



By Nissim Ezekiel

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#### Understanding the Poem

1. Comment on the subtlety with which the poet captures the general pattern of communication within a family.

Answer: Nissim in his poem For Elkana has portrayed a common scene of any Indian home. On an April evening, strolling in the porch, the wife tries to discuss certain issues that the husband is indifferent to, as he believes that any man in the neighbourhood would know solution to them, while their son plays around. The lady of the house is keen on discussing the issues and needs no disturbance and demands her husband to pay attention. A simple style of how a conversation takes place between any husband and wife, be it on any topic under the sun. the husband finds the talk irrelevant and tries to ignore. He believes the issues the wife is discussing to be too simple to waste his time on and humorously declares that the wife is always correct to avoid any further argument. The reader may find it interesting to note that even during the argument the poet does not forget to mention the love of the wife for the husband.

2. Poetic effect is achieved in the poem through understatement and asides. Discuss this with examples.

Answer: The effect that an understatement or an aside creates is the vivid visual imagery that descends in the reader's mind while reading the poem. It brings the reader in resonance with the poet's mood while composing. The reader is overwhelmed with the setting through which the poet captivates the reader's mind. Thus, the work of these adjectives is to not just beautify but to create the image of the plot. The details of the background and other surroundings, the details about the characters that infuses the mind of the reader so that it all appears lucid to imagine and feel what the poet probably felt or is trying to convey through her/his creation.

When the poet details the environment like "on a broken window pane" and the rest, an image is imparted of the house the characters live in. The emotional effect is created when the narrator recalls "the man she loves who happened to be me" amidst the argument, it makes it clear that no matter how many debates or discussions happen the bond between a husband and wife is eternal and can not be challenged. The poet does not forget the little one around and his body language, he describes keenly. How with "his small legs well apart" he demanded his mother with dinner. The little boy is growing up, his body language reflects his attitude; "his crescent-moon-like chin uplifted eyes hard and cold" display his determination. These all draw a images cascading in the mind along while one reads the poem.

3. How is the idyllic juxtaposed with the pedestrian in the poem?

Answer: Nissim is known for bringing out the extraordinary in the ordinary. His poems are based on the ordinary settings and ordinary issues. The fashion with which he presents the common issues are appreciated by many critics. In fact he was the first Indian poet to have abandoned romance and write on ordinary

issues in poetry composed in English. In his poems like The Night of the Scorpion, he portrays the emotions of the ordinary human being. An ordinary pedestrian scene of a village out of which he created a hyperbole presenting it in a very idyllic fashion. Even in the poem For Elkana, Ezekiel has exploited a very ordinary home situation in which the parents are discussing their household issues. It is just that through various figures of speech such as meiosis, undertones, asides and understatements he personifies the ordinary that any married couple may undergo or a parent may have for her/his child. Thus, through his creation Nissim has given the reader that even in an pedestrian lies an idyllic expression.

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