Chapter Five

Beyond the Shadow, Towards Light:

Conclusion
Any authentic record of an epoch in history presents violence and destruction as the flip-side of progress. Violence, as a corollary of will-to-power has been a fascinating subject for social scientists and other scholars interested in the study of human beings and their relation to the world they live in. It comes as no surprise that a novelist like Dick, who seeks to understand the inner and outer lives of human beings, is keenly drawn to the study of human propensity for violence. Even a cursory glance at the evolution of human technological advancement will show a direct correlation between increased control over nature and violence. If we trace the process of human development assisted by science and technology, technological development, can be seen as a manifestation of power over nature and other fellow beings. Even a non-cynical student of the evolution of human society who doesn’t subscribe to the Postmodern equation of knowledge and power, will readily agree that attempts to sustain control over natural and social processes are achieved by the use of greater power by each successive generation. The development of nuclear weapons gave human beings control over the basic elements of nature. What makes nuclear war different from other manifestations of destructive power is the impact of nuclear war on humanity— a nuclear war can annihilate human society, its past, present and future. A war fought with the conventional weaponry, whatever the scale of conflict, does not signal the end of human civilization. A nuclear war, on the other hand, can make the human species extinct. Until nuclear weapons were invented, there was a belief that all violence would have an end in which there would be a hope of resurrection or revival. But, the same is not the case with nuclear weapons. This threat was haunting the collective consciousness of the western society during the Cold war era. Dick, the creative writer who was greatly sensitive to the Cold War ethos than other Science Fiction writer, attempted to explore the phenomenon in greater detail in his works of fiction. Dick’s work is a unique contribution to the nuclear debate in that his works do not
stop with tracing the trends and identifying the tendencies of the present society but it goes on to extrapolate the shape of the society that is waiting to be born. This, while in itself a signal contribution, is just one of the aspects of his fiction, a feature that places him in the tradition of authentic Science Fiction.

Thus, his singular observations of human nature make him worthy of critical analysis and academic study. Students of Science Fiction are well-aware of the milestones in the genre that predicted the outbreak of the nuclear war with pinpoint accuracy and Dick's work certainly deserves its rightful place in that tradition. Practitioners of the secular apocalyptic tradition, this student is quite likely to recall, presented the nuclear war as an inevitable and imminent threat to humanity. As a cultural historian concerned with the attitudes and patterns of behaviour of his times, Dick holds a mirror to the responses to the nuclear threat. And this is a more important contribution than presenting the nuclear war as the culmination of the processes that sustain the capitalist society. The range of responses to nuclear threat and the diverse strategies to cope with are two of the main concerns of Dick's literary works dealing with the nuclear question. In his fiction, he finds an alternative canvas on which the subject of nuclear threat can be represented. The strategies adopted by fictional characters facilitate an understanding of human fears, despair, selective ignorance, and anxieties. His fictional worlds make the readers confront the nuclear threat without being a participant in the violence. The trauma of those living under a nuclear threat is recreated in the minds of his readers. His approach to the nuclear question and his in-depth study of the issue in its totality across several novels provide ample justification for the choice of his fiction as a heuristic device to explore the workings of the nuclear threat.

Other works in the secular apocalyptic tradition attempt to deal with the nuclear issue with its basis on technological changes and the effects of the nuclear holocaust. The plots revolve
around the conflict between the human beings or between humans and machines—, all of which are inevitable and destructive. Dick takes his analyses to a whole new level by relating this contemporary phenomenon to the evolution of industrial societies, which began, with the hope of creating a perfect world, a welfare society. The nuclear threat symbolizes the degeneration of this ideal society, a utopia. The nuclear shadow symbolizes the degeneration of this utopia into a dystopia where technological advancement comes at the cost of human lives, which are treated as expendable. He looks at nuclear weapons as the culmination of the progress of an industrial society where power becomes the focal point for all aspects of human existence. In Dick’s fiction, nuclear weapons are, in a sense, the culmination of human frenzy for power.

While Dick’s immediate concern is about nuclear threat, he also raises many other important and basic issues about the nature of human existence, namely, establishing control over their environment, self-preservation, acquiring pleasure, the desire for immortality and self-destruction. He draws interesting parallels between the contradictory-but-true desire for destruction and survival, which is compared with internal tensions in the human mind, especially between the desire for immortality and death. Dick’s abiding interest in the responses to the nuclear threat is the key focus in the author’s analyses that rules out any approach to his work that does not include psychic defence mechanism in moments of crisis. Freud’s theses on the defence mechanism of the human mind, which have become much more relevant to the field of literary analysis with the recognition, in contemporary literary theory, of the correlation between Freud’s emotional energies with rhetorical devices, thus open up possibilities of rereading Dick to understand the significance of his contribution to the nuclear debate. The work of Lifton, which provides a convenient bridge between Freud and the phenomenon of victims and victimizers, becomes relevant to an understanding of the artistic treatment of the nuclear issue.
Lifton's work becomes an essential tool to deal with the fiction of Philip K. Dick, as Lifton is one of the few psychologists who sought to understand a negative sublime like the nuclear war experience by using the analogy of the experience of the Nazi holocaust victims. More importantly, there is more than mere family resemblance between Dick's theses on the origin and effects of the nuclear war and Lifton's observations. Lifton starts with the present and moves backwards to recreate the past in order to understand the fears and psychosis of humans living in the shadow of the nuclear threat. After studying the psyche of people under the nuclear threat and working backwards to analyze technological societies that began as scientific and technological utopias before its degeneration into dystopias, Lifton argues that these technological societies are based on accumulation of power to carry out widespread violence. In Lifton's view, nuclear weapons are external manifestations of human greed for power. Dick's literary world corroborates Lifton's thesis. The fictional characters are faced with the danger of unbridled technological advancement in a technological society where machines begin to dominate humans in almost every aspect of human existence. Dick's apprehension over this aspect of modern technological societies finds expressions in his Science Fiction. Dick deals with each of the major aspects of a technology-driven society: the impact on the human psyche, science vis-à-vis technology, and lastly, the shape of the future society. One finds Lifton dealing with similar issues in his work, though his primary concern is the psyche under the nuclear threat. This study sought to draw a parallel between the literary and a psychoanalytical analysis of the nuclear issue to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of the nuclear question.

It is useful to recapitulate the major arguments in this study, in order to point towards the directions in which future studies in the area could move. The first chapter of the study sought to establish that the expansion and domination of technology in modern industrial societies is
marked by a state of conflict at different levels. It used the analyses of Lifton and Dick in their respective works to establish the thesis. The struggle for power, propensity for violence, and destruction form the basis of conflict between humans and later between humans and machines. Lifton's works analyse the victims and victimizers of the nuclear threat to identify the causes of the nuclear shadow from the point of real life victims of the Japanese nuclear genocide and nuclear weapons' scientists, strategists, and weapons designers. Like Lifton, Dick tries to address the nuclear issue in his works by looking at the causes that lead to the emergence of the nuclear threat as a symptom of the maladies found in human beings and industrial societies. Dick's novels function as a canvas on which abstract human factors like desire and control for power take a concrete form through characterisation and situations. A unique feature of Dick's fiction is that he neither blindly follows the conventions of the genre, nor abandons it completely. He appropriates the genre's tradition and moulds it in his own unique way so much so that the nuclear conflict is as much within the characters' minds as without. The ten novels in this study have been chosen on the basis of their primary focus on the nuclear question through Dick's numerous extrapolations on modern industrial societies driven by science and technology. The ten novels are grouped into five categories that serve as different snapshots of societies dealing with the nuclear shadow at different points of time.

As mentioned earlier, human conflict is a major concern for the works of both Lifton and Dick. While Lifton's focus is on psychological aspect of human conflict, Dick's concerns go beyond that as he attempts to recreate in his readers' minds an experience of what Dick considers the greatest conflict of contemporary humankind, the conflict of human beings with themselves. In this conflict, there are no victimizers, only victims. Lifton's analysis provides a structure in which the different defensive psychological mechanisms that help the individual cope with the
threat are explained. Lifton’s claim is that the human mind’s ability to withstand emotional trauma without suffering damage is limited while the horrors that a nuclear scourge can bring are infinite and it is beyond the realm of human imagination. The concern about human control over machines also figures in Lifton’s interest in studying the creation and proliferation of nuclear weapons. He argues that the human mind, faced with a nuclear threat, fails to comprehend the full extent of its destructive power and this form of uncontrolled technological expansion makes the human psyche more aggressive and fixed on acquiring more power. Thus, Lifton argues that the human mind instead of controlling nuclear weapons, which are a manifestation of uncontrolled machines, end up being enslaved by, machines.

Dick’s focus goes beyond these psychological frameworks that are employed in Lifton’s analysis. Dick tries to assess the effectiveness of these defensive psychological mechanisms in dealing with the threat and argues that the characters instead of finding solace, are further traumatised by getting sucked into their inner world or reality and losing the touch with external reality or the world outside. By severing the connection with external reality, they get entrapped in their private worlds and their lives become a living nightmare from which they cannot awake or escape.

Dick looks at the issue of human conflict in his own unique way by using the conventions of Science Fiction, which portrays nuclear wars as unavoidable and adapts it to examine human conflict in greater detail to raise questions like what does it mean to be human, the nature of reality, and the role of Utopias which degenerate into Dystopias. His works focus on the characters’ search for redemption in apocalyptic fiction. Dick portrays conflict as a struggle between two opposing forces locked in a struggle for the control of power. The conflict takes
place at different levels; within the individuals in the society as well as between the individuals themselves.

A striking feature of Dick's work is that his characters are ordinary individuals from different walks of life caught up in extraordinary situations. In the struggle for greater power, the victimizers make use of the available technology to subjugate their victims. In these works the nuclear weapons and their terror becomes the greatest weapons employed by the victimizers against the victims. However, unlike other threats, the nuclear scourge makes all the stakeholders in the issue, its victimizers, as well as victims, initially before eventually turning them into victims. Faced with the nuclear threat, the human psyche adopts defensive psychological mechanisms to cope with the trauma. Psychic Numbing, Denial, Disavowal, Dissociation, and Brutalization are the main psychological mechanisms suggested by Lifton. This study has undertaken to show the main psychological mechanisms that are at work in Dick's fictional world. These mechanisms are used to explain each character's behaviour when confronted by the nuclear threat. In most cases, these mechanisms fail to protect the novels' characters from the trauma of suffering the nuclear threat irreversibly.

However, this study also brings to light the fact that Dick's concern goes beyond these mechanisms. The defence mechanisms help the readers to categorize the experience and stimulate an intellectual response to the characters' plight; even as Dick's imaginative portrayal of them induces an emotional response to their situation. In a word, the reader gets a 'withined-without' look at the characters' sufferings. But Dick transcends the limitations imposed by Lifton's predominantly empirical approach to the issue through his instinctive faith in the potential of humanity to rise above the dehumanising condition of existence. Dick exploits the poetic licence in the medium of Science Fiction and offers hope to his readers by making a few
characters transform themselves from the condition of being victims. They become survivors through their individual acts of courage. Dick’s fiction tries to look at possible subversion of an impending doom through individual acts of saying ‘no’ to nuclear weapons and ‘yes’ to human existence. The works suggest how the human species can survive extinction by retaining what he considers the quintessential human qualities: empathy, peaceful coexistence, and collective security. In the process, Dick reveals the real source of a problem like the nuclear threat. One of the interesting theses that Dick posits in his novels is that the machine-like qualities that humans have come to acquire are in fact the source from which the nuclear threat originates. If these qualities are not perceived as anti-human, the human race can become extinct. Dick’s works describe how machine-like qualities take the characters closer to the nuclear abyss and suggest possible ways of escaping the nuclear threat.

To revisit some of the points discussed in this study, in the first novel analysed, Dr. Blood money, Bonny Keller’s world is shattered by the nuclear war and she undergoes great trauma. However, she embraces life and begins to rebuild the society at Marin County by lending support to fellow victims. She is an ordinary homemaker who is forced to confront the horrors of the nuclear war and its devastation. Her belief in human beings’ ability to cooperate with others and to work towards a greater good, help to bring out similar sentiments in other victims. By encouraging other individuals that each one can contribute to rebuilding a new society where people are valued for their manual skills and knowledge, she helps to revive life after the nuclear catastrophe. She’s a representative of the human spirit to survive by overcoming the nuclear threat. She is also remarkable for trying to help Dr. Bruno Bluthgeld, the scientist responsible for nuclear attack because of her empathy for him in spite of being a victim herself. Dr. Bluthgeld is so firmly imprisoned in his own nightmarish world because of guilt over his actions as a
victimizer, that death becomes preferable over life for him. He is a symbol of human beings who have become so machine-like and are completely controlled by machines that he no longer has any independent human will. Dr. Stockstill recognizes Dr. Bluthgeld for the kind of person he is. As a nuclear weapons professional, Dr. Bluthgeld’s psyche becomes so closely entwined with the weapons he makes that he cannot perceive of himself as being different or distinct from machines. This makes him paranoid of ‘invisible’ enemies. The scientist’s mind begins to perceive the world as his enemy that should be destroyed by his weapons. Even in the new community formed after the nuclear catastrophe, he’s unable to form any meaningful relationship with other individuals till his death at the hands of one of his victims, Harry Hoppington, who lost his normal life due to the scientist’s mistake in the atmospheric nuclear test.

The World Jones Made is about Jones, a preacher with precognitive powers of seeing a year into the future and how he destroys the absolutist government and replaces it with his own dictatorial rule. He does this by creating paranoia about the invasion of the Drifters, alien life forms seeking a planet to survive. Jones starts a nuclear war, convinced that he can usurp all power by using the pretext of fighting the Drifters. However, things change with the defeat of Jones at the hands of the Drifters. Modelled on Germany’s Nazi dictator Adolf Hitler’s character Jones represents the corruption of absolute power and its manifestation, the nuclear weapons. Though he begins as an enemy of the Federal government’s dictatorial rule based on Hoff’s Relativism, he manages to overthrow it and becomes a victimizer in the form of the new authoritarian despot. When he ends up as a victimizer, he loses all his human qualities and becomes machine-like. At this point, his condition is no way different from his victims. He is the victimizer who becomes the victim due to losing his will to machines. While Jones stands as a
warning to the extent of threat that can emerge in the face of human laxity in handing over power to machines. John and Nina Cuissick show how individual acts of courage and empathy could hold out hope of redemption for the humankind. Jones manages to overthrow the Federal government but he himself is defeated by the effort of John Cuissick. John’s ordinary action attains extraordinary significance due to the fact that he’s a mere police officer who manages to overthrow Jones’ despotic regime. His decision to save the human mutants from Jones’ army of zealots ensures the survival of the human species on Venus after Earth’s subjugation by the aliens. While Jones’ reaction to the mutants is that of intolerance and hatred, John’s reaction is one of empathy and compassion that makes him an ideal example of how singular actions by individual can have great changes in the society.

The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch shows the struggle for power between two mega corporations led by Leo Bulero and Palmer Eldritch to capture the market for hallucinogenic drugs that victimize the conscripted colonists on Martian deserts. The forced migration is linked to the Earth becoming too hot for human survival without portable cooling units for every individual due to the nuclear war. This condition works at many levels but is most potent at the level of the characters’ psyche. The horror of this scourge makes the colonists want to forget the shared reality and to go into their private world. This takes place due to the characters being unable to accept the shared reality of the external world. Dick shows how the world of personal reality imprisons the characters to suffer more than the external threat. In case of the external threat, there’s always a possibility of rehabilitation, but in the case of the internal threat, no redemption is possible. The consumption of Can D by Leo’s company draws its users into the world of Perky Pat where it is always Saturday and sunny. On the other hand, the consumption of Chew Z by Palmer’s company makes its users captives in an illusionary world where Palmer
Eldritch is the omnipotent. The world is one where all characters are forced to carry the mark of its ruler—the mechanical hands, teeth, and eyes—which form Palmer’s stigmata. Palmer’s character is a victimizer who makes those in his private world, his prisoners by branding them with his mark and keeping them enslaved. He is revealed to have been captured by an alien life form that thrived by controlling the minds of its victims. The stigmata reveal his losing human qualities of tolerance and compassion towards fellow beings and becoming bereft of any sensitivity like machines.

Barney Mayerson gets caught in the conflict between the two corporations. Initially he tries to dodge the forced conscription to Mars by trying to get Leo’s help. Like other victims, he too gives up his human qualities in order to satisfy his greed for power. An example of his greed is his abandoning his wife to retain his luxury apartment. When subjected to experience the world of Palmer Eldritch, he realizes his shortcomings and decides to join the Martian colonists. Emily Hnatt, after being abandoned by Barney, decides to say ‘no’ to being a victim and manages to set out on a business enterprise for herself by making ceramic pots and selling them to Leo’s company. Instead of adopting the ways of the machines, she makes unique objects with her own hands; an act, which Dick suggests, is a renunciation of the repressive world of technological societies. Under Richard Hnatt’s compulsion, she goes for a frontal lobe therapy and loses her creative ability when the operation performed by the German surgeon, a former Nazi, fails. She refuses to give up and starts working again, trying to build her career once again. Her efforts are a testimony to human resilience even under the most adverse conditions. Her character offers an alternative to sliding down the nuclear abyss. Barney’s decision to join the Martian colonists marks the acknowledgement of the existence of the threat posed by technological society that aims at reducing humans to mere cogs in a vast system that’s
subservient to the absolute power of the machines. By joining the colonists and trying to establish a sustainable community with others, he presents the possibility of salvation from the all pervasive danger of machines.

*The Penultimate Truth* shows how the menace of nuclear war creates an atmosphere of paranoia and this encourages further building of nuclear weapons for protection from the original nuclear weapons- forming the ultimate paradox of technological society, the absurdity of nuclear shadow. Lifton points this out as a form of "nuclear absurdity" which has no parallels. The majority of the world’s population in this work of Dick’s, have retreated to underground dwellings called “Ant -Tanks” because of the fear of radiation released by the nuclear war. The spectre of nuclear war is created by those in power in order to keep the population under control and forcing them to labour for satisfying the rulers’ greed for power. They are kept under a phony impression by being given false reports about a non-existent ongoing nuclear war, which has made Earth’s surface uninhabitable.

There are different levels of reality created in the novel, each of which is assumed to be true until it’s proved false by the next. Nicholas St. James initially thinks of the world in the Ant-Tank to be real but then discovers that the surface world is real and that there’s no nuclear war taking place. Dick tries to warn his readers that the concentration of power and technology in the wrong hands makes it possible for the corrupt to force the population to be subservient to machines. The ruling Y-men, led by Stranton Brose make use of a simulacrum, which looks like the American President, Yance Talbot. By sending fake picture of a non-existent nuclear war and broadcasting speeches read out by the simulacra, the Y-men victimize the people living underground by forcing them to continue building more machines and weapons for the war effort. Though Dick warns about the dangers of how the nuclear menace can be exploited to
subjugate people, he also suggests the possible safeguards that can be adopted to prevent the suppression of people. David Lantano’s failed but repeated attempts to kill the perpetuator of the hoax by using time travel shows the inevitable expansion of technology and the concentration of absolute power with the machines. David finally manages to inform the people that the nuclear war on the surface is over. His unwillingness to reveal the reality, shows his doubt if the people would be ready to accept it after having lived for so long under the nuclear shadow. Nickolas St James, however, is confident that eventually people would give up their machine-like way of thinking and adopt human qualities of trust and cooperation. They would begin to believe that each one would not be able to survive without the other, thereby developing a species’ consciousness.

_Vulcan’s Hammer_ depicts that while machines may gain all the knowledge acquired by humankind so far, they wouldn’t still be able to develop human wisdom. Dick raises the issue of what determines human action, whether it is emotion or reason. In this novel humankind hands over all decision making power to machines. Machines are given this power on the assumption that they are rational calculating machines and as such are free from emotions and sentiments. With Vulcan 3, assuming power it falls prey to the very same faults it was supposed to be free from. It becomes jealous and attempts to destroy people in order to remain in power. Being designed by humans who placed selfish interest over reason and emotion over logic, Vulcan 3 develops the same qualities, begins to perceive every disagreement or objection to its idea as a threat to its existence, and attempts to destroy it. The entire Unity Organisation hierarchy develops along the way of Vulcan 3 with each one being suspicious of everyone else and with the paranoia about being outsmarted by the other, rampant at every level of the organization. This mentality prevents the characters from forming meaningful relationship with anyone. Like
Vulcan 3, which develops nuclear weapons against people it imagines to be its enemies, the people behave similarly due to the atmosphere of mutual suspicion and rivalry. When the threat from Vulcan 3 comes into the open, the characters respond differently according to the varying influence the machines had on them. Having followed the machines’ orders for long, Director Taubmann opts to accept the rule of Vulcan 3. Jason Dill, in spite of his continued interaction with Vulcan 3, perceives the threat from the particular machine and tries to investigate by seeking the help of Vulcan 2. He takes steps to save human lives from Vulcan 3. His selfless actions hold out hope for the present world that has fallen prey to the genocidal mentality perpetuated by the machines. The character of Director Taubmann is a symbol of the possible sliding into the nuclear abyss if technology was allowed to advance without any checks. Director William Barris stands for a survivor’s mentality that retains his human-like qualities and helps to ascertain and acknowledge the threat and eventually finding a solution to it. His quality of empathy, trust and the willingness to take responsibility enable him to make an alliance with the Healers to defeat Vulcan 3. With his idealism, sense of moral responsibility and honesty, his character is a direct contrast to that of Director Taubmann. With the victory of humans over Vulcan 3, Dick celebrates the victory of joint human effort against a modern bureaucratic system, ably supported by technology and industrial organization.

*Dr. Futurity* is set in a society of the future where the onus is on the death and not on life of individuals. Like doctors who are trained to save lives, there are people called ‘Euthanors’, who are trained to take lives or to assist individuals in dying. The novel in question has a parallel with the Euthanors and the Nazi doctors described by Lifton. Dick and Lifton attempt to address the issue of how a nuclear threat can change social beliefs and convictions on which reality is based. Lifton cites the example of the Nazi doctors who, though trained to heal, were able to
carry out racial extermination by virtue of the genocidal mentality's influence. Dick reverses the situation and through the character of Dr. Parsons, presents the reader with a world where death is valued over life in the quest for creating a perfect race. By drawing a parallel with the situation in Nazi Germany, that attempted to create a superior Aryan race through a reductionist and totalitarian solution of eugenics, Dick tries to depict that any endeavour that attempts to find a reductive and absolutist solution to social problems, is bound to send the society down the path of ultimate destruction. Dick tries to show that human beings and their societies are far too complex to have their problems solved through a single panacea. While the same may be possible for machines, on the basis of a scientific and technological solution, it would only lead to the formation of a dystopia if the same solution were applied to human societies. In his study of Nazi doctors, Lifton points out how the aura of the Nazi ideology based on quasi-scientific and technological solution led to formation of defensive psychological mechanisms like Doubling and Disavowal. In this situation, the doctors who were trained and under oath to save human lives were able to carry out mass murder with impunity from feelings of guilt, by virtue of their altered perception of reality. As a precaution against the development of such genocidal mentality, Dick advocates a firmer and more critical control on the perception of reality. On being caught in a predicament where he's left with no choice but to murder Corith in a world where death is not only acceptable but sought after, Dr. Parsons makes a remarkable choice. His willingness to sacrifice his own life rather than taking another innocent life, results in a widespread change that changes the course of the plot. This shows how an individual act of courage though limited in its scope, has the potential to become the harbinger of hope and redemption.
*Time Out of Joint* is about Ragle Gumm, who initially appears to be an average man who solves newspaper puzzles for a living and is caught up in an extraordinary situation where he realizes that his reality is actually a fake world. The characters in the fake world constructed to make him believe that he's living in the past, undergo different psychological defense mechanisms to cope with the nuclear threat as the analysis using Lifton's framework shows. But Dick takes the matters beyond the shared reality of the characters to look at their personal reality. The novel reveals that the external manifestation of human conflict in the form of nuclear war is a symptom of a deeper human conflict with itself. It's a conflict in which initially there are victimizers as well as victims but ultimately all involved in the conflict are reduced to becoming victims. Dick believed in the existence of a dichotomy in the world: between good and bad, destruction and healing, and between death and life. Through his apocalyptic novel, Dick tries to focus on the 'good' aspects that he calls human qualities and believes that they can 'heal' the injured human psyche and lead humankind towards 'life' or what Lifton calls 'species mentality' to overcome the nuclear threat. Ragle's walking out on the people of his fake world is a selfless act of giving up his world of comfort to give the Lunar colonists a level field in their negotiation with the despotic Earth's government. It shows how an individual's selfless act can be the beginning of a change in human society that's otherwise, regressing towards the nuclear abyss.

*Eye in the Sky* shows the extent to which an individual character's personal reality can be an incubus from which there's no awakening or escape for fellow characters. The accident at the nuclear research facility throws the characters into different worlds where the personal reality of each of the characters becomes the shared reality of the other characters. The repressive nature of the personal worlds shows the extent of the nuclear scourge, which is external as well as internal. Dick's work focuses more on the internal conflict within the characters. At the opening of the
novel, Ted Hamilton is forced to live his job at the missile research laboratory on the accusation of his wife's being a communist and in the different worlds that he experiences, he attempts to regain his job unsuccessfully. However, the experiences in the different worlds enable him to overcome the conflicts in his own mind and to give up his work on nuclear weapons. He decides that while his past work had furthered the nuclear danger, he would devote the rest of his life not only for making the world a safer place but also a better place. His wife Marsha's character shows the need to be aware of how genocidal mentality evolves through mutual distrust and paranoia that develops among the characters in the technological society, which they are a part of. Ted's decision to abandon his work with nuclear weapons and to take up making musical instruments shows the possibility of averting the genocide through singular acts of courage. Marsha's independent analysis and the subsequent decisions about the world reveal her refusal to follow the diktats of the authoritarian and despotic government. Both Ted and Marsha serve as the twin aspects of human consciousness that is necessary to develop and sustain a species consciousness in the present world besieged by the nuclear scourge.

Martian Time-Slip deals with the failed attempt at colonising Mars to set up a technological society similar to the one that had led to a nuclear war on Earth. The novel points out that the destructive potency of any absolutist technological society is not limited to Earth but is equally applicable to any other place as it's based on totalitarianism and absolutism. Set in the bleak Martian environment, the alien environment brings out the worst machine-like and the best human qualities in the characters. Those with human qualities of empathy, self-sacrifice, and mutual trust survive the hostile environment while those with machine-like qualities meet their end. Though all individuals on Mars are victims of the nuclear scourge, those with human qualities emerge as survivors.
Cantata 140 uses the election campaign of Jim Briskin as the first Black American President to question the technological society’s perspective that is based on exploitation of the majority and the accumulation of power in the hands of a few. Jim Briskin’s character vouches for human qualities that are essential for a society to be able to sustain itself as a species. The novel depicts that even if the humankind had evolved from Peking Men instead of Homo sapiens, it would still need a species mentality to survive and not a genocidal mentality created by uncontrolled technology.

Thus, an analysis of Dick’s selected fiction that deals with the nuclear shadow shows that nuclear weapons are the external manifestation of human conflict in technological societies and their origin can be traced back to internal conflict within the individuals. Dick traces the root of the inner conflict, which takes place at different levels. At the human population level, the conflict is between different social sections and individuals to gain power over the others. Dick uses the opportunities the genre provides to analyse the issue of human conflict and raises questions about how this conflict for power extends to technology and its advancements like nuclear weapons. The existence and proliferation of nuclear weapons have a deep and varied impact on the human psyche at the social and individual level. At the social level, the nuclear threat adds to mutual suspicion, fuels nuclearism, and develops genocidal mentality among human societies. Faced with a threat that can destroy the species forever, the human mind undergoes numerous defensive psychological mechanisms that enable individuals to overcome the threat with minimal psychological damage.

Philip Dick’s fiction is thus an impressive synthesis of tradition and innovation. Like vintage Science Fiction, it shows putative worlds and conditions of existence within them, even as it lays bare the process at work in contemporary society. It creates a simulacrum of experience
in technological society, where the characters and situation bear a marked resemblance to the experience of victims in nuclear wars. By brilliant sleight of hand, Dick fuses the horizons of real experience and imagined experience through a strategy comparable to the rational process of mapping the known with the new. The reader who is submerged in the world that is yet to be born is forced to comprehend the nuclear threat in its totality: its causes and consequences, as well as strategies to deal with it. Such an experience is likely to transform the reader and make him or her instinctively fall back on their humanity. A community of such readers could be easily persuaded to resist nuclearism, understood as the epiphenomenon of the process of dehumanisation.

Philip K. Dick's fiction is thus more than a creative writer's gesture towards a world of mutually assured existence. It is an effective intervention in the nuclear debate, whose potential for radical politics cannot be underestimated. This researcher earnestly hopes that more studies on writers like Philip Dick will be undertaken as part of the effort to make effective contributions to the nuclear debate.