

INDIANNESS USED IN, "THE PATRIOT" BY NISSIM EZEKIEL

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ABSTRACT:

Nissim Ezekiel, an Indian Jewish writer having a fundamental figure in post Indian literary history focuses on Indian writing in English. Nissim Ezekiel's contribution as a poet in Indian writing in English is very substantial and valuable. Being a Jewish his family had long ago migrated to India and settled down in Mumbai. His poetry contains some of the aspects of Indianness. "The Patriot", the heading simply describes the speaker's devotion towards his country. The theme of the poem revolves around the burning desire for peace post-independence with the subject matter being the English language in today's era. "Indianness" is a term which in itself is quiet controversial. It is the sum total of the cultural patterns of India and the deep-seated ideas and ideals whether political, personal, economic or spiritual. These ideas not only affect the Indian mind but the same also prevalent in the various social relationships like Man-Woman, Man-God etc. These ideals and ideologies play their respective role in all types of social scenarios. A deep study on verses of Nissim Ezekiel provides its readers a true picture and insight in the Indian society and its various aspects. This paper is an attempt to find out how Nissim Ezekiel has beautifully used Indian experiences. The crucial point here is that as a poet, he has observed and experienced much of Indian life very closely.

KEYWORDS: Patriot- a person who loves, supports, and defends his or country and its interests with devotion; Indianness- controversial- argumentative; Migrate- travel to another place; Ideals- moral beliefs; Ideologies- ideas or beliefs; Prevalent- accepted, widespread; Scenarios- ; Crucial- critical, important.

1.INTRODUCTION:

Nissim Ezekiel [16 December, 1924- 9 January, 2004] was an Indian Jewish poet, Actor, Playwright, Editor and Art-critic. He was a foundational figure in post colonial India's literary history, specifically for Indian writing in English. He was awarded the **Sahitya Academy Award in 1983** for his poetry collection, "**Latter Day Psalms**". Ezekiel has been applauded for his subtitle, restrained and well crafted Diction dealing with the common and mundane themes in a manner that manifests both cognitive profundities, as well as unsentimental, realistic sensibility that has been influential on the course of succeeding English poetry.

Nissim Ezekiel is one of the greatest poets of Indo-Anglian literature which grew during the last century. Some of the writers who could with felicity use English as a medium of expression in their creative writings, created a kind of awareness about the Indian social problems. Indo-Anglian literature contributed its share in the Indian consciousness. The term Indian consciousness means the awareness that India historically has her cultural identity. By Indianness, we mean a subject that suits the Indian sensibility and most part of the Indo-Anglian literature is concerned with one or the other aspect of Indian- sensibility. The works of Nissim Ezekiel are not an exception to it. His works bring a typical incense of Indian tradition, cultural and day-to-day life.

Nissim Ezekiel's poetry seems to be a comment on the Indian social scenario where he tries to present "what", "how" and "why" of the various aspects of Indian society. He not only tries to highlight the social facts and problems which Indians face because of their poverty, superstitions, squalor etc. but also expresses his deep admiration for the Indian spiritual values. But the admiration for the Indian spiritual values does not mean that he is not aware of the degradation or perversion of the social, moral and spiritual values in the Indian society. He is equally attentive to them as they lead the society to the way of spiritual hypocrisy.

Nissim Ezekiel enriched and established Indian English language poetry through his modernist innovations and techniques, which enlarged Indian English literature, moving it beyond purely spiritual and orientalist themes to include a wider range of concerns and interests, including mundane familial events, individual and skeptical societal introspection.

Nissim Ezekiel's poems like "**very Indian poems in Indian English**", "**The Patriot**", "**The Professor**" and many other such poems works as a subtle comment on English and the way it is used for communication in Indian society. **Chetan Karnani** says, "No other poet has successfully exploited the nuances of Indian English as Ezekiel has done". He is successful in depicting the typically "**Indian thinking**" in "**Indian English**". "**The Patriot**" acts as a perfect example of a post colonial and post modern setting that metaphorically speaks otherwise. The poem may be read as a satire or rather a well hidden cry for the Nation to realize its position as a neo-colonial country in an apparent post-colonial world.

1.1 POETIC INSPIRATION:

It all started as a comment by a Friend, who said that you write in English no doubt and you write English well but you don't seem to even know or realize that thousands of Indians speak what can only be called Indian English, so from that time in all his train journeys from Mithibai College back home, he started to take some interest in the way every time he heard an obvious Indian English phrase like, **'I'm not knowing only, he would take it down'**. When he had about a thousand of these, he thought of creating this present poem.

1.2 LIVING CONDITIONS:

Nissim Ezekiel presents that the new generation is going after 'Fashion and Foreign things'. He presents the typical Indian make-up. The Indian living conditions are sought to be portrayed. The India of yester years are no longer to be seen here, as modernization and industrialization have speeded up the process of change.

The regrettable thing in the modern world is the act of violence and anti-social tendencies proving to be a menace. Still the positive aspects like Regeneration, Remuneration and contraception could be thought as a way out of the present muddle. One can certainly hope for the better and propagate the best that is thought as unique.

1.3 ANCIENT INDIAN WISDOM:

In the **second stanza**, the readers get a peep into things- Indians as Gandhi's heir; he would opt for peace and non-violence. He is puzzled why others are not following Gandhi's advice- while in this estimate the ancient Indian wisdom is correct, contrastively the modern generation takes it to whatever is western and fashionable like other Indians, he too has to improve his English language. The student's interest and petty agitations make him feel sickening line. Antony's appeal to the Roman mob, he will call upon the fellow citizens to think of the pastmasters.

1.4 GANDHIAN DAYS

Thus in the **third stanza**, he pronounces in order to get away from that which is disgusting, he wants to have a cup of wine which is very good for digestion. It can be taken as equivalent to the western wine if only a little salt is added to make it a lovely drink. The poet confesses that he is the total abstainer from drinks while it is taken by addicts to gulch themselves; he is for his part would turn to simple drinks like Lassi. Thus the poet tries to receive the old Gandhian days.

1.5 THE WORLD TODAY:

In the fourth stanza, the poet is able to think aloud and after his comments conditions all over the world situation today. The present conditions all over the world speak of a bad trend that given an edge to the production of dangerous weapons and try to be superior to others. The countries of the world often tie with each other in keeping themselves ahead of others in this mad competitive world. This retrace often leads to conflicts resulting in loss of precious human lives. If only one considers the others as the brother; the trend could be changed.

2. UNITY IN DIVERSITY

India is a land where the principle of **'Unity in Diversity'** is practiced. Here many communities live together even though there are some problems. This ideal situation in which one co-exists with the other is described as **Ram Rajya** by the poet. He gives the hand of friendliness to the visitor and expects him to come again. The poet is optimistic when he says that enjoys the moment of good company. So he ends the poem by saying that he does not feel the necessity of celebrating ceremonies.

2.1 CONCEPT OF MIMICRY

The poem written in Indian English, quite blatantly portrays how a country like ours has imbibed the language of our colonizers, the British but have managed successfully make it our own. This **concept of Mimicry** can be defined as a method by which colonized countries used the language gained and being educated by the British as well being taught their lifestyle to give it their own name and revolt against their colonizers. Here, we see how the narrator speaks of the youth moving toward foreign trends and also his own attempt to learn English words by reading newspaper. The poet is trying to bring out these notions as examples of how mimicry is a vital step toward post colonialism as even though we learn English and experience it on a daily basis, we still find places to add our own lingo and also **'Indianize'** western clothing.

2.1 CONCEPT OF NATIVE INTELLECTUALS:

Another concept that is brought out in the poem is that of the need for the initiative to be taken by the Native Intellectuals, in this case Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi can be considered a native intellectual as he gained a higher education in London and later used this knowledge to peacefully wrestle against the Gandhi, even to this date. By concluding this, he talks of how the nation will always consider its culture to be of utmost importance and that it has been upheld through several trials and tribulations. The line, **'All men are brothers, no?'** depicts the conflict that exists due to being previously

oppressed, the narrator manages to rise above the stereotype that Indians are vengeful and uncouth, rather they are willing to break through boundaries to establish unity among nations as at the end everyone is familiar with the concepts domination and subjugation. The final lines illustrate how the nation stands as a united front in welcoming others to experience the country as they, the locals sees it. It is seen as entirely new place when spoken about the 'orient' by the past colonizers. In the end, the narrator speaks of not engaging in ceremony as he will always enjoy the company of others, a cultural practice within the country, contradicting several popular notions that existing in a new-colonial era, is our viral sin.

2.1 INDIAN SENSIBILITY:

To reinforce the message the poet makes use of the Indian-English Pidgin for example: **Goonda fellow, one glass Lassi, etc.** along with a use of lot of Indian phrases this poem highlights the Indian style of speaking English. Since the setting of the poem happens to be India i.e., **Mahatma Gandhi, Indirabehn [IndiraGandhi].** The famous personalities are mentioned in reference to symbolize positivity and to motivate the readers to follow the path of love.

The poet shows confusions and wonders why the others are not following Gandhi's advice and claims that the 'Ancient Indian Wisdom is 200% correct' on the other hand the new generation believes in whatever is western and fashionable. 'The Patriot' expresses the Indian relation of brotherhood within the different states [i.e., **Gujaratis, Maharashtrians, Hindiwallahs**] and question the reader about the indifferent behavior that the Indians display to the neighboring countries such as **China and Pakistan** and hopes that the citizens after a hand of brotherhood to the neighboring countries as well. The poem also presents a comparison of **Lassi and Wine**. Lassi signifies the olden values and the wine indicates the new fashion and how the new generation is beginning to prefer wine over lassi.

His poem "The Patriot" expresses his deep concern for the contemporary problems that India faces and again the use of "Indian English" shows Ezekiel's grip on the working of the Indian mind:

Pakistan behaving like this,
China behaving like that,
It is making me very sad, I am telling you.

And the use of typically Hindi works like "Rama Rajya", "Lassi", "Ashram", "Guru", "Chapati", "Pann" further add the Indian flavor to the English language. The five stanza poem consists of no rhyme scheme though the use of 'ing' has created its own rhyme at times. The poet uses repetition a number of times i.e., '100% correct, I should say even 200% correct, better than wine, not that I'm tasting wine, still you

tolerate me, I tolerate you'. The poet also adds in alliteration i.e., **Regeneration, Remuneration, Contraception and the Total Teetotaler.**

The Indian dialect creates a humorous mood, yet maintains a very peaceful, pleasant and a thoughtful tone. The voice of the poem sounds sarcastic at times despite the concern for the country and the optimism, present in the poem.

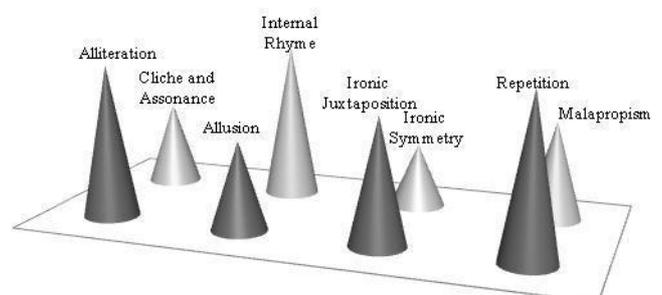
By the end of the poem he summarizes the non-appreciation towards the kind of patriotism that leads to **Fighting**. The poet leaves a ray of hope for the **Ram Rajya** to re-establish the old resins, seeking them to return. The urbanization that the man practices to enter the modern world; tend to forget the values and eventually the volcano of hatred erupts causing fights. The speaker hopes to change the pattern; if only one considers the other as brothers and sisters.

3. FIGURES OF SPEECH:

Figures of speech are formed by a set of words that come together causing alterations in the traditional syntax to emphasize, exalt feelings or provoke an idea. There are a wide range of figures of speech used to show the essential ones in English poetry. A figure of speech or rhetorical figure is figurative language in the form of a single word or phrase. It can be a special repetition, arrangement or omission of words with literal meaning, or a phrase with a specialized meaning not based on the literal meaning of the words. Figures of speech often provide emphasis, freshness of expression, or clarity. However, clarity may also suffer from their use, as any figure of speech introduces an ambiguity between literal and figurative interpretation.

The Graphical representation given below shows the figures of speech used by Nissim Ezekiel in his poem, "The Patriot".

FIGURES OF SPEECH(3.1)



4. GRAMMATICAL ERRORS

The poem **"The Patriot"** contains a number of Indian English, for example: the reduplication of **Verbs** in **"fighting fighting"**, the lack of **Indefinite and Definite Article** in **"threw stone at Indirabehn"** and **"all people of world"**, the use of one instead of the Indefinite Article 'a' in **"one glass lassi"**, the excessive use of the Definite Article 'the' in **"not that I am ever tasting the wine"**, the use of Present Continuous Tense instead of Simple Present Tense **"I am standing for peace and violence"**, the omission of an obligatory object Pronoun in **"modern generation is neglecting"** etc. again this is a satirical poem rather than a genuine example of Indian English, but the phenomena exemplified are genuine enough.

5 .CONCLUSION:

Ezekiel's poetry contains various aspects of Indianness. Indianness is a vital element in Ezekiel's **Thought, Feeling and Imagery**. Indianness has become one of the major themes of Ezekiel's poetry, which he treats as an intense personal exploration. To conclude, Nissim Ezekiel has beautifully used the long history of Indianness as the socio-cultural identity, its different expressions and its rich variety in his poetry. Therefore, **C.P. Verghese's** definition is quite expressive. He says, **"What I mean by Indianness in Indian Writing in English is the sum-total of cultural patterns of Indian and the deep-seated ideas and ideals: Political, Economic, Secular and Spiritual that constitutes the Mind of India"**. Thus Nissim Ezekiel has skillfully used most of the aspects of Indian life and cultures in his poetry.

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