

Pilgrimage is a nice poem, composed by Shiv. K. Kumar

a highly skilled Indo-Anglian poet. His poetry is marked for his keen sense of form, imagistic brevity and concreteness as well as a poised rhythm. 'Articulate Silence', 'woodpecker' and 'Broken Columns' are his invaluable poetic treasures of English literature. The usual themes of his poems are poverty, unrequited love and cultural interactions. But unhappy sexual love looms large in his poetic composition. In the present poem, he exposes the superfluous practices in religions being encouraged by the pseudo-religious leaders. The true spirit of religion is neglected because of the blind faith of the people. Pilgrimage is just a false show, for God is omnipresent. The poem is also remarkable for simple language, modern diction, delicate thought, fresh metaphors and new images. Let us see the poem in a brief.

In the given poem, Shiv Kumar expresses his discontent against the hideous approaches of the pseudo religion. He points out that the religious leaders lay emphasis on the false shows instead of the true spirit of religion. He says that there are several religions and they speak the same language. Their preachers, all over the world, try to attract more and more people to their particular religion. They often use foul means to this effect, such as wealth and wrong theories. Most of them succeed in their ventures and take undue advantage of by exploiting the credulity of the innocent people. The poet, further, says that those who cannot differentiate right from wrong and fail to understand the theory of 'enforced equality', are easily trapped and get all amusement. Such people go on pilgrimage with a great zeal. But those who understand the real spirit of religion, take it as an 'insidious design'.

"Others felt amused

at the enforced equalities

The bystanders took us for a Persian  
mobacc of some insidious design."



The poet does not want to accompany the pilgrims who are completely misguided and misled by the selfish custodians of religions. So, he pretends a laxia to lag behind and to see 'the road's last, devious curve'. When he is left behind and contemplates, he concludes that the religious leaders have defiled the true spirit of religion with their blasphemies. He declares -

"The tree on either side  
would have given us a guard of honour  
had our leader not defiled them  
with blasphemies."

The poet is now confused and nervous. He is unable to decide further course of his action. He is in a fix. Then his inner conscience, the only real guide of human beings in such situations, comes to his rescue. It wisely asks him to 'march crabwise' if he intends to achieve his real goal:-

"Then suddenly someone announced  
That the easiest way to hit  
The destination was to  
march crabwise."

At the end, the poet outrightly rejects the idea of going on pilgrimage. He thinks that God does not reside in a particular mosque, temple and church. He is omnipresent and can be found <sup>every</sup> anywhere, if we have real devotion to Him. The journeys like the pilgrimages are not better than measuring amplitude of the sky. They are meant only for stimulating blood, so that energy may be lost for nothing. The poet, in the mean time, hears women muttering 'Rest would be heaven'. Now, he warns people against the selfish designs of the religious leaders and cautions them not to be trapped by their false shows.

Thus, we see that Shiv Kumar has portrayed the modern scepticism. All religions should be equally respected for they lead to the same destination. The

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Religious leaders should provide proper leadership to the people for realisation of God. They should not be guided by their selfish interest. Shiv Kumar is also at his best as an artist. The images of 'sun's threat', 'dwindling supplies', 'enforced equalities', 'Persian mosaic', 'involuntary design', 'preluded ataxia', 'devious curve', 'crabwise march' etc speak of his artistic perception of the modern life. Really, it is a good poetic creation of Shiv Kumar.