

and clarity.

Dr Shashi L-3 ✓ 6. POET, LOVER, BIRD WATCHER 19-5-20

"Poet, Lover, Bird Watcher" in *The Exact Name* is one of Ezekiel's finest poems. It is "a wonderfully orchestrated poem, the tone becoming impassioned and exultant as the feelings rise to the crescendo." In this beautiful poem Ezekiel expresses his views on the art of poetry through vivid and beautiful images. I.N. Kher remarks: "The poem reveals the

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nature of poetic perception through the network of a highly fecund metaphor in which the images merge into each other like lovers in the art of love. The poet or the bird watcher begins by defining the mood in which all those who study birds or women must place themselves – birds or women symbolize freedom, imagination, love and creativity. A posture of stillness is recommended, because it is in stillness that one listens to the stirrings of the soul, a necessary pre-requisite to the study of freedom and creativity. That is why the best poets wait for words from the centre of stillness before they articulate their experiences.”

In the first stanza Ezekiel strikes a parallel between the poet, the lover and the bird watcher. The poet deftly brings together his two pet themes, poetry and love, along with his comparatively new found enthusiasm for bird watching. So, the poem has become a wonderful synthesis of all that Ezekiel has loved best in life. All three – the poet, the lover and the bird-watcher have one thing in common, that is, to watch the movement and wait patiently :

To force the pace and never to be still  
Is not the way of those who study birds  
Or women. The best poets wait for words  
The hunt is not an exercise of will  
But patient love relaxing on a hill  
To note the movement of a timid wing.

The bird watcher has to wait patiently, the movement of the fluttering wings of the bird, the lover has to observe patiently the calm and dignified movement of the beloved, and the poet has to wait for the right moment when inspiration dawns on him and right words spontaneously come to him. At the end of this patient wait, the poetic word appears in the concrete and sensuous form of a woman, “who knows that she is loved”, and who surrenders to her lover at once. In this analogy

...the poet finds his moral proved,  
who never spoke before his spirit moved.

In this poetry, love and bird-watching ; word, woman and bird become interrelated.

“Bird-beloved-poem syndrome runs throughout the Lyric.”

The slow movement in the three cases is rewarding. The bird-watcher is rewarded when the bird is suddenly caught in the net, the lover is rewarded when the beloved gladly surrenders and the patient poet gets inspiration to compose a fine piece of poetry. It is all the more rewarding. In order to watch the rarer birds the bird watcher has to go “along deserted lanes and where the rivers flow in silence near the sources or by a shore”, the lover has to explore love in a remote place like the heart’s dark floor where “the women slowly turn around, not only flesh and bone, but myths of light.” The poet passing through remote, crooked and zigzag paths of his psyche and consciousness, attains enlightenment and inspiration, and words occur to them which take the shape of poetry

which has the power to activate the senses and makes men see and hear much more than he would have otherwise done. Ezekiel says :

.....and sense is found  
By poets lost in crooked, restless flight.  
The deaf can hear, the blind recover sight.

The imagery in this poem is vivid and striking. C. Paul Verghese writes : "What is striking about the use of images in this poem is that the transition from one image to the other is so unobtrusive that the poet, lover and bird-watcher lose their separate identities for once and merge into one another to carry the poem forward to its end." In this lyric the literal and the symbolic merge and become undistinguishable. The words "patient love relaxing on a hill to note the movement of a timid wing" are literal when applied to the bird-watcher but become a wonderful symbol for the poet's wait for the right words and the right images, or the lover's wait for the moment when the beloved will turn to him. Birds turn into words, the remote shore to which the birdwatcher goes to "watch the rarer birds" turn into "the heart's dark floor" where the poet looks for themes and images :

To watch the rarer birds, you have to go  
Along deserted lanes and where the rivers flow  
In silence near the source, or by a shore  
Remote and thorny like the heart's dark floor.  
And there the women slowly turn around,  
Not only flesh and bone but myths of light.

It is one of the most celebrated poems of Ezekiel. It is based on "iambic pentameter lines in closely rhymed ten-line stanzas". The beautiful and well-worked images, which are evocative and suggestive, work, as we have seen, on three interpenetrating levels. ✓

## 7. THE VISITOR

"The Visitor", published in *The Exact Name* is a short and simple lyric which shows Ezekiel's power to create poetry out of "the ordinariness of most events". The cawing of the crow is an ordinary and common event which is the main theme of this lyric. Life is full of ordinary events which usually pass unnoticed but they turn to beauty and delight when the poet treats them poetically. This lyric also exhibits Ezekiel's power to verbal portraiture and his observation of the feathered creatures. It consists of five stanzas of six lines each.

The opening stanza refers to the common Indian superstition that the cawing of the crow predicts the arrival of some guest. Sitting on the window, it fixed its baleful eyes on the poet and cawed thrice. It raised its wings slightly in sinister poise. The crow's gesture indicated that something sinister was going to happen. Its body was tense and it stretched out its neck like that of a nagging woman. The room resounds with its voice and its presence is felt there. The description of the crow