGLIAN POETRY BEFORE 1970

(Historical Background)

To begin with the words of a famous Indo-English poet, "Indian English Poetry is not the weeds to be pulled out of the garden of the Muse. It is a bloom fresh and fair. The nightingale is the same, so is her song. 'S

Indo-Anglian Poetry— imitative, assimilative and adoptive in the beginning turned to traditional, philosophical and mystic, developed into romantic and lyrical, and has matured into ironical, satirical, humanistic, imaginative, meditative, metaphysical, realistic, thematic, creative and spontaneous.

Indo-English poetry or Indian English poetry, a name which it was finally given about a decade ago, has its origin with Henry Derozio (1809-31) who hailed from Bengal and who died in the prime of his youth. Derozio published two volumes of poetry — 'POEMS'(1827) and 'THEFAKEER OF

JUNGHEERA : A MEMORIAL TALE AND OTHER POEMS'— (1828)

Before we dwell on the subject, it is necessary to mention the different names which Indian English literature was given— 'Indian Writing in English', 'Indo-English' and finally 'Indian English Literature'. The term 'Indo-Anglian' was objected to by many Indian critics like Atanldntl Bose. Prof: K. R.S. Iyengar who moved heaven and earth to propagate the cause of Indian English Literature changed the term 'Indo-Anglian' to 'Indian Writing in English'. Proc. Alphonso Karkala, while distinguishing it from Indian Literature in English and Anglo Indian Literature, named it 'Indo-English Literature'. However, Prof. V.K. Gokak did not accept the term maintaining that 'Indo-English Literature' refers to translation into English from literature in Indian languages. The above view of V.K. Gokak is rejected by many critics. Indo-English Literature is still an acceptable term, though the most recent edition of Congress Classification Rules has transferred 'Indo-English Literature' from 'English Literature India' to 'Indian-Literature-English' Without entering into the controversy, let us take 'Indo-English Poetry' and 'Indian

English Poetry' as the same terms for the topic of the present research is 'Social Consciousness in Post 1970 Indo-English Poetry'.

There have always been doubts in the minds of English men about Indians writing genuine poetry in English and several English poets have pooh-poothed the poetry written by Indians in English. Gordon Bottomley is said to have described Indo-Anglian poetry as 'Matthew Arnold in a sari'. He should rather have referred to it as 'Shakuntala in skirts'. W.H. Yeats called Indo English Poetry 'A blind alley lined with curio shops leading nowhere. Yeats dismissed Indo-English Poetry summarily without realising that language is a means and not an end in itself. It is culture and not the language which gives identity to literature.

According to I.11. Rizvi, "Language is a stream through which the current of poetry flows."6

In the opinion of S.Z.II. Abidi, "The fact that Indo-Anglian poetry is Indian in content and sensibility and English only in form and language goes in favour of the genre as a distinctive body of poetry."7

Paniker is of the view that "in Indo-Anglian poetry we have an Indian locale, a fondness for an occasional Indian phrase or word and generally autobiographical themes."8

Bruce King defends valiantly that Indo-English poetry is Indianised. He says, "They (Indo-English poets) Indianised their poetry by making it an expression of Indian life as experienced rather than pre-conceived ideas about reality."9

Aruna Rani gives a balanced judgement when he says, "Indian poets distinctly see their goal though as yet they may not have scaled great heights. More importantly, their writings adequately incorporate the Indian ethos. It is a beautiful sapling rooted in Indianness."10

Indo-English poetry may be divided into two periods—Pre-Independence and Post-Independence Indo-English Poetry. The earliest Indian poets writing in English were Henry Derozio

(1809-31), Ruinarain (1824-89) and Michael Madhusudan (1824-73). During that period Indians resigned themselves to the idea that British rule was 'fate accompli'. This was the reason why most of the Indian poets writing in English composed imitative and derivative poem The Dutt family, however, was a class in itself. The family embraced Christianity. 'THE DUN FAMILY ALBUM' was brought out in 1870. It was a collection of 187 poems composed by three Dutt brothers—Govind Chunder, Har Chunder and Greece (Sic) Chunder and their cousin Umesh Chunder.

Their poetry, as Prof. T. R. Shanna writes in his introduction to *Essays on Nissim Ezekiel*, 'displayed a typical slavish imitation of the English romantic poets. Their poetry is pathetically wanting in authenticity.

In a way, Ram Sharma, pseudonym of Nobe Kishen Ghose, was the first mystic poet of Indian

English poetry and brought out three books of poetry entitled 'WILLOW DROPS' (1873-74), 'THE LAST DAY : A POEM' (1886) and 'SHIVA RAJE', BHABOT/ GITA AND MISCELLANEOUS POEMS' (1903).

By common consent, 'Lalita Dutt (1857-77), the third and youngest child of Govind (Chunder Dutt was the first most authentic Indo-English poet. Among the Indo-English poets, she was the first to treat the Indian myths extensively. Her book of poems 'Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan' was posthumously published in 1882. In this book, two of the ballads deal with Sita and Savitri, four with the legends of Dhruva, Butto, Sindhu and Prehlad. one with the goddess Uma and the other two with Lakshman and Bharata.

Among the less known Indian poets writing in English were Behranji Bhanvalji Malabar-e

(1853-1912) author of 'THE INDIAN MUSE 'N ENGLISH GARB' (1876), Vest,Vala

(COURTING THE MUSE, 1879), M.M. Runic (THE RISE, 1879) and Nagesh WishwanaCh Pai (THE ANGLE OF MISFORTUNE : A FAIRY TALE, 1904). Ronresh Chandra Dutt (1848-1909) who was a cousin of Lalita Dutt translated Rig Veda, the Upanishadas, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana into English.

After Mantohan Ghose (1869-1924), the elder brother of Atrobindo Ghose, was the most talented among the poets who lived in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the first quarter of the twentieth century. His notable poetic works were, 'LOVE SONGS AND ELEGIES' (1898) 'NAL AND DAMAYANTI' (1916), 'ADAM

ALARMED ,W PARADISE'(1918), SONGS OF LOVE AND DEATH published in 1926 after his death and 'ORPHIC MysTER/Es'and 'IMMORTAL Eve'published as late as 1974. Most of the poets described above, barring Toru Dutt and Mannohan Ghose were imitative, and most of them were philosophical and mystical to a small extent. Toru Dutt was a genuine narrative poet while Ghose was a philosophical and mystical poet.

Almost all the Indo-English poets, great and small, who belonged to the Pre-Independence

India including the three great figures Rabindranath Tagore, Aurobindo Ghose and Sarojini

Naidu, although two of them died after the dawn of independence (Sarojini Naidu in 1949 and Aurobindo Ghose in 1950), were not socially conscious and none of them dwelt on the social problems of the day.

Let us mention the less known poets and their works first. Joseph Fildade (1872-1947), published several collections such as POEMS' (1901), GOAN FIDDLER' (1927), 'SONGS OF EMLE' (1938), and 'SELECTED POEMS' (1942). Other names worth mentioning are Jicendra Mohan Kigore

('FLIGHTS OF FANCY' 1881), Ratnakrishna ('TALES OF/NOAND OTHER POEMS) A.M. Modi (SPRWG BLOSSOMS, 1919), Romy Datta ('ECHOES FROM EAST AND WEST', 1909 ; POEMS' 1915) R. B. Paymaster (NAVROZ/ANA OR THE DAWN OF A NEW ERA '1917) : P. Sheshadri (SONNETS 1914 ; 'CHAMPAK LEAVES', 1923 ; 'IN THE TEMPLE OF TRUTH' 1925) : A.F. Khabardar ('THE SILKEN TASSEL '1918) ; M.B. Pitawala ('SACRED SPARKS' 1920 ; 'L/NKS WITH THE PAS'1933); N.V. "I handani ('THE of DELH/AND OTHER POEMS' 1916) ; 'KRISHNA 'S POEMS' 1919 ; 'HE WALKED ALONE' 1948) and Nizama Jung ('SONNETS', 1917 ; 'ISLAMIC POEMS '1935 ; 'Poems'1954).

Swami Vivekanand (1862-1902) was a nationalist to the core and he wrote poems in a nationalistic tone. Harindranath Chattopadhyaya who was a prolific writer, was a transcendentalist and mystically complex poet. Among his collections were 'THE FE/TSR OF YOUTH' (1918), THE MAG/c TREE'(1922), 'Poems AND PLAYS' (1927), 'SPRING W WINTER'(1955), and 'VIRGINS AND IONEYARDS' (1967). Some of his poems, progressive and socialistic in content, have little significance

today.

Aurobindo Ghose (1872-1950) was a patriotic, lyrical, narrative and philosophical poet. He was a seer and metaphysical thinker who derived his themes from the Indian classics and mythology. According to Keshav Malik, Aurobindo was a prophet and seer, but debatable as a poet. Prof. P. Lal, though himself not a poet or critic of repute once told an English critic that Aurobindo as the major influence had to be negated before modern Indian poetry could arrive.

Sarojini Naidu, (1879-1949) hailed as the 'nightingale of India' wrote her best poetry in her early days. Her volumes of poetry were 'THE GOLDEN THRESHOLD' (1905), 'THE B/RTHOF T/ME'(1912), and 'THE BROKEN WING' (1917). Her 'FEATHER OF THE DAWN', 'COLLECTION OF Lymes' written in 1927 was published posthumously in 1961. Her collected poems appeared in a volume entitled the 'SCEPTRED FLUTE' (1946).

Sarojini Naidu was guided by EDMUND Gosse who asked her to make use of the 'INDIAN FLORA AND FAUNA' in her poems. She depicted day-today life as it is led in Indian cities and in the countryside. However, she was attracted more towards the rich and variegated contemporary life of India.

To quote Il.S. Bhat in, "In spite of the fact that she (Sarojini Naidu) draws realistic pictures of Indian environment, she, like Swinburne, seems to be more concerned with the 'aural force of words' than their intrinsic value, in Mallarmé's sense."²

She wrote many poems on common Indian themes like 'PALANQUIN BEARERS', 'THE BANGLE SELLERS' and 'INDIAN WEAVERS', but she had nothing to do with the dark side of Indian life and did not depict the plight of the poor and the down-trodden.

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) was a versatile genius who was awarded 'NOBEL PRIZE' for his collection of poems 'Gitanjali' in 1913, but many famous critics deny him the position of an Indo-English poet. He wrote originally in Bengali and translated most of his poems into English. However, we have to admit that his

poems, translated into English, look so natural that it is impossible not to call him an Indo-English poet. He was a mystical, philosophical and religious poet, well versed in mythology and folklore adorned with patriotic fervour and embellished with love for humanity. He was as much an internationalist as a nationalist.

As far as the portrayal of social consciousness in poetry is concerned, Tagore undoubtedly dealt with some contemporary situations. He was against superstitions, rituals and traditional worship in the temples, and glorified the tiller, the pathmaker and the breaker of stones. He discussed Indian customs, poor peasants and prostitutes, but he failed to paint the dark and miserable pictures of life as a socially conscious poet should do.

According to Dr. Bhattacharjee, 'He has not much of tragic vision. Neither psychological, nor cosmic tragedy was within his grasp.'

Hence, Aurobindo Ghose, Sarojini Naidu and Rabindranath Tagore cannot be called socially conscious poets, as the term is used and understood today.

PRE-INDEPENDENCE ERA

It is sometimes debated whether Indo-English poetry is derivative and imitative or it is able to stand on its own legs. As pointed out earlier, it was in early 19th century that some Indians tried their hands in writing poetry in English and most of it was undoubtedly imitative. Later on, it changed into philosophical, spiritual and narrative poetry. We must keep one thing in mind that the English language had been serving the purpose of a link-language among different regions of India and the educated and the elite propagated their ideas in English. Indo-English poetry also served a great purpose in depicting ancient Indian culture, and poetry which was written just before independence cannot be called imitative or the hand-made of the British, because it represented the Indian tradition, myth and milieu.

Prof. I.K. Sharma of Rajasthan University, Jaipur threw some light on Indo-English poetry in his article 'Some Stray Thoughts on Indian English Poetry'. According to him, Indo-English poetry which had been philosophic, religious and didactic, turned outward during the freedom struggle. It broke new ground by becoming national.

POST-INDEPENDENCE ERA

Just before Post-Independence period, there were hosts of dreams, plans and promises which were expected to be materialised just after independence. However, our dreams, plans and promises fell apart like a house of cards. Our problems began to multiply and our multi-dimensional society became more and more complex. Indo-English poets, like many other poets of the regional languages became socially conscious of what was going on around them. They did not soar with the skylark nor did they sigh at the sight of full moon. The sordid realities of life pinched their hearts and looked straight into their eyes. Hence, some outstanding Indo-English poets aimed their darts at those things which were against the social norms and those which were sucking the blood of the poor and the down-trodden. They wrote about the pseudo-politicians, the terrorists, the oppressors, the atrocious and the political turncoats. They spoke about violence against women, the corrupt practices which had crept into Indian religions, the exploitation of the poor and the misuse of power. Some of them like Nissim Ezekiel, A.K. Ramanujan, Gieve Patel, Keki

N. Daruwalla, Adil Jussawalla, P Lal, Gauri Deshpande, Arvind Krishna Mehrotra, R. Parthasarthy and Keshav Malik came on the scene before 1970, but most of them have continued to linger or shine on the horizon of Indo-English poetry after 1970. Some of the poets who faded away after 1970 will be discussed in brief, while those who have dealt with social consciousness in their poetry in detail and have continued to dominate the scene after 1970 will be dwell on in full detail.

The Post-independence poets represented, as they should have, 'ZE/TGE/ST'— the spirit of the times. They laid emphasis on the seamy and dark side of life. Indian poets writing in English made consistent efforts to build their own tradition. David Gevet held the view that Indian poets who wrote in English after independence have liberated poetry from Tagore. The poets of the 'fifties' and 'sixties' brought in an age of transition in Indo-English poetry. There was a lot of soul-searching and they became restless to represent the sordid realities of the Indian society.

To quote T.R. Sharma, "Their poetry reflected their inner responses to the exter-

nal stark realities of life. In the poetry of most of the post-Independence Indian language poets there is a sort of tension, originating on account of their acute self consciousness on the one hand, and the restraint forced upon them by the hostility of environment on the other.

It will not be out of place to mention first those poets who followed the romantic tradition after independence and before 1970. Some of the less known but important poets in this field have been Adi Kumar Seth, B.D. Shastri, Barjor Paymaster, K. R.R. Shastri. P.V.B. Shanna, Ravi Vyas and Trilok Chandra. Adi Kumar Set-h brought out two collections of poems namely

'THE LIGHT ABOVE THE CLOUDS '(1948) and 'RAIN MY HEART'(1954). Other poets are known for just one collection of poems each—B.D. Shastri for 'TEARS OF FAITH' (1950), Barjor Paymaster for

'THE LAST FAREWELL AND OTHER POEMS' (1960), K.R.R. Shas(ri for 'GATHERED FLOWERS' (1956),

P.V.B. Sharma for 'MORNING Buos'(1964), for 'JAY H/ND'(1961) and Chandra for 'THE LAST FAREWELL AND OTHER POEMS '(1960).

Among the philosophical and meditative poets who came under the influence of Aurobindo

Ghose may be mentioned Dilip Ktunar Roy ('EVES OF LIGHT', 1948), Thenlis (POEMS, 1952),

Romen Ghosh (THE GOLDEN APOCALYPSE, 1953), Prithvi Singh Nahar (THE WWDS OF SILENCE,

1954), Prithvindra N. Mtlkher (A ROSE BUD'S SONG, 1959) and V. Madhustldan Reddy (SAPPH/RES OF SOLITUDE, 1960). Some poets have continued this tradition even after 1970. Two of such well-known poets are K. R. Srinivasa Iycngar (TRYST w/FH THE DIVINE, 1974; MYCOCOSMOGRAPH/A P0Erm,1976 and LEAVES FROM A LOG, 1979) and V.I<. GolGIK (SONG OF LIFE AND OTHER POEMS, 1947, IN LIFE'S TEMPLE, 1965, KASHMIR AND BL/NDMAN, 1977).

Nar Deo Sharma says "New Indian English poets are sincerely committed to social, political and religious perspectives to the extent that they do not feel shy of poetizing stark realities which might not satisfy the parochial norms of the good and the beautiful altogether, but highlight the unvarnished truth in poetry. Thus, the portrayal of intact Truth has become the throb of modern poetry so much that the literary potpourri seems to be the judicious verbal surgery of the unremitting mania in man for corrupt ways, hypocrisy, selfish depravity." 6

To quote Nar Deo Shartna again, "Contemporary Indian English poets have launched out an intellectual crusade through realistic poetry for an overall refinement in every walk of life..penetrating into suffering of the poor, endemic corruption that is devouring morals of the nation, religious and spiritual hypocrisy that fritters national integrity, and hollow rituals, depraved politics and utter selfishness". 16

Recent poetry in English has become a force to reckon with. In the words of Bijay Kumar I)as, "Recent Indian poetry in English is no longer the shadow; it has become the substance, and it is not an echo but a voice worth listening to....It is not a myth but a distinct reality." 7

In his introductory article entitled 'ASPECTS OF MODERN POETRY W ENGLISH'B. K. Das says, "The incipient romanticism and rapid narcissicism of the early Indian poetry in English are now discarded in favour of poetry as a criticism of life.

According to Prakasll P. , Joshi and M.A. Nare, "The contemporary Indian poetry in English is marked by a mockery of modern Indian culture, values, morality and society." 9

Contemporary Indo-English poetry, to quote P.E Joshi and M.A. Nare again, "is self-nourished because of its social awareness and concerns."20

In the opinion of Vrinda Nabar, poetry cannot exist without society and its environment. The critic says, "Poetry....does not and cannot exist in a vacuum, that its perceptions are shaped by upbringing social and other environmental elements, the tradition of the society within which the artist (poet) functions and so on." 21

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CHAPTER 3

POETICAL SCENARIO FROM 1970 TO 1980

1970's saw a rich harvest of poems which gave ample proof of the deep sense of social consciousness shown by the Indo-English poets. Some of the outstanding poets of this period are Nissim Ezekiel, Keki N. Jaruwalla, Shiv K. Malhotra, Jayan Mahapatra, C.P. Bhatnagar,

I.H. Rizvi, I.K. Sharma and D.H. Kabadi.

Nissim Ezekiel

Among the first major poets who became conscious of the social conditions in India after independence is Nissim Ezekiel.

To quote R.S. Pathak, "In his poems Ezekiel has tried to give vent to Indian cultural and social ethos. Indians' hopes and aspirations, their trials and tribulations, their failures and frustrations have found a befitting expression in them".²³

In England, Ezekiel brought out his first collection of poems, 'A TIME TO CHANGE', published by Fortune Press, London in 1952. His second collection of poems, 'SIXTY "(PEW' appeared in December, 1953. His third volume of poems, 'THE THIRD 'was published by Strand Book Shop, Bombay in 1959 and the following year he brought out the fourth collection, • THE UNFINISHED MAN, (1960) published by Writers Workshop, Calcutta. The fifth volume of his poems, 'THE EXACT NAME', also published by Writers Workshop, Calcutta appeared in 1965. It was in 1976 and 1982 that he brought out his next two volumes, 'HYMNS w DARKNESS' and 'LATTER DAY-PSALMS'. They were published by O.U.P., Delhi,

Only two collections of his came out after 1970. However, most of the poems depicting social consciousness can be found in 'HYMNS IN DARKNESS'(1976) and 'LATTER DAY PSALMS'(1982).

Ezekiel is an Indian poet to the core.

He himself says : "I love India, I expect nothing in return, because critical, sceptical love does not beget

To quote Ezekiel again, "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" .²⁵

G. Damodar in his article 'THE CULTURAL DICHOTOMY W EZEKIEL ' (P.49)— 'ESSAYS ON XI.s.,II EZEKIEL' by T.R. Sharma, Shalabh Prakashan, Meerut 1995 writes, "Ezekiel's commitment has given rise to a series of poems on the complex, rapidly changing India of today with its incongruities and inequalities, its poverty and pretensions.

To quote G. Damodar again from the same article (p.47), Modern India for Ezekiel is not only an India with colonial vestiges which is chiefly industrial and urban, but a rural India where he finds reality in the "eyes of simple innocence". Such poems as 'IN THE COUNTRY COTTAGE', 'POVERTY POEM', 'NIGHT OF THE SCORPION' and 'IN INDIA' show Ezekiel's ambition to strike roots in the reality which is the meaningful centre of Indian life. The typical strength of his poetry arises from the fact that he has his ideas firmly related to contemporary Indian reality. "²⁷

I). Rarnakrishna in his article 'Ezekiel's Credo' says, "In his statement about literature, Ezekiel takes what Rene Wellsc and Aust in Warren in 'THEORY OF LITERATURE' call the 'extrinsic' approach that looks at literature in relation to society, idea..."²⁸

In an interview he tells John B. Beston that he would like "to belong even more fully to the Indian scene."²⁹

To quote Shirish Chindhulk. "The government officials may be interested in the trick of suppressio veri, suggestio falsi.The first difficulty is posed by the hypocritical, phoney, insincere, corrupt, selfish, mercenary, apathetic, and inefficient government officials.....The statistics are always fabricated and the appeals for more

relief funds are always plausible because there is an axe to grind more funds, more private gains. It is as though blood hounds have a field day and that is why the villagers are terror stricken." 30

Ezekiel loves to paint the life of the common people of India, mostly living in the Indian cities. According to [Jrtnila "Nissin) Ezekiel is essentially a poet of the city and the city he describes is Bombay." However, Bombay may stand for life of any city in India.

K.P. Ratnchandran Nair says that in Ezekiel's poems, 'We discover a genuine attempt to harmonise the diverse elements of our volatile urban culture.31

Bombay is a modern city but Ezekiel calls it barbaric. It is poverty-stricken, noisy and polluted

"Barbaric city sick with slums

Deprived of seasons, blessed with rains,

Its hawkers, beggars, iron-lunged

A million purgatorial lanes

And childlike masses, many-tongued,

Whose wages are in words and crumbs. "

—'A MORNING WALK'

According to Anisur Rahman, "Ezekiel is a poet of the city of Bombay."32

To quote S.N. Srinan11, "Ezekiel sees the extremes of poverty and splendour, but he is horrified not by social injustice, but by the fact, that the town has killed the soul in its people and has changed them into featureless masses. This idea is reflected in the poem, 'N/ND/A'an extract from which is reproduced below

'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

Suffering the place to time

I ride my elephant of thought

Ceizanne slung around my neck". 33

P. Lal in 'MODERN INDIAN POET w ENGLISH' writes, "The town, its towering building, factory chimneys and human souls choked by them, produce long forgotten mood in the poet, and now he offers a prayer to God, rejected long ago

God grant me privacy

God grant me certainty

On kinship wit h the sky

Air, earth, fire, sea—

And the fresh inward eye. '04

According to T.R. Shartna, "Nissirn Ezekiel, as a poet, displays a highly private sensibility in relation to the significant, social and ethical changes in post-independence India."³⁵

He exposes the follies, foibles, weaknesses and deficiencies of the people of India. He feels that poor people in India live in terrible misery and poor women are ill-treated in the cities of India.

'THE TRUTH ABOUT THE FLOODS' is a poem in which Ezekiel ridicules some students who visit a village to do relief work in the flood-affected villages in propagating their relief work rather than doing it :

"Don't make a noise, said the student,

'Sit down in a circle'.

The villagers sat down in a circle.

They did not say another word. The transistor was on, the biscuits were distributed, the camera clicked. Then the students left humming the tune of a popular Hindi film song..

In the same poem Ezekiel shows that the flood-affected villagers are disgusted with the government officials because they are totally alienated from them

"But the villagers wouldn't talk to me till I told them I wasn't a government official. "

The relief party is described in the following manner .

"A relief party came at last/ Five students with a transistor/ a tin of biscuits, / a camera. "

— 'Hynws 'N DARKNESS ' (P.2 f)

Middle-class people in India pride themselves on their sons' getting high administrative jobs. In his poem 'VERY INDIAN POEMS IN INDIAN ENGLISH' he puts the thought in the words of a retired professor .

"By God's grace all my children

Are well settled in life

One is Sales Manager,

One is Bank Manager

Both have cars. "

— DAY PSALMS ' (P.23)

Ezekiel also pours fun on spurious efforts to attain spiritual enlightenment in the poem 'Portrait'in which a man who is no longer young is "foolish still and has a dim identity."

According to S.Z.H. Abidi, "An ironic but sympathetic portrayal of the various facets of life in India is an expression of Ezekiel's acute awareness of his environ Rizvi, 1.11.