**Night of the Scorpion: Nissim Ezekiel**

Nissim Ezekiel is seen as one of the prominent name in early modern Indian poetry. He was the first Indian poet to communicate modern Indian sensibility in modern expression. He was born in 1924. He published **Night of the Scorpion** in his book The Exact Name, 1965. **Night of the Scorpion** expresses a new and emerging aesthetic in Ezekiel's poetry. His early poems were written with strict meter and rhyme, but **Night of the Scorpion** adopts a natural, colloquial meter and tone. The poem was made a deliberate attempt at formal innovation by using a loose, seemingly free-verse structure. Additionally, Ezekiel stopped putting capitals at the beginning of each line, which allows his later poems to flow much more easily on the page.

In **Night of the Scorpion**, the speaker tells a story from his childhood in which his mother was bitten by a scorpion. The poem begins with a simple announcement; *I remember the night my mother was stung by a scorpion*. The poet recalls the gloomy showery night when his mother was stung by a scorpion. It was continuous rain of ten hours had led a scorpion to take shelter in his house, under a sack of rice. When the poet’s mother went to get rice from the granary, the dark coloured scorpion with a diabolic tale bit her and disappeared in the rain with the poison within it immediately. The scorpion did not stay there anymore after it had stung the mother of the poet.

The village people and peasants came up in large numbers with candles and lanterns to the poet’s house to see his mother. The peasant groups are compared with swans of flies, it tells that they were large in numbers. The peasants were superstitious. They chanted the name of God to make the scorpion in active. They chanting were like the sounds of buzzing bees. They believed the effect of the poison would increase with the movement of the scorpion and therefore, they tried every bit to stop the movement of the scorpion. They wanted to kill it, but it wasn’t found anywhere.

The poet’s mother was in great pain. The people prayed that all the sins of her previous birth be burnt. They believed the world to be unreal and wanted pain to absolve all her sins, and decrease the sufferings of the next birth also. More and more people walked in. The poet’s mother continued to suffer and was in great pain.

The peasants begin to share good wishes for the speaker's mother, hoping that the scorpion will die that night, or at least sit still, that the sins of her past life will be burned away, and that she may return to an even better life in her next life because of her suffering.

The peasants continue making wishes for the speaker's mother, wishing that the forces of evil might be diminished by the speaker's mother's pain. They sat on the floor around the speaker's mother, hoping that the scorpion's bite would *purify her,* with *the peace of understanding on each face*.

The villagers were superstitious, but the poet’s father was a agnostic. He suspected every claim based on religion. He was a sensible person and decide everything based on reason and logic. The poet describes his father as a *sceptic* and *rationalist.* The father was also seen making an effort to help his mother through all the ways he was familiar to. *trying every curse and blessing, / powder, mixture, herb and hybrid*. The speaker's father even lit the bite on fire in an attempt to remove the poison. He poured a little paraffin upon the bitten toe and put a matchstick to it. The poet watched the flame feeding on his mother, he also watched the holy man trying to control the effect of poison with words in prayer or magic and performed his rites. After twenty hours the sting was lost, the poison became powerless and the mother recovered. She forgot all her sufferings and her pain. She thanked God, and was grateful that the scorpion had spared her children*. My mother only said / Thank God the scorpion picked on me / And spared my children.*

The poem shows Indian community life. How the society stands for each other in the time of trouble. Community live close together and keeps itself informed about its neighbour. Further it represents mother child relationship. For a mother children are above everything even her own life. A mother can go to any extent or bear any sort of pain to save and keep her children protected. The emotional detachment lets the poet speak directly to the reader, who understands right away what Ezekiel means without having to juggle emotional pain over the suffering mother.

Though **Night of the Scorpion** does not use the strict formal structures that Ezekiel had used in his earlier poetry, this does not mean that the poem is not rhythmic or musical. The punctuation and enjambment of the lines cause the poem to flow in the large first stanza.

Finally, this poem communicates a tension between urban living and the natural world that Ezekiel returns to again and again in this work. The antagonist of the poem is the scorpion, who is forgiven by the speaker very early on since he was indoors simply for survival.

**Alliteration** - stung by a scorpion, Parting with his poison, diabolic tail in the dark, risked the rain, poison purfiy, through and through, poured a little paraffin, flame feeding.

**Antonyms -** previous/next, evil/good, sceptic/rationalist, curse/blessing.

**Assonance** - candle/lantern, buzzed/hundred, Mother's blood.

**Metaphor** - scorpion is the Evil One.

**Simile** - like swarms of flies.