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**Philosophy – Nissim Ezekiel**

After the death of Sri Aurobindo, Nissim Ezekiel is the first major voice that represents more or less the change of an era in the history of Indian English poetry. He is a major poet in terms of literary output and sustained quality of verse. The principal reason why almost every critic in and outside India writing on Indian English poetry, speaks about Ezekiel's poetry not only because he is historically important for any study of post independence Indian English poetry, but also because his poetry has a character that is unique. His respect for craft makes his poetry much more than a mere fulsome expression of an emotion or an idea. He is according to Adil Jussawala, "perhaps the first Indian poet consistently to show Indian readers that craftsmanship is as important to a poem as its subject matter." Above all, as a poet he is conscious of the responsibilities of his calling and his poetry furnishes examples of mellow magnificence that has been built up by assiduous cultivation of poetic craft. Like A.K. Ramanujan and R Parthasarathy, he also represents a poetic sensibility which is in many ways unique and stands a cut above the rest of the major contemporary Indian English poets. He has also been extremely fortunate in the matter of critical attention.

"Philosophy" is one of the more difficult lyrics of Nissim Ezekiel. It is a meditative - reflective poem and it stands the superiority of poetry over philosophy. It was published in "The Exact Name", 1965, and stands in the very beginning of the collection. Ezekiel studied philosophy in London where, "Philosophy, Poverty and Poetry", three companions shared his, 'basement room'. In this lyric also, he begins by stating his love of philosophy. It is spoken of as a place to which he often goes without a plan or unconsciously like a current of air and water. While he is there i.e. while he is studying philosophy, he forgets the reality of life. Hence it is a place away from existence.

However, in that place it is all cold lucidity. Efforts are made to explain away things by logic and argumentation, and so the poet misses the warmth of human life and human relationships which he finds in poetry. The philosophy is free from the limitations of real life, from the concrete and the physical, and can freely indulge in abstractions and

generalizations. He can indulge in any number of generalizations, and indefinitely multiply his ideas and concepts as quickly as he can. It is as if the mills of God are at work in the world of philosophy, and rapidly produce arguments, abstractions and generalizations. A sumptuous feast of abstractions is thus spread before him; he can have his fill without any check or hindrance.

In the second stanza, the poet makes rapid survey of the flow of time and give the philosopher's and also the scientist's evaluation of human life. The poet carries his imagination backwards to prehistoric time long before the advent of man on this planet. It was a time when the earth was in its prime or youth according to geological time scale. Then it was covered with mud, which was its original or essential condition. In the vast flow of time since the creation, and the comic panorama revealed to us by the study of geology, astronomy, history and other disciplines, they are mere wink of the eye. The insignificance of human passion is verified through the powerful image, each such passion being a blink in the eye of Time.

Besides the study of Science and Philosophy, there are some residues which they fail to explain. They fail to throw light on certain aspects of human life and human nature. There are certain dark myths, certain hidden truths which are not explained by philosophy and science. They remain obscure and unexplained for, "formula of light", that is to say wisdom and not mere logic, is needed to explain them, and such wisdom is provided by poetry.

Moreover, the superiority of poetry is depicted in the last stanza of the poem. The poet says that the language of poetry, the language of human emotions, warm and not cold, like the language of philosophy, appeals to the senses, to the emotions and explains many of those truths which are beyond the reach of Science and are considered as dark myths by them. Poetry studies common things, such as common human relationships, and so it is to be preferred to the cold abstractions of philosophy. Abstractions are cold like a naked person, they are dead cold and hence futile. Poetry, on the other hand, has warmth, warmth of human relations, hence it is the source of life and wisdom.

Thus, the poem 'Philosophy' is one of the best lyrics of Ezekiel. It is an assertion of the superiority of the poet's own calling, a vindication of his stress on the "ordinariness of most events", which he considers are the proper study of poetry. He may escape into the cold world of philosophy and logic for a time, but essentially he is a poet, and as such a student of common human relationships and the warmth of the human emotions. In fact, the poem is thought provoking and overflowing with the idea of philosophy in simple language and rhythmic style.