

Enterprise

--- Nissim Ezekiel

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 beat down to match our rage.

We stood it very well, I thought,
Observed and put down copious notes
On things the peasants sold and bought
The way of serpents and of goats.
Three cities where a sage had taught.

But when the differences arose
On how to cross a desert patch,
We lost a friend whose stylish prose
Was quite the best of all our batch.
A shadow falls on us and grows.

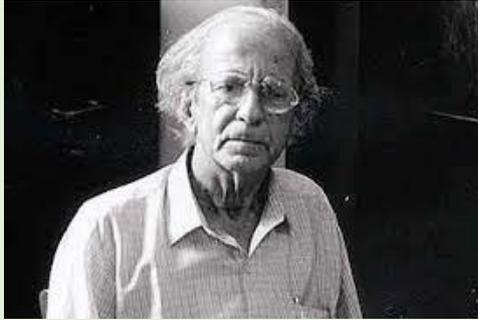
Another phase was reached when we
Were twice attacked, and lost our way.

A section claimed its liberty
To leave the group. I tried to pray .
Our leader said he smelt the sea.

We noticed nothing as we went ,
A straggling crowd of little hope,
Ignoring what the thunder meant,
Deprived of common needs like soap.
Some were broken, some merely bent.

When, finally , we reached the place ,
We hardly know why we were there.
The trip had darkened every face,
Our deeds were neither great nor rare.
Home is where we have to gather grace.

About the poet



Nissim Ezekiel (16 December 1924 – 9 January 2004) was an Indian Jewish poet, actor, playwright, editor and art critic. He was a foundational figure in postcolonial India's literary history, specifically for Indian Poetry in English.

He was awarded the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1983 for his collection, "Latter-Day Psalms", by the Sahitya Akademi, India's National Academy of Letters. Ezekiel has been applauded for his subtle, restrained and well crafted diction, dealing with common and mundane (simple) themes in a manner that manifests both cognitive profundity, as well as an unsentimental, realistic sensibility, that has been influential on the course of succeeding Indian English poetry. Ezekiel enriched and established Indian English language poetry through his modernist innovations and techniques, which enlarged Indian English literature, moving it beyond purely spiritual and orientalist themes, to include a wider range of concerns and interests, including familial events, individual angst and skeptical societal introspection.