

ASEBL JOURNAL

Good Books

Nissim Ezekiel,
Collected Poems

Stephen K. George, Ed.,
*Ethics, Literature, Theory: An
Introductory Reader*

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The Bluest Eye

R.K. Narayan, *The Guide*

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War*, Gregory F. Tague,
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of Right and Wrong*, Marc
Hauser

The Ethical Brain, Michael
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Good Quote

“That to which we have
been accustomed be-
comes, as it were, a part of
our nature.” - Aristotle

What do you think?

~

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KEEP YOUR HANDS OFF MY ETHICS: THE ETHICS OF READING IN *THE BLUEST EYE* AND “SONNY’S BLUES”

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To assess the ethical perspective of a literary work is haphazard at best; literary critics who determine what kind of ethical position or moral behavior should be considered when evaluating a piece of literature run the risk of having their critical analyses construed as nothing more “than subjective opinion” (Booth 24). The perception in ethical criticism is twofold: it allows the critic to peruse a piece of literature to articulate certain acceptable (meaning moral) prescriptions and it places the onus upon the critic to induce his audience to accept these prescriptions as legitimate and necessary. This is a difficult task to

achieve, because the audience must ascertain whether those moral insights proffered by the critic are akin to their own view of society. The critic also risks devaluing the aesthetic nature of the literary work, alienating those who believe that literature should be judged by its artistic and innovative merits rather than by an arbitrary ‘ethical’ or ‘corrupt’ estimation. Whatever the difficulties, ethical literary criticism is a principle by which critics and readers – consciously or unconsciously – appraise the ethical value of a literary work, and the effect upon this influence in society determines how a literary

work is understood and valued.

A literary critic will judge a work of art based on “credibility, complexity, [and] depth” (Yehoshua 12), but the complaint that plagues literary criticism stems from the tendency to take the ethical perspective completely out of the equation. An ethical sensor is on when any work of art is evaluated; to appraise a literary work solely on its aesthetic or stylistic qualities without grappling with the ethical issues within the plot and moral behavior of the characters “is simply naïve” (Booth 34). Any literary critic assessing Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye*

In this issue (page 1): An excellent overview of ethical criticism in literary studies by **Vernita Burrell**—a good starting point for those who are interested in pursuing such study at greater length.

Also in this issue (page 4): “R. K. Narayan’s Raju: A Symbol of Sin, Suffering and Salvation” by **Dr. Naveen K. Mehta**, an examination of a powerful character in R.K. Narayan’s, *The Guide*, where we can see what Schopenhauer called, the quieting of the will.

And finally (page 6): In “**Religious Strains in Nissim Ezekiel’s Works**,” **John Wesley** and **N.D.R. Chandra** attempt to engage in the elusive measurement of holiness in poetry.

may admire the novel's beautiful and complex language or the manipulation of chronological time within the plot, but he must look beyond surface aesthetics to fully understand Pauline Breedlove's self loathing or to consider that the sexual abuse Cholly exacts upon his daughter Pecola may have emerged from the humiliating racial injustices he endured as a young man. The role of ethical criticism in tandem with literary criticism is to acknowledge that a narrative has the capacity to inspire and transform; a reader can be thoroughly engaged with the plot and can be uniquely affected by the beauty of the novel's style, but the reader can also be stirred by the complexity and the disposition of its characters and by the moral choices a character may make that will ultimately influence his or her fate in the narrative's resolution.

The precepts introduced within field of literary ethical criticism allow a reader the opportunity to evaluate literature based on the singular question "how ought we to live?", but the objective should be to discern the importance of a literary work without moral proselytizing or without asserting that any expression of art should be acknowledged "only when it has a clear positive moral effect, presenting valid models for imitation, eternal verities...and a benevolent vision...which can incite human beings toward virtue..." (Gardner 3). *The Bluest Eye*, if evaluated by this critical perspective, would be considered ethically unsuitable because, on the surface, there is no clear positive moral effect; every character is flawed, therefore no character could be considered models for virtuous imitation. Is a reader then at the mercy of an ethical critic who may dismiss *The Bluest Eye* because the sexual deviancy of Cholly or the misogyny that permeates throughout the novel may deviate from his idea of how an upstanding character behaves? Do the tenets of ethical criticism diminish the power of the novel because there is no positive character transformation from which the reader can establish his own manner of living in society? The prospect that *The Bluest Eye* – or any work of literature – should be required to induce human beings toward virtue puts immense pressure not only on the author who is now required to anticipate what kind of virtue should be garnered from the narrative, but on the reader, who is expected to find a common moral message in the narrative and apply it to his life in a way that is acceptable. This gives an inordinate amount of power to the ethical critic; he becomes the arbiter of all things moral and good in literature, asserting this power to "implant views about how to live and how not to live" (Booth 25). The challenge then becomes, upon what grounds does the critic feel the need to establish a moral basis on something as personal as literary choice, and how can the reader trust the veracity of what the critic deems to be morally worthy? Looking deeper through the questionable moral choices that exacerbate the misery of the characters in *The Bluest Eye* – acknowledging that the moral in the narrative can be recognized even if some characters are involved in immoral behavior – an ethical critic will do his job when he engages the reader "in serious thought about ethical matters, based on the reinforcement of certain ethical positions as admirable and others as questionable..." (Booth 33).

The role of ethical criticism should encourage the reader to reinforce *his* particular ethical sensibilities according to what message he derives from the literary work, not from any arbitrary moral proclamations espoused by the ethical critic. If the reader is not careful, he runs the risk of surrendering any personal, organic inspiration garnered from the text to the critic's insistence in "judg[ing] works of literature...on grounds of the production's moral worth" (Gardner 3). It is important to remember that any ethical validation a reader derives from literature is personal, based upon his preconceived notions of 'good' and 'evil' and how these notions affect his everyday life. Ethical criticism should not require a literary work to be didactic in order to evoke an ethical position in a reader. Through literature, a reader has the opportunity to "learn about values, experiences, and sensibilities of many kinds..." (Tanner 120), but the means by which he absorbs these values and experiences is entirely an individual process. An ethical response to a novel – the conclusion gathered by the choices, behaviors and consequences of its characters "depends on the persons and how they read – that is, on the general values, assumptions, attitudes, aspirations, and intuitions that orient their reading" (Tanner 124). There exists a natural tendency to extract a moral outlook from literary works because informed readers are spurred on by "the information they convey or the emo-

tional state they induce” (Posner 65), but whatever moral outlook they glean, it should not be used as a standard by which they approach *all* works of literature.

There is a concern that ethical criticism, as it assesses the moral worth of a literary work and, by extension society, will create a schism within the literary order. Literary criticism that neglects the ethical component when critiquing literature can still maintain a unified audience; readers may disagree with the aesthetic qualities of a narrative, but aesthetic conflicts are tame compared to the explosiveness that a disagreement over ethical and moral issues can generate. Ethical criticism can appear to be “inevitably ‘judgmental’, following a simple binary pattern of me and my group ‘good’, the Other and [their] group ‘evil’” (Parker 5-6). Ethical criticism gains credibility when the critic recognizes that “intentions [are] embedded in the author’s choices” (Booth 28); the critic should then relay his observations to his audience by placing primacy on the intentions and moral choices reflected *in* the narrative – as changeable as they are – rather than focusing on a fixed moral appraisal *of* the narrative. The critic whose ethical assumptions consume his literary criticism differentiates himself from those readers who prefer to keep ethical assertions out of their literary enjoyment, because a critic who bases his assessment of a literary work on ethical precepts primarily for the edification of a reader in society assumes that the reader is unable or unwilling to make his own informed moral decisions. As a consequence, categorization in an ‘us/good’ or ‘them/evil’ structure is not only inevitable, but it stimulates “the injudiciousness, extremism, shrillness, or dogmatism of some ethical critic or other” (Gregory 39), and as a result, fostering resentment between the two factions.

The subject matter in James Baldwin’s “Sonny’s Blues” can cause some division if an ethical critic judges the narrative solely on his version of its moral worth. The psychological and philosophical differences between the brothers are immense. Sonny possesses an avant-garde outlook on life, but depends on heroin to mentally sustain him, while his brother is psychologically distant and emotionally stunted. Baldwin, using his unique prose style and eloquent description, exposes the dilemma that both brothers face. If ethical criticism is correctly applied, the critic will recognize that these moral dilemmas can be elucidated within “each individual’s stance because a moral stance is, in the final analysis, a personal stance” (Yehoshua 18). If the critic is not careful, his appraisal of “Sonny’s Blues” can drive a wedge between those readers who find a moral lesson despite the choices that Sonny and his brother make and those who find the behavior and actions of Sonny and his brother morally bankrupt, therefore proclaiming the narrative morally unworthy. There is no straightforward roadmap by which Sonny and his brother attain mutual understanding, but the recognition that there are various means to reach a moral and ethical conclusion – instead of choosing one ‘good’ way or one ‘evil’ way – will alleviate these divisions that seem to relegate ethical criticism to the equivalent of moral finger-wagging.

It would behoove the ethical critic to assess a literary work not in a general ethical reflection or by simply relegating it to either a “moral” or “corrupt” category, but by incorporating the specific stylistic and creative components that give the narrative its own sense of substance and power. Anything else would reduce a narrative into a “form of false consciousness” (Parker 4); a reader would be in danger of bypassing a much deeper message hidden in struggles of a morally challenged character. If the disciplines of ethical and literary criticism do not work hand in hand to ensure that any ethical messages perceived in a literary work are acknowledged but not held as a condition of merit, then the literary work is in danger of being consumed by the pursuit of an ideological argument. There must be an open dialogue between the ethical and the literary, a dialogue which takes care in addressing the unique style, content, or purpose of the narrative while at the same time searching for and accepting the ethical messages contained within its aesthetic beauty.

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R. K. Naryan's Raju: A Symbol of Sin, Suffering and Salvation

Dr. Naveen K Mehta

In R.K. Naryan's *The Guide*, Raju as a "Swami" affects the psychology of the whole village. Even the concepts of renunciation, penance and self-sacrifice affect the psyche of Raju. Raju is a curious combination of disparate qualities. In his struggle for survival Raju accepts the role of the holy man thrust on him and uses all his intelligence and "experience" in playing the "role" effectively. This paper is an attempt to study R K. Naryan's Raju as a symbol of sin, suffering and salvation.

The role of Raju as a Swami shows the significance of spirituality on the psychology of the common man in India. An average Indian believes in supernatural powers of the Sadhu. When a child dies the average Indian mother runs to a Sadhu believing that he will bring the child back to life. When a child is sick and does not sleep peacefully at night it is taken to a *fakir* or Swami for it is believed that if the saint strokes the child, the child improves in various ways. And Raju as a Swami is expected to do all these things and in this process he affected the psychology of other characters in the novel as well.

The transformation of Raju's life is indeed the spiritual triumph of Narayan's art of characterization. At the end of the novel, Raju dies in the true spirit of a saint. Psychology is not an end in itself but it is a means for approaching the final spiritual goal. The development of an individual's personality, however, is a creative process; it is also like entering the sphere of the Beyond and, therefore, is inseparably connected with religion.

To get a hold on the psyche of the simple villagers, he tells half-remembered stories from his childhood, delivers weighty discourses on philosophical themes from the scraps of knowledge collected from books he had read when he worked at his railway stall, and launches schemes of educating the people of the village though he himself had hardly reaped the fruits of formal education. But in performing this, Raju is throughout his career aware of the big gap between his real self and the ideal image forced on him. The man who had taken even prison life in his stride and had not suffered in any real sense, felt like crying aloud, "why don't you leave me alone?" With the addition of a flowing beard he enables his outer appearance to conform to the image of the holy man he is taken to be but deep inside he knows he is still very much the same "old" Raju who loved the good things of life.

Thus Raju, in *The Guide*, elaborated the psychological significance of the spirituality through his various deeds. When Raju finds that people want to believe in his spiritual power, he psychologically cannot disappoint

them. Happiness comes to him only when he begins to act as a selfless man. The present study reveals that Raju rises above his *self*, recognizes the claims of humanity, and learns to live and die for others. Therefore, psychologically, Raju has achieved self-realization and self-fulfillment and has taken a new birth.

The Bhagvad Gita also describes that he, who has subdued his mind and body, has given up all objects of enjoyment and has no craving, performing sheer bodily action: such a person does not incur sin. This has been revealed in the faith of the villagers. They psychologically believed in the spiritual power of Raju. But Raju knows well that he is not a saint. The confession that he makes to Velan, is Raju's the first step towards self recovery from psychic problems.

Raju as a hungry and frightened man undergoes a process of inner-purification. He gathers psychic strength. "If by avoiding food I should help the trees bloom, and the grass grow, why not do it thoroughly." Thus, it is seen that Raju's genuine compassion for Velan and the other villagers and his complete preparedness to suffer for them lift him out of his restricted self to a higher and transcendental place of existence.

India is plunged with the so-called holy men. Even if they may be ex-convicts, they are worshipped by the gullible masses. They are hypocrites like Raju who go on assuming the saintly gestures from time to time. An ex-convict, Raju has affected their psyche. But he confesses everything to Velan at the end. By confession he has done his proper penance and stepped on nobler rugs of life.

As a Swami Raju had to undergo an act of vicarious suffering to purify the sins of others. It was a destructive risk. But he did it well. During the early days of his role as a saint, he assumed and feigned that role due to the needs of his stomach. During the last days, however, it was the faith of the people that forced him to perform as a saint.

Thus, Raju's death of the end is for the *Dharma* that holds up the suffering humanity. Raju is thoroughly human in his desires and passions. And yet he is capable of a remarkable capacity for detachment which enables him to endure Jail, not only without embarrassment and pain, but with positive pleasure. Thus when the crisis prevails, the absence of a strong ego and the lack of attachment prove to be powerful assets for affecting a recovery.

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Religious Strains in Nissim Ezekiel's Works

John Wesly and N.D.R. Chandra

The root of the word “religion” is usually traced to the Latin *religare* (*re*: back, and *ligare*: to bind), so that the term is associated with “being bound.” The idea may reflect a concept prominent in biblical literature. Israel was said to be in a “covenant” (*berith*) relationship with its God (Yahweh). Religion has played a vital part in the evolution of human beings. Nissim Ezekiel's upbringing and schooling in India with children of different faiths—Hinduism, Islam and Christianity—have uprooted him from Hebraic religion and traditions. When Ezekiel became a writer he sometimes broke away from his religious writing, he began his spiritual journey believing in all religions. Sometimes, he is drawn away from it and come back to it again.

In Nissim Ezekiel's poems we see the word “Religion” being mentioned. His autobiographical poem “Background Casually” is a blend of different religions. Nissim Ezekiel in a letter to Shahane says: “I am not a religious or even a moral person in any conventional sense. Yet, I've always felt myself to be religious and moral in some sense. The gap between these two statements is the existential sphere of my poetry” (1976: 261). Asked about his beliefs, confused, Nissim Ezekiel would said “I believe in the scientific attitudes of life” (Rao 2000: 42) and Raj Rao continues to say before I knew what was happening to him, he started announcing atheism and faith in future society dominated by scientific attitudes and values. Ezekiel slowly came under the influence of Solomon who proclaimed that he was both a rationalist and an atheist; and was planning to stop attending the prayer services. Ezekiel got upset, and made up his mind to renounce religion.

In the poem “In Creation,” he tries to show his acts and God's move on a parallel line. The primordial act of “creation” is compared to the bursting forth of words in a vision, which brings the dancing moment alive in all its richness. He is “focused in a purer light” once, the inspiration is on, “Waiting for transcription on the page” any experience can be translated into a poem:

Pavements or pools, traffic lights or lilies,
Rivers or roast chicken, cafes or corn,
All are focused in a purer light, poems,
Waiting for transcription on the page
In the dancing minute or the spacious hour. (Ezekiel 2005: 79)

In his autobiographical poem Ezekiel gives a sketch of his childhood days in a Roman Catholic school. He compares himself to “mugging Jew among the wolves,” and how he was attacked by other religious boys. When he was looked down upon by others he says, “They told me that I have killed Christ,” and he takes this as a challenge and wins “the scripture prize” that year. As he mentions in his poem “Background Casually:”

I went to Roman Catholic school

A mugging Jew among the wolves.
They told me that I had killed Christ.
That year I won the scripture prize. (2005: 179)

The poem "Enterprise" in general is an allegory on pilgrimage. In the words of Surendran "The poem can also be looked at as an allegory on the human condition on this planet and the frequent efforts, failures and frustrations to which man is subject to"(2000: 264). The Poem "Enterprise" inscribes:

It started as a pilgrimage
Exalting minds and making all
The burdens light. The second stage
Explored but did not test the call.
The sun beats down to match our rage. (2005: 117)

The Jewish enterprise metaphorically, described as the pilgrimage exalted minds and made their burdens light because they were God's chosen people. The second stage was reached, when they thrived and prospered under God's grace but it did not test the call; their zeal is symbolized in the scorching heat of the sun. The travellers finally reach the place, obviously the place they had set out to reach, but they hardly know why they are there. The trip has darkened every one of their face and their deeds. The only consolation is the fact that "Home is where we have to gather grace." Ponni opines that: "The sustained spirit moves on the expected path; the usual procedures noting down the prevalent habits, customs and the historical or religious importance of the visiting places just go on"(2004: 68). And these travellers are so careless that the ways of the serpents and goats are gone unnoticed.

Another glance is put upon the poem "Jewish Wedding in Bombay" where the poet himself is the groom. The poet brings various issues starting from the marriage and goes on till they are at the final stage where the marriage is going to break up. The poem is full of fun, tears, joy, sympathy and he says that: "The game delighted all the neighbour's children, who never stopped staring at me, the reluctant bridegroom of the day"(Ezekiel 2005: 234). The "groom claimed to be modern" because he is not taking any dowry. This was a typical Jewish wedding which Ezekiel depicted in this poem; it was done according to the "Mosaic Law."

Indian culture treats guests as God and serves them, takes care of them as if they are a part and parcel of the family itself. Respect for elders is a major component in Indian culture. Elders are the driving force for any family and hence, the love and respect for elders comes from within and is artificial. An individual takes blessings from his elders by touching their feet. Elders drill and pass on the Indian culture within the children as they grow. They also chant "the name of God a hundred times" this shows the superstitious condition of the typical Indian village life:

The peasants came like swarms of flies
And buzzed the name of God a hundred times
To paralyze the evil one.

May he sit still, they said.
May the sins of your previous birth
Be burned away tonight, as they said.
May your suffering decrease?
The misfortunes of your next birth, they said. (2005: 131)

Raghu opines that: “The poem achieves a striking authenticity by bringing together, for the first time, the six elements that dominate the mimesis, in Indian poetry in English, of the Indian reality: poverty, superstition, violence, suffering, duplicity and communal effort”(2002: 49). Though Nissim Ezekiel is a Jew belonging to Bene-Israel community, he is very much under the impact of Hindu thought. Shahane recalls: “He wrote to me recently suggesting this impact of his sensibility. I also veered towards the Hindu view of life, which I consider mystically, religiously and metaphysically right, though I don’t accept its ethics and social codes.....”(1976: 260). As King Bruce recalls that: “He had never separated from the Bene Israelites with whom he identified, as he felt outside an increasingly Hindu India”(1991: 8). The poet strongly expresses faith of the people in the poem “Background Casually:”

The Roman Catholic Goan boys
The whitewashed Anglo-Indian boys
The muscle bound Islamic boys
Were earnest in their prayers. (Ezekiel 2005: 132)

It is during his student life that he learnt of the hypocrisies of people who pay lip service to their religions. In this poem Ezekiel gives the clear image of “Prayer” how it is treated by these different religious boys. First he starts with the Roman Catholic boys and goes on to “Whitewashed Anglo-Indian boys” then the “muscle bound Islamic boys,” who are intense and diligent in their prayers especially how the Islamic boys are too serious with their Religion. Ezekiel “distrusts institutional dogma and organized religion as they have failed to establish any meaningful contact with life. Church going has become a mechanical and meaningless ritual”(Singh 1980: 171).

Another glance at the poem “Guru” tells us every man is liable to commit errors. At one point of time “one can be a saint and in a mean time can change into a criminal.” This is what the poet mentions by this poem, even the saint can be a rogue; the so called saint can be turned into a sinner in no time. The poet’s treatment of such people who deceive others by their hypocrisy like this saint waits the wrath of the poet. Satyanarain says “Exposing quacks is, of course a laudable aim; but then they flourish in every field including literature! While no one can take exception to Ezekiel’s satire on Hindu Godman as such, one also wishes that the poet’s roving eye had turned to many a fake fakir and lecherous monks and friars of whom poets from Chaucer downwards complain, there is such a throng in hell”(1980: 87).

In the poem “Episode” God sends three beggars to put an end to a false sex relationship, which is built on lies in the first two stanzas. But the theme slowly shifts and the poet uses a fine ambiguity in the word “lie” which is used as a pun here. These lovers were telling lies continuously to each other. The poet gives the beautiful de-

scription of the place where they were sitting. So to put an end to their false love and to stop cheating each other and their lying, God sends three beggars to disturb them and stop their lying. The poem "Episode" reads:

Thus ended what was ill begun.
She lied to be with me.
I lied to myself.
We sought romantic restfulness.
God sent three beggars.
We went back to our separate bonds. (Ezekiel 2005: 99)

The poem "Paeon" suddenly goes on to resume a spiritual tone in the last stanza. Sex here is treated as a source of Blessedness. And he says "The first baptism is not in water / But in fire." The fire cleanses all the sin and dross whatever comes across its way, in the same way; Ezekiel wanted for himself a spiritual cleansing. As he writes:

Always the body knows its nakedness.
The first baptism is not in water
But in fire. The limbs are shaped to lock
And love, the eyes---- they say---- show a strange light,
And lives are welded which exist apart. (2005: 92)

He speaks not only about human desires without any reservation but he treated passion as an essential requirement for the creation of poetry. In an interview with John B. Beston in December 1975, he clearly points out that he is not a religious poet in traditional sense:

I fall short, I think because I don't get a sense of religion, sustained from day to day, in my life. If I write a religious poem, the next poem is likely to be a secular, skeptical. I attach a great deal of importance to the worldliness of the world, its Independence. An actual measure of holiness, I don't think I get anywhere near. (1979: 47)

This vacillation between religious values and seductive worldly life was there from the beginning of his career as a poet. In "The Egoist's Prayer—4" he says that his desire is not to be chosen by God to carry out his purposes till those purposes coincide with his own. He is reluctant to God's plan towards himself, and says that "you have plenty of volunteers" to chose from. In the second stanza in the following poem he compromises himself with God and says that he is ready to do as per his will, but only on one condition that God's will should "coincide with mine." The poem "Egoist's Prayer—4" says:

Do not choose me, O lord,
To carry out thy purposes
I'm quite worthy, of course,
But I have my own purposes.
You have plenty of volunteers

To choose from, Lord.

Why pick on me, the selfish one? (2005: 213)

In Indian tradition, Krishna expresses his devotion to Radha, his principal consort. Krishna is a playful God, associated with tricks and games. In one of the most famous incidents in the Krishna legend, he steals the clothing of a group of bathing cowherds' wives and exhorts them to come forth from the water to reveal themselves. The religious significance of this incident is that the believer must not hold back from uniting fully with the divine, must be utterly devoted to the God. The following images are based on Hindu mythology:

Krishna's tricks
are not for him
nor Radha's wiles
for her.
They have a different truth
Within a kingdom of their own.
I envy them
Only Shiva, meditating,
Could be immovable
in her moving presence.
As for me,
I hardly meditate at all. (Ezekiel 2005: 216)

In the poem "How the English Lessons Ended," Ezekiel is the protagonist. He is asked to help a "Muslim neighbour's daughter" who "has failed in English" for "three successive years." Ezekiel gives her physical appearance "getting on to nineteen," "wears a *burkha* when she leaves for school," which is a cloth worn by Muslim women from the head till the toe. Finally, the poet accepts their request of giving tuitions for the neighbour's Muslim daughter:

I agree we are neighbours long long time.
Send the girl along, I'll see
what I can do. She comes, sheds her *burkha*:
tall, thin, dark, with shifting eyes,
small face and heavy clouds of hair. (2005: 200)

Gradually she makes friendship with the poet's daughter, friendly, who's turning sixteen. And suddenly the hitch starts from the "picture-book," "The English lessons end abruptly / I've learnt enough, she claims, / and they think that the teacher "made advances." The poet's mother is furious and she comments "*That girl will never get a husband!*."

The poem "Healers" give a warning call to the people, he wants them to renounce and "give up every-

thing” of their secret lives, “and be saved.” Even threatens them that the “master knows the secret,” the “master” represents the God Almighty here. And the next moment we see that he is encouraging, strengthening and making them courageous. He says: “God’s love remains your heritage” it means everything for a human being, and gives negative impression. He himself is not steadfast and not sincere in his spiritual life. These words are taken from Hindu Holy books saying that “know your mantra” and “Meditate” upon it. The master in “Healers” advises:

Know your Mantra, Meditate
release your Kundalini,
get your shakti awakening
and float with the spirit
to your destination. (2005: 232)

This chapter highlights the various religious cults and institutions, beliefs and faiths, which Ezekiel touches on. Ezekiel had his own type of religion which he mentions and we come across his whole set of works, they are religion of love, charity, sex, humanism self-deception religion of faith, religion of spirituality, religion of poverty and the poor, religion, which is of the human being/person/society, a religion which is tied up or, which is dominated by superstition, traditional religion, religion of an atheist, peasants religion, religion of long suffering, wisdom, truth, religion which discriminates, then there is this religion which gives comfort, of art, hypocrisy and the religion of morality, etc. Ezekiel mentions all these types of religions in his poetry, he puts them in a beautiful way that we can see his mastery of impression and satisfies the argument of the reader. Bijay Kumar Das says: “Ezekiel believes in humanism. In poem, after poem he expresses his concern for humanity and tries to find out what ails mankind and how to get out of it” (2004: 3). Therefore being a conscious artist, Ezekiel lies in the process of adjustment between the knowledge derived from experience or personal feelings and the knowledge which imposes the pattern. Therefore reacts with great sensitivity, a devoted mind and assurance of his so called technique. Of self-religion or Dharma, truly explores his “Religious Strains” which is a main theme in his poetry.

Most of the poetry of Ezekiel is contains existential stains which are out of own religion. In reality, his concern is about different religions, from Hinduism, Buddhism, Zoroastrism, Islam, Christianity, Judaism and Parsi. The specialty of Ezekiel is he uses all these so called religions to convey his message or to form his poetry. Sometimes, he brings out words out of these sacred books in his own words and presents them to the reader.

No other Indian-English poet has shown the ability to organize poetry at the same time using experience and skill in knitting words as good as Ezekiel. Karnani comments on experience and competence in this way: “Unlike other amateurs, aristocrats and philistines of Indian-English verse, he has shown remarkable ability to give his poems a certain finality of form” (1974: 166). Ezekiel has remained backward, because he belongs to the “backward place.” As a God-father of Indian-English poetry, he doesn’t have to feel that tough sense of competition that other poets have to face in some parts of the world. This is because he has achieved what he could and has outgrown the early influences in him and discovered his own authentic voice. In short, one can conclude that Ezekiel relives in all religions but practices none. He remains silent spectator and keen observer of the religious hap-

pening and events of the world. In fact, he believes in “swadharma” and divine power that reins the world and humanity at large.

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