Chapter III

POST-COLONIAL CONCERNS IN THE POETRY OF SHIV K. KUMAR

Nobody can doubt about Shiv K. Kumar's reactions against colonial culture. As a typical Indian he is very much conscious of Indian culture, music and civilization. Since 1947, he has been aware of the problems and merits of an independent nation. Bijoy Kumar Das aptly remarks:

... language and landscape, self and other, nationalism and trans-nationalism have become important ingredients of Postcolonialism. In this context the theme of landscape and national unity makes a rewarding study of Kumar's poetry. In him one detects a certainty of touch that seems to reflect a confidence in the direction and purpose of his writing, as well as an integrity of images of India, style and subject matter. (2)

At the outset it is essential to understand the various aspects of his personality as he is a poet, art critic, philosopher, prose writer, novelist, teacher,
humanist, realist, satirist, nationalist, administrator etc. As a poet he enjoys writing poems on several ideas that hit his mind. As an art critic he is famous for editing *The Essays* of Ralph Waldo Emerson and other writers. As a philosopher he is interested in Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Karl Marx, Bergson, Alfred Adler, Freud etc. As a novelist he is interested in ethico-social and political problems of the country. His poems confirm his interest in the teachings of Buddha and the wisdom of Lord Krishna. As a satirist he satirises the corrupt officers and greedy people. In the poem *Which of My Selves Do You Wish To Speak To* he admits several phases of his life. He appears in ‘new configuration’ whenever anybody touches one part of his self. May be he appears in different moods in the morning, evening and noon time. However, he recollects his past and he has a lot of experiences to feel:

... stirring memories
of a face from my childhood,
it's time for an intimate dialogue,
rven with a mail-box. (18-21)

Much depends upon his mood and he may appear to be complex and ugly. In this modern age people fail to analyze the complexities of life. At times he
fails to follow his own notion. May be the situation
takes a different turn and he never expected that. He
admits:

... I may then respond

in a language that only shadows
understand.

So which of my selves do you wish
to address and have you chosen
the right time and place? (29-33)

As mentioned in the second chapter he was
highly interested in the teachings of Buddha. For
him Buddha is more than a prophet as he got Nirvan
after getting rid of all worldly desires. In the small
poem *Thus Spake the Buddha* he attaches due
importance to a few words such as ‘desire’,
and ‘sublimate’. Buddha asked his followers to
control their physical and worldly desires if they
want to enjoy bliss on earth. A life of restraint has
got to be lived as five senses make a person wander
in different directions. As God has given a body to
human beings, they are busy in earning and spending
money. Mostly people don’t think of higher aims as
their basic aim is to satisfy physical appetite:
Body's appetite, like a crocodile's belly,
can hold rock, metal
and a virgin's thigh. (5-7)

Quite often people are victims of anger, lust, greed, violence and political powers. Their ego adds fuel to fire. One of his teachers asked him to control the body and then he tortured his body. Still he could not get Nirvan. Hunger does not lead a person to salvation. He says:

Under the Bodhi tree, I vanquished my hunger,
to bare ribs and cheeks dented like little whirlpools
till the intestines cried out:
'Enough'! (8-12)

Still Buddha felt an inner urge to pursue his search for truth and divine light. Meditation and prayer helped him to get divine light.

His poem The Morning of Freedom: August 1947 describes the nationalist feelings. However, the poem shows his vision of life. There is a feeling of
pain and frustration in the beginning as partition resulted in bloodshed:

... Surely this a not the morning we'd longed for. (3)

All freedom fighters and the common people hoped much with the departure of colonial powers from India. 'Ultimate destination of stars' (7) is still valid today as progress has been made by the country in the fields of agriculture, transport, industry, health, education etc. His heart is full of grief as he had to leave Pakistan like other Hindus. Nobody knew his/her future in India as well as Pakistan. It was too early to predict anything. Yet Hindus hoped:

... From the dreamlands of beauty's pleasure-houses kept beckoning impetuously seductive arms.

But we yearned only for the morning's face,
even though within easy reach was
the hem of a radiant beauty.

Delicate was our longing and faint
our sense of exhaustion. (13-18)

Those who reached Indian towns, were large in
number. Thanks God! They had not been slaughtered
on way. They had lost their home and property.
Naturally they found themselves in a new atmosphere
and economic degradation. Yet the poet seems
hopeful with end of colonization:

We hear now that light and darkness
have parted —
also, that there’s now a union of quest
and goal,
that the lost of the afflicted is not
changed,
that the pleasure of union is granted
and banished is the torment of
separation. (19-23)

Many citizens felt that they were not citizens of
either free India or free Pakistan as they were on
their way. There was unlimited anguish of
separation. Many people stayed in the refugee camps.
and waited for news about their relations. How to get the joy of union? How to start new business? Where to settle for future? There was no answer to such questions. The poet says:

Fire in the bosom, longing in the eyes, and heartburn —
Nothing can soothe the anguish of separation.
Where did the gentle breeze come from and where did it vanish —
The street lamp has no news yet.
Even the night’s heaviness is just the same;
The moment of salvation
For the heart and the eye
Has not yet arrived.

Let’s press on, the destination is still far away. (24-32)

The whole poem is full of pathetic scenes and creates the feelings of pity and fear in the heart of readers. Nothing is imaginative as the refugees faced a lot of terrible situations on way.
Shiv K. Kumar's perception is remarkable when he writes the poem Lord Krishna to Arjuna to assert the importance of detached action. As mentioned in the second chapter Lord Krishna asked Arjuna to perform his duty regularly with love. In this poem Lord Krishna finds Arjuna a victim of despondency and self-delusion. The latter fails to understand that matter is mortal and spirit is immortal. Arjuna feels attached with his friends, relations and teachers and hence does not attack upon them. But Lord Krishna removes his fear with the argument that all earthly relations have no meaning before Ultimate Reality. As the sun never sets in reality, soul does not die with death. Regarding soul Lord Krishna tells Arjuna:

...  
the commander within flies away
from the rear gate to set up another
fort
elsewhere. He is never killed.
flame cannot turn him to ashes,
nor water dampen his resilience.
He was there to see the fist sunrise
and he will survive to see this planet
lapse
into nothingness. (26-33)
Still Arjuna’s sense of attachment remains intact as his relations are ‘reflections’ of his own self. This is his ignorance. The earthly creatures such as bat, lizard, insect, cobra etc. don’t know the divine system. Lord Krishna tells him not to trap his mind any more and perform his duty as a warrior:

All these objects have faces too,
like those of humans. They all trap the mind
into emotions, high or low.
Let me not show you some faces from the landscape
of your past, as I open my heart to you —
Literally, not figuratively.
Look here at those faces of your ancestors,
blurred in the primordial mist. (45-52)

The dead can’t be recognized even by Arjuna. They too have forgotten their past. Men are just strangers upon earth. Time is like a wall standing between past and present. Lord Krishna makes it clear that Arjuna can’t understand the working of time as especially future is hidden for the human
beings. Why should he grieve for the victims of time? Lord Krishna knows that Arjuna is going to destroy his enemies and hence the latter should think only of present. Future is another extension of present. He advises Arjuna:

As if you are yourself their doom,
when you too will descend into the
dark cellar

When the moment arrives. Here I am
telling

You all this under the canopy of the
present moment,

With the horses neighing, elephants
trumpeting

And chariots wheeling around. (57-62)

Here it is clear that death spares none — he may be superb warrior or a common man. All are equally victims of time, decay and death. The poet asserts the working of death. Still Arjuna thinks of future though it is out of his control. Krishna can control air, water, fire, sky and earth. He changes the current of affairs and supports his followers. He knows — What lies beyond the horizon? Things take their motion with his orders. He knows the result when events take shape. He controls the working of
the objects of nature i.e. seed, trees, plants, rainbow, flowers, lightning, thundering, earthquake, storm and 'what lies ahead'? He tells Arjuna:

But I know it all
for I do the choosing — the epicenter
of the next quake, the point of shipwreck
on the ocean's surface, or the arrow that Would transfix the fish's eye in a water bowl.
I choose the sex in the womb, the hurricane's direction and velocity.
If man were to know his future, Wouldn't he play God? (76-84)

Stars are guided by him. Meteor goes off course with his order. He knows that Kaurvas are going to meet their doom. Let Arjuna forget his illusion and take action against the lecherous and greedy people. After having listened these arguments Arjuna feels elevated and his illusions vanish. Lord Krishna finds that there is desired effect on Arjuna's mind. If Lord Krishna wishes, then stag and lion can drink water at the same pool. A man has strong will power and
restraint if he returns chaste from the door of a whore. As Arjuna feels enlightened, he gathers courage, vigour and zeal to attack upon the evil-doers. Truth, righteousness, charity, generosity, tolerance, fortitude, etc. are like diamonds that shine forever. Krishna feels that Arjuna is ready for action and he adds:

Then pick up your bow and arrow, O Warrior,
and fight to set the crooked straight.
Your destiny was etched on your palm
at birth. Just as it was preordained
That I'd be with you, like the mask
in a deer's navel — a whisper in the air
that leads a traveller through wilderness. (128-134)

Arjuna is capable of making distinction between good and evil, truth and falsehood, purity and lechery, restraint and passion etc. In the end Lord Krishna asserts that the creator expects noble deeds from His creatures as goodness, righteousness and fortitude will triumph in every age. He tells Arjuna:
A mentor too realizes himself through his disciple, like the Creator seeing his image in his creation. (138-140)

Action, creation, liberation and detachment have been asserted by Lord Krishna and these qualities are the basis of Indian culture. Shiv K. Kumar accepts their validity even today. This message was given to Arjuna long ago and yet action and detachment are illustrated in different corners of the world by scholars and saints.

Like Buddha, he tries his best to understand the realities of death. His mother's departure makes him understand that death is inevitable. She was nearly 83 years of age when she died. There was no symbol to give warning of the arrival of death. Quite often she used to recline on the divan like a Mughal queen. As she felt some choking of breath in her throat, she became restless. The family dog broke into three yelps and the poet felt the sudden tragedy. The mysterious bond between mother and the son broke and he found himself lonely. In the poem An Encounter With Death he finds himself helpless as death carried away his mother. Whenever there was a rustle of the wind, he felt the presence of his
mother's spirit. The rattling of the door also reminded him that her spirit was hovering near him. In a pathetic mood he says:

For thirteen days, say the Hindus, the departed soul hovers round its earthly habitat — and so for thirteen days I have communed with the spirit. Whenever a door rattles, a nipping wind howls, a dog whines or blue-bells clang, I feel her presence within me. (22-28)

In the poem My Mother's Death Anniversary he feels himself lost and bewildered. Darkness has taken the place of light. The beating of the clock seems to stop for sometime. There is no need of ECG now as she is dead. Every year he performs Shradha in her memory to 'feed the dead'. Yet the yellow flame, symbol of divinity, shines from door to door. Quite often his mother used to boast that her son has grown up as an elm and she can depart with the stranger Death:

What's that yellow flame that moves from door to door
peering through the chinks
of my heavy draperies.

Now that my son has grown
into an elm,
I may go out
to meet the stranger. (11-18)

In the poems Indian Women and Cabaret Dancer he points out the difference between Indian culture and western culture. In Indian Women he describes the village well where women have gathered to take water. As their pitchers are empty, they are waiting for their turn. None of them is angry though the sun is pretty hot. Quite often they peep into water to have glimpse of their face. Here they are waiting for the safe return of 'their men'. When the sun sets, darkness starts swallowing the light of the sun. The poet has sympathy with these women and paints their picture in real colours:

... for the moisture in their eyes,
with zodiac doodlings on the sands
they guard their tattooed thighs
waiting for their men's return
till even the shadows
roll up their contours
and are gone
beyond the hills. (10-17)

On the contrary western music is being played in the hall and the cabaret dancer appears as a semi-goddess. Drummers are beating the drum and there is anxiety among the spectators. In artificial darkness 'the moon' rises and there is quivering in the hearts of spectators. The poet uses the symbol 'to break the fast' and then says that 'a panther is let loose'. (9) He adds:

The breathless spotlight chases
the fugitive —
Captures its liquid musculature.

She wriggles, rolls, unfurls
spilling her sap all
over the earth's span.

Then she slithers through
wineglasses, kisses all
the lepers on their flushed cheeks.

(10-18)
Such scenes are not rare in cabaret halls though rural areas are generally free from them. The difference between Indian culture and western culture has been depicted in this poem. The poet fails to understand the pleasure people get in cabaret dances and hence calls the spectators 'lepers'. This disease is commonly observed in the capitals of states. Then he finds the Hades river flowing in society and says:

A frenzied moan curls up
from Hades and all
the animals are unleashed.
A scramble for a closer
scrutiny of the deity.

The star suddenly vanishes
Behind a laced veil —

The temple doors are slammed. (19-26)

The spectators wish that this dance continues forever as the 'deity' gives them sensual pleasure. But alas! Their joy turns into nothingness when she disappears. Now they feel cheated as the 'temple' doors are slammed. They think of tomorrow and tomorrow for the renewal and revival of the same
joy. The poet indirectly satirizes this western dance which was not staged before 1947. It is by-product of western culture.

In the poem _A Letter From New York_ he reacts against colonialism and exploitation of the blacks. An Indian has high expectations when he reaches New York. He hopes for every kind of comfort with new job. But his dreams shatter when he starts working there for money. Now he wants to come out of 'inverted manhole' as the culture of apartments is different from that of Indian towns. In the first section of the poem he describes his experiences and observations to his friend Mahesh:

Here I live in a garbage can
and the pile grows bigger each week
with the broken homes
splintered all around. (6-9)

A citizen of New York does not enjoy luxuries of life as things are rough and tough for immigrants too. Many people accept divorce easily as people don't believe in the sanctity of marriage. He uses the term 'broken homes' as wives as well as husbands are not loyal to each other. There is no social bondage and people wish to remain liberated. They
continue to lead a life of tension as they struggle for existence. Their worldly desires never come to an end and nothing is perfectly clean. He writes:

The white of the Negro maid's eyeballs
is the only clean thing here,
besides, of course, the quart gallon carton of milk
squatting at my door. (13-17)

The racial differences are found in American society and many Black colonies are still not safe for Whites at night. It is true that the police officers are alert round the clock and yet the graph of crimes continues to increase. These Americans don't have faith in the sanctity of the Ganges but Shiv K. Kumar does. He says:

They wouldn't believe it here
that the Ganges' water can work miracles like Lourdes',
inspite of the cartloads of dead men's ashes
and bones and the pandit's shit —
daily offerings to the Mother River! (21-26)
For the poet there is no doubt regarding the purity of Ganges. He accepts that some fake Pandits misguide ignorant people to make money. Yet the Ganges is a mythological river with its scientific elements as found in its water. The Shastras confirm the Kumbh dates for future years and many saints live on its banks. Now efforts are being made to keep the Ganges clean.

He goes to Sixth Avenue to work for a solicitor. His boss takes quick decisions in legal cases though often loses his temper. In New York he often feels hurt at heart as he does not find any mental peace. Buddha renounced all worldly comforts but not the poet. There can’t be any compromise between spiritual peace and worldly gains. His nerves feel tense several times and nobody cares for his contentment and well-being:

En route to perdition
I sometimes stop at Grand Central to piss.
Where else can one ease one’s nerves
to feel the Buddha’s peace
When the bladder fills up
like a child’s balloon? (42-47)
He knows that he has not come from another American town, Italy, Britain, Africa. He is not a Red Indian also. Of course, he is ‘from the land of Gandhi’ (56). A few questions arise here — Who asked him to migrate to U.S.A.? Has he not migrated for a life of pomp and show? Did he not get bread and butter in India? Why did he give up his Indian job? Why is he not prepared to tolerate the dark side of American life? Why does he feel fed up in alien situation? Did Gandhi go to New York to earn money? Did Vivekananda go there for material gains? Is he a supporter of Abraham Lincoln? Why does he feel disgruntled if Americans don’t look cheerfully at him? What has he done for Americans so far? How can he make his place in American society? Who cares for people like him?

But the poet does not ignore the strong economic structure of American government. There is no unemployment here. People work for the nation according to their abilities and qualifications. Strikes are uncommon and people work with love and devotion. The sick people, lepers, crippled people and other helpless destitutes are cared for. Eyes look towards lamp-posts and not beggars. New Yorkers have established homes for poor, needy, old and sick people and free medical aid is provided regularly.
Every nurse works like Florence Nightingale with devotion.

Unfortunately, the new generation of Americans wants to be free from the bondage of marriage and hence prostitution has become common in U.S.A. Shoplifters don't care for law and police officers. Grocery stores are robbed in day time and betrayal is common. The poet does not hide the ugliness of New York (Chicago, Los Angeles, California etc.) and bitterly says:

Now you're one of us
It's cheaper
to look a woman to live with
than breed mammals after
a brief church ritual,
only to be betrayed by the
uncanny grocery mirror,
the scourge of all shoplifters. (74-81)

At night he listens news of all sorts — political affairs, economic achievement, social net work, cultural degeneration, sexual assaults, violence on the streets etc. He calls it 'tenuous frequency' as such things commonly happen. Life continues the
next day with the same vigour, zeal and warmth.
American propaganda is made with 'Voices of
America.'

In an alien land he still feels that he has his
own soul. He does not enjoy free sex as others do.
There is some inner force that checks him and
inspires him to remain chaste:

But my soul is still my own.
The other evening they came —
Allen and Linda, Dick and Grace, Jack
and Su
dripping bourbon from their lips.
They mated in my kitchen
Behind the book-racks,
even brought me a blind date.
But something held my hand.
Was it damyata?
Or my mother's last wish,
Or a diffidence nourished
On black coffee and white bread? (86-97)
As an Indian he has his own faith to console him in times of intellectual tension. Often he thinks of his sins and redemption. He asks himself — Can he wash off his sins? Like Christians, he offers prayers every Sunday and feels relieved to some extent:

Every Sunday morning I descend
into purgatory,
the basement where three Laundromats
gulp down nickels
to wash all our sins.
But the brown of my skin defies
all bleachers.
How long will the eclipse last? (98-105)

Naturally the poet has no desire to settle in New York and aspires to return home. The fast running cars, the skyscrapers, the big offices and other material gains have no attraction for him. The glamour of American life seems false and disgusting. The poet frankly describes the ugliness of American life and hence the West has no attraction for him.
Same feeling of frustration is presented by him in the poem *Walking Down The Avenue of The Americans*. The skyscrapers and the large pavements have no delight for him as he is an Indian. Whenever anybody smiles at his wife or child, he appears to be a seducer or kidnapper. The big buildings are metaphorically called ‘giant vultures from Mars’. (21) The scene of road is symbol of growing ‘blackness’ as he has nothing positive to observe. Perhaps man has collapsed ethically — ‘man collapsed’. The headlines of the newspapers are equally disgusting. In a frustrated mood he says:

Every passerby in polaroids
is my wife’s seducer,
my child’s kidnapper.

My reflection in every shop-window
is a portrait
of my ashen middle-age;
harassed by pavements
hurling stones at me. (13-20)

In the elegy *Murder of A Missionary* he pays tribute to Graham Staines who worked hard for the welfare of poor people. The family members of Graham Staines have committed no crime and yet
became the victims of communal violence. The poet admits that the sun of charity and generosity has set with this act of violence. These innocent people failed to protect themselves as the violent mob attacked them:

Sundown. A van carrying him and his two sons
is torched. A frantic struggle to escape
but they’re speared back into the inferno.
An anguished sky blazes a forked lightning
to signal the end of innocence. (1-5)

Perhaps it was ordained in their fate to die so. However, it is the climax of darkness and tyranny. Graham Staines never expected such things in life and yet he was murdered for nothing. Yet the poet hopes that philanthropists will never feel disappointed with this event. For example, Abraham Lincoln didn’t feel disappointed with the burning of Joan of Arc. Many Christians don’t feel hurt with the hanging of Christ. The blood of such people does not go waste and Bernard Shaw calls it ‘impersonal evolution and personal tragedy’. Similarly Graham
Staines proved to be a prophet of mercy, kindness and righteousness:

When the media flashed his photograph,
He looked like a prophet who’d walked
Over the Pacific waters, all the way
from his land of the Kangaroo, to seek
crucifixion, far away from home. (13-17)

Nobody has raised his voice against this last stanza. The saints don’t care for death as they have a mission in life. Nearly four percent people leave eternal mark with their death and ultimately seek their purpose. How can masses forget their contribution to humanity at large?

In the poem *Mother Teresa Feeds Her Lepers At Her Home For the Destitute, Calcutta* he appreciates the contribution of Mother Teresa for the lepers, destitutes, crippled people, beggars etc. Had she desired, she would have led a comfortable life as the Principal of Convent School. But she established Normal Hridaya for the needy people who found themselves ‘unwanted’ on earth. People felt morally forced to help her financially as she was not asking
anything for personal profit. Basically she identified herself with the lepers and old people who needed medicines and love. Their heads bowed down with pain and miseries and she came forward to support them. Quite often she helped the lepers with small money so that they could start small shops of their own and lead an independent life. However, she was never proud of her noble deeds. She was conscious of their physical and mental wounds. She was 'complacent' and 'wholesome' towards the orphans as the latter lived like worms. She could infuse life in the veins of old people who were generally crying with hunger. Like the sun, she was a source of light and energy to miserable people:

A shaft of sunbeam
falls across the hallway, beckoning
the dead to rise. A hand's velvet caress
ripples like an oasis
shaded by palm trees. (7-11)

She offered her affection and love to the sufferers irrespective of their caste and colour. Her love was spontaneous and pure like crystal water and her eyes never withdrew with personal pain. Like
Virgin Mary, she came forward to help the poor people:

Your eyes will then glow like fire-fliss, your footsteps fall like dew-drops on banana leaves on a summer morn.
You may then leap through a right of fire, kiss a cobra’s hood, work miracles with sand,
for you are then the Virgin’s brides maid —
only half mortal like the lotus. (15-21)

Here she has been identified with pure lotus as the latter blossoms in mud water. Being mortal she knew the hard realities of life and the ugliness of 20th century. Whatever she got at the time of getting the Nobel Prize for peace, she donated for the sick lepers. Her home was a temple for the needy and anybody could approach her. She could work miracles even in adverse circumstances. The ancient ritual of the missionary was really performed by her. She was above national boundaries:
Across the street, a temple
peals out its chants, frightening away
the birds. Inside, a goddess in stone —
face ebony, eyes the colour of blood —
raises her rights hands, like a cactus
blade, to consummate
an ancient ritual. (22-28)

Such benefactors of mankind don’t die with
death and are ‘with ages’.

As a humanist Shiv K. Kumar feels the need of
research work in the field of medicine as a lot of
patients die with cancer. In the poem To A Friend
Who Died of Cancer, Bequeathing his body to
Research he describes the psychology of a noble
person who asserts the right use of his dead body. As
he doesn’t care for next world, he thinks of other
patients of cancer. Let the future generations learn
the cure of this terrible disease. As soul has
departed from the body, the latter is to be a part of
ashes and dust. Why to throw it waste as ashes? It is
not ‘self-immolation’ as it is charity for a noble
cause. The patient had suffered a lot of pain when
injection needles were pricked into his body and the
medicine entered his body like fire. The poet uses
the term ‘shadows’ to highlight the agony of his friend as he will never see light of the day. With the metaphor ‘shadows of a solar eclipse in your blood’ (7) he lights the hope of life for other patients. There is no suspicion in his mind as new knowledge is bound to help others. The poet thinks of his personal tears and ‘the genesis of pain’. But dead body can prove to be a blessing in disguise. A new approach towards death has been asserted here:

Since you were never a boader,
you outdid us all with your last wish.
If the body can also redeem (you said),
after the soul’s desertion,
why squander it away as only ashes
to slime the Ganges? I’ve saved it for you
(you said). Eat it up, drink my tears.
Probe the labyrinth of my ligaments
To locate the genesis of pain.
Somewhere
in my blood stream the dead fish
must have left a clue. (12-22)

The patient does not have any illusion about his dead body as he is not the only person to die. He
does not hope that the ashes will bear any heavenly fruit next time. This world is important and he has no regrets. The poet appreciates his friend's gift for research.

As an Indian he is acquainted with the mother-daughter relationship. Every traditional mother gives instruction to her daughter at the time of latter's wedding and asserts the ethical value of obedience. Kama i.e. sexual relation between husband and wife is indirectly explained to her. In the poem An Indian Mother's Advice to Her Daughter Before Marriage he describes this situation because virginity period comes to an end with marriage. The daughter is advised to be obedient as 'surrender' is the key to happiness. She should appear beautiful and active when the husband needs her in bed:

Don't ever argue
at the moment of surrender
for the end is ineluctable. So move in
with moonshine on your face and the quick
of the sun between your thighs.
But take time unfolding yourself.
Let him first burn
awhile on the hot sand
for this is also the moment of claiming,
not giving in only. (6-15)

Planets move round the sun and similarly sexual pleasure of the husband is the key to family bliss. At the same time she is advised to follow self-control and restraint and not appear lecherous at any cost. Let the husband be passionate and only then she is supposed to ‘give in’. The mother advises her to keep in mind the short memory of husband who might harden into a rock. Let her wait for the arrival of her husband as he may go out of home for his job-work. If the husband loves his wife, he is bound to return home. How can a husband forget a lovely and faithful wife? The poet illustrates the basic relationship of Indian family here and says:

A man’s memory is myopic
like a sparrow’s; once filed up
he hardens into a bedrock.
And often at night you may find
yourself alone, pulling feathers
out of your pillow. But be patient.
If he's gone out fishing down the dark
river, he'll be back
for in spite of his appetite, a man
cannot swallow both ends of the
rainbow. (16-25)

As a broad-minded Hindu he has respect for the
river Ganga and wants to keep it pure and clean. When it takes its origin from the hills, it is as pure
as a newly-born child. The chickens are pure when
they come out of shell-prison. Similarly the calf
reaches towards the udders of its mother-cow. The
small baby is unconscious of the complexities of this
world at the time of his birth. In the poem Cleaning
Ganga he says that at the time of his birth, the
Ganges has to take a long course before it falls into
the sea. Unfortunately, a lot of garbage and factory
wastage are thrown into the Ganges making it smell
foul. Unfortunately the bones of the dead are thrown
into this pure river. Many ghats for dead bodies are
established on its banks at several places without
bothering for its purity. Quite often crocodiles open
their 'yawning jaws' to swallow other creatures. The
poet laments that all is not well inside and outside the Ganges:

It's only when they are carried down the river of time that iron sinks into their souls.
The waters then get sullied by ritual and dogma — ashes and bones, wilted floral offerings to the dead, and the noontime sweat oozing from the saffron-striped foreheads of the crocodiles whose yawning jasw chant mantras in some obsolete tongue. (8-15)

Here he satirizes the people who make its water dirty and impure. After all its water makes the fields fertile. It is the source of crops growing on its shore. And yet the process of 'immersion' goes on:

May be if someone could dismantle all scaffoldings along the mother river's waistline
And ask the dead to seek immersion
in other confluences,
the little fish will then bleach these
waters
for the sun's lasers to probe her limpid
groin. (16-21)

The government officers feel themselves
helpless as it is a question of faith of the people.
Now the saints have organized for keeping the
Ganges clean and the government has sanctioned a
big budget for this project. Towards the end of the
poem the poet accepts the eternal character of this
pure river as Indian culture prospers on its banks.
There are many ghats in Haridwar, Allahabad,
Varanasi etc. and the devotees offer regular prayers
on its banks. Just he wants to stop the destructive
elements to keep the light intact:

The moon will recapture in the river's
mirrors
the sharp lineaments of her own face
flushed like a bride's
as she walks into the nuptial chamber
holding a lone candle
to be snuffed out
into the Bay's eternity. (22-28)

With the help of similes he adds grace to his thoughts and accepts her eternity.

As a philosopher Shiv K. Kumar accepts the concept of trinity i.e. Lord Brahma as creator, Lord Vishnu as preserver and Lord Shiva as destroyer of evils. He advocates faith in this process of creation, preservation and decay. Yet he exposes the clever and cunning Pandits who cheat people in the name of temples, gods and fake mythological tales. There is no end to temples, churches and mosques in India as people are religious-minded. Let people worship God regularly with devotion. In the poem A Wayside Shiva Temple he exposes the fake Pandits who put pebbles and black stones on any platform and call it Shivling. Every rock can’t be considered the symbol of Lord Shiva as there is a religious process to purify the statues made of stone, metal, silver, gold etc. Quite often ‘lingam-shaped boulder’ is put by the side of roads and the ignorant people offer coins so as to please Lord Shiva. This is no way to worship the Lord as the procedure is pretty complex. Certain legends have got to be understood to establish Shiva’s temple and yet Shiva’s temples are established to cheat people. The poet is deadly
against orthodox people though he doesn't doubt the omniscience of the Lord:

Some ingenious hand had cleansed it with plantain leaves, bathed it in cow's milk, ensconced it in brick and mortar, securing it behind an iron railing so that even the sun can no longer see its progeny grown into a legend.

This morning, before the first wayfarer could stop by to make his offering, I peered through the bars to ask if it remembered me still, and if it longed to be wind-swept, rain-washed — and stripped under the candid sky. (7-18)

In the poem A Woman Labourer Breast-feeding Her Child, during Lunch-break the poet describes the affection that a mother has for her baby. She works hard since morning till evening in the heat of sun and cement mixes with her sweat. Quite often she
feels angry with the dull routine of carrying things from one place to another. Yet she does not forget to feed her child with milk as she is conscious of the call of nature. She covers her open breast with her head-veil and listens the heart-throb of her child. Breast-feeding removes the difference between the rich and the poor as it is universal feature:

**Under her head-veil, now dropped**

to cover two moons, wee hands

and feet flutter like a culver.

**Time that never ceases to nibble**

At stone, wood or glass

Now pricks up its ears to listen

To a heart-throb. (10-16)

In the poem *Baptism of Fire* there is contrast between reason and faith. A person intones the mantras as the priest dictates. Fire is a witness to the whole ritual. Like T.S. Eliot, the poet asserts the value of Damyatta, Datta and Dayadhvam. He admits:

**I see my doom**

in a flame's iris.
This is the fire
That crackles when I touch Sheila's
Nascent breast under the mango tree.
I burn when my mouth holds
her scarlet throat, till she goes
limp in my arms like soufflé
and the earth spins on a bull's horns
for a new gyre. (9-18)

The priest pronounces Damyatta, the first knot
with the sacred thread and he becomes conscious of
steering the cosmic sea:

'Damyatta!' — the priest lungs
into my thoughts. 'This is the
first knot in the sacred thread
round your neck. It will control
all the tigers in your blood stream
and steer it to the cosmic sea.' (19-24)

Then the priest pronounces Datta with the
second knot. This is how the child (foetus) is
connected with the mother in the womb. And finally
the priest pronounces Dayadhavam to control his
yearnings of peace:
As for the third knot —

Dayadhavam — it’s for you, O fire-tamer, to empathize with my
yearning to swing on the rainbow
to the horizon’s skirt,
sunbathe on the beach with alligators,
or chase stallions across the plateaus of Kashmir. (38-45)

And he adds:

As the fire sinks, the priest goes
Mute. The ritual done, I rise
noosed by the sacred thread
to make off to a moon-face
under the mango tree
to undo all the knots. (46-51)

In the poem *The Holocaust Survivor* he satirizes Germans for their imperialism. They wanted to take revenge from Great Britain, U.S.A., Russia, Italy and France and defeat in First World War was intolerable to them. The treaty of Versailles added fuel to fire and German soldiers had not been paid any salary as the national treasury had no resources. All national
income had stopped and Hitler provoked the Germans for expansion of national territory. War was accepted as a means of national progress and fake friendship was promised to neighbouring countries. But the prudent politicians of Great Britain and U.S.A. could smell the principles of Hitler’s Nazism. Now a lot of weapons were prepared in Germany and the war preparations were in full swing. Unfortunately Italy’s dictator Mussolini joined hands with German forces and even promised friendship with Hitler. As Japan was being troubled by the Chinese soldiers, it also joined the Fascists and Nazis. The French authorities were afraid of this situation as another world war could break at any time. The German forces surrounded various French towns for taking revenge. The British Prime-Minister was wise enough to make the necessary arrangements for national defence.

Like T.S. Eliot and George Orwell, Shiv K. Kumar hated imperialism as war does not solve problems. Fortunately Arnost Lustig could escape from the Nazis ad they had concentrated a camp at Auschwitz. Shiv K. Kumar felt hurt with the supporters of German Swastika and said:

And it was just as easy for them
to masquerade. After the kill
take some facial surgery
peel off your tattoo
round off the knife edges
of Swastika into the wheel
of love — and your voice will
savour of meringue. (9-16)

A lot of false propaganda was being made after 1935 and Germans prepared weapons in the name of defence. However, Hitler could never smell that Americans were busy in the preparation of atom bombs. As the poet presents the situation of a restaurant, he asks Arnost Lustig to take food without any tension. But his friend fails to get rid of his mental stress and recollects the terrible day when he was a victim of German forces at Auschwitz. Who could ignore the war policies of Hitler between 1935 and 1945? Human beings were treated as only means as war-victory was the only end. As Hitler was not prepared to grant human rights to citizens, Shiv K. Kumar condemned him and said:

But the fear in those Gaza blue
pools of your eyes as though
the German shepherds are still
on the prowl, dodging castration.
The only way to vanquish the sun
is to glower back
into his vitals. (31-37)

Here the heat of the sun is the symbol of
growing terror of war. While living in New York
(1982) the poet recollects the events of Second
World War and hopes that good sense will prevail
now and the politicians will think of world peace.
People of the world can't afford for Third World War
and the growth of colonialism will definitely destroy
all fruits of civilization.

While living in England the poet recollects his
Indian life and the works done here. In the poem A
Reminiscence he describes the cultural differences
between the East and the West. Quite often he feels
restless and tense in U.K. as he fails to be conscious
of identity among the foreigners. At times he has an
urge for 'an exit' from Cambridge, London,
Liverpool etc. as he has his home far away. It is true
that he gets job there but alas! He misses the job-
satisfaction and finds himself 'in a ghetto' and the
dust enters his mouth. His feeling of nostalgia is
clear when he says:
After a night’s breather in a ghetto,
exuding odours of garlic and turmeric,
I scout out for work, ears plugged
with snow-flurries, nose brick-red
like a circus clown, a taste of
coal-dust in my mouth. (5-10)

Now he feels as if he is damned. Even the
sights of Bond Street fail to console him. The
wandering ‘waxen’ colonel reminds him of people
who are damned. Is he one of them, lost in
wilderness?

In the shop-windows of Bond Street,
The mannequins, draped in virgin
transparency, grin at my jaded
joins. Farther down the street,
a salvation band, its conductor
a Tussaud’s waxen colonel, strikes
up a hymn:
‘Go ye into this wilderness
to seek thy damnation!’ (11-19)
The various elevators have no charm for him as he is fed up with the noise of the roads. At times he feels as if he is in 'snake-pit' and his tension reaches its climax. There is nobody with whom he can share his grief. The question is — How long to lead a life of isolation? Why does he feel himself different from the natives? May be he is just a fugitive here and the passers by fail to please him:

I'm besieged by a knot of fugitives,
some bundled up on the pews,
others hanging by the strips,
their faces phosphorescent in
the ambient gloom. In front of me
the signs blink.

‘Linda cheers you up
when your job gets you down’.
‘Smoke Abdulla!’ (31-39)

Quite often he is jobless and the love of his mother inspires him to return to India. The moments of 'self-scrutiny' prove fatal as he is rootless in U.K. The tunnels of London prove a 'labyrinth' and he fails to find his way. The music of colonial nation appears dull, boring and echoes 'serpentiney'.
Indian theory of action as prescribed in *The Bhagwadgita* comes to his mind and yet he does not take action. This is the time to seek peace, love, truth, fortitude — far away from England:

‘Actions speak louder than words.
Prayers for Peace and Love
Jay Soahem Jay Jagat!

There’s no vent-hole in this bastille
to subdue the fetor of putrescent
flesh and bone, the sweat of
humans fleeing from their shadows.

The cock crows again. (69-72)

The French fort of Bastille reminds him of French Revolution (1789) when the people demanded equality, liberty and fraternity. This fort had been maintained as a prison and the prisoners got no justice for years. In 1789 the revolutionaries revolted against French King Louis XVI and attacked upon this fort for the liberty of prisoners. After a struggle of two hours its governor surrendered and the event is popular for the triumph of republicanism and fall of monarchy. Similarly the poet seeks a
'hole', an opportunity, to escape from England and yet fails to decide his future course of action. However, there is a cry against tyranny in his heart.

In the poem *Heathrow Airport: Immigration Checkpost* the poet exposes the British approach towards the immigrants. The British authorities fail to understand the reality of 'a lost empire' as they have own national and economic problems. As America and China have captured markets economically, the British goods are not appreciated everywhere. Yet the British educational institutes, hospitals, industries, banks etc. are still popular in developing and undeveloped nations. People of many Asian and African families still send their children to Great Britain for education and jobs. As there is minor unemployment there, the authorities want to check the entry of immigrants. When Asians create law and order problem, the situation becomes tense. In this poem the poet depicts this encounter between the East and the West as the checkpost authorities ask a lot of questions at the time of entrance of immigrants. In a bitter mood he uses the terms 'barbed questionings', 'virginity', 'zone of inquisition', 'white raven', 'magic book', 'god’s eye', 'royal ensign', 'back to your genesis' etc. These authorities want to discourage the Asians and Africans as they are afraid of racial problems. These
authorities appear as 'white raven' when they analyze the visa and passport of the immigrants. Long back there was a demand to test the virginity of women if they wanted to enter U.K. The poet feels hurt against such inquiries and raises his voice:

These barbed questionings
only test the tropical wind's
virginity to sough through the yellow
zone of inquisition. (1-4)

The Whites are still proud of previous imperialism and not prepared to adjust with new situation. Quite often they ask absurd questions even from the tourists:

The white raven, perched on a high stool behind his magic book,
can caw off the names
of all your ancestors
like the panda on the Ganges bank.

(5-9)

Such attitude of British government authorities is bound to create barriers between the Whites and
Asians. How can an inquiry officer behave like God’s inspector? Even the royal ensign, a low post in the army, behaves with royal authority. After all immigrants have their own dignity. How can the poet tolerate difference between man and man? He satirizes this British ‘god’s eye’ and says:

You’ll break through the sound
barrier only if your dart hits
the god’s eye. Otherwise, the silver
trawlers flying the royal ensign may
whirl you back to your genesis. (10-14)

As a humanist his approach is positive as he wants to support universal brotherhood. The times have gone when people fought for communal cause. He hopes that Indians and Britishers will forget their past enmity and have friendly relations for mutual welfare.

In the poem Trafalgar Square the poet expresses his feelings regarding the decay of ancient British glory. The British forces fought against Napoleon under the supervision of Captain Nelson and won the battle. Now Trafalgar Square has been developed as a tourist centre to emphasize the act of British bravery. There are several statues here and
sculptors have put four stone lions as symbol of vigour and bravery. In 1820 William the IV gave it the name of Trafalgar Square though the French people are jealous of this historical place. The Captain Nelson is dead and yet his brave deed is remembered by the people:

This posthumous assertion of jaded column — its nostalgia for the wounded Jesus who lay bleeding in the sailors' arms while the sea-gulls squealed hallelujah under the red sky.

Now the rheumatic pigeons fed on splintered peanuts by alien hands can hardly flutter up to the lions squatting on their black clay haunches —

tight-lipped lest their dentures drop off the pedestal. (1-11)

The pedestal tells the story of the battle of 1805, a story of colonialism and imperialism. But
the poet indirectly asks the Britishers to remember the national losses:

Round the corner
down a spurious lane
the British Council’s catacombs —
remnants of a lost empire —
shiver in this mild winter. (12-16)

The stones are cold and the cold winds are blowing. The lions can’t prowl and yet the poet wanders there to recollect the past. Whenever the political processions are taken to Trafalgar Square, he thinks of the past as well as the present. For him the present is the extension of past. Even New Year’s celebrations are arranged here to pay tribute to Captain Nelson who was badly hit with a shell in his right shoulder. Yet he guided his soldiers to move ahead and not declare his wounds to others. The battle was won though the nation lost Captain Nelson.

The poem Trapfalls in The Sky shows change in the mood of the poet. There was a time when he enjoyed various pleasures in life. The flowers pleased his senses and he thought of the bright side
of life. ‘Earth’s modest amplitude’ gave him immense joy. Then he thought of fresh beginning and not the end. He uses the world ‘sprout’ for fresh beginning and growth and admits:

Long ago, I saw my heart-throb sprout from the sky-bed into a canna flower-
its tiara like a spangled kite in the air
spanning the earth’s modest amplitude.

Now the situation has changed as appearances appear deceptive. Light seems to be vanishing and he feels exhausted. Whatever assets he had gathered so far, seem useless now. In a mood of agony he says:

Now that the candle is sinking
on its elephantiasis foot
of sprawling wax, I see in the sky
only trapfalls into which have vanished
all my liquid assets. (6-10)
Quite often he wants to get peace and thinks of the ways and means for getting Shantih. Like Buddha and T.S. Eliot, he meditates for this state. Various thoughts come to his mind and create restlessness. At times he feels drifted away from tranquility as if 'gored by its own spines' (1) Several fanatisies haunt him as he wants to meditate. After all it is not easy to reach the stage of nothingness. Several questions and doubts need to be answered such as — What is the theory of origin of man? What is the relation between man and God? Is human soul immortal? Where does it come from? Where does it go after death? What is the relation between finite and infinite, good and evil, matter and spirit? How to get Nirvan? Then the 'reluctant motion' troubles him — What is the relation between spirit and gravitation? Such questions create 'puddle' and make him think of several other issues. In the poem Transcendental Meditation he wants to control his five senses. Just he pronounces 'Om' and thus 'robed in sound' he wants to forget all worldly sounds to get peace. No hustle and bustle is required for meditation as he has to concentrate on nothingness. He has to remember that he has no body. Physical needs and worldly glamour have no value for him — no brother, sister, wife, son etc. as he is far above every earthly bondage. Just minor intonation puts him in 'subliminal zones of the mind' and he forgets East, West, North and South to reach the stage of
timelessness. — no morning, evening, night etc. His single thought is peace as he is tired of even the structure, rhythm, symbols of poem too. Life appears to be a bubble and he wants to be free from the fear of death. Soul is, was and will be as he is above matter. As he starts sinking 'deeper and deeper', he is in the grip of nothingness. Shantih means nothing as he has to enjoy immortal bliss of nothingness. As a man he can do it as he is free from all worldly considerations. Nobody belongs to him and he belongs to nobody. Physically he is nothing as he is spirit. Nothingness (15) is not easy to get. This is what Buddha experienced, Vivekananda possessed this stage and saints reach there with prayer and finally pronounce 'Om Shantih'.

In the poem *Alternatives* he thinks of the alternative of despair, darkness, autumn, heat, nakedness, hoarseness, doom, pain, etc. Yet he does not become sad as he thinks of the intimate relation between good and evil, light and darkness, autumn and spring, doom and creativity, pain and pleasure, mortality and immortality etc. Why to worry even if the city is doomed to decay and destruction? —

Despair spirals to

a sky of hoarseness.
Darkness drips from decapitated lamp-posts —
the squall lashes
at the naked glasspanes.

Sitting in the porch
I wonder if this city
too is doomed. (1-8)

The cycle of birth and death goes on and spring comes with the departure of winter. Same is the case with sorrow and joy:

In mid-spring
birds lie still
under the memories of a winter
that had raised too many questions.

Shall I cower under the pain
or rise to cut the fierce winds
like a rock on the hill's slope
dig in my spikes
and look cap-a-pe
for a certain meaning
in tornadoes? (9-19)

The rock stands firm at the top of the hill. He wants to put an end to all his questions as life goes on. Nothing is permanent except truth, non-violence, self-restraint, meditation, righteousness, courage, bliss, eternal values etc. God Himself creates alternative to despair, autumn and decay.

The same conception has been repeated in the small poem *Trapped*. His 'pregnant folly' gives him insecurity on earth as thinks of his functions of life. Quite often he feels himself a victim of inaction, 'inertia', 'eternal remorse' etc. like the 'fallen gods'. He admits:

I'm caught in a ring of fire.

And you, my pregnant folly,
sit there securely —
your moon-filled belly
robed in flaxen inertia
nourishing a moment's sperm
into eternal remorse
for all the fallen gods.
He asks himself — Can he capture time? Can he control past, present and future? Who is he? Where has he come from? Where is his eternal home? Is he not a victim of degeneration like ‘jaundiced leaves’? Will he not burst like balloons? Is his soul not a captive in body? As little girls fail to capture wild falcons, he fails to understand the complexities of time, space, satellites etc. —

In the market-place
little girls rehearse
catching wild falcons with hairpins
and the feathers fall —
November’s jaundiced leaves
Light as captive balloons
Thick as snow in the Red Square. (9-15)

As snow falls in Red Square, he too is bound to fall and depart. Snow melts with the heat of the sun and turns into nothing. Same is the case with him.

Like saints, he thinks of birth on earth and then departure from here. In the poem Memorial Service he asserts the cycle of birth and death. Man is just like a horse rider and he is bound to be lost in mysterious darkness without leaving any trace of his
existence. The body turns into ashes with hardly any weight and the same ashes mix with earthly dust. His earthly friends kneel down at the time of his departure and offer prayer for the peace of his soul. This earth is ‘vestibule’ for creation as well as death. The poet tries to understand this mystery and says:

Lighter by bone and flesh
the dead man,
on a brief furlough
comes riding on a dark horse
over the jasper sea
to watch the kneeling faces
wait for the droves of hymns
to work themselves out
before it’s time to partake of
the sumptuous delicacies
in the vestibule. (1-11)

In the poem And Death Shall Speak With Many Voices he tries to analyze the mystery of death. Different people die in different ways — somebody dies of cancer and the others die of cardiac failure. Someone dies young as he meets an accident and leaves behind young wife and small children. For
some people death is a burden whereas others take it as a relief. The reactions of family members also differ from place to place. Yet inevitable death remains a reality. If a man dies at matured age, after having fulfilled his duties, nobody feels restless. On the contrary, death of young people creates panic in the family. However, dead bodies are put on pyre of wood:

Over the body
soaked in oil and resin
on the sandalwood pyre
awaiting the flames. (1-4)

New journey starts for the soul:

The flamingoes may now
pick the unresonant bones.
The ashes are waiting
for the stray winds. (12-15)

In the poem Gynous Truth he illustrates the fundamental truth about women. After having performed the daily duties of wife she has to offer herself to her husband. Her hard ‘flint’ does not remain hard as ‘time changes sex’. (3) She is no
more single at night as she identifies herself with her husband. Her husband is her demi-god and she is his essential partner. Her muscles are vanquished naturally and she unites herself with him out of love. All pain turns into pleasure and this is the working of nature:

The nuptial truth is gynous:
beside a muffled lampshade
the taut nipples
bend the vanquished muscles
over and syllogisms
do obeisance
to another god. (12-18)

In the poem *Reclamation* he is highly conscious of spring and creation. Why to forget potency of earth as there is divine system of creation? He emphasizes the words 'spring', 'saplings', 'potentials', 'season', 'seeds', 'reclamation' etc. though he admits the marks of old age. Before the periods of menopause begins, women can give birth to child. Autumn does not mean that fresh leaves will never grow on plants and trees. Why to forget the arrival of spring, the symbol of new life and freshness? The potency of spring can't be forgotten:
In the premenopausal’
late autumn
of the body
regret for a fugitive spring
that skidded off the track
is treading on faceless potentials.

(1-6)

Regarding reclamation, spring season and the
sprouting of seeds he says:

But there are saplings
that may grow
out of season and clime
if the mulching is rich
and hope shields stems and tendrils
from borers.

Deep in the earth’s bowels
there are seeds
that may have lain
untouched by moisture
awaiting reclamation. (7-17)
If God creates males, He also creates females for adding new creatures. This process of creation and death goes on indefinitely:

Age brands its indelible marks
on humans only —
how can a gold-fish conceal
its sagging face,
its drooping jaws? (18-22)

As a broad-minded person he is not afraid of old age and its 'jaws'.

As a scholar and teacher he is highly conscious of his duties towards society, family, nation and the world. After all he has been blessed with talents by God and hence he has to lead life of action. Common people wander in the 'blocks, pavements and streets' and yet he can't think only of the setting sun and arrival of darkness. Inspite of all oddities of his way and 'obstinacies' of fate he decides to fulfil his promises towards society. He takes decision in time and then starts working for brave new world. In the poem Commitments he asserts the terms 'boundaries', 'commitment', 'decisions', 'intent' and 'action'. He asserts:
The sharp outlines of the mental landscape

that decisions have to be made —
to have pancakes with bacon for breakfast

or just hot coca with wafers,

and read that letter under the pillow —

for the n'th time

to decipher its intent

and feel that’s where the action is ...

(9-16)

In the poem *The Unbeliever* he condemns the people who have no faith in decent values of life. They condemn society and fail to do anything for their fellow-beings. This is the reason that they have no positive approach to life. Nobody can achieve his aim of life if he thinks on negative lines. For Shiv K. Kumar, perversion is no solution to the problems of life. Quite often the perverted people are lost in crowd as they have no ‘roots’ of their own:

Perversion too is perception.

From the pulpit

words expand —
Hippo's jaws grinning
At the holiday crowds. (7-11)

In the poem Limitations he asserts the value of realities of life. Even God had His limitations and He remains conscious of them. All the prayers of human beings can't be granted at every moment. The river freezes in the winter season as there is excessive snowfall at that time. But 'shallow depth' need not discourage people as certain facts can't be changed. Human beings have to accept human and divine limitations:

Like God at Christmas Eve
realizing his
impuissance
through human prayers
the river stands still
once every winter
to gauge its
shallow depths. (1-8)

The earth has to move on its axis. The moon has to impart light to starts. Even the sun shares its light with the moon. All the planets have their orbits. If the heavenly bodies have their limitations, the
human beings have to accept their boundaries too. Reflection has got to be made for self-illumination. If human beings don't accept the concept of limitations, they'll feel restless and tense. Certain things 'can't be changed and human beings are helpless before the working of divine system. He aptly says:

Beyond the flame's nervous leap
cching at the fringes of endeavour,
the smoke writhes
in coiled inutility.
Don't let the music's
impassioned glare
deflect the stillness
of our reflections
in the black coffee.
What you can't, can't.
Forge not your words
into palliatives.
The forest is deep and dark enough
to let every hunter
choose his own game. (9-23)
A few poems of Shiv K. Kumar deal with subjects that are beyond colonialism, post-colonialism, modernism, post-modernism etc. as they are universal in tone. The poem *Adam to God* is one of them. In the poem *Bhishampitamah to Yudhishter Daharamraj* he creates pity and fear with tragic scenario of former’s death-hour. As the former is deeply wounded with the arrows of Arjuna, he has no desire to survive anymore. In last moment of grief he lies alone on the bed of sharp arrows though he has no complaint against the Pandavas. At such a critical time Yudhishter listens a call in the air and reaches near Bhishampitamah to console him. There is bloodshed in the battle-field of Kurukshetra and there is no limit to the agonies of wounded soldiers. After seeing this ‘devastation’ Yudhishter asks a question — Is it the end of creation? (9) As Gangaputra has decided to put an end to his body he listens the call of death. Yudhishter knows — Death Can’t touch him till he summons it himself. Bhishampitamah does not want Lord Krishna to intrude at this time though he can’t deny latter’s ‘divinity’ at any cost. Yudhishter tells him:

No, I’m here, alone. A seeker is a loner —
a predator who never hunts in a pack.

So here

I am — to hear your version of truth.

Isn't the voice of experience more authentic

than even divinity's which often sounds

like a matron's. (40-45)

Like life, truth is complex and a 'design multi-versant'. Bhishampitamah tells him:

... truth is a tangled
web. Never is there in a carpet's pattern a

single thread, however resplendent,

It's design multi-versant. And often

it leaves a blank space or a knot,
capriciously. (46-51)

The great Pandava must know that it is not easy
to digest truth. Often people feel 'confused' when they come to know the reality of truth. But truth
shines like the Pole-star. Let him know the mystery.
Bhishampitamah tells him further:

My bow

was that blank space in my

life's pattern. Or, was it like throwing

a pebble into a placid lake only to stir

up a maze

of ripples. Like teasing a hive of bees that

fly out vengefully to sting everyone

around. (58-63)

Quite often he felt shattered mentally. He failed
to tolerate the cunning behaviour of Duryodhan,
Dusshashan and Sakuni when Draupadi was insulted
inside the court. Yudhishter also regrets for putting
her on stake. Ironically Yudhishter is called the
'Prince of Righteousness — Dharamraj — an icon of
virtue (77-78) though he proved to unethical towards
her. Nobody observed the code of honour. Let
Yudhishter follow the light of fire. Bhishmpitamah
tells him:

It's both destroyer

and creator, parent and child.
The wounds on my body are one thousand, like the thousand names of Vishnu. And each wound has a thousand eyes. Yes, Yudhishter, it's only through pain's eye that you can perceive truth. (92-100)

His ethics is sublime as he adds:

How unfortunate are those that see only the rainbow, hear only the spring's melody, and dream on a cloud's thistledown bed. The way to see is to go blind, and the way to fly is to crawl on your belly. (101-105)

Yudhishter seems surprised as if he is wandering through a labyrinth and cobweb. But he wants an escape from this 'maze' as he too has
sympathy with the dead and wounded soldiers. But who can deny the result of Karma? If actions are performed thoughtlessly, their results would be terrible. When Lord Krishna delivered lecture to Arjuna, Bhishmpitamah overheard the same. Actually people like Duryodhan, Dusshashan, Sakuni etc. are to be blamed for all this destruction, death and decay. Hence disinterested action is essential and he repeats Lord Krishna’s words here. He tells Yudhishter:

... Disinterested action — that’s

It! Why should mortals ache for the fruits of their actions? That way lies pain. (129-131)

The poet selected this episode from The Mahabharata to assert the value of liberation and detachment.

Thus, Shiv K. Kumar is a poet with a feeling of commitment. Inspite of having passed some time in U.K., U.S.A. and other European countries he loved Indian culture and civilization. As he had studied the essays of Ralph Waldo Emerson, he followed the theory of ‘creative reading and creative writing’. In
his poems he advocates *The Bhagwadgita’s* theories of renunciation, liberation and detachment. In many poems he makes the people conscious of the evils of neo-colonialism. There is no denying the fact that he makes all possible efforts to understand the mystery of death, next birth, nirvana etc. With the poems of *Genesis* he makes it clear that God can’t deny knowledge to His creatures.
WORKS CITED


