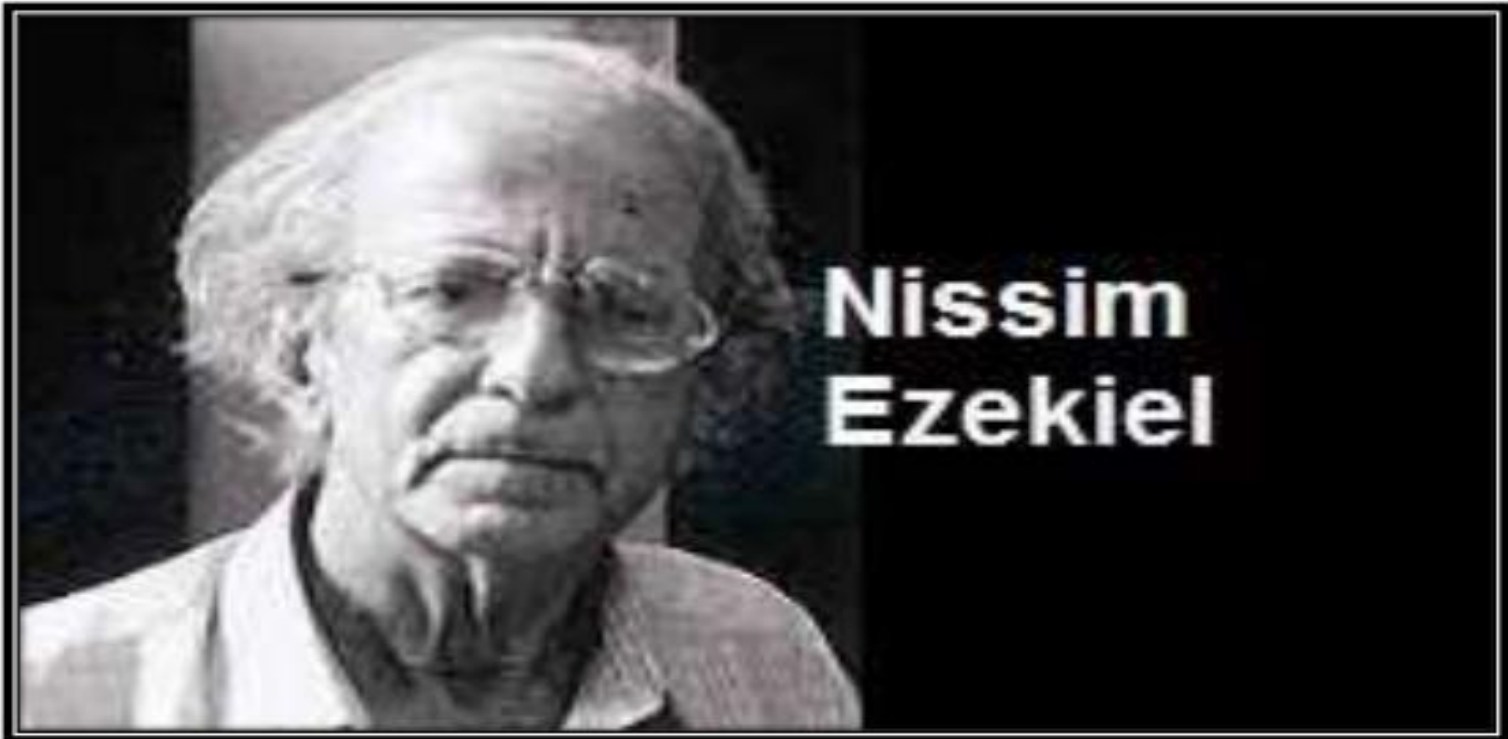


GOVERNMENT DEGREE COLLEGE, RAVULAPALEM

A.RAJESWARI, LECTURER IN
ENGLISH



NIGHT OF THE SCORPION



About the poet

- He is an Indian poet
- Ezekiel was born in 1924 in Bombay of Jewish parents.
- He worked as a teacher of English Literature for a number of years at Bombay University.
- His poetry collection include
 - A Time to change (1952)
 - Sixty Poems (1953)
 - The Third (1959)
 - The Unfinished Man (1960)
 - The Exact Name (1965)
 - Hymns in Darkness (1976)
 - Latter-Day Psalms (1982)
- **He was awarded the Sahitya Academy Award in 1983 for his Poetry collection, "Latter-Day Psalms"**

About the Poem

1. The present poem “Night of the Scorpion” was published in Ezekiel’s Book Exact Name in 1965.
2. It is a brilliant narrative poem.
3. A **narrative poem** tells the story of an event in the form of a **poem**.

THE NIGHT OF THE SCORPION

I remember the night my mother was stung by a scorpion. Ten hours of steady rain had driven him to crawl beneath a sack of rice.

Parting with his poison - flash of diabolic tail in the dark room - he risked the rain again.

vocabulary

DIABOLIC



Characteristics of the Devil, which is disgracefully bad or unpleasant

The peasants came like **swarms of flies**
and buzzed the name of God a hundred times
to paralyse the Evil One.

With candles and with lanterns
throwing **giant scorpion shadows**
on the mud-baked walls

they searched for him: he was not found.

They clicked their tongues.

With every movement that the scorpion made his
poison moved in Mother's blood, they said.

Swarms of flies



candles



Lantern



Shadows on the mud baked walls



May he sit still, they said


May the sins of your previous birth
be burned away tonight, they said.

May your suffering decrease
the misfortunes of your next birth, they
said.

May the sum of all evil
balanced in this unreal world




against the sum of good
become diminished by your pain.
May the poison purify your flesh



of desire, and your spirit of ambition,
they said, and they sat around
on the floor with my mother in the centre,
the peace of understanding on each face.
More candles, more lanterns, more neighbours,
more insects, and the endless rain.
My mother twisted through and through,
groaning on a mat.
My father, sceptic, rationalist,
trying every curse and blessing,
powder, mixture, herb and hybrid.

He even poured a little paraffin
upon the bitten toe and put a match to it.
I watched the flame feeding on my mother.
I watched the holy man perform his rites to
tame the poison with an incantation.
After twenty hours
it lost its sting.



My mother only said
Thank God the scorpion picked on
me
And spared my children.



Analysis of the poem

- The first four lines of the poem describes as to why the scorpion bit his mother
- The parting with his poison implies its stinging the poet's mother (line 5- line 7)
- line 8 to line 28 shows the superstitious nature of the people of the village.
- Next lines – suffering of mother
- Sceptical and rationalistic behaviour of father
- Holy man's rites
- Victory of mother's love

Tones of the poem

- The **tone of a poem** is the attitude you feel in it — the writer's attitude toward the subject or audience
- 1. Narrative: Describes the incident
- 2. Mystic tone : Religious behaviour of the villagers
- 3. Reverent Tone: The poet's respect towards his mother

Structure of the poem

- Poem is written in free verse with no rhythm or rhyme scheme.
- Conversational effect
- Makes us sympathize with the poet
- Poem starts off in I person but the poet doesn't give his own reaction
- Focuses more on other people

LITERARY DEVICES

- Alliteration
- Assonance
- Metaphor
- Simile

Alliteration

- Alliteration is a figure of identified by the repetition of a speech sound in a sequence of nearby words.
- Example: She sells seashells by the sea-shore.
- Alliteration in the poem: Stung by a scorpion, parting with his poison, diabolic tail in the dark, risked the rain, poison purify, through and through, poured a little paraffin, flame feeding

Assonance

- **Assonance is the repetition of identical or similar vowels in a sequence of nearby words, as in**
- **“mellow wedding bells”**
- **In this poem: Candle/lantern, buzzed/hundred,
Mother’s blood**

Metaphor and Simile

- Metaphor: a thing regarded as representative or symbolic of something else.
- Scorpion is the evil one
- Simile: a figure of speech involving the comparison of one thing with another thing of a different kind, used to make a description more emphatic or vivid (e.g. *as brave as a lion*).
- In the poem: like swarms of flies

ONOMATOPOEIA

- Also called echoism
- It designates a word, or a combination of words whose sound seems to resemble closely the sound it denotes.

Ex: “hiss”, “buzz” “bang”

In the poem : swarm, buzz, twisted, groaning

Comprehension

- 1. How did the poet describe the scorpion?
- 2. Describe the superstitious behaviour of the peasants?