Abstract
The present paper is an attempt to highlight social consciousness in the poetry of Nissim Ezekiel, the pioneer of modern Indian English Poetry. He has made endeavours at mapping out new Terrains as a creative writer. In the modern world society is changing day by day. He has attempted to rethink and redefine the social consciousness. In an uninhabited and audacious way to express man-woman relationship, issues related to marriage, sexual relations, social distinction, power politics and cultural construction.

I. INTRODUCTION
Nissim Ezekiel is the First Post Independence Indian English poet whose name has become synonymous with the Post Independence English Poetry. He has not only written poetry in new style but also trained other poets including Dom Moraes how to write poetry in English. He published his first anthology – A Time to Change in London in 1952. Back home, he published a number of collections, Sixty Poems in 1953, The Third in 1959, The Unfinished Man in 1960, The Exact Name in 1965, Hymns in Darkness in 1976 and Latter-Day Psalms in 1982. For him poetry writing was a worthy vocation, a way of life. He treated life as journey where poetry was be the main source of discovering and organizing one’s own self. For him poetry was a mean of self realization. He identified himself with poetry.

II. QUEST FOR IDENTITY
Ezekiel is a poet of many themes such as love, sex, problems of modern society, quest for physical, social and spiritual integration of the self. In a course of interview given to Gentleman Ezekiel states:

To start with, my own inspiration is and always was, ‘my inner life’. And writing is, for me, a way of coping with the tension between my inner life and the
outer life. Looking back, this from the earliest days seems to be the main source of my writing. Every other source is some how related to it – even the experiences of other people. My poems are often introspective and therefore, express self criticism and self doubt. I also write about my relationship with other people, love, sex, the individual in society etc (Gentleman 97).

Linda Hess finds that Ezekiel is an “endless explorer of the labyrinths of the mind, the devious delving and twisting of the ego, the ceaseless attempt of man and poet to define himself, to find through all the myth and maze, a way to honesty and love” (Hess 67). H.M. Williams also opines Ezekiel’s poems as “experiments (in which) he seeks to dive deep into the psyche, into his own psyche” (67).

In his long poetic career Ezekiel has taken love, and experiences related to it, as a major theme. Love in its various manifestations has shaped his vision and has helped him to a better understanding of himself as a man and poet. His love poems are an authentic record of a personal quest, highly important for him as a man and as a poet for a distinctive identity for himself. His poetry can be viewed as his song for his self discovery. Hence, Ezekiel endeavours to relate his poetry or art with life and its related problems.

III. POET OF LOVE

Ezekiel is a love poet par excellence. He has given a very clear picture of love and sex in a number of his poems. He knows that true lovers are innocents and therefore, he says that lamb is not as innocent as lovers in act of love. Not only lovers, but couples too attract his attention. As he says in “Marriage”:

Lovers when they marry face
Eternity with touching grace
Complacment at being fated
Never to be separated.

(Collected Poems 123)

He looks love and woman from male point of view while Kamala Das views it from female point of view. Flattery and bold advances are necessary for survival and success in love and married life.

Sex is a normal instinct in man and woman. It is not strange that they desire each other for sexual union. Sex is not a myth but a reality like other realities of life. So the poet describes love and sex in an artistic way in his poetry. Ezekiel is powerfully drawn to female form. In poem after poem, from “Poet, Lover and Bird Watcher” to the superbly audacious “Nudes”: 1978, we find him exhibiting the female form.

For Ezekiel the joys of life are important and woman for him is a part of joy. For him seeing, touching, kissing and loving in the bed are important because through all these
acts he can also communicate with other human beings and with the world to overcome his isolation.

In the poem entitled “Motives” the persona honestly states his motive to consummate his love with the desired woman and emphasizes his sexual passion in a frank language?

My motives are sexual,

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Your thighs are full and round,
thin and flat I’d love them too
There go my aesthetics.

(Collected Poems 154)

In two other poems entitled “At the Party” and “At the Hotel” the persona looks at woman from the male point of view.

Our motives were concealed but clear,
Not coffee but the Cuban dancer took us there,
the naked Cuban dancer
on the dot she came and shook her breasts
all over us and dropped
the thin transparent skirt she wore.
Was it not this for which we came?

(Collected Poems 112)

IV. MAN-WOMAN RELATIONSHIP

It is evident that Ezekiel is bold in describing man-woman relationship from the biological psychological and sexual point of view. In the patriarchal society man has been installed on the high pedestal while woman has been assigned the secondary role. She is supposed to play the role of humble mother, sincere sister, devoted wife, obedient daughter and toy of man as a mistress, seductress and sex object etc. There are more women in the poetry of Ezekiel than perhaps in the work of any other Indian poet in English and the inter-action between man and woman is a major concern of Ezekiel’s oeuvre.

Among the Indian English poets whose forte de métier lies in depiction of human relationship in a wider contextum. Nissim Ezekiel has earned for himself a place of exceptional as a poet who has probed into intricacies of modern man’s and woman’s nature as a first hand recorder of life’s growth, as a poet on an endless quest of identity exploring into the labyrinth of the mind (Singh 181).

The true happiness lies in the union of bodies. Ezekiel considers the union to be holy for it perpetuates life, implants continuity to forces that govern life:

By rituals holy in the temple
Where life creates and created,
All kinship here are consummated,
By trust of lust
When all that burns in breasts or lips is sated.

(Collected Poems 82)

He thoroughly understands that love related to sexuality and not on spirituality is bound to be tainted by sin. Ezekiel always projects a male sensibility. He reacts to the human form as a male would react to female body. As Harish Raizada comments: “Ezekiel takes a realistic and human view of love and sex stripped of sentimentalism and romantic illusions and lovers diverse moods and situations in his treatment of man-woman relationship. Love is of vital importance for him as man and poet” (46).

Modern society is the society of diverses because the spouses do not have patience in their lives. Success of marriage depends on patience and proper understanding. However, the art of love making also involves a number of deceits which are described by the poet in ‘The couple.’ The lover is forced to pretend that he loved her:

Indolence and arrogance,
Were rooted in her primal will,
a woman to fear, not to love,
Yet he made love to her
(who can say he loved her?)
And damn the consequences.

(Collected Poems 183)

V. CONCLUSION

Ezekiel’s religious concern is humanistic not metaphysical or transcendental and contemplative only. He asserts in his poem “Happening”. “The food I eat / can not nourish me / unless I love the human face” (Collected Poems 164). According to Ezekiel, philosophy, morality and religion must always have humanitarian consideration in order to solve philosophic, moral and religious problems of the society. T.S. Eliot believes that there is close relationship between culture and religion. He opines that culture is the product of religion and vice-versa and thereby underscores the intimate connection between the two. He further adds that culture is “essentially the incarnation of the religion of a people (Eliot 28).It is the religion of the people which makes them culturally different from the people of the other faith. Two religions may have something in common but it is very difficult to reconcile separate ways of life, shaped into religions. In this context Ezekiel remarks,

I am against a monolithic culture in a totalitarian society, but the alternative is not an indifferent, sterile culture or conglomeration of cultures, each steeped in its hopelessly stagnant ideas. The alternative is a critical spirit which will bring culture alive making old ideas new and new ideas sound (Selected Prose 74).
VI. REFERENCES


TO CITE THIS ARTICLE