

## Confessional Elements In Nissim Ezekiel's Poems Dealing With Love, Sex And Marriage



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In the middle of the twentieth century, a new type of poetry developed in the hands of a few American poets like Allen Ginsberg, Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton, John Berryman and others. It was termed as 'confessional' poetry. The great English poets, Like Eliot and Pound, also practiced 'confessional' poetry. But they differed from their American counterparts in that they were cleanly objective instead of being purely subjective.

Nissim Ezekiel treated man-woman relationship in the frank and sincere manner. The theme of love and sex obsessed his mind and found expression in his early poetry. As K.R.S. Iyengar says, "He was painfully and poignantly aware of the flesh, its insistent urges, its stark ecstasies, its disturbing filiations with the mind"<sup>2</sup>. A great deal of the poems from Nissim Ezekiel's first book- *A Time to Change* (1952), a few of the poems from *Sixty Poems* (1953) and a very few of *The Third* (1959) may be regarded as confessional, because in them, he treated the physical dimensions of the relationship between man and woman freely.

Here I have dealt with the collection of poems entitled *A Time to Change*. Ezekiel's *A Time to Change* reflects his personal experience. The theme of love and sex dominates this collection. As poet was in his full-blooded youth, his mind was obsessed with the idea of love and sex, especially in his lonely hours. For example, in *And God Revealed*, the work 'love' is repeated quite frequently in the first stanza and intermittently in the rest of stanzas. Moreover, the poet has himself confessed that "there is a frequent focusing on and preoccupation with a 'pagan' woman in my poetry"<sup>3</sup>. The pagan woman symbolizes the fleshy existence of sexual vibrancy and emotional intensity in the heart and soul of the poet. The first section describes man's departure from home. It seeks to point out that although mind is the source of everything, yet we are the slaves of the nightmare of sex and the ego. The protagonist finds out that our redemption is possible only if our guilts are revealed and laid thread bare. The second section depicts the protagonist's frustration and his search for identity. There is a strong assertion that redemption can

be sought only in life itself and not beyond it. It is for this reason that the protagonist seeks consolation in love and poetry:

*So, in our style of verse and life*

*The oldest idiom may reveal*

*A smile never seen, limbs retain*

*A virginal veracity and every stone*

*Be as original as when the world was made<sup>4</sup>.*

The third section explains the desired pattern of future life. The fulfillment in life is possible through human relationship and marital bliss. In the fourth section, Ezekiel says that he builds up his poetry out of dreams and abstract material. In the final section of the title poems, the poet tries to seek his identity. But his "deep affection for the world"<sup>5</sup> takes him to the other extreme. Thus, *A Time to Change* depicts Ezekiel's confession of love and sex, his frustration for not achieving his objective and his strenuous efforts to seek his identity.

The second poem of this volume, *On an African Mask*, dwells upon the poet's emphasis that "the passion of mind or heart" can be poised by art based on the contrast of opposites. The poem, like other Ezekiel's poems, endeavors to resolve the struggle in the primeval jungle and paves the way for *Morning Prayer in The Unfinished Man*. *The Double Horror* deals with cramping and dehumanizing effect of the city. It may be pointed out that the vitiating effect of city life prompts the people to indulge in sex, and thus makes them all the more corrupt. To conclude, Ezekiel's poems entitled '*A Time to Change*' are dominated by the ideals of love and sex. As Mohanty says, "In poem after poem, Ezekiel celebrates body, defies the physical world, immortalizes the flesh."<sup>6</sup> He has portrayed a wide range of interests in the need of physical passion and its fulfillment. His inclusion of the lower animals in the activities of love and sex entitles him a higher place in the annals of the poets of love and physical passion. Above all, Ezekiel's frank confession of love and sex in his early poems associates him with Robert Lowell and Sylvia Plath on the one hand and Kamala Das, Shiv K. Kumar and Jayanta Mahapatra on the other hand.

### REFERENCE

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