

# THE NIGHT OF THE SCORPION

Power Point Presentation

By

B.N.Prathyusha

Faculty In English

P.R.Government College(A), Kakinada

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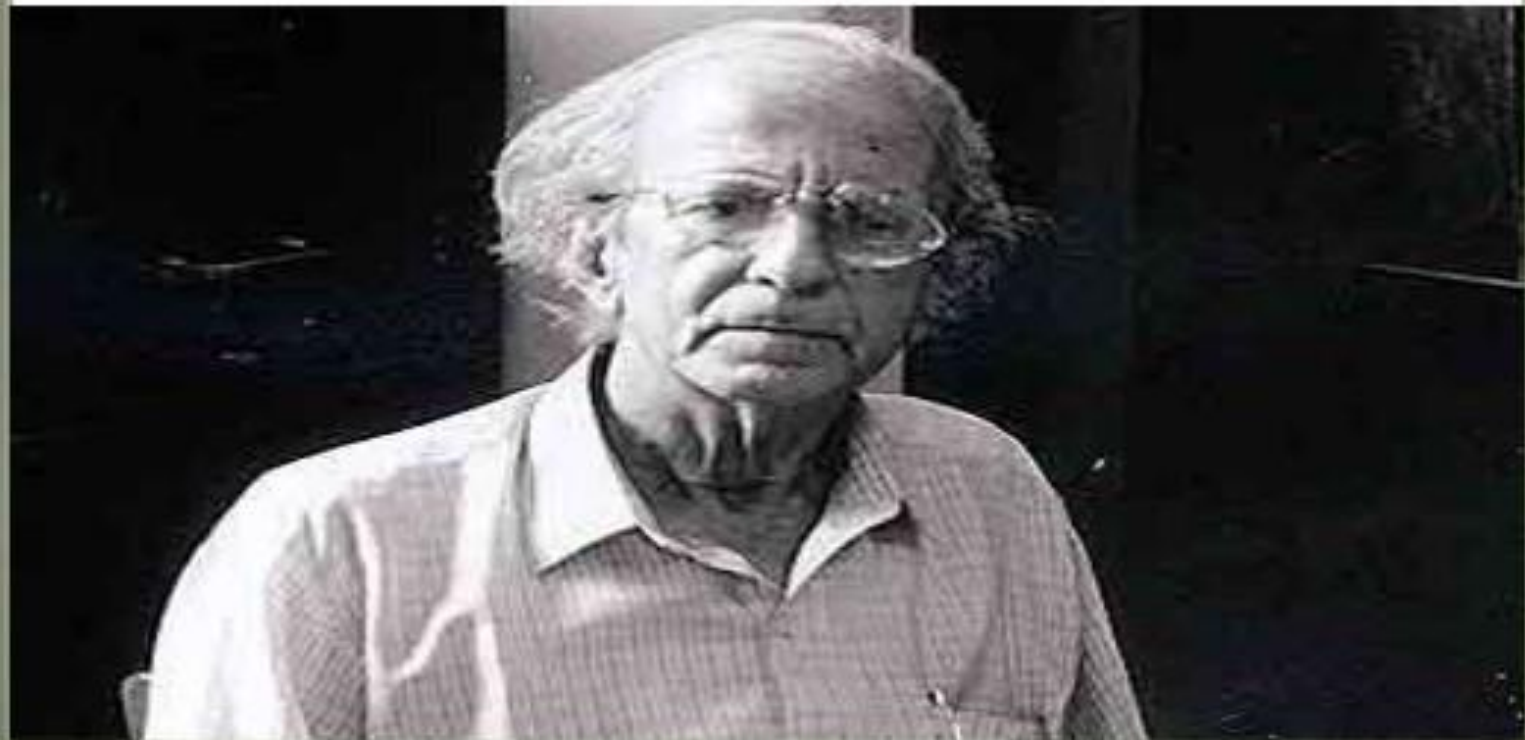
Nissim Ezekiel



# NISSIM EZEKIEL

(16 Dec 1924 – 9 Jan 2004)

Father of Modern Indian English Poetry

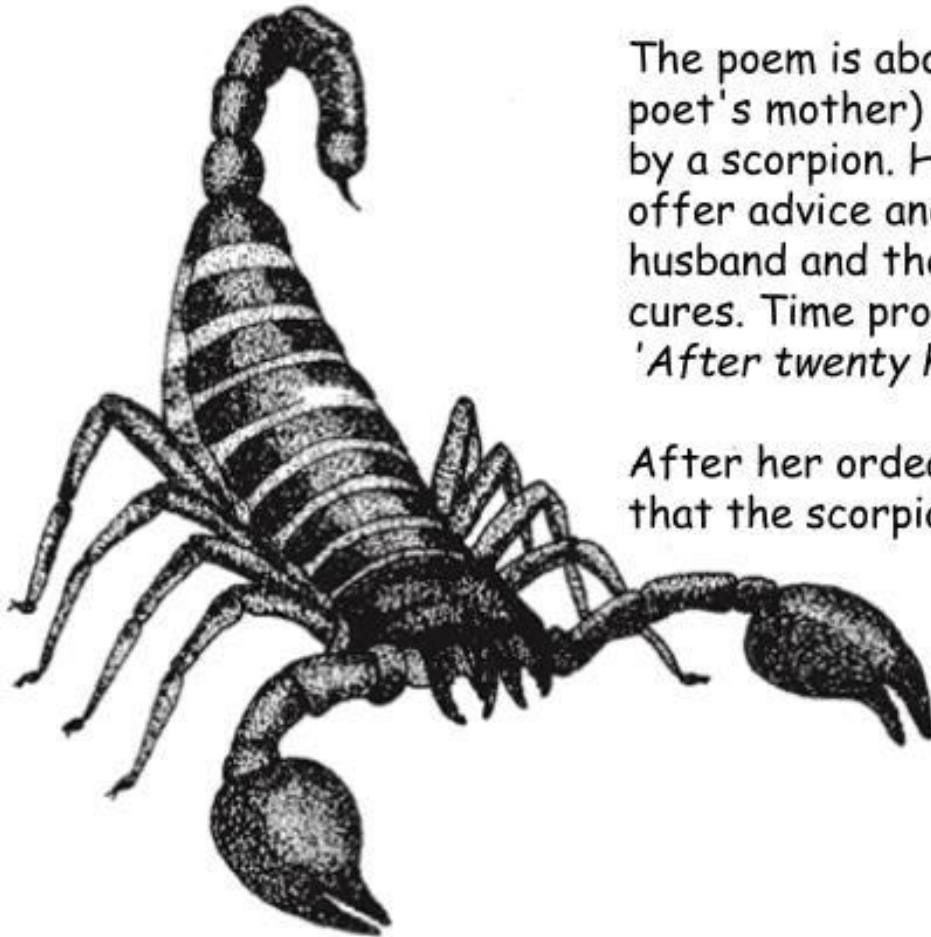


# NISIM EZEKIEL (1924-2004)

- ▣ Born in Bombay. He was an Indian Jewish Poet, Playwright, editor and art critic.
- ▣ He is acclaimed as the father of post-independence Indian English verse.
- ▣ He was awarded the Sahitya Academy Award in 1983 for his poetic collection, “Latter-Day Psalms”.
- ▣ He was awarded Padma Shri award in 1988.

# Night of the Scorpion

Nissim Ezekiel



The poem is about the night when a woman (the poet's mother) in a poor village in India is stung by a scorpion. Her concerned neighbours come to offer advice and help. The neighbours, her husband and the local holy man try different cures. Time proves to be the best healer - *'After twenty hours / it lost its sting'*.

After her ordeal, the mother is merely thankful that the scorpion stung her and not the children.

# Theme

The poem opens with the poet's reminiscence of a childhood experience. One night his mother was stung by a scorpion. Ten hours of steady rain had driven the scorpion to hide beneath a sack of rice. After inflicting unbearable pain upon the mother with a flash of its diabolic tail, the scorpion risked the rain again. The peasant folk of the village came like swarms of flies and express their sympathy. They believed that with every movement the scorpion made, the poison would move in mother's blood. So, with lighted candles and lanterns, they searched for him, but in vain. The villagers further opened the bundle of superstitions. They expressed that the mother's suffering and pain will burn away the sins of her past and decrease the misfortunes of future.

# Night of the Scorpion

First person

The poet's  
mother

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.

Scorpion is just  
Trying to stay dry

Parting with his poison - flash

Alliteration

Stung the mother

Religious imagery

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.



The poem is written in the first person.  
The speaker in the poem is a child and  
they are talking about a night when  
their mother was stung by a scorpion.

The words "rice" and "dark  
room" suggest that the  
poem is set in a poor Indian  
home.



# Steady Rain



Religious imagery to show  
The scorpion is demonic

Scorpion is afraid and risks the  
rain to get away from the people

of **diabolic tail** in the **dark room** –  
**he risked the rain again.**

Sets the scene  
by showing it's  
a poor Indian house

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

Symbolic of the  
Devil – capitalised  
To make it a name

Simile which makes the  
peasants seem panic-  
stricken and illogical

# Of diabolic Tail in the dark room paralysing evil by prayers



A simile is used to describe the neighbours. It suggests that they are panicking.

"buzzed" = onomatopoeia



This description of the scorpion suggests that it is like the devil.

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.

The woman lives in a  
mud hut which  
reinforces the poor  
society.

The local people try to find the scorpion. The  
community seem superstitious. They believe  
that the scorpion's movements make the  
poison move in the mother's blood.



With candles and with lanterns searching  
for the scorpion in the mud backed walls

MORE CANDLES



VILLAGE NATIVITY



Superstition shows  
how ill-educated the  
peasants are

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

**May** he sit still, they said.

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

Sounds like a prayer, but having the same word  
At the start of so many lines makes this reaction  
Seem repetitive and unsympathetic

Talking about  
reincarnation – they think  
she will die

**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.**



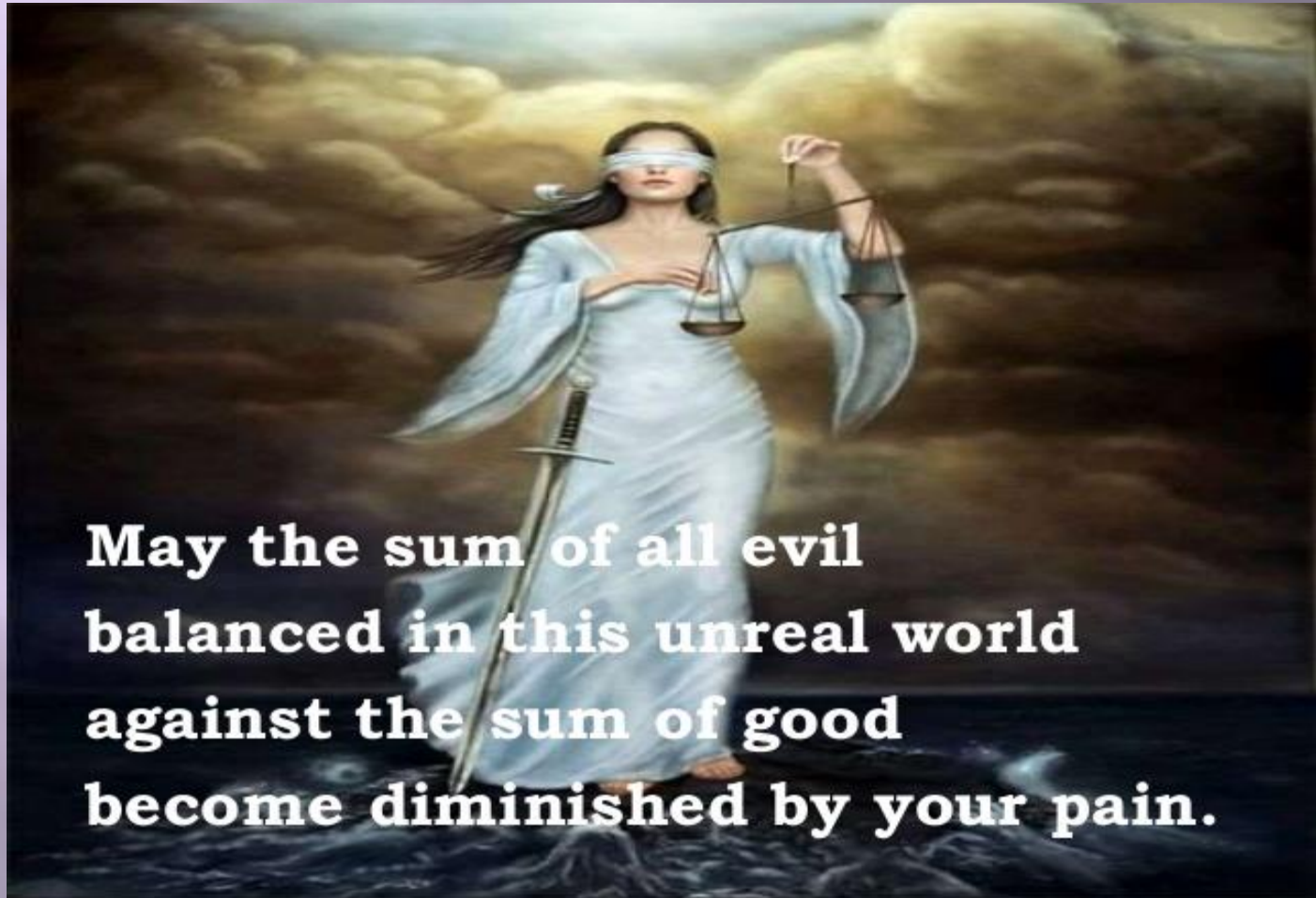


Reincarnation again.  
Religious imagery

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

May the sum of **evil**  
balanced in this unreal world  
against the sum of good  
become **diminished by your pain**.

Pain is seen as a way of cleansing  
the soul before the next life



**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.

Shows the superstition about the afterlife

They think that she is going to die.

Repetition of the word more

Superstition shows  
how ill-educated the  
peasants are

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his poison moved in Mother's blood, they said.

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Shows the superstition about the afterlife

They think that she is going to die.

Repetition of the word more

My mother twisted through and through,  
groaning on a mat.

My father , **sceptic rationalist,**  
**trying every curse and blessing,**  
**powder, mixture, herb and hybrid.**

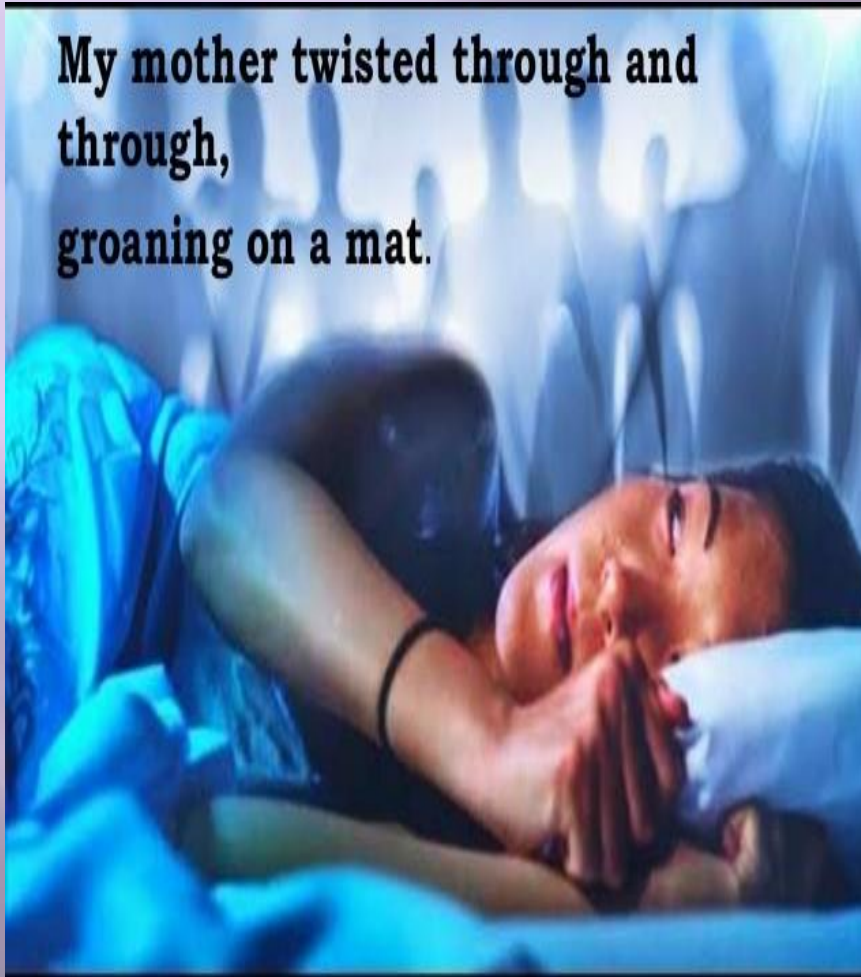
he even poured a little paraffin  
upon the bitten toe and put a match to it.

The event was so serious that his father tried anything to save her.

Desperation.

# Twisted Through And Through,

**My mother twisted through and through,  
groaning on a mat.**





Repetition

Personification of the  
flame/ alliteration.

I **watched** the **flame feeding** on my mother.

I **watched** the holy man perform his rites  
to tame the poison with an **incantation**.

Chanting

After twenty hours  
It lost its sting.

Time was the only  
healer.

My mother only said

Shows the  
nature of a  
mother's love.

Thank God the scorpion picked on me  
and spared my children.

Separate stanza concluding the  
story. The mother is rational  
which contrasts with the  
villages.

# Flame feeding, Mother's love towards children



Thank  
you!