

CHAPTER - II

COMMUNICATION: WIT

2.1. Wit: An Introduction

The fact cannot be denied that wit has been one of the most prominent features of poetic communication since the earlier times. Poets like Shakespeare, Donne, Herbert, and Crashaw in the West evoked wit as a style. The metaphysical poets' wit is characterized by ingenuity in metaphor, pun, and paradoxical conceits. Authors such as Mark Twain, Winston Churchill, and Oscar Wilde perfected the use of wit with intellectual understanding, and sharp and cutting wisdom. The Western critics characterized wit as intellectual power just as they proposed different definitions of wit from time to time.

The term wit is derived from an old English word *witan* meaning 'to know' and hence, comes the definition of wit primarily as a matter of sense and understanding. It is an intellectual display of cleverness and quickness of perfection, and thus, dependent upon apt phrasing, i.e. sharpness or felicity of expression. It plays with words, develops startling contrasts, and appears often in epigrams and paradoxes. In the Elizabethan age, a man of pregnant wit, or of great wit, was a man of vast judgment. In the reign of James I, wit was used to signify the intellectual faculties or mental powers collectively. According to Locke, it consists in quickness of fancy or imagination. By Dryden's time, it was used as nearly synonymous with talent or ability. To Dryden, wit is synonymous with imagination, a term that was to have a far narrower meaning in the eighteenth century, with its emphasis on reason and common sense. Pope defined it to be a quick conception and an easy delivery, according to which, a man of wit is a man of brilliant fancy; a man of genius. Samuel Johnson states that the original meaning of wit is 'the powers of mind; the mental faculties; the intellect.'¹ The longest citation that Johnson offers for wit comes from Locke: 'Wit lying most in the assemblage of ideas, and pitting these together with quickness and

variety, wherein can be found any resemblance, or congruity, thereby to make up pleasant pictures in the fancy.ö² In the time of Cowley, it came to signify a superior understanding, and more particularly a quick and brilliant reason. Tentatively, but illuminatingly, T.S. Eliot defines the wit of certain seventeenth-century poets as ða tough reasonableness beneath the slight lyric grace.ö³ Babette Deutsch in her *Poetry Handbook* explains ðwitø without any reference to humour, fancy, imagination, or anything of the kind. It is rather the ðfaculty that makes for metaphor by the perception of likeness in unlike things.ö⁴ In her perception, the discourse of poetry and discourses about poetry are not interchangeable with vocabularies pertaining to other literary genres and modes. She seems to center her views on mediating aspects of pragmatic communication.

2.1.1. ‘Wit’ in Sanskrit Poetics

From the viewpoint of communication, it also seems relevant to refer to Indian *Rasa* theory, which too, is very enlightening. *Rasa* is the ultimate criterion of literariness according to which ðwitø consists in action from the generation of an idea in the poetø mind to the evolution of poetic emotion in the readers. The effectiveness with which a poet nurtures his abstract idea into a concrete presentation displays the wit of the poet.

The idea of *deviance* in language use as in the Sanskrit *vakrokti*, another very important theory of Indian Poetics, propounded by Kuntaka (10th-11th Century), lies in the strikingness of expression. In fact, this strikingness of expression distinguishes poetry from other forms of literature and is the result of unusual poetic activity, subsuming both ðwitø and ðironyø. Thus, one finds *vakrokti* linked with poetic imagination on the one hand, and aesthetic delight of the reader, on the other. A notable point is that strikingness of expression merely does not constitute *vakrokti*; the aesthetic enjoyment derived from the perusal of a composition is also equally important. Thus, one finds the wide domain of *vakrokti* encompassing both linguistic and extra-linguistic features of a composition. The linguistic category includes phonetic, lexical, grammatical, and sentential deviations; whereas the extra-linguistic category includes the variations in the context or entire composition.⁵ Thus, in a way one finds *vakrokti* closely associated with the western criticsøconcept of wit.

Also related to *vakrokti* or deviance is the idea of propriety or *auchitya*, propounded by Ksemendra (11th Century). This, too, has a close affinity with the modern concept of \neg wit \emptyset . The propriety or the impropriety of something is determined by the context and not by a set of rules. Something that is proper at one place becomes improper at another. Thus, in all the parts of a composition, from phoneme to the entire discourse, the rule of propriety is to be strictly observed. The figures of speech, if improperly used, may lead to distortion and disfigurements. Similarly, the contemporary or the modern concept of wit uses the depiction of incongruities, but even the incongruities are to be selected in an appropriate manner, abiding by the theory of *auchitya*.

2.1.2. The Concept of ‘Wit’ in the Present Study

The chapter, therefore, takes into account certain specific features of \neg wit \emptyset such as common sense, quick reasoning, word play (without being funny), amusing expression, and insightful remarks that show the poet's power of the mind, and seeks to establish it as one of the characteristic elements in poetic communication. \neg Wit \emptyset holds the attention of the readers to successfully establish the communicative link between them and the poet. It is \neg wit \emptyset that leads to the evolution of \neg irony \emptyset and the interplay of \neg wit \emptyset and \neg irony \emptyset generates a satiric, sarcastic, or humorous effect on the readers. In fact, both Maha Nand Sharma and I.K. Sharma display \neg wit \emptyset as a thin disguise for communicating their more poignant feelings with striking expression, or what has been defined as ‘acute perception and cleverly appropriate expression of ideas providing amusement and pleasure.’⁶ In short, both the Indian poets try to seize on some thought or occurrence, and by a sudden turn, present it under aspects wholly new and unexpected, often with a laughable keenness and force.⁷ Or, as Bruce would say: ‘The pleasure we find in wit arises from the ingenuity of the turn, the sudden surprise it brings, and the patness of its application to the case, in the new and ludicrous relations thus flashed upon the view.’⁸ \neg Wit \emptyset excites in the mind an agreeable surprise, and it arises not from anything marvellous in the subject, but from the imagery employed, or the strange assemblage of ideas. Poets display \neg wit \emptyset either by debasing things pompous or seemingly grave; or by aggrandizing things little and frivolous; or by setting ordinary

objects in a particular and uncommon point of view, by means not only remote, but also apparently contrary.

2.2. Discourse of Wit

The poems of Maha Nand Sharma and I.K. Sharma are rich in wit, which helps them achieve wonderful intensity, complexity, and resonance, either via imagery, tone, rhythm, setting, exposure of culture and society, and dialogue, or via form. Both of them create unfamiliar connections between words and ideas in a manner often surprising and amusing. In order to understand and enjoy the two poets, the conventional descriptions of wit may be extended, refreshed, and qualified. Their poetic wit is distinguished by brevity, eloquence, and surprise. It favours incongruous congruity and fosters pleasurable psychological effects in its sense of amusement. It also plays a role in the formulation, transmission, and conservation of their cultural wisdom.

A few poems of both the poets are analyzed here in terms of the syntactic, the semantic, the pragmatic, and the discourse levels in order to explore the source, cause, communicative role, and the effect of wit in the sphere, both in and out, of their poems.

2.2.1. Wit in the Poetry of Maha Nand Sharma

2.2.1.1. 'To a Professor Guide'

The first poem selected for an analysis is Maha Nand Sharma's 'To a Professor Guide'

How many blooming roses have you killed ?
 How many paper-roses have you passed
 As genuine ones ? How many hearts you chilled
 With academic thefts so mean, so crass ?
 How many ounces bright of precious gold
 Your wife on birthdays got from flattering friends ?
 How many maunds of purest *ghee* have rolled
 Into kitchen thine along with tins of jam ?

How many lovely fish by you were netted
 With baits of Ph.D. and high degrees ?
 How many pampered dogs you instigated
 To bite your shining friends with jealous glee ?
 Hypocrite mean ! the temple where should burn
 The incense pious of spiritual values high
 To stinking den of vicious plots you turn
 For pelf and power and pomp by mischief sly. ⁹

From the dramatic structure of the poem, the context is evident, that is, academic degeneration and decline in the professional values. As the title of the poem suggests, it is an address to a professor, who should act as a guide/mentor to students, but as depicted, is involved in corruption and other unethical practices. The speaker uncovers moral degeneration as well as rampant corruption in the academic sphere. It is shocking to learn that the persons responsible for propagating and establishing moral values in the youth, and thus, the contemporary society, are themselves immersed in all sorts of corrupt practices. The poet himself being a university professor has witnessed it, and has a firsthand experience of the degeneration creeping in the academic sphere.

In the first line of the poem, the speaker uses the expression 'blossoming roses' for promising scholars who have genuine thrust for knowledge and are on the way to prove their skills through research papers and theses. Thus, the phrase 'blossoming roses' acts as a tender image to feelingly portray the genuine scholars, and simultaneously, it also stands as a symbol to denote authentic research contributions. It suggests that an original research paper or thesis should have the fragrance and freshness as that of a rose, or in other words, it should be an exploration of a new idea or thought, such that it benefits the human race and academia with its findings. Similarly, the term 'paper-roses' depicts non-meritorious students and their research findings that neither have the fragrance nor freshness, i.e. no academic worth, to contribute to the stock of existing knowledge. Such a suggestive image and concrete metaphor, both in the same phrase, displays wit. The use of the phrase 'academic thefts' in the last line of the first stanza hints at the plagiarism prevalent in the contemporary academic sphere. It is a common observation that in many universities these

days, the scholars “steal” the research findings of some other fellow and submit it for the award of a higher degree by making (or even without making) a few changes and variations in the original one, thus, yielding unauthentic research thesis. The surprising fact is that the professors encourage such practices by being involved in the process of academic thefts and later, passing such thesis or findings by labeling them as authentic ones. The speaker criticizes such practices by calling it “mean” and “crass.” The use of the word “so” as a modifier to both the words (mean and crass) intensifies the surprising and sarcastic effect of the lines in the given context. The word “chilled” in the third line unveils the element of surprise both for the speaker and the audience, or the reader. The mild tone of the stanza not only shows the academic speaker’s maturity and gravity but it also reflects the dissatisfaction of the speaker from whatever he observes around him. The phrase “academic thefts” also provides a key to enable the reader to decode the images and metaphors used in the previous lines in the same context, i.e. academic, as intended.

In the second stanza of the poem, the speaker explains the cause behind the unethical temperament and corrupt attitude of the professors in a tough manner by stating the materialistic benefits that they reap by compromising their high professional position. Thus, the academic thefts are converted into materialistic benefits, and later, become an asset. The metaphors of “precious gold”, “maunds of purest ghee”, and “tins of jam” indicate the sharp witty comment the speaker makes by questioning the intellectual fraternity, the extent of materialistic gains they make by academic cheating and falsehood. With the grammatical deviation in the first line, i.e. “How many ounces bright of precious gold”, and the third line, i.e. “How many maunds of purest ghee have rolled”, the poet indicates the number of people that offer gold ornaments to the academicians’ wife on birthdays and the number of people that supply ghee to his kitchen for the professor’s ability to cheat or his thuggish stances. The phrase “maunds of purest ghee” reminds one of the ancient *Charvaka* saying: “*ōyavat jivet sukham jivet rinam kritva dhritam pibet bhasmibhutasya dehasya punaragamanam kutah*”, i.e. As long as you live, live happily, beg, borrow, or steal, but relish ghee; incur debt but drink ghee. Once the body is reduced to ashes, how can it come back again! ¹⁰

In the third stanza of the poem, the use of the expression *ōlovely fishö* as a metaphor for the research scholars, especially referring to female scholars, and *ōpampered dogsö* for the professor's close associates and supporters, especially the junior colleagues, who are left with no other option but to support him for their personal benefits, is suggestive and reflects wit. The use of the metaphor *ōlovely fishö* suggests that the professor treats the young scholars as a means to satiate his needs and requirements, as a fish satiates one's hunger. Further, the use of the words *ōnettedö* and *ōbaitösö* to compliment the expression *ōlovely fishö* add to the witty effect of the poem. Thus, the first two lines of the stanza hint at the (sexual ?) exploitation of the young research scholars by the professors to meet their personal base motifs, and comments on the falling research standards.

The speaker uncovers the contemporary university scenario, where the research scholars are busy all the time meeting the non-academic demands of their research guides instead of putting their efforts behind the exploration of new facts. Similarly, the use of the phrase *ōpampered dogsö* to refer to the close associates on whom the professor bestows all his favours is highly suggestive, and depicts that such associates are ready to do anything for the sake of their master, and thus, they are like dogs who wag their tails obediently at each and every gesture of their professor-owner. The use of such metaphorical language which opens new horizons of meaning reflects wit. Again, in the last line of the stanza, the speaker uses the expression *ōshining friendsö*, where the word *shiningö* functions as a modifier to mean the honest successful colleague who is victimized by the opponents' jealousy.

In the first line of the final stanza, the metaphor of *ōtempleö*, i.e. university or college or the place of learning, turns into a *ōden of vicious plotsö* in the third line. It provides an insight into the corruption of rich Indian culture and tradition. That which once *incensedö* higher values now *stinksö* with *ōvicious plotsö*. The academics indulge in acts of *sly mischiefö* for *ōpelf* and power and *pompö* rather than any spiritual upliftment. The narrator's tone increasingly becomes harsh with the repetition of the explosive sound /p/ throughout the stanza, i.e. the use of the words such as *ōhypocriteö*, *ōtempleö*, *ōpiousö*, *ōplotsö*, *ōpowerö*, and *ōpompö*, which intensifies the element of dissatisfaction on the part of the speaker.

Each line of the poem has nine to eleven syllables out of which six or more syllables are stressed, and this imparts a high rising tone to the poem. The high rising tone compliments the questioning attitude of the speaker that is well reflected by the seven interrogation marks throughout the poem. Further, the end-rhyme words in each of the quatrain contribute to the making of wit: for example, killed/chilled, gold/rolled, netted/investigated, burn/turn, and high/sly. The poem communicates the social awareness of the poet while the use of pungent and caustic remarks point to his high ethical and professional values.

2.2.1.2. 'To a Maiden'

Maha Nand Sharma continues with the same higher ethical attitude in the next poem 'To a Maiden' which is significant in the context of rising female foeticide and low priority given to girl-child in the Indian society. The speaker of the poem is aware of the poor status accorded to a maiden who appears to be conscious of it but helpless to do anything. The narrator stresses that her beauty lies not so much in her outer looks but in her soul, her inner nature, which provides her strength to face life at different stages:

Be conscious that your beauty lies concealed
More in your soul than in your fleshly eyes,
Than in the eyes of those whose looks unveil
Their lust whereat your innocent visage shies. ¹¹

Very subtly the narrator plays down the adage that beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder and criticizes man's own concealed shameful intentions as they look at a girl. With the eyes of lust one cannot fathom the beauty of a girl's soul. The narrator unveils what is concealed:

See, you'll be mother of some promising child !
Be conscious of this role by God ordained.
Be conscious of your strength in a form so mild.
At the halt of birth you boarded life's train. ¹²

Using the imagery of a railway journey, the girl-child is naturally ordained to become a wife and a mother, and play varying roles with all the ups and downs at different 'halts' in life's train. Her inner strength alone helps her move through the different demanding, or

challenging woods of life. The use of the expressions 'halt of birth', 'boarded life's train', and 'stunning jolts' in the journey *vis-a-vis* the significant roles she plays is a well-considered plea for respect to a girl child:

Your journey through this world as well has halts
 Your wedding, your conception and the weddings
 Of sons and daughters whence, with stunning jolts,
 You'll move through woods of wifehood, motherhood taxing.
 With a long path of ups and downs stretching
 Before your child-like inexperienced eye,
 Deserve you well our cheers and our blessings,
 Not ogles, stares which bounds of shame defy.¹³

Thus, the poem encapsulates the entire life of a woman, and highlights all the daunting responsibilities that she performs. It communicates the message that a girl should be encouraged, applauded, and respected for the difficulties she overcomes at the different stages of her life instead of being criticized and exploited, both physically and mentally. A close analysis of the stress pattern of the poem displays a stress on the vowel sounds, and that too, similar vowel sounds that imparts a high rising sound to the tone of the poem, and thus, facilitates the motivational intent of the poem.

2.2.1.3. 'A Tale of Freedom's Tears'

Another example of the poet's wit is the poem 'A Tale of Freedom's Tears'. The poem is a long narrative of eighty-seven (quatrain) stanzas, where 'Freedom' has been personified and depicted as a lady, and the poet makes 'Freedom' his mouthpiece to comment on the weaknesses and drawbacks of different forms of governments such as monarchy, dictatorship, democracy, communist, etc. The poem begins with the address of the speaker to Freedom, and then, it develops in a dramatic mode where Freedom narrates all her tragic experiences to the speaker. She discloses all the conversations that she has had with different heads of the different governments along with all her personal observations made in each territory. She narrates the pathetic tale of how she was used by the different governments for meeting their personal requirements, and then, smothered by them. Thus, the reader comes

across a number of small conversations within the main conversation between the speaker and Freedom that depicts all her sufferings. Freedom narrates that she was wooed, proposed, and loved by all the heads of the different governments initially, but later, she discovers that she was deceived, battered, and molested by all of them. The poem begins with a political context, and then, moves on to the depiction of contemporary society, i.e. the context turns social, and later, one also finds a few stanzas as a commentary in the religious context. And again, it reverts back to the political context in its last section.

In the thirteenth stanza of the poem, Freedom describes the hypocrisy of the courtiers in the regime of a monarch:

Imprisoned in their double selves,
The crafty courtiers moved about
With daggers deep inside their hearts
And flowøry smiles on face without. ¹⁴

The phrase "double selves" suggests the hypocritical attitude of the courtiers. These courtiers may be understood as the ministers and parliamentarians in the contemporary political scenario. The phrase "daggers deep inside their hearts" communicates the evil intentions of the courtiers. Here, the word "dagger" stands as a symbol to denote "danger", "harm", and "betrayal", whereas "deep inside their hearts" suggests that the courtiers secrete all malicious intentions within their heart, which is the organ pumping blood throughout the body, thus, suggesting that the malicious intentions and faithlessness are in the blood of such courtiers, and therefore, they can never be reformed. The expression "flowøry smiles" connotes deceptiveness in the context of the poem. The contrast between the two phrases: "daggers deep" and "flowøry smiles" highlights the hypocrisy of the courtiers, and the word "crafty" as a modifier to courtiers compliments the suggested nature.

Freedom is rescued from the tyranny of the monarch by a Dictator, who promises to treat her with all due respect and shows admiration for her. Freedom expresses her doubts over the promise made by the Dictator, as she had been befooled by the monarch who talked of similar things initially, but did not care for her at all, once she decided to stay with him. The Dictator answers her doubts in the following words:

I have been raised to status mine,
 With zeal acclaimed by all the men.
 By accident of birth alone
 The King was straight imposed on them.

A dawn is breaking all around
 Wherein ø will be a bliss to live.
 For darkest night enveloping thee,
 The prospects of a day I give.ø¹⁵

Here, the phenomenon of ðbirthö is termed as an ðaccidentö, which is a striking expression, and in the context of the poem, it is applicable to both: the king as well as the commoner born in his territory. The statement is equally true and justifiable for both, as a son born to the King is destined to be the ruler, whereas one born to a commoner is sure to be ruled by the King. It is the unconventional use of the word ðaccidentö that evokes wit, and in terms of the pragmatic communication, it communicates the ways of the world.

Freedom is not happy with the state of things in the regime of the Dictator as well, as she finds ðblind enslavementö¹⁶, ðdense gas-chambersö¹⁷, ðfiring squadsö¹⁸, ðspies in concentration campsö¹⁹, and ðbody trampedö²⁰ in its territory. Freedom is saved from the clutches of the Dictator by a democratic leader. She accompanies him to his country, where she finds rampant corruption all over:

In floods, like water, money flowed
 To leadersøpockets, flooding them.
 The pockets of their sonsô the Lord
 Be thankedô then checked the flood, like dams. ²¹

The first line of the stanza depicts a flood, which is not any ordinary flood, as it is observed that money flows at an equal pace with that of the water, but to the leadersøpockets instead of being utilized in providing relief measures. The stanza, thus, depicts a two-fold flood in which there is an upsurge of water on the one hand, whereas an overflow of money from the leadersøpockets, on the other. The reader can easily co-relate the depicted situation in the contemporary social context with the news that flashes on all the T.V. channels and

newspapers during and after each flood. At least, in India, the CBI and other investigating authorities' reports in the matter add strength to the reliability of such news. Thus, the poem subtly reflects the contemporary social and political scenario. The use of the word 'floods' as a noun in the first line and as a verb in the succeeding line displays word-play. The analogy, thus, developed between the two lines constructs the discourse of wit projecting two entirely different situations: the first, in which the flowing water has ruined the lives of the innocent and poor people; and the second, where the flowing money has flooded the pockets of the politicians and bureaucrats. The inherent wit in the lines facilitates the evolution of humour from the perspective that both the classes of people, i.e. the poor, and the politicians and bureaucrats, face the challenges posed by the flood in some way or the other. It also leads to the evocation of irony as the poor and innocent people are losing their lives because of the flood on the one hand, whereas the other classes of people are minting money at an exponential rate during the same calamity at the cost of the poor, on the other. The stanza also evokes a satire on the corrupt politicians and bureaucrats who do not hesitate to make money at the cost of the poor and innocent people, as they gulp the relief and compensation packages released from the government's treasury in the name of the victims. Satirically, it is not only the corrupt leader or the government official who is benefitted by the flood, but his/her entire family reaps the profit, as the money flows to them in the form of an overflow from the corrupt person's pockets. The comparison drawn between the corrupt person's pocket and dam on the basis of their function displays wit and stimulates an undercurrent of humour. Here, the word 'pockets' is connotative of the 'expenditure' and not 'savings'. The parallelism drawn between a pocket and a dam (the former saving from the over-accumulation of wealth and the latter from the consequences of an unexpected upsurge of water) displays wit at the pragmatic level. Semantically, the pocket is used in a connotative sense, whereas the dam is used in its denotative sense at the semantic level of the poem. The stanza communicates that the politicians and bureaucrats have a dam to protect themselves, but the poor and innocent citizens have no such dam at their service. The communicated message also hints that the money sanctioned for the construction of the dam has also been gulped by the politicians in addition to the relief funds. Another noteworthy point is the repetition of the /d/ sound throughout the stanza that

suggests the dishonest, deceitful, and degenerating attitude of the politicians and bureaucrats; degradation in the moral values of the contemporary society; and disgust and dissatisfaction on the part of the speaker in the poem.

Freedom being insulted, battered, dented, and crushed by the agents of Democracy is rescued by two angels who try to soothe her with the following words:

-With eyes so sunken, withering cheeks,
And hollow-bellied skeleton frame,
Thou canst not ever be thyself
By hunger hast thou been so maimed.

Thou shalt now be a guest of State
øI will feed thee, clothe thee, house thee well.
Thou shalt be quite secure with us.
In joy and comfort thou shalt dwell.ø²²

The stanza describes the physical appearance of -Freedomø who has been reduced to a pitiable state after the long enduring torture at the hands of a monarch, dictator, and agents of democracy. The use of the expression ðhollow-belliedö as a modifier to qualify ðskeleton frameö displays an exaggeration or over-statement, as a skeleton is never pot-bellied in appearance. The poet strategically employs exaggeration or over-statement to intensify the pathetic effect by counting more on the deplorable status of Freedom, and thus, reflects wit. The wit evokes *karuna rasa* (pity and compassion) in the context of the poem. One finds similar instances of wit scattered throughout the poem.

The whole poem seems to be an image which projects the contemporary socio-political and religious scenario of India, and -Freedomø seems to be a personification of the country itself, narrating all its miseries since the time of gaining independence. The country has been exploited by almost all the politicians and bureaucrats, who exercise the authoritative powers, on the pretext of governance. The tone of the poem clearly reveals that -Freedomø has been an illusionary concept for the common masses, and in actuality, it is a maid attending the masters in power. Thus, the poem communicates how the people have been

deceived in the name of 'Freedom' and in real terms, 'Freedom' itself is imprisoned and molested in the contemporary age of moral and ethical degradation.

2.2.1.4. 'Poesy's Appeal to the Critic'

The next poem selected for the study is 'Poesy's Appeal to the Critic'

As tender as a rose I am.
 O Critic, crush me not.
 The tide of feelings do not stem
 With hair-splitting thought.

Should piercing knifeô your headô dissect
 What none but heart can make ?
 I'm spirit divine brewed, in fact,
 The thirst of soul to slake. ²³

In the poem, 'Poesy' is personified by attributing to it the ability to speak. Poesy, being the speaker, addresses a 'Critic' and requests him/her not to be too harsh on it. Poesy pleads to the critic to use his/her 'heart', instead of using only 'head', in the process of its minute critical observation that smothers the poetic essence to some extent. Maha Nand Sharma, himself being a poet, is quite aware of the treatment that poesy receives at the hands of the contemporary critics, and the poem seems to be a vehicle to communicate his personal observations and mark a protest against such attitude of the critics.

In the first line of the poem, Poesy compares itself with a 'rose' on the basis of tenderness. Here, 'rose' also stands as a symbol of beauty, fragrance, fragility, freshness, colour, delicacy, and eloquence. Thus, the simile drawn between a 'rose' and Poesy transfers all the qualities of the earlier to the latter. Such an insightful and suggestive remark clothed in a simile displays wit. Wit also oozes out from the perception of likeness in the two unlike things, i.e. 'Poesy' and 'rose' in the context of the poem. The phrase 'crush me not' displays the use of emotive language and uncovers the pathetic condition of the speaker. It communicates that the speaker is in a state of fear, and is quite apprehensive of the treatment

that one would receive at the hands of the critic. An analogy may be drawn between the expressions *ōTouch me notō*, which stands as a proper noun to denote a species of plants that shrivels and shrinks when touched, and *ōcrush me notō* suggesting that Poesy loses its bloom with an awkward touch of the critic. The use of the compound word *ōhair-splittingō* as a modifier to *ōthoughtō* suggests of the minutest critical examination possible on Poesy. The last two lines of the first stanza communicate that a critic should take into consideration certain emotive features of the language during the critical analysis of a poem instead of imposing a particular rigid parameter.

In the first line of the second stanza, the use of the term *ōpiercing knifeō* as a metaphor for the critic's head on account of the activity it is involved in, i.e. the dissection of the poem, displays wit. The word *ōdissectō*, imported from the medical terminology, and the expression *ōpiercing knifeō* connotes to the process post-mortem, and simultaneously, exhibits the poet's ability to exploit the metaphorical and suggestive capabilities of the language. The use of an interrogation mark at the end of the second line imparts a challenging tone to the speech, which is a contrast to the humble tone of the previous stanza, and hence, communicates the boldness of the speaker. Poesy boldly asserts in the next line that she is *ōspirit divine brewedō* to slake *ōthe thirst of soul.ō* The phrase *ōspirit divine brewedō* leads to multiple meanings, and each meaning fits into the poem pragmatically. The phrase may be decoded as referring to a unit of the Divine Light, i.e. the Almighty, as it has the potential to quench the thirst of the human soul, from one perspective; whereas the word *ōspiritō* may also be decoded to suggest an alcoholic drink, as the word *ōbrewō* denotes to the process of manufacturing a special kind of beer. Thus, from the perspective of the pragmatic communication, it leads to two different meanings: the first, Poesy has the divine potential of elevating a person spiritually; and the second, it intoxicates a person and calms down the high soaring aspirations, or vice-versa.

Overall, the poem communicates that a critic should have a flexible and liberal approach, and should take into consideration certain feelings, emotions, and imagination as purely

justifiable and acceptable while analyzing poetry, rather than sticking to the same uniform rigid yardstick in the evaluation of all the genres of literary art.

2.2.1.5. 'Second Childhood'

The poem 'Second Childhood' depicts the journey of life through its different stages, i.e. intervals of age, in a witty manner:

Our earlier childhood brings us on the stage
Of the world where webs of joys and griefs galore
Are woven till our death by Fate. The age,
The second childhood, is our exit door.

The teething child at the world with wonder looks;
The toothless child annoyed by what he sees.
The smiles of the first illumine every nook;
The second cries with gout in drying knees.

O Age, be not annoyed. Transform annoyance
To indifference, and treat the pains in joints
As thorns which prick our frame before our indulgence
With rose, the death, our journey's final point.

So welcome second childhood, lending peace
By leading us to death, our soul's release. ²⁴

The poem crystallizes the whole journey of life amidst two extremes: the first, the childhood of a teething child, which depicts the stage of an infant, i.e. one's coming to the world; and the second, the childhood of a toothless child, which depicts the old age, when one loses one's teeth, and thus, prepares for the exit from this world. The poem exhibits a Shakesporean echo as the structure and form of the poem is that of a Shakesporean sonnet with the quatrains depicting a cross-rhyme pattern, and the end rhyme scheme of *a b a b c d c d e f e f g g*. Apart from the form and structure of the poem, the depiction of the world as a stage, and the use of the expression 'second childhood' to connote the old age bespeak of the strong Shakesporean influence over the poet. The influence of the famous Shakesporean

play *As You Like It*, in which human life is categorized into seven different stages, is reflected by the poem. The description of the two childhoods, and the parallelism drawn between them is striking, suggestive, and witty.

The speaker celebrates death by terming it as a *roseö*, and such a comparison between the two unlikely entities intensifies the witty effect of the poem. It communicates that death is the ultimate goal of a person and it brings the final relief from all the worldly sufferings. Such a message reflects the speaker's firm belief in the preaching of the ancient scriptures and religious texts. The poem encourages one to stand firm in one's sufferings and boldly face the challenges imposed by the ripening age.

2.2.1.6. 'Outlet and its Check'

In the poem 'Outlet and its Check' Maha Nand Sharma paints a true picture of the contemporary society and its manner. The poem depicts a comparison between the past, when humans had a tight check over their deeds and used to conquer their sinful desires with their firm faith in the Divine, i.e. their spiritual bend of mind; and the present, where corruption and hypocrisy is rampant all over and the moral degradation of people has resulted to lawlessness and other evil practices all around. Finally, a panacea for all the existing problems is suggested in the last two lines of the poem: 'The more we progress, more we backward move. / Uplift the soul this crisis to remove.'²⁵ The penultimate line communicates that the blind race to progress has ultimately led us to further deterioration in all aspects. The line appears to be an equational phrase in which an inverse relationship is depicted between the materialistic progress and spiritual progress, thereby, suggesting that the greater is the materialistic progress, the greater is the spiritual deterioration. In terms of the rhetorical devices, the statement reads to be an antithesis, which strikes hard on the thought-process of the reader. Again in the last line of the poem, one finds the poet playing with the syntactic structure of the language by starting it as well as culminating the sentence in an imperative verb, i.e. 'Uplift' and 'remove' respectively. The use of the two imperative verbs in the last line of the poem hints at the urgency of the desired action on the part of the reader to bring resurrection and initiate a wave of reformation in the contemporary society.

The poem, thus, suggests that it is high time to check the rampant corruption and moral degradation all over, and it is only possible by bringing a change in one's own attitude, by reforming one's own ways, by inculcating virtues to replace the dominant vicious forces in one, and by adhering to religious and spiritual practices. Such a suggested panacea reflects wit and intellect of the poet, as it encapsulates a profound thought.

2.2.1.7. 'The Telling Silence'

The next poem selected for an analysis to exemplify Maha Nand Sharma's wit is 'The Telling Silence'

Though speaking not one word, the girl
 With radiant smiles beamed.
 Her playful eyes, her lustrous curls
 With a thrilling life teemed.

She, with her telling silence, was
 A poem of loveliness.
 To me, her silence lent, alas !,
 A poet's restlessness. ²⁶

The speaker describes the alluring beauty of a girl to whom he seems to have got infatuated. The first line of the poem begins with a conjunction followed by a verb, and the subject comes at the last, which manifests that the speaker's intention is to highlight the appearance and action of the girl in the first stanza. The use of a conjunction in the beginning of the poem helps one to construct a presupposition suggesting that the speaker has been in touch with the girl before the juncture from where the narration starts, and it marks the beginning *in-medias-res*. The second line maintains the continuity of thought and starts with a preposition (With) followed by an adjective (radiant), and then, the noun (smiles) compliments the thought laid down in the previous line, and finally, ends with a verb (beamed); thus, highlighting the action again. The third line adds to the description of the appearance and gestures of the girl, and again, the fourth line displays the same syntactic structure and semantic function as that of the second. Thus, one observes strong cohesion

and coherence in the stanza. The repetition of the /s/ and /l/ sounds, seven times each, lends musicality to the stanza. The use of the phrases *ōradiant smilesö*, *ōplayful eyesö*, *ōlustrous curlsö*, and *ōthrilling lifeö*, where the first word acts as a modifier to the latter, infuses a lot of energy and vitality into the poem. It elevates the subject of talk, i.e. a simple girl, to an extraordinary plane, and thus, implicitly justifies the poetic treatment that she receives.

The use of the expression *ōtelling silenceö* in the first line of the second stanza adds to the witty effect of the poem, as one finds *ōtellingö* to be a modifier to *ōsilenceö*. In the second line, the use of the phrase *ōpoem of lovelinessö*, where the word *ōpoemö* is a metaphor for the girl, communicates that the girl is a rare combination of all good elements, features, and qualities. The final line of the poem depicts the strong influence or effect of the girl over the speaker, and the expression *ōpoet's restlessnessö* is pregnant with wit, as the sphere of restlessness is tried to be quantified and also qualified by developing an association with the distinctive attributes of that of a poet. It also communicates that the girl acts as a stimulus to initiate the process of poetic creation in the given context. It suggests that whenever a poet is enthralled by his/her observation, he/she starts feeling desperate and restless to communicate it to the entire world, and here lies the roots of the poetic process. The third line of the second stanza ends with an exclamation, i.e. *ōalas !ö*, which implicitly suggests that the appearance and gestures of the girl has had a great enduring impact on the speaker and she has casted a spell of her beauty and charm over him. The speaker finds her to be a personification of beauty, feminine charm, and life-force simultaneously. The note of exclamation infuses emotion and lends a personal touch to the whole description. It communicates that the speaker is spell bound by her beauty to such an extent that he is unable to forget her, and developed a romantic longing for her. The second stanza as well displays the continuous repetition of the /s/ and /l/ sounds, twelve and eight times respectively, adding to the musicality of the poem.

Another remarkable feature of the poem is the recurrent use of adjectives as modifiers to entities such as *ōsmilesö*, *ōeyesö*, *ōcurlsö*, *ōlifeö*, and *ōsilenceö*, which makes the description sound poetic, i.e. distinct from normal communication. The poem strictly adheres to the end

rhyme scheme of *a b a b* imparting it a smooth rhythm and wit is exposed in the very tone of the rhyme pattern. The use of highly suggestive phrases such as *õtelling silenceö*, *õa poem of lovelinessö*, and *õa poetø restlessnessö* displays wit. The expressions used to celebrate the beauty and feminine charm of the girl, such as *õradiant smilesö*, *õplayful eyesö*, *õlustrous curlsö*, and *õtelling silenceö* evoke *shringara rasa* in the poem as it communicates the beauty of the girl, and generates a feeling of admiration in the heart of the reader.

The poem successfully displays the role of wit in communicating intense emotion, feeling, and personal experience by overcoming the barriers laid down by the language in normal communication. It is, undoubtedly, a very challenging task to exactly describe the charming features of a girl and the effect that it has over an observer, but Maha Nand Sharma comes over this inadequacy with the help of wit. The poem displays unique permutation and combination of lexical items in phrases such as *õradiant smiles beamedö* and *õthrilling life teemedö* to produce a scintillating effect.

2.2.1.8. ‘A Lament’

The next poem in the chain of the study is ‘A Lament’ that presents the speaker in a state of introspection or self-analysis. The speaker confesses that he was lured by the materialistic brilliance of the world and spent the whole of his life running after pomp and power. He was deviated from the path of righteousness and could not lead his life in adherence to the spiritual code of conduct. He realizes his fault and laments over the fact that he has wasted his life. He seems to be greatly disheartened by the present state of things, and finds the conditions deteriorating day by day, with no hopes of revival:

The ever-tightening worldly chains
Of gold have wearied me.
The lure of pomp and powø and gains
Has turned me off from Thee.

Alas ! my youthful energyø gone
Consumed in hot pursuits
Of watøry bubbles vain, oøerblown
By lust which mortals dupes.

The darkness which, I thought , would fast
 And smoothly melt away,
 Surrounds me, layer on layer, and blasts
 My earlier hopes so gay. ²⁷

The first two lines of the poem straight away depict the uneasy situation of the speaker with the help of the words such as *õchainsö* and *õweariedö*. The word *õchainsö* is used in a connotative sense and leads to a multiplicity of meaning as it may be decoded to suggest *˚affairs˚*, *˚duties˚*, *˚responsibilities˚*, *˚relationships˚*, *˚pursuits˚* etc. at the pragmatic level. The word *õgoldö* in the second line metaphorically suggests all certain materialistic pursuits which the speaker has undertaken. The implicative of the semantics of the first stanza pragmatically communicates that one is so blinded by one's materialistic cravings that one gets away from God by completely losing the spiritual track.

The second stanza of the poem builds over the thought expressed in the previous one by further describing the things that has led to the widening of the gulf between the speaker and the God. The use of the word *õhotö* in its connotative sense to communicate all the toiling efforts that the speaker has made running behind the materialistic things is charged with wit. Again, the expression *õwatøry bubblesö* stands as a metaphor for all certain things that are perishable in nature, and it also generates an image which is very suggestive in the context of the poem. It suggests that all the materialistic things, power, and position earned in this world are transitory in nature as the bubbles formed on the surface of water. It may also be decoded as a symbol referring to human beings of the contemporary age who have a blown-up appearance but no worth inside them, i.e. empty within.

Thus, in terms of pragmatic communication, the poem communicates that humans waste their entire life running after certain perishable things, and they discover the deceptiveness of these materialistic pursuits or worldly yearnings when it's too late. Although they are aware of this truth, they are unable of restrain themselves and this leads them to all the trauma and pain. The profound thought expressed in the poem touches each and every reader as it portrays in a very subtle manner what one experiences at some or the other juncture of

one's life. The inherent wit in the poem leaves the reader brooding over the thought. The poem displays an end rhyme scheme of *a b a b* imparting it a smooth rhythm.

2.2.1.9. 'To My Old Self'

Like the poem 'A Lament' yet again, one finds Maha Nand Sharma turning inward to profess his philosophical viewpoints in the poem 'To My Old Self'. The poem is yet another example that bespeaks the mastery of Maha Nand Sharma in composing sonnets and that too, strictly adhering to the Shakespearian form. The poem shapes up in the style of a soliloquy where the old speaker is in conversation with his inner self, and he questions himself that how long would he continue to endure all the pains of old age, i.e. how long would he live? :

O actor old ! when wilt thou leave this stage ?
Is not your cup of sufferings full by now ?
How long you'll fondly write this final page
Of hopes deluding, full of griefs enough ?

How long will you with nothing left but woes
And a skeleton slender with no strength to work,
Neglected, weary, plough your lonely furrows
Which give the questioning youth a shocking jerk ?

O ! fret not, fool, your griefs and hopes which prod
Are variegated hues of a fine mosaic
Which has been woven since your birth by God,
Our Lord, to lend some charm to life prosaic.

Revive your senses dead, your strength, your spirits
And play your part as long as God permits. ²⁸

The poem reflects the unhappy state of the speaker. It depicts that the speaker is frustrated of his sufferings and griefs, loneliness, and the neglect of the people around him, especially the young generation. The poem displays the bifurcation of the speaker into two selves: the outer self-posing a set of questions on the futility of existence when one has grown too old; and the inner self, encouraging one to continue in this world as long as God has ordained.

The poem begins with the address of the speaker to his old self, which stands as a representative of all old people, and enquires that when would it leave the world. The speaker addresses himself as an *õactorö*, and the modifier *õoldö* succeeds the noun (actor), which displays an unconventional use of the language as per the syntactic rules. The word *õstageö* is used as a metaphor for the world and it complements the use of the word *õactorö* previously. The first line communicates that the world is similar to a stage where all humans are actors, and they merely play their part. The use of the expression *õfinal pageö* as a metaphor for the old age, and the use of the verb *õwriteö* in its connotative sense to suggest the act of endurance in the context of the poem reflects wit. Thus, the first stanza displays the metaphorical use of the language in constructing the discourse of wit that portrays the helplessness of the old age, thereby, generating a feeling of depression and self-pity in the reader, which is termed as *vibhatsa rasa* in Indian poetics.

In the first line of the second stanza, the use of the discourse marker *õbutö* to conjoin *õwoesö* denotes that it is the only thing left with the old man, and it generates *karuna rasa* (compassion, pity) in the poem. In the following line, the use of the phrase *õskeleton slenderö* for the old man's physique, where *õskeletonö* stands as a metonymy for the body of the poet and *õslenderö* as its modifier, sparkles with wit. Here, one again witnesses the modifier following the entity to be modified, displaying deviant use of the language. The mention of the word *õskeletonö* itself would have been enough to cater the need of the pragmatics of the poem, and the additional use of the modifier *õslenderö*, which appears to be the second superlative in the context, imparts a hyperbolic shade to the communicated message. The use of such a language intensifies the effect of the communicated message. The phrase *õplough your lonely furrowsö*, in the third line, conveys multitude of meanings: In one context, it may be decoded to suggest that the old man continues to till his land, i.e. life, but all in vain as he has no seeds to sow; and in the other context, the word *õfurrowsö* may be interpreted in a connotative sense to refer to the deep wrinkles on his face, and the word *õlonelyö* modifying it to suggest that it is the only expression left over his face. Whatever be the context in which the mentioned phrase is decoded, the final line of the stanza equally complements both the meanings. Again, the expression *õquestioning youthö*

communicates that the young generation has developed an attitude of posing doubts and questions to each and every activity around them, or in other words, the youth shroud themselves in a state of uncertainty all the time. The use of the word *õshockingö* as a modifier to *õjerkö* creates a hyperbolic expression, and it depicts the reaction of the youth to the ways of the old people, i.e. the senior generation.

The inner self of the persona steps into the role of the speaker from the third stanza onwards. The *-newø*speaker (inner self) makes an attempt to soothe the *-previousø*speaker (outer self) by curbing its anxiety. The use of the image of a fine mosaic to represent or depict human life is witty. It communicates that griefs and hopes are the two different colours of the *õmosaicö* named *õlifeö*, and one needs to have both in order to enjoy life in its complete sense. Thus, the third stanza relieves the reader from the stressful thoughts of the previous two stanzas.

2.2.1.10. ‘Dilemma of Age and its Resolution’

In another poem, *-Dilemma of Age and its Resolutionø* the speaker unveils his pitiable condition that has resulted because of his growing age. Yet, the speaker yearns to fulfill certain desires which mount upon him to make him restless. In the second stanza, the speaker reveals:

In what a strange dilemma I am caged !
 Conflicting wishes stage their dance in meô
 The wish to stay, to go. Lifeø final page
 Provides a dismal reading now, then glee. ²⁹

In the second line of the stanza, *õwishesö* are personified by attributing to them the human ability to dance, and the *õdanceö* in the context of the poem is an outcome of the conflicting nature of these wishes. The semantics of the second line create a pun on the word *õdanceö*, as it is not used in its positive denotative sense but in a negative connotative sense to suggest quick change in oneø position or stance. It communicates that a human, the speaker being a representative, is unable to keep a check or control over oneself because of the emergence of

conflicting wishes in one. In the succeeding line, the use of the phrase 'Life's final page', where 'final page' stands as a metaphor for the old age, reflects wit.

In the third stanza of the poem, the use of the phrase 'pandulum's swing', where 'pandulum' functions as a symbol to refer to time, connotes the passing of time:

The pandulum's swing from pleasure's end to grief's
And *vice versa* rings a message wise:
'Detach yourself from both and seek relief
In calm Divine before your spirit flies.'³⁰

The first two lines pragmatically communicates that one experiences joys and sorrows one after the other, as one's life swings between the two poles all the time. The last two lines of the stanza communicate a very enlightening message which intends to elevate one spiritually. It advocates one to distance oneself from both, the pleasures and the griefs of life, and find solace in the Divine. The message inherently communicates that one should reduce one's involvement in the worldly, or materialistic, pursuits and devote more time to inculcate spiritual values.

2.2.1.11. 'Youth, Age and Senses'

Yet in another poem, 'Youth, Age and Senses' Maha Nand Sharma depicts the adverse effects of growing age, especially on the five senses of human beings. The reader is astonished to come across the phrase 'I heard with eyes' in the very first line of the poem:

There was a time I heard with eyes, the hundreds
Through printed word. Now blinded by my age,
I hear through eyes of others merely shreds
Of works of others. Life's covered cage!³¹

The ability to hear with eyes seems to be impossible, and therefore, the phrase sounds as a paradox, but the second line clarifies the thought expressed to communicate that the speaker had the ability to listen to hundreds of voices through the medium of their writings. Here, one finds the witty use of enjambment at the end of the first line to create the desired effect

of surprise. The first two lines may also be decoded to communicate that the speaker was a very good reader who could enliven his reading experience to feel that the voices in the text were in direct conversation with him. Again, in the last line of stanza, the use of the expression *õcovered cageö* as a metaphor to describe life is pregnant with meaning. The word *õcoveredö* qualifies the noun *õcageö* to suggest severe restriction, forced confinement, or strict limitations. The term *õcageö* is generally used in the context of animals, and therefore, the use of the term in association with humans itself is surprising and presents a gloomy or sad picture. The modifier *õcoveredö* intensifies the gloomy effect and communicates that human life (in the present times) is even worse than that of the animals that are kept in cages. The image of the *õcovered cageö* projects that human life is a terrible confinement that one cannot escape nor even have a view of what one is about to confront. The use of an exclamation mark at the end of the phrase makes it more appealing and personal, thus, arousing feelings of pity, compassion, and sadness, which is termed as *karuna rasa* in Indian poetics.

2.2.1.12. *A Rudraksha Rosary*

The long epic narratives of Maha Nand Sharma are equally rich in wit, and it is with the help of wit that Sharma re-narrates the mythological and legendary tales in a style that caters the interest of the modern readers. For instance, in *A Rudraksha Rosary*, which presents the exploits of Lord Shiva, Sharma describes the combat between Brahma and Vishnu in the modern political perspective where each politician strives to ascend to power and in the strife, one even compromises with one's highly acclaimed stature, ethical and moral standards, and political dignity at times. By depicting the mythological action, i.e. ancient myths, in the light of modern political and social scenario, the poet bridges the gap between the past and the present on the one hand, and transports the contemporary reader to the time of action, i.e. past, or drags the ancient characters to the present times, on the other hand. The reader is easily able to decode or interpret the narration with one's present understanding, and thus, the method adopted by the poet facilitates the process of poetic communication and makes it more successful. For example: the description of the combat

between Brahma and Vishnu, in Book I of the narrative, is presented in such a way that it appears to be any ordinary quarrel between two humans in the present age, but the poet very subtly injects a distinguishing remark to depict that the characters are not ordinary or common humans, but gods:

O Lord ! the streams of blood are gushing forth
 From Brahma's and from Vishnu's sacred frames
 As they are locked in combat for the rule
 Of all the worlds. Their thrusts and counter-thrusts
 Which threaten death each moment, keep our hearts
 In trembling suspense! . ³²

The expressions 'sacred frames' and 'threaten death' distinguish the two characters engaged in the brawl. The use of the word 'sacred' as a modifier for the bodies of the two characters, and the super-human ability to threaten death bespeaks the mighty stature of the two characters, i.e. Brahma and Vishnu. The depicted brawl unveils the politics of the gods, and thus, suggests that the dirty game of politics exists everywhere and at all levels. It communicates that even gods are reduced to the position of commoners, if inflicted by the urge of power and self. Here, the reader would definitely make use of one's political understanding and experiences of the contemporary age to understand the narrated incident, and this marks the success of the poetic communication.

Maha Nand Sharma displays the use of modern technical terminology to describe the supernatural powers of Lord Mahesh, and this helps in bridging the gap between the past (time of action of the narrated event) and the present (the time of reading), thus, making the narrative suitable for the contemporary reader:

As piercing as the beams of X-ray light
 Which pierce through the skin and flesh and blood,
 The eyes of Lord Mahesh through heavy cloud
 Witnessed the bloody fight of beings divine. ³³

Here, the narrator makes an attempt to describe the potential or power of the Lord's third eye, which is also known as the eye of knowledge, in terms of the technical terminology of

the contemporary age. The use of such a language contemporarizes the history or myth, and hence, makes it not only easily interpretable or understandable, but also interesting to the readers of the present generation.

The narrator comments on the two gods (Brahma and Vishnu) who are blinded by their lust for pelf and power: *ōWell may a creature pick and hold his shade / But dullards never gain the wisdomø light.ö*³⁴ The narrator makes use of an exaggerated language to convey that such people who do not wish to gain knowledge cannot be helped by any means or method. In order to communicate the impossibility of the task, the narrator claims that even if a creature would ever be able to hold one's shade, which is quite impossible, the dullards would not gain wisdom. Such a thought confirms that people blinded by their extra-ambitious urge and desires lose the track of wisdom completely, and it is impossible for anyone to put them back on the right track.

Maha Nand Sharma also generates wit through his subtle use of the language to coin striking expressions and phrases such as *ōluckless searchö*³⁵, *ōglaring lieö*³⁶, *ōThe rolling eyesö*³⁷, *ōwidthless lineö*³⁸, *ōeye above the eyesö*³⁹, *ōwas night by day, and double night by nightö*⁴⁰, *ōof earthly atmosphereö*⁴¹, *ōill got gainsö*⁴², *ōAs red as redness on the sinking sunö*⁴³, *ōHe hung-- his groundward head between the armsö*⁴⁴, *ōheart melting sightö*⁴⁵, *ōThe winds were roaring loud or murmuring softö*⁴⁶, *ōneck-encircling armsö*⁴⁷, etc.

One also finds a number of epigrammatic sentences, scattered throughout his long narratives, projecting a profound thought. For instance: *ōWhen anger rules the beings, their reason quitsö*⁴⁸; *ōí wisdomø light so easily lost / In darkening, damping, cooling shades of powøö*⁴⁹; *ōFor wisdom gained by words alone is not / so lasting as the one by sufferings gainedö*⁵⁰; *ōí wisdomø loss precedes the fall of menö*⁵¹; *ōEndurance is the badge of womenø tribe / And wisdomø calm and quiet preserve is hersö*⁵²; *ōThe shadow looks like substance in this worldö*⁵³; *ōThe dawn has tinge of darkness left in itö*⁵⁴; *ōThe wisdom and the strength are poles apart / In life wherein the youth has strength, not wisdom, / while age has wisdom, not the strengthö*⁵⁵; *ōA womanø virtue is her brightest jewelö*⁵⁶; *ōThe worldly rise is oft the spiritual fallö*⁵⁷; *ōThe loneliness and grief are mutual feeders. / The more we*

are alone, the more our grief. / The more our grief, the more we are alone. / Our joys, not griefs, are shared by the world⁵⁸; ðThe lifeø a vale of misery never-ending !ö⁵⁹; ðNo man foreknows the irony gods would playö⁶⁰; ðThe sober age corrects impulsive youthö⁶¹, etc. One also finds such epigrammatic expressions spread in the short poems of Maha Nand Sharma as well. Such expressions and phrases evoke wit and provide enough food for the thought of the reader. These expressions are found to be very suggestive in the context of the poem, i.e. at the pragmatic level, as well as, when interpreted independently, i.e. at the semantic level. They communicate the poetø philosophy and worldview. One discovers that the recurrent use of such epigrammatic expressions provide an intellectual tinge to the whole narrative, and reflect wit.

Wit also oozes out of the rich imagery that Maha Nand Sharma constructs with the elements of imagination and exaggeration. For instance, the poet projects a beautiful rich image of the heaven in *A Rudraksha Roasary*:

The plains of heavø he reached where flowed the streams
Of milk, meandering through the lush green grass
And dotted on their banks by groves and bowers
In which the brightly smiling women wound
Around rotating spindles cotton threads
And close to which in sprawling pastures, swains
Were grazing cows with white-as-velvet flanks.
Like brothers, sisters moved the swains and damesø
No grade, no king, no classesí .⁶²

The vivid description of heaven, although imaginary, helps the reader to visualize an abstract concept, i.e. heaven, in a concrete form. The narrator evokes wit in the description of imaginative places and the poetic style is so exalted that it brings to life even a non-living entity. For example, the description of the *peepal* leaf: ðA veinous heart-shaped pointed crusty leafö⁶³

Wit is also reflected in Sharmaø similes and metaphors that draw a comparison between two very unlikely objects and such examples are scattered throughout his poetry. For example, ðí the crest- fallø vishnuø heart, / In anxious suspense for his flightø result, /

Was trembling like an autumn leaf in the wind.ö ⁶⁴ Here, the comparison drawn between a heart and an autumn leaf is astonishing. Again, the narrator describes the endlessness of Lord Shiva with the help of a simile: öÍ Iøm as endless as the goals in lifeö ⁶⁵ The comparison drawn between the endlessness of Lord Mahesh and the unending chain of human goals, desires, and wishes also communicates that a human must desist from one's materialistic pursuits as it is of unending nature. Later, the narrator comments on the rate of population growth in the contemporary times with the help of a simile: öwhere men will breed and multiply like rabbitsö ⁶⁶ The comparison drawn between humans and rabbits on the basis of their multiplication rates leads to a sarcastic effect as well.

2.2.1.13. *A Spiritual Warrior*

Maha Nand Sharma uses the language in a very subtle, suggestive, and efficient manner to communicate feelings, emotions, and personal experiences, which are hard to be communicated through the verbal medium. One comes across a splendid display of wit in the very beginning of *A Spiritual Warrior*, where the narrator presents the conversation between Shantanu and Ganga:

I have been hunting all day long, my love,
And killing lions, tigers, elephants huge,
But now as I return at eve in woods
Of Hastinapur, I find in you a girl,
A huntress weaker far than me and the beasts,
Who hunts me down with weapons soft but sharp. ⁶⁷

The speaker in the quoted extract is the King of Hastinapur, Shantanu, who has proved his strength and valour by killing a number of ferocious animals, on his hunting expedition. He falls prey to the beauty of Ganga and could not resist the temptation of proposing her. The two different uses of the word öhuntö in the same dialogue displays wit. Firstly, the word öhuntö is used denotatively to depict the act of killing wild animals; whereas in the last line, it is used connotatively to suggest infatuation of falling prey to one's beauty. Again, the use of the word öweaponsö as a metaphor to refer to the good looks of the girl seems to be witty.

The use of the modifier *õsoftö* to qualify *õweaponsö* sounds paradoxical, but is appropriate in the context of the poem as it refers to feminine charm and beauty, and one cannot miss the wit glaring through the phrase *õweapons soft but sharp.ö* The extract communicates that even mighty people, especially men, fall prey to the feminine beauty and one's sexual urges, and cannot escape its clutches with the aid of one's strength, courage, or valour.

Again, in the very beginning of the Book IV, *‘An Interlude of Nightö of A Spiritual Warrior*, the narrator displays wit in the depiction of the scene:

While basking in sunshine of worldly day
But thick-enveloped by the spæritual night,
The lustful monarch Shantanu went a ó hunting
And tired of hunting, thirsty, í ⁶⁸

The phrase *õsunshine of worldly dayö* suggests good happy days with all materialistic comforts, and the word *õbaskingö* connotes enjoying in the context of the poem, as Shantanu is the King of a vast empire and has all pleasures of the world at his command. In the next line, the narrator depicts the loss of spiritual values by the term *õspiritual nightö*, and the compound word *õthick-envelopedö* suggests *‘the abundanceö*. The use of two contrasting entities, i.e. *õdayö* and *õnightö*, to depict the way of living over a particular period of time catches the attention of the readers.

Maha Nand Sharma also displays wit in the use of rhetorical devices such as oxymoron and hyperbole. Shantanu reveals his condition as a helpless creature when inflicted by love: *õMy pleasant pain that's painful pleasure too.ö* ⁶⁹ Here, the use of two oxymoron in the same sentence, i.e. *õpleasant painö* and *õpainful pleasureö*, to connote the experience of love communicates that love is a feeling that always has a tinge of pain admixed with it. Next, the poet displays the extreme use of hyperbole, when Shantanu is in conversation with Satyavati: *õO fairy's child ! A rare combination / Of loveliest traits of all the loveliest beings ! / O brightest, tenderest, sweetest heavenly nymph !ö* ⁷⁰ Shantanu addresses Satyavati as a *õfairy's childö*, but in reality she is *õA mere fisherman's daughterö* ⁷¹, and the fact is already disclosed to the readers in a few lines previous to this address. Shantanu celebrates her beauty as *õthe loveliest traits of all the loveliest beingsö*, which clearly sounds hyperbolic.

To add to it, the use of four superlative modifiers consecutively in the next line intensifies the effect of the hyperbole. Such a technique is intentionally used by the poet to communicate that Shantanu is blinded by his sexual urges once again. It reminds the reader of the 'Shantanu-Ganga' episode mentioned in the first book of the narrative. The scene and situation is exactly reproduced to develop the analogy. It also reminds the reader that the first time when Shantanu was overcome by his sexual urges, it led him to a disastrous situation; but yet, he learns no lesson from it. Thus, the depicted scene and situation evokes irony to communicate that a person blinded by one's dominant urges forgets all the past experiences and becomes a slave to one's senses. Similarly, one finds a number of other instances where the poet uses wit to communicate the idea/thought that is not expressed, or mentioned, directly in the text of the poem, i.e. the poem communicates the 'unsaid'

2.2.1.14. Factors leading to the evolution of wit

Thus, one finds that the poetry of Maha Nand Sharma displays wit mainly in the juxtaposition of dissimilar ideas for some lively purpose, either assimilation or contrast, generally of both; depiction of a profound thought; depiction of the incongruities of life; making an insightful remark; word play; displaying the attitude and mood via the tone and rhythm of the poem; and communicating his personal philosophy or worldview, which has a didactic purpose, through his poems. The poetic style that evokes wit in Maha Nand Sharma affirms that juxtapositions of culturally ordered dissimilarities ought to cause a moment of amusement, which may be termed as the aesthetic pleasure. His poems project wit not only as a verbal joust but as a strategy for interpreting the complexities of the world. Through the medium of wit, he integrates thinking about the seriousness, the worries, and challenges of life. It can be inferred on the basis of the above discussion that Maha Nand Sharma displays the evolution of wit more through his ideas, and for the purpose, moulds the language accordingly; and thus, sometimes overcomes the conventional, staid, and simplistic definition of wit.

2.2.2. Wit in the Poetry of I.K. Sharma

An analysis of a few poems by I.K. Sharma would bring to the forefront the different ways in which the two poets construct the discourse of wit for poetic communication. I.K. Sharma displays wit more at the syntactic level of the language than at the depiction of incongruous situations and complexities of life.

2.2.2.1. 'To the Clouds of the New Millennium'

The first poem selected for an analysis to study the evolution, function, and effect of wit in the poetry of I.K. Sharma is 'To the Clouds of the New Millennium'

It's painful to be a watcher
of the sky, where
clouds, in fragments, hang in space
and shed not a drop ..
Like a close-fisted bania
you sit in a locked room
outside of which
liveried doormen do not open the gate.

We love you
when you flex your muscles,
when you are rough, violent, maniac,
when you batter our back and skull,
when you break glass windows of public buildings,
when people under umbrella slip in the street,
and taxis stop midway on highways.

Put on your black dress of yore, dear.
Do not don, sorry to say,
these Gandhian clothes.
Calmness is no virtue of a cloud.
Reinvent your old role
and break through this network of silence.⁷²

The lexical elements of the poem are woven together in such a manner that they generate a number of contexts in the mind of the reader. The first striking and amusing thing about the poem is that the speaker is watching the ðskyø but talking about the ðearthø. In the first reading, the poem seems to be a product of the speaker's personal experiences as a fellow belonging to the deserts. The speaker talks himself out, addressing the cloud, that he is very unhappy with the state of things as they do not shower any rain in the deserts. The speaker has been witnessing this biasness of the clouds for a long time. He pleads the clouds to change their stand towards the deserts, and bless its inhabitants. The comparison drawn between the clouds that linger over the fate of deserts and a ðclose-fisted baniaö is startling. The phrase ðclose-fistedö is used as a modifier to ðbaniaö, which denotes a petty businessman, and it communicates the baniasø attitude towards their money, i.e. money-mindedness. The comparison also communicates that ðrainø is as precious as ðmoneyø for the people dwelling in deserts. The use of a simile to draw the comparison between an inanimate entity, i.e. cloud, and a living being, i.e. bania, and sorting out a common characteristic between them, i.e. their unwillingness to spend any amount (wealth) for the welfare of others, depicts wit, and further, leads to the evolution of humour or satire.

If the same stanza, i.e. first stanza, is viewed in a political context, one explores that the speaker uses ðcloudsö as a metaphor for the contemporary politicians who do not fix themselves, or are loyal, to any political party or coalition, and keep their options open to join any other group that would meet their personal interests and base motifs. In the given context, the word ðfragmentsö communicate that such leaders like to preserve their independent stature so that they would be able to reap maximum profits out of their support to any political party in the need of its seeking majority. The comparison between a politician and ða close-fisted baniaö, who sits in a ðlocked roomö guarded by ðliveried doormenö, communicates the shrewdness of the political leader as they hesitate to open the mouth of the state treasury for the welfare of the common man, and even if they do so, they gulp the most of the said amount. The phrase ðliveried doormenö also hints at the aristocratic lifestyle of these politicians, and it may also be decoded as the metaphor for the police security personnel who guard these politicians.

The use of anaphora to describe the admirable qualities of a cloud in the second stanza of the poem relates the speaker's urgency and yearning to see the clouds in their boisterous downpour. The repetition of the word "when" five times implicitly suggests that the speaker is desperate to know when the clouds would gift him rain? In the political context, the phrase "flex your muscles" suggests initiating an action, especially a protest; the words "rough", "violent", and "maniac" hints at the agitated state of the politician, when he decides to fight for the good of the people; the "batter our back and skull" refers to the long encouraging speeches that the leader bestows on the common masses; the expression "break glass windows of public buildings" points to the protest of the political leader and his supporters against the governing authorities; the penultimate line suggests that the protest has taken the shape of a mass revolt; and the last line depicts the life coming to a standstill because of the mass protests. The communicative force of the stanza, in short, rests on a comparison between the movement of the clouds and the agitation on earth, or in other words, the politics of agitation. The poet's wit lies in his comparison between white (politician) and black (clouds), just as there seems an analogy between the agitators on the earth and the thunderous movement of clouds in the sky. Thus, one finds that the syntactic and semantics of the poem equally facilitate the production of two different discourses via the pragmatic communication.

In the last stanza of the poem, the speaker commands the clouds to change their role, and step into the role of a benefactor. The use of the imperative verbs such as "Put", "Do not", and "Reinvent", and that too, at the very beginning the lines display the tone of instruction. The drastic change in the attitude of the speaker towards the clouds is quite surprising and unexpected. There is a pun over the word "don" as it suggests two different meanings at a time: first, put clothing on one's body, i.e. the cloud is asked to change its colour; and the second, the cloud is instructed to shed off its arrogant, bossy, and tyrannical attitude. It displays both the grammatical forms of the word "don", i.e. as a "verb" as well as a "noun" in operation simultaneously. The expression "Gandhian clothes" is used as a symbol to refer to white colour, which represents "peace" and "non-violence", "humility" and "patience". It also reminds an image of a political leader who attires himself in *khadi*. The stanza

implicitly communicates that in this new millennium, the black, i.e. -cloudø is good and productive as rain brings all positive things; whereas the white, i.e. politician, is neither productive nor reliable. In the given case, the implied metaphors add to the pragmatics of wit. The discourse suggests that in the present age, the politics of concealment needs to be changed with practice of revelation even if it is -blackø because -blackø is clearer than the -whiteø which actually, conceals -blacknessø

One finds sparkling wit in the expression 'network of silence' as it is deeply suggestive and refers to a dull, monotonous, exhausted, and boring life. The last three lines of the poem communicate that a cloud's role is to thunder and shower, instead of observing a *maun vrata*, i.e. desist from speaking. In the political context, the term 'black dress' refers to a protest, and the second and third line suggest that a politician should not guard himself from making a protest against the evil on account of adhering to Gandhian principles. The word 'calmness' hints at the inactiveness of such politicians. The last two lines communicate that nothing good can be attained through silence (in the present age), and therefore, one needs to voice one's opinion against the odds to initiate a wave of resurrection and welfare. Looking from a different perspective, one may also decode the expression 'network of silence' in the light of the 21st century meaning of -networkingø i.e. making worldwide contacts through a number of social networking sites and reach any corner of the world via internet. Thus, in the said context, the expression suggests that in the present millennium, one can also communicate through one's silence (literally), i.e. by just being able to access the internet, and thus, create a -networkø of people who remain silent but wish to expose the prevailing idiosyncrasies of the world. The idea seems to be -futuristicø (as the poem was composed years ago). It implicitly communicates that -fragmentsø have to be united through -networkingø in order to attain something of the kind people witnessed in Lybia, Syria, and other Arab countries (now popularly known as Arab Spring).

I.K. Sharma is, thus, brief and beautiful. He displays a very suggestive and economical use of the language, and creates his effect mostly by communicating what is not said, that is -unsaidø in the text of the poem. The reader reaches the -unsaidø via the -saidø i.e. text, and

is surprised to find that what is not said, but implicitly communicated, is much more than the said, and here lies the poetic genius of I.K. Sharma.

2.2.2.2. 'Termites'

Here is yet another poem, titled 'Termites' which turns out to be an image:

They are real:
 question the validity of trees
 on earth, Grinding teeth,
 they make home in the bloodstream
 of a sprawling Paradise.
 Vandals, underneath, have no ears,
 answer no query, hear no screams or prayers.
 They block every passage
 so no one steals a look
 at their iron appetite.
 And they briskly work,
 trust no one
 till they have brought the lush vision
 of a dream
 down to amorphous dust. 73

The poem begins with a sense of mystery or suspense. It is composed in an allegorical style, where each word has a denotative or explicit meaning generating a different context, as well as a connotative or implicit meaning constructing an entirely different discourse. The title is integral to the poem, as without the title, the poem may be difficult to comprehend. The pronoun 'They' relates to somebody or something familiar to the larger audience or common people. Here, if 'They' relates to 'termites' then the entire poem becomes an image which may have a deeper significance, too. 'Termites' may stand for a politician who has 'iron appetite' for bringing down all dreams and visions to 'amorphous dust.'

The lexical items, syntactic structure, and semantics of the poem lead to a number of possible contexts such as Nature, Political, Spiritual, and Social. When the poem is interpreted on the basis of the denotative meaning of the words, one finds the poem built around 'termites' a small insect which is capable of bringing down even huge trees by

eating its pulp in a slow, but steady manner. Thus, the poem depicts a scene from the Nature, where the small termites are in fight against the õsprawling Paradiseö, i.e. huge green trees, and in order to keep themselves alive they endanger the life of lush green trees. Therefore, in the context derived on the basis of the denotative use of the language, the word õbloodstreamö refers to the interior of the trunks and stems, and õsprawling Paradiseö stands as a metaphor for the tree. The termites are referred as õVandalsö, and that too, with õno earsö as they do not respond to anything happening outside their place of inhabitation, and such a suggestion displays wit. The termites are cunning enough not to harm the outer surface of the tree, so that no one gets a clue of their presence, but damages the whole tree by eating into its pulp, and finally, leading to its downfall. The use of the phrase õsteals a lookö for anyone observing their presence and the expression õiron appetiteö for the heavy food that they consume are witty. The phrase õbriskly workö depicts the slow but steady damage made to the tree, and the word õamorphousö in the role of a modifier to õdustö communicates the complete ruin of the tree.

When the same poem is decoded in the political context, one finds that the term õtermitesö and õVandalsö refers to the political leaders and bureaucrats who are eating into the fabric of the country and robbing it of all its resources. Here, the word õtreeö stands as a symbol/metaphor/ image of the country, and the phrase õquestion the validity of treesö suggests that corruption has grown at such an alarming rate that it threatens the existence of the country, i.e. the whole country is pushed into slaveryø pit.

It may also be understood that the termites are the foreign agents or forces that are eating into the sap of the country. The phrase õGrinding teethö imparts a harshness to the tone of the poem as the morphemes -grindø and -teethø are stressed or accented and the sounds /g/, /d/, and /t/ are rising and harsh in the given case. Here, the word õbloodstreamö refers to the different authoritative institutions or channels that monitor the governance of the country. The phrase õblock every passageö suggests the concealed manner in which the people involved in the governance handle their wicked, i.e. corrupt, affairs in the name of governmentø top secrets. The expression õiron appetiteö refers to the insatiable lust for

wealth and power that the men in authority secrete. One finds that all the syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic features of the poem compliment the generated discourse, the one in the political context, very aptly.

The same poem may also be interpreted in the spiritual context, where the word *termites* and *Vandals* connotes *human vices*, the *trees* stands as an organic symbol for *humans*, the term *Grinding teeth* refers to the *vicious forces* of a vice; the word *bloodstream* suggests that the entire human body is under its influence; *Paradise* stands as a metaphor for human body as it is believed that each body possesses a soul, which is a constituent of the Divine or Almighty; *steals a look* suggests that the vices are not visible or apparent to one's common observation; *iron appetite* suggests the consumption of human body, i.e. how the ruling vices eat away one's body, and thus, endanger one's existence; and finally *amorphous dust* hints that each living body turns to a heap of dust one day. Therefore, in the spiritual context, the poem communicates that the vices are just like termites which bring the downfall of any human being, irrespective of one's status or stature. The implicit message communicated through the poem is that one should always be on guard against vices and should never allow it to creep into one's blood. Here, one finds a good co-relation between the syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic features of the poem (as in the previous two interpretations), each complementing the other, intensifying the witty effect of the generated discourse.

Similarly, the poem may also be decoded in the religious context, where the term *termites* or *Vandals* refers to the strict and orthodox practices of any religious sermon that imposes a lot of restrictions on the normal lifestyle of people. Although such dogmatic religious practices incur a lot of pain on its practitioners, people blindly follow them for the sake of traditional and cultural values. Such a blind faith ultimately leads to the downfall of the one who exercises it. In the religious context, the term *Grinding teeth* connotes rigorous impositions laid down by the orthodox practices; the phrases *have no ears*, *answer no query*, and *hear no screams or prayers* communicate the illogicality of such beliefs and practices; the expression *iron appetite* refers to the high, demanding, and soaring

restrictions imposed on the ardent practitioners of such orthodox religious practices; ðlush visionö suggests the high expectation of attaining divinity; and finally, ðamorphous dustö hints at the futility of all such practices. Thus, the poem communicates that orthodox religious behavior does no good in the process of spiritual upliftment, and instead leads to one's downfall as it eats away the religious tolerance of a human.

The poem has the potential of constructing a number of other discourses as well, varying with the context, and the syntactic structure, semantics, and pragmatic characteristics complement each other very well to support the different discourses. The poet's wit lies in the poem's multiplicity of meaning, even as it adheres to no particular established poetic form and is composed in free verse. The repetition of the accented vowel sounds throughout the text imparts it a smooth rhythm, and thus, facilitates the flow of thoughts without any abrupt interruption.

2.2.2.3. 'The Brawl'

The next poem selected to exemplify the use of wit in I.K. Sharma's poetry is 'The Brawl'. The poem is composed around a very common observation in the contemporary society of finding two young ruffians (ðgods of the streetsö) out to settle score or assert their ðphonyö superiority. The speaker narrates his personal observation of the brawl:

To conduct the dialogue of new energy
the untamable, clad in tough trousers,
and thick-soled shoes, come swaying
from a dark alley to the open ring. ⁷⁴

The phrase ðdialogue of new energyö implicitly refers to a brawl in the very first line of the poem. It may also be decoded to suggest that the ðnew energyö, i.e. a metaphor to depict the young generation, is violent in nature, and therefore, brawl is the language of their communication. The last three lines of the stanza complement the implied meaning as it provides a description of the youth of the present times. The use of the expressions ðuntamableö, ðnew energyö, and ðswaying / from a dark alley to the open ringö seems to recall the WWF wrestlers on TV.

The second stanza of the poem reflects the keen observation of the speaker:

They stare at each other,
spit twice and touch their amulet.
With a slow build-up of rage
they fold up their sleeves.
Every syllable of their body ignites. ⁷⁵

The speaker depicts each and every movement, gesture, and activity of the two persons involved in the physical combat. The detailed and minute description grasps the attention of the readers and one is able to visualize the whole act. The use of the word 'syllable' as a metaphor for the different parts of the human body, and the word 'ignites' to suggest being 'charged up' i.e. ready for action, sounds witty.

The third stanza depicts the beginning of the verbal combat that fuels the brawl:

Ballasts of fire stream out
of their mouth over and over
and rise to rival's mother, father
and sister and to the lowest depths
of the fig-leaf region.
With it their teeth grow stronger
and nails longer. ⁷⁶

The stanza communicates that both the persons start abusing each other in a very obscene language, and they drag all the family members into the dispute via their abuses. The use of the most obscene, uncultured, and uncouth language through the abusive mode communicates the futility of the brawl. The use of the phrase 'Ballasts of fire' as a metaphor to refer to their angry outburst reflects wit. The third, fourth, and fifth lines of the stanza provide an implicit description of the abuses uttered, something like one encounters in the fiction of Mulk Raj Anand. The poet's communicative efficacy lies in constructing the abusive discourse without the use of any obscene word. The mention of 'fig-leaf region' shows the narrator's (or poet's) distance from the brawl being depicted. It just creates an ironic effect in the context where private parts of the human body or sexual organs form the core of the abusive language. The poet seems to imitate the ancient painters and sculptors who used a fig-leaf in their paintings and engravings to hide the private parts of the men and

women they created. The poet uses it as a lexical element in the metaphorical sense to refer to the private parts, and such a technique is indeed witty. The effect is further accentuated by the use of the expressions such as *ōlowest depthsö*; *ōsoft spotsö* and *ōramsö* in the following stanza. The phrases *ōteeth grow strongerö* and *ōnails longerö*, where the two words *ōteethö* and *ōnailsö* (which are metaphorically loaded with sex or sexual power) are used as weapons to communicate the growing destructive or damage causing abilities of the two rivals. Apparently, their brawl is physical which, in terms of the discourse of abuse, turns into a sexual brawl. The use of an end-rhyme in the last two lines, i.e. *stronger/longer*, hints at the rhythm of the brawl building up to the sexual and /or lower depths of their fight.

The next stanza presents the first stage of the physical combat, i.e. the beginning of the jostle:

They move closer
 munching words like nuts.
 Their eyes blaze like glowing coals.
 For a while they wait,
 look for soft spots
 beneath the clothes.
 Like rams
 they stretch their neck
 leap to their feet,
 a n d
 bump into each other. ⁷⁷

The use of the simile *ōmunching words like nutsö* in the second line produces a realistic presentation of the faces of the two opponents. Again, in the next line, the speaker uses another simile, *ōeyes blaze like glowing coalö*, to depict the ferocious looking eyes of the two persons. The expression *ōglowing coalsö* is used to refer to the colour of the eyes, which has turned red, because of anger (or passion). By the end of the stanza, the verbal combat turns physical. The use of another simile, *ōLike ramsö* and the phrase *ōbump into each otherö* complements the sexual undertone in the brawl. The gestures of the two persons, such as *ōstretch their neckö* and *ōleap to their feetö* enlivens the comparison drawn between them and rams. The inherent wit in the stanza leads to a satiric effect. The lines describing the

instance just before the physical entanglement display an internal rhyme, i.e. stretch/neck and leap/feet, which shows the building up of the rhythmic rage (as if in a sex-act?).

The fifth stanza presents the physical struggle in a detailed manner:

Their teeth come closer
to the rival's nose
by turn.
With each emphatic stroke
of their untrembling fists
words from the land of ass and swine,
which are uncapturable in this poor language,
play upon their lips. ⁷⁸

The stanza depicts the aggressive attitude of the two opponents and the speaker labels the language used by them as "words from the land of ass and swine", suggestive thereby, of all sorts of abuse in their combinations as used by the two persons. The wit lies in what is sarcastically suggested and what appears as parallel to sexual combat. The use of coming closer of the "rival's nose", "each emphatic stroke", "untrembling fists", "play upon their lips" are all sexually loaded expressions. The speaker, maintaining his distance from the two persons' obscenity, admits his inability to communicate any better than what is possible in his normal language.

The narrator continues in the same vein, merging verbal abuses with physical rise and fall "by turn" and grabbing "each other's clotted hair" to wind up:

They switch their gears fast,
they spin around,
and give frightening twists to arms.
They poke, they punch,
they duck, they dodge,
they whack, they bang.
Each one sings the top song of his hook. ⁷⁹

The use of verbs such as "spin", "twists", "poke", "punch", "duck", "dodge", "whack", and "bang" in quick succession imparts movement and momentum to the poem and its action, both physical and implied. Again, in the last line, "Each one sings the top song of his hook",

the phrase ōtop song of his hookō suggests the best knock, or blow of the participants. Yet, the ōnuts do not lower their tail.ö⁸⁰ Thus, the inherent wit in the lines leads to a humorous effect.

The last two stanzas, each of three lines, are remarkable for the hyperbolic and metaphorical use of the language:

The bout gives to many, creeps,
yet no one dares to appease
the gods of the street

Ill-luck !
A tiger-van with open mouth swoops
and usurps the dazzling end. ⁸¹

The use of the phrase ōgods of the streetö to identify the two persons involved in the brawl is quite sarcastic as they ōcome swaying from a dark alleyö in the opening stanza. The poet's communicative success lies in their portrayal with objectivity and ending up in a tiger-van (police-van). They thought themselves to be lucky, but ironically, the brawl is their ill-luck. The phrase ōA tiger-van with open mouthö connotes a police van in the given context, and the description sparkles with wit. It also generates an image of a van used by the municipality to arrest street dogs, and it evokes satire and humour as such a van is used in the poem to get hold of two humans, who are fighting like dogs, in the street. The depiction of such a suggestive image which leads to two pragmatic meanings evolving from the same context reflects wit.

Again, the use of the word ōdazzlingö as a modifier to qualify the -endö of the fight suggests that the narrator was enjoying the brawl and wanted to see someone win instead of an abrupt end. It implicitly communicates that people enjoy watching someone fight, and therefore, they do not attempt to interfere and put an end to it. Thus, the poem seems to be a two-fold satire on the attitude of contemporary people, who fight over petty issues and enjoy seeing someone fight. The poem, therefore, is a good recipe of all the favourite ingredients, i.e. wit,

satire, irony, humour, and sarcasm, of I.K. Sharma. It displays wit in the selection of the lexical items, use of metaphors, narrative technique, and suggestive imagery.

In the poems like 'To the Clouds of the New Millennium', 'The Termites' and 'The Brawl' the poet might appear negative but I.K. Sharma is essentially a poet of hope and trust. 'After the Storm' for example, holds a promise for the future: 'the gale at dawn *will* resurrect / and transform us all.'⁸² In another poem, 'Sow the Seed Deep' he reasserts the awareness of his negative observations, howsoever, witty, ironical or humourous, as positive: 'a green room for the second coming, / cosmos rises from a cell in no flash / breathe in deep before break into being.'⁸³

2.2.2.4. 'Waiting for Rain'

As in 'After the Storm' the narrator in 'Waiting for Rain' personifies rain by attributing to it the human ability of 'teasing' and 'coming'

Am born in the land where the sand shifts
to make way for more to come,
on the day water wound through the sky
to tease and not to come.

'Come, come, come down rushing forth
you thick, black, and dark !
come and flog us without ruth
to make us swollen bark.'

Every soul became a divine theme,
every hut an incensed temple,
the heartless above looked frozen-faced
to say a No, through ample.

My mother quivered into a song :
'come for my son, if not me,
show to the world I gave birth
a babe - the shadiest tree.'⁸⁴

The narrative of poverty and empathy is real and communicates the pathos through the song of the mother for her child, who too, understands the value of rain in the life of people in desert:

Close to us *Maa*, thunder is heard,
lightning winks at sky,
clouds slide, scatter their pearls,
what sins ours to be dry ?ø

No sin, my child, gods play like this,
keep up your tiny heart,
some day he will leap from above
to help our broken cart.ø ⁸⁵

The mother is seen encouraging her child to hope in a condition of hopelessness, and live. The innocent child has never experienced rain but he must not lose hope and faith which sustain life, whatever its tests. The use of the expression 'tiny heart' depicts the restless spirit and dying hopes of the child (and by extension, hopelessness of every poor person), also serves as a metonymy for the child. In the last line, the phrase 'broken cart' is pregnant with meaning as it acts as a metonymy for the misfortune and ill-luck of the inhabitants of the deserts; and it's an image of the broken or static life of the desert dwellers. The use of the word 'broken' as a modifier to 'cart', which suggests movement, hints at the standstill lifestyle of the people.

2.2.2.5. 'The Foundling'

Wit is displayed in yet another poem 'The Foundling' in terms of postal imagery, where a new born baby left in a park is referred to as an 'unsigned letter':

Like an unsigned letter
it was seen fresh in a park
wrapped in neat human syllables
free from edges and fray
at the end of the day.

It bore no stamp of man

who posted it in the dark,
 nor of the box that bore it
 privately for long;
 it was a pure text without a trace
 of date, time, and place. ⁸⁶

Here, one finds again the title being integral to the poem, and the comparison completely novel. Such a treatment of the subject of abandonment of a new born baby is not only unique but also not found elsewhere in English Literature. The foundling is "Like an unsigned letter, no owner, no father or mother, no one to refer to. The letter (or the message), like the abandoned new born, is fresh, and urgent but where to deliver or redirect it? It is a living letter, wrapped in neat human syllables, but deliberately left uncared in a park (and not in a roadside dustbin for the fear of being attacked by a stray dog, or any other animal). The wit is communicated in the second stanza where the narrator carefully points to the *issue* of the delivery of the letter because it bears no stamp, either of the origin, or of the end. It is posted in the dark, with no trace of the sender or the recipient. And, it cannot go to the *Dead-Letter* office, either. The one-day old infant is "a pure text, but ironically, without a trace / of date, time, and place."

The use of the lexical items such as "stamp," "posted," "box," "text," "date," "time," and "place" provides a pragmatic context to the poem which seeks to alert the readers about a complex socio-sexual problem featured in newspapers frequently. Poetically, "stamp" serves as a metaphor for the clue or identification of the person who left the infant in the park; "posted" suggests "dropped," "box" stands for the mother's "womb," "pure text" refers to the "innocent infant" and "date," "time," and "place" suggest the whereabouts of the child's parentage. The use of the term "box" for the mother's womb is not only witty, but also pungent, and evokes a sarcastic effect. The use of the adverb "privately" in the context of the poem hints at the pregnancy of the woman as a result of an illicit relationship with her partner. Thus, the adverb "privately" adds to the criticism of contemporary men and women.

The discourse of the poem reveals a detached but serious concern about the degrading moral and ethical values of the younger generation, in that the love affair and "privately" bearing

the child is *long* but discarding it immediately after the birth is *short*. What seems to hurt the narrator is lack of appreciation of the ‘purity’ of the sex-act which culminated into the birth of a baby, but ironically, is viewed as sinful or impure.

2.2.2.6. ‘Crossing the Bar’

The next poem selected for an analysis is ‘Crossing the Bar’ which communicates the cultural beliefs and superstitious mindset of Indian people, reflecting the social awareness of the poet:

All the roses of her dream drop their face
as she views a cat straying in the lane,
she warms her feet and strives to sprint
but the infernal being beats her in the race.

Jibbed, she muses over her fate,
her kids and also her mate,
caught in the maze of the cat and the vicious bar,
her mouth for a while stands ajar;
no aid the lady finds in the barren street,
turns at last to the missile of her feet;
she pulls out the mighty, the right one,
and hurls it across the catty line.

Truly, first goes the footwear
blowing out the ill,
back stays the wearer
away from the kill.

Magically thus the lady slays the curse of cat
without raising a hammer, a sword, a cricket bat.

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The poem is built around a strong superstitious belief that whenever a cat crosses across a path, something wrong is in the offing, and it is mostly presumed that the person who witnesses it and yet crosses over the vicious bar is bound to meet an accident. The poem displays a very subtle use of the language to create certain metaphors, which sparkle with wit, and lead to the evolution of humour. The poet displays his mastery in the use of the

metaphorical language in the very first line of the poem, where the phrase *õroses* of her dreamö refers to the hopes, aspirations, and wishes of the lady addressed in the poem. The phrase *õwarms her feetö* suggests that the lady prepares herself for a quick run in order to pass through the street before the cat could run across her path. The term *õinfernal beingö* is used to refer to the cat as it is associated, especially in the context of the poem, with evil or something ominous.

The second stanza of the poem depicts the mental trauma of the lady as she finds the cat crossing across the path she has to tread upon. The word *õJibbedö* hints at the dilemma, the woman is caught in. The lady is in two minds that whether she should cross over the vicious line, i.e. the imaginary line drawn over by the cat, to reach her kids and mate, or should she wait for someone to nullify the ominous effect of the cat by crossing over the vicious bar first. The phrases *õmaze of the catö*, *õvicious barö*, and *õstands ajarö* communicate the superstitious attitude of the lady and depict her traumatic situation in a witty and implied manner. The expression *õbarren streetö* communicates that the lady is unable to find any passer-by, who could tread over the vicious bar first, in the street to nullify the curse imposed by the cat, and thus, rescue her. Finally, an idea strikes her, and she resorts to her right leg footwear and hurls it across the ominous bar. The use of the phrase *õmissile of her feetö* for the footwear, and the word *õmightyö* to refer to the right one of the pair, reflects wit and impregnates the narration with humour.

The use of the word *õTrulyö* in the first line of the third stanza in an ironical sense to mock at the baseless superstitious beliefs is witty. The lady believes that by hurling her footwear across the *õcatty lineö*, she has nullified the ominous effect of the cat, and ironically, the belief is further strengthened by the speaker's use of the words *õTrulyö* and *õblowing outö*. The use of shorter lines, and that too, with decreasing number of syllable counts, i.e. 7, 5, 5, and 4 respectively, and the end rhyme scheme of *a b a b* (footwear / wearer and ill / kill) imparts a soft and mild tone to the stanza, thus, bringing out the inherent irony in an efficient manner. Such a syntactic technique to achieve the desired pragmatic affect reflects wit.

The last stanza of the poem is of only two lines and concludes the narration. The use of the word 'Magically' intensifies the ironical effect and adds strength to the inherent wit in the poem. The use of the phrase 'slays the curse' is witty and humorous as the speaker mentions the act of slaying, i.e. physically murdering, for the imaginary curse (abstract entity) thrust by the cat. The last line of the poem adds to its wit and humour as the speaker very subtly communicates that the lady did not take the aid of any weapon to slay her enemy, and thus, she is a practitioner of non-violence. The use of the tools such as 'hammer', which comes from the mechanical terminology, and 'cricket bat', which belongs to sports terminology, seems incongruous in the context of the poem, but is used efficiently in a congruous manner to meet the requirement of pragmatic communication.

2.2.2.7. 'Khajuraho'

The poem 'Khajuraho' celebrates the engravings (sculptures) and paintings in the temples of Khajuraho that display different postures of love-making. Khajuraho is a merging point of Shiva and Vishnu, and Jain and Buddhist images as well. It is a saga of composite spiritual practices celebrating creation and resolution, *prakriti* and *purush*, pleasures of physical union and pleasures of divinity in creation, and different philosophies during the medieval period in India. I.K. Sharma, as O.P. Bhatnagar notes, 'not only exhibits his art at handling a variety of situations, moods and stances, but also his ability to assimilate Christian and Hindu symbols into a poetic whole with success' in his Khajuraho.⁸⁸ The poem begins on a tense note and prefaces a sort of warning to the reader which turns out to be ironic:

Here are no sermons in stone.
The figures act: mate and mate and mate
in eighty-four ways and will do so
beyond 1984.
All commandments die here.⁸⁹

Khajuraho is popular for its temples, and also some other sites that stand as a centre for religious activities and discourses. The speaker warns one about the uniqueness of the temple where such a (religious/saintly) discourse is visually arousing one to intense

sexuality as the figures òmate and mate and mate / in eighty-four waysö which falsify George Orwell's intellectual premonition about the end of the world, or at least the end of all pleasures and happiness. If one comes to Khajuraho, one would be convinced that life has always been worth living and enjoying with full of love and faith. The perception about life, or of its uncertain future, changes when one visits this unique temple of free love and erotic messages. The mention of 1984 is witty in that it not only refers to George Orwell's celebrated novel of the same title, but also relates to òeighty-four waysö of mating, action of *raga-raaginis* or *yoginis*, and eighty-four lakhs *yonis* (creatures ?) that life moves in an eternal cycle. In fact, the narrator, seeing the tempting images and engravings on the wall, finds that òAll commandments die here.ö The word òcommandmentö for a Christian or Muslim, for example, is heavily loaded in that a temple is no place for temptation or sin. And, all that should remain concealed is open here in Khajuraho temple, tempting one to commit sin in the mind by seeing the images of mating all around.

The speaker celebrates love as holy and not òa brief candleö⁹⁰, and it is eternal. Time or age does not extinguish the fire nor can it òsqueeze us dry.ö⁹¹ The ÒTen Commandmentsö (Exodus 20: 1-17)⁹² appear irrelevant in the temple of love where òThe wholesome pairs, sovereign in their closets / rise from low caverns to lofty summits / from physics to metaphysics / through their speechless alchemy.ö⁹³ The flesh is divine and it dips into each other òto reach their Jerusalem.ö⁹⁴ The poem constructs a new discourse of liberation, a sham of salvation, celebrating the love of body for the love of spirit that dwells in it. The poem, thus, celebrates Òbodyö and Òsexö as not something to be looked down upon, but Òdivineö The phrase òlow caverns to lofty summitsö is suggestive of all the different kinds of postures that is possible in the act of sexual intercourse, thus, depicting a very arousing and sensuous imagery in simple words. Such an image grabs the attention of the reader by infusing *shringara rasa*, i.e. a feeling of love and beauty, into the poem. The phrase òphysics to metaphysicsö is pregnant with meaning and it suggests that the act of love-making elevates one to a higher plane, where the person forgets all worries and worldly affairs, and it may be spirituality, which is otherwise very hard to attain. Again, the phrase òspeechless alchemyö is deeply suggestive and unveils the hidden potentials of the act of

copulation. The use of such phrases makes the poem more suggestive and leaves a witty impact over the reader.

The speaker echoes Shakespeare in the very first line of the sixth stanza as he declares: "Love is not a brief candle." He encourages one to leave behind the "noisy beliefs"⁹⁵ and learn new lessons at Khajuraho, where the temples are "not just another temple."⁹⁶

2.2.2.8. 'Eklavya'

Professor Mukund R. Dave observes: "A wide variety of Prof. Sharma's themes encompass cultural expose, personal experiences, ruminations and social criticism distilled into a mood. He keeps shifting from people to places to things evoking a sense of movement across vast stretches of time from antiquity to the present day."⁹⁷ In the poem titled 'Eklavya', Sharma exploits the age-old mythical tale of Eklavya-Dronacharya to voice his protest against the discrimination and deprivation on caste basis. The poem explores Eklavya as the symbol of unbounded devotion, spirit, and sacrifices; whereas the sage (guru Dronacharya) stands as a symbol to represent the oppressive forces, either it be political parties, social group, government machinery, religious organization, or any other that promote class-distinction or caste-distinction. The poem exposes the horrible design of the so-called superior (ruling) class of learned, and attempts to vindicate the rights of the "savage" (lower/depressed) classes:

Yes, you were a savage but of a different
kind; you were like a poet, who
practised art in the backyard tent
to say; a folk poem is better than the high-born two.⁹⁸

Explicitly, the word "savage" refers to Eklavya, but implicitly it addresses all the under-privileged class (lower class as per social status); and the phrase "high-born two" refers to the elites (royal lineage) explicitly, whereas those belonging to high caste and community in the implicit context. The contrast between the two terms, "savage" and "high-born", depicts the two extreme ends of the social set-up. Eklavya could not get the guidance of a learned

guru, because he belonged to a lower caste; and hence, was prohibited from acquiring knowledge. But he gained expertise in archery seeking assistance from an image that spoke more than the original. The image referred to in the poem is that of the Dronacharya, and the phrase “spoke more than the original” very subtly suggests that Eklavya could learn the war-skills because of his dedication and commitment. The sage (guru Dronacharya) was surprised to find such a talent, and that too, hailing from a lower community. The lines, “Your revelation froze the royal nerves/ of learners; even the wisdom teeth of the sage”, communicates the sage’s surprise and leaves a witty impact over the reader. Dronacharya enquired about his (Eklavya’s) *guru* (mentor/teacher), and discovered his own image to be in the said role, he asked for his *gurudakshina* (payment in terms of accomplishing an assigned task). The sage wanted to ensure that Eklavya did not endanger the reputation of his royal disciples, or even stand a match to the caliber of the princes, and therefore, asked Eklavya to gift his thumb as his *dakshina*:

Shaken, the sage contracted your finger
with fractured ease, which you conscientiously
sliced off without grimace or murmur,
gave it dripping a scion by a *mali*.⁹⁹

The phrase “fractured ease” unveils the internal turmoil or conflict between the heart and mind of the sage. The use of the word “scion” to denote the sliced off finger suggests that the great Eklavya did not even think twice before his brave act of cutting down his finger (thumb) in order to please his *guru*, and he made it look as simple and easy an act as a gardener cuts down the unusual growth of a plant to give it a good shape. Surprisingly, here the act of slicing off “a scion” takes away all the unmatched expertise in archery and warfare techniques that Eklavya has acquired and developed.

The brave act of gifting his thumb to his *guru* marks the obedience, sublime, and reverend nature of Eklavya on the one hand; and the base, deceitful, and cunning attitude of the sage on the other:

True, you lost a part, but they lost
their epic limbs, their sunny soulyards;

together they could not bisect the high chest
that grew among woods and cattleyards. ¹⁰⁰

The expressions such as ðepic limbsö, ðsunny soulyardsö, and ðhigh chestö mark wit and intellect of the poet, as they are succinct expressions pregnant with suggestive meanings. The phrase ðepic limbsö connotatively refers to the grand stature, reputation, and honour of the celebrated legendary characters; ðsunny soulyardsö refers to their sense of justice, truth, and uprightness; and ðhigh chestö stands as a metonymy to refer to all brave people who come over all odds and stand victorious.

The poet creates a tense tone at the very beginning of the poem with the use of the word ðYesö, and it also reflects that the narrator has his sympathy for Eklavya. It also suggests that the narrator voices his consent for the likes of Eklavya. The poem epitomizes Eklavya and Dronacharya, and they become archetypal images to represent the poor and aristocratic class respectively. The myth of ðEklavya- Dronacharyaø steps over the mythical boundaries and can be experienced /observed in the present day society where the teachers take more interest in teaching the rich, than the poor students. Even the schools of reputation charges very high fees that do not allow the poor to take admission, and as a result, they are debarred from receiving quality education. The poem also communicates that how the ðupperø caste, with best of intentions at display, seeks to harm the ðlowerø but in the process, harm themselves. It also suggests in an implicit manner that one may learn any art or skill if one is seriously dedicated, and even gain a mastery in the same by repeated practice as in the case of Eklavya. Another remarkable element in the poem is the evolution of a tense note (tension?) at the very beginning of each stanza with the use of the words and expressions such as ðYesö, ðAware of rulesö, ðYour revelationö, ðThe test numbedö, ðShakenö, and ðTrueö; thereby displaying wit. To add further, the use of ðbutö as the discourse marker, thrice in the poem, to add to the tension or surprise is witty as well. The keywords or expressions reflecting wit are ðhigh-born twoö, ðwisdom teethö, ðsavageö, ðbifocal shockö, ðelegiac songö, ðcontractedö, ðfractured easeö, ðscionö, ðepic limbsö, ðsunny soulyardsö, and ðhigh chestö. The most distinguishing feature of the poem is that it strictly adheres to the end rhyme scheme of *a b a b*, which is unlike I. K. Sharma's other poems, as it reveals that

the poem is composed with quite a different intention, mood, and style. The adherence to end rhyme scheme facilitates the narration, and presents it without any deviation to complete it as a whole in one go.

2.2.2.9. 'Myth'

In the poem 'Myth' the speaker brings to the forefront the characteristics of 'myth' and describes that how a myth leads to a number of other myths. The poem implicitly presents the clash between 'Imagination' and 'Reality' where 'Imagination' is represented in the form of 'myth' and 'Reality' as 'history'. The poem communicates that the two, i.e. Myth/Imagination and History/Reality, should be mutually inclusive or exclusive. In the very first line of the poem, history is personified by being labelled as 'close-fisted' and 'deaf':

When close-fisted history turns deaf
 the arrears of events speak in dumb myths,
 no moss can ever climb up to their mouths
 nor any snake drive its venom into their heart.
 Can the forked intelligence of man
 ever unlock the wealth of their imaginative sky ?
 Can the panelled wisdom of his
 ever wade through their fathomless stream ?

Here, an ant grows into a tiger,
 new spots grow on its body every year,
 each year of seclusion breeds new children,
 their promiscuity further lead to another coil of beings,
 they then roam about on the highway of horns and wings,
 fastened, they again form a new network of meaning.¹⁰¹

The poem communicates that history has stopped taking into account the contemporary happenings. The phrases 'arrears of events' and 'dumb myths' in the second line of the first stanza evoke wit. The word 'arrears' is generally used in monetary terms to refer to an unpaid overdue debt, and therefore, the use of the word in association with 'events' seems unconventional; and it may be decoded to suggest the repercussions of a past event. The

phrase 'dumb myths' suggests that myths evolve out of an unjustified belief or practice as they do not manifest anything, but is an outcome of a certain incident which people consider to have happened in the long past. Thus, the first two lines of the poem describe the process of the evolution of myth. Again, the phrase 'forked intelligence of man', where 'forked' serves as a modifier to 'intelligence', is deeply suggestive and connotative. It suggests that a human mind is furcated or ramified over any issue, and it changes its stand over a thing from time to time. It may also be interpreted in another context that evolves from the word 'snake', whose tongue is forked in appearance, used in the previous line to connote 'venomous' and hence, the line communicates that human intelligence, where 'intelligence' stands as a metonymy for human brain, is full of venomous ideas and thoughts. The phrase 'panelled wisdom' complements the evolving discourse as the word 'panelled', which means 'conditioned' is used as a modifier to qualify 'wisdom', which means overall intellect, and that cannot be conditioned.

Wit oozes out again in the first line of the second stanza, where the speaker reveals that even a small ant gets the projection of a tiger in myths. The use of the verb 'grows' and the preposition 'into' between an ant and a tiger makes the statement a hyperbole, and thus, amuses or surprises the reader. Again, the phrase 'seclusion breeds new children' amuses the reader as breeding is not possible without a partner. Therefore, the use of the verb 'breeds' between 'seclusion' and 'children' makes it a paradox. It metaphorically suggests that a myth tends to produce more myths with the passage of time and it is an ever going process. Thus, it is quite evident that the title of the poem is the 'key' to the poem. The poem communicates that myth breeds myth with the passage of time to 'form' a new network of meaning, and the message is witty.

2.2.2.10. 'School Interval'

In the poem 'School Interval' one finds I.K. Sharma constructing a discourse of wit with the use of a number of 'action' verbs such as 'gamboling', 'chase', 'melee', 'clash', 'tangle', 'chipped', 'hurt' etc. The poem pictures the lunch-break or the games period of a school.

routine, and the selective use of the lexical items, especially the verbs, imparts a quick movement to the whole episode:

Gamboling they fly out
to the sun-lit yard
and chase the balls they play with.
In the melee their heads clash,
legs tangle,
an arm chipped here,
a cheek hurt there,
yet their song
doesn't seem to sagí .

Their sky breaks
as the bell tolls,
their minds turn and turn
to raids of the ball;
they, heads bent,
tumble into their pen
like lambs with a brand
on their skiní .¹⁰²

The poem most authentically describes or projects the attitude and activities of school children during the leisure time that they get amidst their highly packed academic routine. The poem begins with a present continuous form of verb, 'Gamboling', which shows an action in progress straightaway. Then, the uses of the metaphorical language 'fly out' to suggest 'coming out in an exuberant mood' displays wit. The use of a number of action verbs such as 'gamboling', 'chase', 'melee', 'clash', 'tangle', 'chipped', and 'hurt' demonstrates a happening action in the first stanza of the poem. The whole stanza is an encapsulated image of a group of school children playing in the school's playground during the recess or the games period/class. The very authentic and true depiction of the scene, and that too, in simple words catches the attention of the readers.

The first line of the second stanza displays the poet's attempt to translate a native idiomatic phrase *aasmaan toot para*, meaning 'burdened with innumerable difficulties at once'. The phrase 'Their sky breaks' is a word to word translation of the native expression, which

surprises the reader, and infuses humour into the narration. Similarly, the phrase 'their minds turn and turn' is another such attempt leading to the same effect. Again, the use of the word 'open' as a metaphor for the 'classroom' reflects wit. The use of the verb 'tumble' to refer to the movement of the school children is in sheer contrast with the word 'fly' for the same act in the first stanza, and it communicates the unwillingness of the children to move back to their classrooms (?). The last two lines of the poem display the use of simile and metaphor together in an ingenious manner to draw an analogy between the school children and lambs, which stand as a symbol of innocence, and the phrase 'brand / on their skin' suggesting school uniform sparkles with wit. The poem displays the communication of personal observation with the help of wit via the subtlety of the language use.

2.2.2.11. I.K. Sharma's Imagery: Source of Wit

One often finds I.K. Sharma's imagery to be a rich source of wit. For instance, in the poem 'This Winter' the poet describes the trees in the following words: 'The trees in the front lean / their heads like a schoolboy / who does not know the answer.'¹⁰³ The comparison drawn between the trees in a winter season and a school boy, who does not have an answer to a question from his teacher, the two very unlikely entities brought together creates a witty affect. In another poem titled 'Wedding' Sharma defines wedding with imagery:

A vanishing act
into another space,
from open fields
to settle into a small room
full of balloons of dreams.
Emotions hang on the nose,
cheeks murmur promises,
eyes leap to balconies.
A fresh aroma walks around her.¹⁰⁴

The image generates a new concept of marriage, which the reader must have never thought, and therefore, it strikes the reader hard. It communicates that marriage is an act after which the person is lost in an unknown territory which is transient in nature. The use of the phrase

øballoons of dreamsø intensifies the witty impact as it adds strength to the idea of transience of ÷oneselfø (no freedom of self) after marriage, i.e. the person is bound to lose one's previous identity, and from within evolves a ÷newø person. The concept of ÷transienceø is reinforced by the use of the words øballoonsø and ødreamsø as it acts as a symbol to communicate an existence of a short duration.

Similarly, the poem ÷To the Ganga Maiyaø celebrates river Ganga as a mother and reveals all such mythical beliefs that have been strongly associated with it. The speaker describes river Ganga in the following words:

Mother, your arms stretch up to the sea,
your head touches the Himalaya,
you, a bowl of divine milk tilted,
never to taper on the earth. ¹⁰⁵

In the process of introducing the river to the readers, the speaker presents a magnificent image, øa bowl of divine milk tiltedø, which sounds extra-terrestrial and hyperbolic. The speaker personifies the river Ganga and sings her praises throughout the poem. The sixth stanza of the poem describes the appearance of the Ganga in evening:

You shine best in the evening dress
when a disc of *diyās* float on your breast,
fires of heart and mind, though apart,
sing, then, of One in one ó fold art. ¹⁰⁶

The vivid description of the river creates an anthropomorphic image, which is very suggestive and communicative, and thus, reflects wit. In the final stanza of the poem, the speaker pleads Ganga to come to his rescue and cure him of all his pains and difficulties of life:

Slay, slay all torments of life
with your maternal knife;
you, Mother, the nurse of the living,
and cradle of the unreturning. ¹⁰⁷

Here, the use of the word *õslayö* in a connotative sense to suggest *æureø* and then, the phrase *õmaternal knifeö* to complement the word *õslayö* and unveil the riverø potential of bringing a resurrection leaves a witty impact. It also demonstrates the poetø ability to use the language in an unconventional manner to suit the communication need and purpose.

2.2.2.12. How the poems construct the discourse of wit

On the basis of the analysis of poems and study made in the previous sections, it may be concluded that the poems of I.K. Sharma sparkle with wit, and the style of constructing the discourse of wit varies from poem to poem. He generates wit more at the level of language, i.e. syntactic level (word-play), than in the depiction of ideas and thoughts. The selection and the placement of words construct the discourse of wit, and the wit further leads to the evolution of humour, irony, and satire; the context playing a very important role in the same. In some of the poems, the subtle use of the language, or the connotative language, makes the poem deceptive in nature by imparting it a multiplicity of meaning, each evolving from a different context.

2.3. A Comparison of the Two Poets

When a comparative study between Maha Nand Sharma and I.K. Sharma is made on the basis of the poetic discourse of wit in their poetry, one finds that both the poets overthrow the impositions laid down by the conventional descriptions of *æwitø*. A thorough examination and investigation of their poems confirm that wit can also be generated in poetry through other mediums as well, and not only via the subtleness of expressions. The poetic wit displayed by both of them achieves wonderful chroma, complexity, and sonority in the depiction of thoughts, tone, rhythm, setting, imagery, dialogue, and exposure of culture and society. The other noteworthy feature of their poetry is that each of the poem, no matter how obliquely, is successful in communicating an idea or argument. Maha Nand Sharma generates wit to communicate his thoughts and ideas, evoke images, inform and instruct, construct satire and sarcasm, and thus, develop the whole discourse of the poem. On the other hand, I.K. Sharma displays wit only as a carrier to transport amusement through the

evocation of humour, irony, and also satire sometimes. It is the exercise of the poetic wit that allows the poets to create the 'extraordinary' out of common observations and personal experiences. They use language in such a way that it overcomes the inadequacy of language to communicate their experiences, and even poignant feelings. Both the poets, at places, seem to be translating from their mother tongue, i.e. Hindi to English, in order to construct their poetic discourse. Both the poets infuse language with 'wit' to make it a perfect vehicle for poetic communication, thereby, gaining the attention of the readers by leaving a witty hangover.

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