

# THE EPILEPTIC K N DARUWALLA

—

Suddenly the two children  
flew from her side  
like severed<sup>1</sup> wings.

Thank God, the burden in her belly  
stayed where it was.

The rickshaw-puller was a study in guilt.  
It was too much for him : the convulsionary<sup>2</sup>  
and her frightened<sup>3</sup> kids  
floundering about in a swarm<sup>4</sup> of limbs.

A focus in the brain  
or some such flap,  
the look had gone from the mother's eyes  
the way her children  
had flown from her lap.

The husband dug through the mound<sup>5</sup>  
that was her face; forced the mouth wide  
plucked out the receding tongue  
Warped<sup>6</sup> into a clotted wound  
and put a gag between her teeth.

The traffic ground  
to an inquisitive<sup>7</sup> halt. A crowd senses  
a mishap before it sees one.  
They fanned her, rubbed her feet and looked  
around  
  
for other ways to summon back her senses.  
A pedestrian whispered,  
Her seizures<sup>8</sup> are cyclic;  
they visit in her menses<sup>9</sup>.

She was not hysteric<sup>10</sup>, she didn't rave<sup>11</sup>,  
her face was flushed<sup>12</sup>, abstract, the  
marionette<sup>13</sup>-  
head jerked from side to side, a slave  
to cross-pulls. A thin edge of froth<sup>14</sup>  
simmered round her lips  
like foam-dregs<sup>15</sup> left by a receding wave.

The hospital doctors frowned with thought  
light words like petit mal were tied  
to the heavies, "Psycho-motor epilepsy  
a physician pointed out with pride  
the 'spike-and-wave' electrical activity,  
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Just when he said, ‘she isn’t shaping  
too well’, she recovered, bleached white  
and utterly raped.

As a limp awareness slouched along her face  
I found it was the husband who was shaking.

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COMMENTS

# Kamaladas

This is a noon for beggars with whining  
Voices, a noon for men who come from hills  
With parrots in a cage and fortune-cards,  
All stained with time, for brown *Kurava* girls  
With old eyes, who read palm in light singsong  
Voices, for bangle-sellers who spread  
On the cool black floor those red and green and  
blue

Bangles, all covered with the dust of roads,  
Miles, grow cracks on the heels, so that when  
they

Clambered up our porch, the noise was grating,  
Strange..... This is a noon for strangers who  
part

The window-drapes and peer in, their hot eyes  
Brimming with the sun, not seeing a thing in  
Shadowy rooms and turn away and look  
So yearningly at the brick-ledged well. This  
Is a noon for strangers with mistrust in  
Their eyes, dark, silent ones who rarely speak  
At all, so that when they speak, their voices  
Run wild, like jungle-voices. Yes, this is  
A noon for wild men, wild thoughts, wild love. To  
Be here, far away, is torture. Wild feet  
Stirring up the dust, this hot noon, at my  
Home in Malabar, and I so far away .....

*Remember me? I am Professor Sheth.*

*Once I taught you geography.*

*Now I am retired, though my health is good.*

*My wife died some years back.*

*By God's grace, all my children*

*Are well settled in life.*

*One is Sales Manager, One is Bank Manager,*

*Both have cars. Other also doing well,*

*though not so well.*

*Every family must have black sheep.*

*Sarala and Tarala are married,*

*Their husbands are very nice boys.*

*You won't believe but I have eleven*

*grandchildren.*

*How many issues you have? Three?*

*That is good. These are days of family*

*planning.*

*I am not against. We have to change with*

*times.*

*Whole world is changing. In India also*

*We are keeping up. Our progress is*



*Everything is happening with leaps and bounds.*

*I am going out rarely, now and then*

*Only, this is price of old age*

*But my health is O.K. Usual aches and pains.*

*No diabetes, no blood pressure, no heart attack.*

*This is because of sound habits in youth.*

*How is your health keeping? Nicely?*

*I am happy for that.*

*This year I am sixty-nine and hope to score a century.*

*You were so thin, like stick,*

*Now you are man of weight and consequence.*

*That is good joke.*

*If you are coming again this side by chance,*

*Visit please my humble residence also.*

*I am living just on opposite house's backside.*

*I have just come upon this poem by the*

I have just come upon this poem by the well known Indian poet Nissim Ezekiel .I am struck by the simple beauty of the poem with its hilarious *Indianisms* , if we can call basically Indian cultural expressions that. This is not about English grammar but the flavor Indian cultural attitudes lend to the English language.

1) “Now I am retired, though my health is good ”

That is an expression which may leave an Englishman perplexed. But to an Indian or someone familiar with the Indian ethos, it is a perfectly normal expression.

Know that he has not retired but is retired. Which means he is healthy enough to continue to work for another decade or so. But a silly service rule retires everyone at sixty on the basic assumption that one

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## “River, Once” by R. Parthasarathy: A Critical Summary and Analysis

The title of R. Parthasarathy's poem “River, Once” is highly suggestive. It indicates that it was a river once and it is no longer a river due to man's indifference to the beauty of nature. The poet expresses his sense of shock at the degradation of the river Vaigai, which flows through the city of Madurai. Using the device of contrast effectively, the poet shows how the river that was once the cradle of a glorious culture has now become a sewer. The river is personified as a mother. The mother river feels for her lost glory and speaks about her present pitiable condition. The Vaigai was a fast flowing perennial river once and a glorious civilisation flourished on its banks. Now it has become a play-field for boys and the mischievous boys “tickle the ribs” with paper boats. The word “ribs” has been used metaphorically for the banks of the rivers. Buffaloes have turned the river into a pond and are wallowing in it. Once there were flower gardens on the banks of the



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^ has been used metaphorically for the banks of the rivers. Buffaloes have turned the river into a pond and are wallowing in it. Once there were flower gardens on the banks of the river and now one finds only thorny bushes and shrubs.

“There is eaglewood in my hair / and state flowers. Now a lot of eaglewood floats on the water and state flowers that are thrown into it can also be sun. Once she was the refuge of emperors and poets. The poets of the past came to her for inspiration. She inspired them to write great poetry. Here the poet makes a reference to the three great Tamil Academies that flourished at Madurai in the ancient past and to the great contribution made by the sangam poets to the richness of the ancient Tamil Poetry. In the past, birds like Kingfishers and egrets were regular visitors and as a mother the river fed them. Now they have flown away as she is unable to feed them. The poet presents an altogether different scene of the river today in a humorous and ironic vein. Every evening “When bells roll in the forehead of temples”, a man comes to the river for defacating in it unmindful of the divine call of the temple bell.

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unable to feed them. The poet presents together different scene of the river today in a humorous and ironic vein. Every evening "When bells roll in the forehead of temples", a man comes to the river for defacating in it unmindful of the divine call of the temple bell. The poet presents this ugly scene to highlight man's indifference to the beauty of nature. Once people congregated on the banks of the river Vaigai for noble purposes but ironically now they do so for different and unholy purposes. Now the river Vaigai has become a receptacle of refuse..

"River, Once" is indeed a powerful poem deeply felt and powerfully expressed. The river is a symbol of the flow of life but in its present contaminated state it is only a symbol what human life has become. Anguished over decay of the river the poet seems to convey the idea that nature has made everything beautiful but man has rendered it ugly because he has lost the sense of wonder and beauty. The poet has succeeded in presenting this idea tellingly through contrastive pen-pictures.

## **The Epileptic – Keki N. Dharuwalla**

“The Epileptic” is a poem written by Indian English poet Keki. N. Daruwalla. He is a poet of great literary stamina, intellectual strength and social awareness.

Epilepsy is a nervous disease causing a person unconscious often with involuntary movements. In the poem, a pregnant woman got this violent fit while she was travelling in a rickshaw. By the grace of God, her pregnancy was safe. But, her two children were frightened. The rickshaw puller was guilty because it was happening in his rickshaw.

The face of the epileptic became a mound of flesh. Her husband was making vain efforts. He tried to open her mouth wide, plucked out her receding tongue, and put a gag into her mouth to keep it open.

The traffic on the road came to an inquisitive halt. The crowd were anxious. They joined to help the woman. Some people fanned her. Some rubbed her feet. They tried their best to summon back her senses. A pedestrian commented that her violent fits were cyclic in nature. They visit her repeatedly whenever she was in her menses.

She was not hysteric. She did not talk violently. A simmering foam was coming out of her mouth. The woman was taken to the hospital. After long discussions and tests, the doctors diagnosed the disease as ‘Psychomotor Epilepsy’. After much fuss, they prescribed

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She was not hysteric. She did not talk violently. A simmering foam was coming out of her mouth. The woman was taken to the hospital. After long discussions and tests, the doctors diagnosed the disease as 'Psychomotor Epilepsy'. After much fuss, they prescribed common drugs like 'Belladonna' and 'Peraldehyde'.

Finally she recovered from her fit. She was pale and completely exhausted. The last sentence of the poem is charged heavily with irony. Until now, the wife shook. But now it is the turn of the husband to shake. The shake of the husband may be from the thought about the excessive hospital fees.

at November 16, 2019

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## The Professor

- Nissim Ezekiel

“The Professor” by Nissim Ezekiel is a satirical poem. It is written in the form of a conversation between a professor and his old student. Here, the poet criticises modern way of life and changing values. At the beginning of the poem, the professor introduces himself as Sheth. He claims that once he taught him geography.

The Professor tells the student that his wife has passed away few years back. All his children ‘are well settled in life.’ He also mentions that one of his sons is a Bank Manager and another is a Sales Manager. To describe their social and financial condition, he says that they both own cars. Then he refers to his third son as the black sheep.

The professor then talks about his daughters, Sarala and Tarala. He says that they both are married and leading a happy life. He is very proud that his son-in-laws ‘are very nice boys.’ The professor has eleven grandchildren. He asks his student how many issues he has. The student probably says three. The professor accepts that the people are going in for family planning these days which is good. The professor points out that the whole world is changing. But, he is very concerned that the old values are replaced by new values.

Finally, the professor talks about his age related issues. He says that he hardly goes out and he has usual aches and pains. He reveals that he is not suffering from diabetes, blood pressure or heart disease. He believes that he is healthy because of the good habits that he cultivated from his youth. He is sixty nine and hopes to live for hundred years. He jokes with his student that the latter was



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Thus the poem serves as a contemporary social criticism.