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Critical analysis of the poem "Night of the scorpion" by Nissim Ezekiel.

"Night of the scorpion" is one of the most anthologized poems of Nissim Ezekiel. In this poem he uses a trivial incident of his mother being stung by a scorpion to evoke the rustic world of the superstitious yet simple peasants. Their coming like swarms of flies and trying to mitigate her pain by various methods reveal the essence of community life of a village. Their methods are all rooted in superstitious beliefs and therefore are in stark contrast with those of the poet's father who is a sceptic and rationalist. While the rustic peasants chanted the name of a god and click their tongues to stop the movement of the scorpion as well as of poison, his father tries all sorts of medicine and herbs to give relief to her mother's pain. He even pours a little paraffin on the bitten toe and put a match to it. The poet watches the flame burning on her mother while a holy man is performing his rites with an incantation. A telling effect is achieved in the last lines of the poem when the pain of the sting is lost and the poet's mother heaved a sigh of relief that the scorpion has picked her and spared her children.

The poem is in free verse with shifting of rhythm to suit the sense and the times where the neighbours' concern for her recovery is expressed have an incantatory effect on the readers.

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'Night of the Scorpion', which was published as a part of *The Exact Name*, demonstrates a new and emerging aesthetic in Ezekiel's poetry. Whereas his early poems conformed to a strict meter and rhyme, later poems like "Night of the Scorpion" adopts a natural, colloquial metre and tone. This poem was published in a time when Ezekiel was making a deliberate attempt at formal innovation by using a loose, seemingly free-verse structure for his narrative poems. Additionally, Ezekiel stopped putting capitals at the beginning of each line, which allows his later poems to flow much more easily on the page.

This poem communicates a tension between urban living and the natural world that Ezekiel returns to again and again in this work. The speaker's community, which lives close together and keeps itself informed about its residents, rose up in this work to surround the mother as she burned. The antagonist of the poem is the Scorpion, who is forgiven by the speaker very early on since he was indoors simply for survival. In the poem, the true force of chaos and evil is the rain, which drove the scorpion indoors and beats down upon the speaker and his family throughout their ordeal.

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