

The process of spiritual growth is equally slow. Spirit has to be fostered with great painstaking effort and patience. Spiritual growth remains unseen initially. It appears silently and imperceptibly. Spiritual growth is a long, silent, invisible process like the growth of grass in the lawn.

"Lawn" is written in *verse libre*. The use of lawn as symbol for spiritual growth is highly evocative and suggestive.

16. CASE STUDY

"Case Study", first published in 1965 in Ezekiel's fourth volume of poems entitled *The Unfinished Man* is a confessional poem with psychological overtones. It is psychological study of a man who lacks firmness of purpose and is by nature weak willed. He fails to make up his mind about his career or his mission in life. It is a vivid portrait of a wavering, weak-willed and irresolute person who is in the real sense "the unfinished man." The narrator is a third person who may be the poet himself.

The narrator found that whatever the unfinished man has done "was not quite right." He had no knowledge of what to do in life. The teachers had never failed in their assessment of their own deeds, but he could not even follow their example. He could not choose a career for himself.

Ought he to practice yoga, study Greek,
Or bluff his way throughout with brazen cheek?

After studying in an ordinary school and at a worthless college, he had had a foolish love affair. Then he patiently tried to build some sort of career for himself but he had not the courage and determination "to climb with quick assault the envied stair." The knowledge he had attained at the "rotten college" could not be useful and helpful to him. At last, he had resolved to try his hand at politics.

He then felt that "his marriage was the worst mistake of all." Although he loved his children, he spoiled them with too much love and also with too much of a disciplinary control over them. At last, he felt that he was "damned in that domestic game."

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He worked at various jobs but he could not be successful in any one of them. Then he stopped for looking other jobs. Those who knew him told that he conceived impossible projects which he afterwards abandoned. He was not a man of action. In fact he never moved "unless he found something he might have loved."

One day he went to the narrator to seek his advice. He advised him to change his purposeless and irresolute behaviour and to use the intelligence he had got. The last stanza is pregnant with a sound moral :

The pattern will remain, unless you break
It with a sudden jerk, but use your head.
not all returned as heroes who had fled
In wanting both to have and eat the cake.
not all who fail are counted with the fake.

In "Case Study" Ezekiel uses the technique of "perspective narration". The technique of retrospective narration has psychological overtones and undertones.

17. A WOMAN OBSERVED

"A Woman Observed" is a short poem which graphically depicts the sexuality of a pregnant woman whom the narrator (the poet himself) observed in an art gallery. She was engrossed in staring at some nude paintings hanging on the wall for the view of the art lovers. The pregnant woman in this poem is a prude who was shocked at sight of the nudity of the women painted in those pictures. The narrator reacts to the woman's sense of shock because he felt that the pregnant woman should have felt no dislike at all for the exhibition of feminine nakedness because it was nakedness and sexuality in bed which resulted in her pregnancy. While she stood wandering at the nude paintings before her, her body evinced an erotic sight which she could not hide. Indeed, she gets sexually excited at seeing nude paintings and statues, but her prudishness about what she has enjoyed repeatedly in her life is unexplainable :

I watch her sadly as
She leaves the place, my eyes
embracing all that sensual
movement bursting through the dress.

"A Woman Observed" first appeared in Ezekiel's fourth volume of poems published under the heading "The Exact Name" in 1965.

18. VIRGINAL

"Virginal", which appeared in "The Exact Name", published in 1965, is an extraordinary and unusual extraordinary poem. It is a psychological poem which depicts the predicament of a woman who has not married and has grown old. She affects to be happy and completely satisfied with her lot but she inwardly feels melancholy because she has denied to herself the pleasures of married life and motherhood.

But with true British courtesy
He left her a safety pin
Before she took the elevator down.

If "the blouse", "true British courtesy", "a safety pin" and "the elevator" combine to introduce variety in this passage, its complexity is reinforced by its undertone. The lady expects, the English boss will offer her "true British courtesy" but what she really gets is his boorish lust.

"In India" is a brilliant and ironical exposition of the pseudomodernity and snobbery of a certain class in India. It gives a vivid picture of the Indian milieu, the practice of religions, the pseudomodernity and traditions. The poem is conspicuous for vivid pictorial imagery and ironic contrasts. Its language is remarkable for simplicity and clarity.

③ 6. POET, LOVER, BIRD WATCHER ✓ ④

"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

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 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 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