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CONTENTS

Sr. No.	Author	Title of the Paper	Page No.
1	Dr. Archana Durgesh & Ms. Ekta Sawhney	Spirituality - The Antidote to All tribulations	1
2	Prof. S. Arunraj	A Study on the Status of Women Education in India	5
3	T. Avinash	Between Illusion and Reality: Subverting Stereotypes (An Analysis of Two Stories)	12
4	Dr. Archana Durgesh & Dr. Pooja Singh	Infertility: A Woman's Encircling Gloom	17
5	Dr. Vitthal V. Parab	The Emerging New Trends In Indian English Fiction	21
6	Dr. K. Anuradha & V. Elumalai	National Identity in Nissim Ezekiel's poem "Island" Correlative with Puram	29
7	Pragya Shukla & Sudhir Kumar	Fasting, Praying & Storytelling	33
8	Dr. Vitthal V. Parab	Pragmatism & Gender Bias in Kamala Das's Poetry	42
9	Dr. Maulik Vyas	Revisiting Mahapatra's Storytelling: a Study of <i>the Green Gardener</i>	49
10	Dr. Archana Durgesh, Dr. Pooja Singh, Achal Sharma, Bramh Prakash Singh, Aakash Wadhawan	Phoolan Devi: The Bandit Queen	61
11	Dr. Vitthal V. Parab	The Social, Cultural Impact of English Literature on the Traditional Life of the People of Bangladesh	67
12	Mr. Parkale Suryakant Narayan	"Sexual Politics" in Sharankumar Limbale's <i>The Outcaste</i> (Akkarmashi)	78
13	Thokchom Ursa	An Insight into Anthropometric Variations of Height and Weight among Monozygotic Twins	83
14	Dr. Prashant Krushnarao Pathak	Human Right and Child Education in Indian Constitution	87
15	कांछळे एम. एम.	दलितेतरांच्या दलित उध्दारांसाठी चळवळी	93

National Identity in Nissim Ezekiel's poem "Island" Correlative with Puram**Dr. K. Anuradha***Asst. Professor of English, Govt. Arts College (Autonomous), Coimbatore, (T.N.) India***V. Elumalai***Asst. Professor of English, K. S. Rangasamy College of Arts and Science (Autonomous) Tiruchengode, (T.N.) India***Abstract**

Basically literature reflects human life. Nissim Ezekiel's poetry is the representation of modern age. He is the person who reflects the realistic picture of modernism. Modernism is the encouraging sign. But sometimes it creates pathetic condition to the society. That is modern man follows certain life style and tradition. And that tradition was full of mechanical. In their tradition there is no place for sentiments and emotions. The poem 'Island' deals with one of the keynotes of modern poetry, say, modern literature, which depicts the disorders of life and, on occasions, suggests ways and means to relive them. And the relief lies in the resolution of the teasing ambiguities and ambivalences of life. This poem may recall sangam literature. At heart Sangam Literature can be divided into two groups. One is 'Agam' and another one is 'Puram'. In the broadest sense 'Agam' deals with the ideas of love and 'Puram' deals with the ideas of war. As far as 'Puram' give importance to patriotism. Patriotic man must save his country from the evils. In modern age, his own actives alone become enemy to him. Because he is a person who create his own customs and everything. So he fights against his own personality alone.

Key Words: Identity, correlation, Nissim Ezekiel

"Poetry is at bottom a criticism of life under the conditions of fixed for such criticism by the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty"
(Sinha 1986: 4)

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deals with one of the keynotes of modern poetry, say, modern literature, which depicts the disorders of life and, on occasions, suggests ways and means to relive them. And the relief lies in the resolution of the teasing ambiguities and ambivalences of life. This poem may recall sangam literature. At heart Sangam Literature can be divided into two groups. One is 'Agam' and another one is 'Puram'. In the broadest sense 'Agam' deals with the ideas of love and 'Puram' deals with the ideas of war. As far as 'Puram' give importance to patriotism. Patriotic man must save his country from the evils. In modern age, his own actives alone become enemy to him. Because he is a

person who creates his own customs and everything. So he fights against his own personality alone.

The poem 'Island' deals with the speaker's quest for identity in a big and busy modern city like Bombay. We know Bombay is the commercial capital of India. Life here is full of din and bustle, hurry and scurry. It offers little scope for a life of emotion and sentiment. It is purely mechanical and commercial. Man is lost in a crowd. He has lost his identity. The speaker feels that this is reality and accepts it as his destiny.

*Unsuitable for song as well as sense
the island flowers into slums
And skyscrapers, reflecting
Precisely the growth of my mind.
I am here to find my way in it.
(Ezekiel 2006)*

The very opening line of the poem contains both irony and sarcasm. The island is 'unsuitable' not only for 'song' but also for 'sense'. The word song represents the life of emotion and sentiment, as well as sense represents the meaningless life or mechanical life. As we shall see, the speaker's description of Bombay is restricted to its disparity of the rich and poor, and its confusion of values. It does not touch upon any of the serious and spiritual aspects. And the still greater irony is grim realization on the part of the speaker, "*I am here to find my way in it*". There is a subtle ambiguity in the statement. He has to find his way in it. The common surmise would be that he would like to find his way out of it, because the island is unsuitable for both song and sense. But the greatest irony lies in his realization of the fact that it is this reality

is his destiny. He has to find out his identity right here, in it.

The reason for this condition can be traced out into 'Puram - 189'. In that verse, the poet states that our universe is surrounded by water. That universe may win by a person who is known for the king. He has wealth, he has education and everything. He is the representative of aristocracy. In the same vein layman is the representative of common men. He does not have education and wealth. There are lots of things common to both of them, like day and night, birth and death, joy and sorrow. Both of them cannot live without food and water. Death treats them equally. So money alone cannot make our life more colorful. Love for nation, human affection and human values are making our life more meaningful. If a man gives importance to money alone, his life turned into desert and lifeless.

Nada kondro kada kondro
Avalaa kondro misaiyaa kondro
Yavazhi nallavar adaver
Avvazhi nallai vaazhiya nilane.
(Puram - 187)

Society is the combination of human interest and experience. Every individual are the elements of society. So the development of nation depends upon the development of an individual. If one individual develops himself through he can develop his family, through he can elevate his society. View on Sangam poetry self civilization is the inseparable parts of nation. Without self-realization the land not at all considered as nation.

In the second stanza, the poet portrays present condition of the nation. The speaker

cries for help. But he would not get help from any corner. In a city like Bombay nobody cares for anybody. So he keeps mostly to his own counsel. This strikes the note of the alienation of the sensitive soul in our time. But the next three lines express the honest confession of a modern sensitive soul. The poet's own voice is also ambiguous. Yes, ambiguity is also one of the characteristics of modernity. There is so much confusion of values that you fail to settle at any one of them. And when there is confusion inside, there will be distorted echoes outside. On the whole, the modern age is marked by insincere. The reason for this insincerity is human rights. Everyone wants to come up his life. They want to elevate their family. And their responsibilities make their life vaguer. They did not have the time to share their emotions. They merely part their lips and show their teeth by way of laughing. They only reveal their teeth not their heart. Basically hand shaking is the outcome of real mutual interest and understanding. Now this hand shaking has become a mere formal gesture without any feeling in it. Our hands alone are active but heart remains passive. These are the unique feature of modern man. According to modernism civilization means technical developments.

The third stanza contains a fine piece of symbolism. 'Bright and tempting breezes flow across the island', suggests two things. It suggests, first, the sea breeze flowing from the very beginning, much before Bombay was burn, not to talk of being mechanized. But the epithet 'tempting' carries an over tone. It suggests, perhaps, the glamour of Bombay, glamour of all kinds

for which Bombay is well known, and whose insidious charm becomes almost irresistible. But there is a way to deal with it. It is to ignore it and fall asleep. In such a case ignorance is better than knowledge.

This fourth stanza recalls the following lines of Shakespeare's 'As you Like It'

*All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely
players;
They have their exits and their
entrances;
And one man in his time plays many
parts,
Is acts being seven ages.
(Retcliffe 2006:290)*

The modern man wants to trace out the meaning of life. They do not reveal the thoughts and feelings of their hearts through facial expressions. Everybody develops the look that suits his role. He separates himself from the world and creates another world of his own. And the result of this activity ends up of alienation. In Island, the word 'belong' suggests the tragic helplessness of the speaker, which is the tragedy of very sensitive modern man. He knows that the city is far from being right. But what can he do? He is helpless. He is, to use an existentialist jargon, 'condemned' to put up with this 'absurdity'.

In fifth stanza, we may compare the speaker with the protagonist of puram – 255.

*Ayyo enin yaan puli anjuvale
Anaitanan koline aganmarbu
edudkkavallen
Enpol peruvithiruppu uruga ninnai
Innathu uttra aramil kuttre
Niraivalai mungai pattri
Varainizhal sergam nadathicin sirithe.*

Here the girl lost her soul mate in the battle field. She wants to trace back his dead body. In that time she reached one forest. That forest is governed by dangerous animal tiger. She does not left her beloved's dead body. She curses the god of death face a loss similar to her. If she makes a clamour, the tiger will kill her also. So she remains passive. This verse slips into last line of 'Island'

The speaker marks that all is not wrong with Bombay. Even now it has 'a host of miracles', which hurries me to daily business. What are those miracles? Perhaps the wonders of science and industry. Yes, they have their bright aspects also. Nobody can deny their contribution to the growth of civilization. The speaker is now reminded of the approach of a 'good native'. A good

native is he who does not look down upon his native land. Like a protagonist, the speaker also remains passive.

The poem may be said to be modern. The word 'modern' is a bit vague and has multiple connotations, varying with the context. But in relation to art and literature it connotes generally 'the feeling of harsh, unresolved complexity' or 'that which appeals in a troubled time to our troubled hearts'. In theme it deals with the various kinds of social, moral and spiritual disorders. In technique and style it prefers colloquial idiom, laconic speech and ironic mode. It presents a mixture of imagism and symbolism in varying proportions. Island contains most of this feature. The entire feeling has been concretized into one image, the image of island, i.e., the city Bombay.

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