

Introduction

The poem *Enterprise* written by Nissim Ezekiel describes a metaphorical journey of some enthusiastic people of which the poet is also a part. This journey can also be compared to the human condition on earth which is full of difficulties and failures.

This pilgrimage is set to achieve a specific goal. The poem consists of six stanzas having five lines each. The rhyme scheme of the poem is ABABA.

Stanza 1

It started as a pilgrimage

Exalting minds and making all

The burdens light, The second stage

Explored but did not test the call.

The sun beat down to match our rage.

In the first stanza, the poet says that he went on a pilgrimage along with a number of other people. All of them were quite enthusiastic so their minds were full of joy and excitement for the pilgrimage.

This excitement made the burden of troubles very light. Thus all the problems and difficulties that they were yet to face seemed to be nothing before their enthusiasm. This was the first stage of their pilgrimage.

This stage can be compared to the early youth of man in which he is quite innocent and unaware of the problems and failures of adulthood.

With this enthusiasm and vigour, they enter the second stage of their pilgrimage. The second stage of their journey was full of troubles and difficulties. The sun that symbolizes harshness of nature was burning hot.

It tried to neutralize the fire of enthusiasm that was burning in them. However, it failed to kill their burning desire. The innocence of first stage withers away in this stage.

Stanza 2

We stood it very well, I thought ,

Observed and put down copious notes

On things the peasants sold and bought

The way of serpents and of goats.

Three cities where a sage had taught .

In this stanza, the poet says that he thought that they succeeded well in facing all the difficulties coming in their way. On their way, they kept themselves busy by noting down the things sold and bought by the farmers.

They also noted down the ways of snakes and goats as well as the description of the three cities where a hermit was teaching lessons. However, they didn't notice what he was teaching.

In this stanza, the poet wants to tell how people get distracted from their goal when they are on the journey of their life. They waste their energy in doing useless things.

Stanza 3

But when the differences arose

On how to cross a desert patch,

We lost a friend whose stylish prose

Was quite the best of all our batch.

A shadow falls on us and grows.

Soon the pilgrims reached a stage where differences of opinions arouse among them arguing about how to cross the challenging landscape. As a result of one of the members of the group, who wrote the most stylish prose and was intellectual, leaves the group and goes his own way.

Thus the shadow of disagreement fell onto their enterprise and continues to grow. The ego of thus people weakens the integrity of pilgrimage.

Stanza 4

*Another phase was reached when we
Were twice attacked, and lost our way.
A section claimed its liberty
To leave the group. I tried to pray .
Our leader said he smelt the sea.*

Now they reach another stage of pilgrimage where they divide into groups, each attacking the other forgetting all about the aspirations that united them for pilgrimage.

As a result, they lose their way. In other words, the goal and purpose of the journey are lost. Being unsatisfied with the leader some quit the group.

Poet being helpless could not do anything and thus starts praying. The leader feels that they were near to the sea i.e. the destination was near.

Stanza 5

*We noticed nothing as we went ,
A straggling crowd of little hope,
Ignoring what the thunder meant,
Deprived of common needs like soap.
Some were broken, some merely bent.*

However soon they become aware of the fact that it was false hope from the leader as they find nothing on their way. They were now a group of aimless and hopeless wanderers. Their noble aspirations wither away.

They could not hear the thundering of inner-self nor could they interpret what it meant. They were now without even petty things like soap.

Being totally exhausted, some of them could not walk anymore, while some bent down with pain. Thus the enthusiasm fades away and their burden is unbearable.

Stanza 6

When, finally, we reached the place,

We hardly know why we were there.

The trip had darkened every face,

Our deeds were neither great nor rare.

Home is where we have to gather grace.

In this stanza, the pilgrims exhausted, tired and frustrated finally reach their destination or goal. However, there is no joy of fulfilment on their faces. Instead, they wonder why there undertook the journey as it now seems to be meaningless and unworthy of the undertaking.

They forget their noble aspiration. Everyone is hopeless. None of them finds anything heroic in their journey as a number of other pilgrims had already achieved the goal.

For the poet, living at home with inner-satisfaction is the biggest achievement of all. Hence the journey that started with enthusiasm ends with grief, despair, regret, and hopelessness.