

Poetry Series

**Kumar Vikram**  
**- poems -**

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## Kumar Vikram(05-12-1973)

Kumar Vikram writes poems in English and Hindi. He was recently invited by Sahitya Akademi (the prestigious Indian National Academy of Letters) to read his poems at its headquarters in New Delhi. His poems are known for inverted statements, lateral thinking, continued questioning of his own self and the way the society impinges on it, dramatic situations and sympathy for the marginalised. He consciously tries to be post-colonial in spirit by transcending the post-colonial muse.

Brought up at Muzaffarpur, Bihar, where his father was professor in English at Langat Singh College from where Prof Sinha retired as its Principal, Kumar Vikram is presently working in the Editorial Department (English) of National Book Trust, India- a multi-lingual major publishing house. His publications include 'Short Essays' (collection of Essays) , 'T S Eliot: An Intensive Study of Selected Poems' (Co-author with Prof Arun Kumar Sinha) .

# A Life Beyond Art

Images of joy  
sneak out rather apologetically  
from the drawings  
of dancing squirrels  
and singing birds  
done up with drying up sketch pens  
producing faint colours  
like the voice of the mother  
requiring to join the chorus □  
singing songs of marriage or birth  
in the neighbour's house  
with her mind preoccupied with the thoughts  
of her ailing son lying on bed back home.

While the painter replaces his sketch pens  
as the violinist gets the discordant chords removed  
for new ones,  
the mother like a dancer injured in her legs  
sits before the ailing son □  
with the songs from the neighbour's house  
jumping through the window  
and settling hesitantly in the corners of the room  
like a rich guest not able to enjoy  
the hospitality served  
in a poor man's home,  
always thinking  
should he have come there at all?

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Kumar Vikram

# A Man Inside The Tent

There is a man inside the tent  
erected some distance away  
from where we live.  
He lives there  
and  
we are told  
has never ventured out.  
Only his silhouetted shadow  
intimidating and unusually magnified  
appearing on the curtains of the tent  
has been seen.  
No one has conversed with him  
till now,  
only his voice as if coming from  
a microphone  
has been heard.

Interestingly  
till recently  
no body knew  
no body had noticed  
the man inside the tent.  
We all thought  
tent was the man,  
as in childhood  
the circus jokers  
walking on pairs of bamboo  
seemed real to us.  
Only recently,  
a ferocious wind  
blew away for some moments  
a part of the curtain  
and revealed  
a man sitting inside the tent.

Now wise men insist,  
after the blowing away episode  
the man would not live inside the tent.  
He would himself demolish the bamboos

holding the tent aloft.

As we sometimes overhear  
some disturbing sounds  
emanating from inside the tent  
as if some facade getting dismantled  
rather reluctantly  
and laboriously,  
we all await suspiciously  
for the man inside the tent  
to appear  
through the dent. □

First Published in 'The Asian Age', Poetry Section, 2002, New Delhi □

Kumar Vikram

# An Icecube

Moulded out of an element  
through a chilling process  
it dissolves  
gets melted down  
is gradually submerged  
and annihilated  
and assimilated  
wholly, fully,  
substantially  
in a goblet of wine□  
to make the pick-me-up  
more tasteful  
more wholesome  
more of a worthwhile  
experience

like a saint  
making the world  
a better place  
after having endured  
the tortuous self-disciplining process□  
and hardened himself  
peacefully,  
coolly, calmly dissolves into  
the wine of life—  
becoming invisible  
yet omnipresent,  
one with elements  
flowing eternally with  
eternity.

Saintly icecube! □  
I dare not aspire to be  
your frighteningly  
unidentified self,  
would rather be  
in the labyrinth  
of self-assertions  
to have some minutes

of unmitigated fame  
like the models walking on the ramp  
under the flickering light □  
of a kaleidoscopic lamp.  
I dare not be  
so gentle  
cool, unassuming  
for it gives me  
a sinking feeling  
of a stone getting immersed  
in a pool.□

First Published in 'The Asian Age', Poetry Section, 29 October, 2000 (New Delhi) □

Kumar Vikram

# King Of The Ephemera (Ode To Media)

On this perpetual stage of chaos  
actors come and dance  
deliver a line or two  
sometimes rehearsed  
sometimes oddly extempore  
before subsiding with a whimper.  
here characters jump onto the stage  
with the euphoric drumbeats  
as accompaniments  
inching towards your chest ☐  
suppressing the beat inside  
only to be pushed aside  
by some other "breaking" characters.

Here the suta discusses  
the movements of the dancers  
of their unusual attires and speeches  
with the sincerity of a modern day priest  
who chants mantras selectively  
to cut short the rituals  
like the classical vocalist ☐  
reciting only breathless raagas  
transcending the preparatory slower ones  
before an audience  
too keen to hit the climax.

A picture too perfect  
shot from a camera  
which does not commit mistakes  
of accommodating things out-of-focus,  
here never would find  
an unrecognised arm creeping into the frame ☐  
or eyes awkwardly closed of those being shot,  
for this king of the ephemera  
takes care  
only those alive and alert  
make it to the frame  
before bowing out of it  
into oblivion.

First Published in 'Media Spectrum', New Delhi,2004

Kumar Vikram

# The Futility Of Being A Spoilsport

Viewed from the windows  
of a fast-moving train,  
the cables of electricity and telephone

(held aloft by the rows of poles  
appearing like the colonnade of village girls  
negotiating through bridle path in the fields  
with water pitchers on their heads)

seem to run with matching speed  
and move upwardly  
rising from the shoulder of a pole □  
only to fall down rather hastily  
on the next one  
and to re-start rising up smoothly  
from still another shoulder.

The pillars of iron  
providing strength  
supporting and carrying on their heads  
the facilitators of modern living  
however,  
seem to interfere without fail □  
with the ambitions of the vaulting cables  
keeping them in tight leash  
obstructing their ascent  
as if reminding them  
of their limits  
of their purpose  
of the limited purpose  
they have to serve.

The cables, however, continuously  
refuse to submit □  
and like a young enthusiast  
are all too willing to rise beyond their roots  
notwithstanding the pillars of bondage wanting them to settle down.

This game of rise and fall

of triumph and failure  
of love and hate  
of temerity and its futility—  
how fascinating it all appears!

But, alas, surrogate is the motion of these players  
like the light of the moon! □  
Once the chugging giant decides to run out of breath  
and make a halt  
this will all end then and there with a jolt!

This habitual spoilsport  
how rightfully  
it loves ending abruptly  
games started by itself  
never really understanding  
that by halting abruptly  
it never really takes the beauty □  
out of the game played so far.

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Kumar Vikram

# The Middle Path

A cat jumped  
through the half-opened kitchen window,  
knocking down in the process,  
the steel-plate covering the milk in the pot.  
With matching agility  
I responded  
to the protesting sounds  
which reverberated through the dry afternoon.

By the moment I reached  
the knocked-down plate had run out of breath ☐  
and I found the winking cat  
ruining the milk.

To allow it to drink the milk  
which I no longer needed  
or to shoo it away  
and throw the milk down the drain  
was the question.  
And I answered neither—  
Opting to choose the Middle Path.

I allowed the intruder to drink ☐  
almost reassuring it with a readymade smile  
and then, silently picking up the broomstick  
like a small-time thief,  
menacingly hit on its head,  
displaying my human might.

(If drawn empathetically  
the sight of the cat  
hastily retreating  
with regret, surprise and anger  
flashing on its face for a split second, ☐  
could become a fine piece of art.)

Then with a winning smile,  
I picked up the pot  
and threw the milk down the drain.

I could not have taken the risk  
of encouraging an animal.

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Kumar Vikram

# The Ragpickers

Blessed are those  
who can carry on eloquently  
about how a dog crosses a street  
and how the cutlery looks graciously  
as it is placed on the table  
or displayed in the showcase.

Certainly the privilege  
of drawing little joys  
and unlimited laughter  
is denied to those  
who can only talk about  
some unique dilemma  
some unsettling  
undefined moods  
and moments,  
some unseen,  
hidden facets  
of the goings on.

Pity on those  
who are left  
thinking,  
brooding,  
analyzing  
about people talking  
spontaneously  
indulgently  
naturally  
about the antics of the dog  
or the fine curves  
offered by some new outfit.

II

The habitual ragpickers  
left wrapping up  
the materials of decorations  
of bamboo sticks

and chairs  
thrown about chaotically  
amidst the stale smell  
of rotten food  
and used paper-plates  
after the actors have left  
after the audiences have clapped,  
if only they  
could go home  
leaving behind  
the unpleasant job  
of delivering the materials back  
after tallying  
the missing items  
and those at hand.

Blessed are those  
who can carry on eloquently  
about how a dog crosses a street  
and how the cutlery looks graciously  
as it is placed on the table  
or displayed in the showcase  
to move on  
for another show  
throwing words behind their back  
to be collected  
by the rag pickers.

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Kumar Vikram

# Undesirable Hangover

When you blow off a candle  
with your casually or strongly exhaled breath  
many a time  
you will notice  
there remains  
for a second or two or less  
faintest possible  
still assertive  
trace of fire  
swiftly coming down □  
the thread  
it had been dancing on  
meeting the base  
and ultimately vanishing  
and leaving behind a queer smell around  
of a faint whitish serpentine smoke  
which also follows it  
in a second or half or more.□

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