CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Contemporary Indian English Poetry

1.1.1. An Introduction

Indian English Poetry has had a long journey from the days of Henry Derozio (1809-1831), generally regarded as the first Indian to write poetry in English, to the contemporary age of poets led by Nissim Ezekiel, A.K.Ramanujan, Kamala Das, Dom Moraes, Shiv K.Kumar, R.Parthasarathy, Jayant Mahapatra, Keki N.Daruwalla, and scores of others. In fact, their "collective contribution to evolution of Indian English tradition has been noteworthy, even if prone to canonization."

And, whatever may be the heights attained by the major Post-Independence poets, the fact cannot be ignored that their success is highly indebted to the efforts of Pre-Independence poets such as Henry Derozio, Kasiprasad Ghose, Toru Dutt, Michael Madhusudan Dutt, Sri Aurobindo, Rabindranath Tagore, Sorijini Naidu, Harindranath Chattopadhyaya, and K.D.Sethna some of whom continue to impress the creativity of several poets even today.

It is also a fact that most of the academic scholars and critics have been rather lukewarm about studying several less known and emerging poets such as I.K.Sharma, R.K.Singh, D.C.Chambial, Maha Nand Sharma, Krishna Srinivas, Niranjan Mohanty, P.Raja, R.Rabindranath Menon, Keshav Malik, Baldev Mirza, Mani Rao, Asha Viswas, Anuradha Nalapet, Kanwar Dinesh Singh, Tejinder Kaur, S.L.Peeran, Mamang Dai, and many others who have been writing and often self-publishing regularly and demonstrating their vitality,
variety and quality, richness of language, visions and impulses, depth of feeling, sense of self, and willingness to explore and reinvigorate traditional forms and styles.\(^2\)

The publishing industry has shown little interest in recent poets or poetry which, as they say, does not sell. The other media also neglect poetry and celebrate fiction, even if poetry contributes manifold to the growth of Indian Writing in English as a genre. The lack of interest, objectivity, and critical attitude among critics and academicians has led to the neglect of noteworthy poets and posed a serious threat to the development of the genre of Indian English Poetry as a whole. Tabish Khair rightly points out: "Perhaps one can argue that Indian Writing in English remains admirably unclannish. This is good. What is bad is that its lack of self-attention aborts the kind of independent critical discourse without which a sustained writing tradition cannot arise. Indian English writing needs to look at itself, if it wants to establish what is still lacking: a solid platform of evaluation that would be connected by bridges to the world, but will not come stamped Made in the West... but it appears that Indian writers in English find it difficult to recognise each other."\(^3\) The existing politics of rejection supported by governing elites-cum-cultural elites... media and academia\(^4\) that lack objective approach and pat the back of only such poets who win accolades abroad and dismiss hundreds of equally competent, capable, and deserving poets as inconsequential, merely for they have not won prestigious national awards and honours or have published only in small magazines and journals in the country.

Some of the less known/emerging Indian English poets such as Keshav Malik, O.P.Bhatnagar, R.K.Singh, Maha Nand Sharma, I.K.Sharma, P.Raja, R.R.Menon, P.C.K.Prem, R.Raja Rao, Sanjiv Bhatia, Ranjit Hoskote, S.L.Peeran, D.C.Chambial, P.K.Joy, T.Vasudeva Reddy, I.H.Rizvi and others possess a unique identification mark of their own and share a common platform for some aspect, or the other, of their poetry enriching the poetic corpus. After the death of Nissim Ezekiel, Kamala Das, and A.K.Ramanujan, poets like Ranjit Hoskote, Mani Rao, Mamang Dai, Keki N. Daruwalla, Tabish Khair, P.Raja Rao, and I.K.Sharma have emerged as torchbearers of New Indian English Poetry. They enrich the medium of poetic communication with their enhanced
poetic style. Poets such as I.K.Sharma and Maha Nand Sharma demonstrate a matured expression of wit, irony, satire, and humour along with other rhetorical devices. They are sincerely committed to social, political, and spiritual well-being just as they do not feel shy of poetizing stark realities and unvarnished truth in poetry. Their portrayal of the predicament of Indian life, the weaknesses in individual personality and society, and the medley of irony, satire, wit, humour, pathos, bathos, and poignancy adds to the making of new Indian English Poetry in the 21st century.

1.1.2. Contemporary Indian English Poetry

A brief discussion of some of the characteristics as noticed in some frontline poets should help follow trends of poetic communication in recent writing:

A.K.Ramanujan, whose Relations(1971), Second Sight(1986), The Black Hen(1995), and The Striders(1996) gained him recognition at home and abroad, shows his preoccupation with conflict between tradition and modernity, search for roots and identity, and East-West encounters. His poems display strong academic and intellectual forms which mark his intense craftsmanship. His favourite themes are: Indian men, women, and their manners; family and relatives; love, life, and death; and cultural conflicts.

R.Parthasarathy, who possesses an exquisite sense of art, is a conscientious poet known for economy of expression and concreteness of images. The search for roots in culture and languages is a prominent feature of his poetry.

Shiv K.Kumar, who has lately emerged as one of the most authentic voices in Indian English Poetry, is highly skilled with a keen sense of form and rhythm. He conveys meaning through a sophisticated use of fresh metaphors and new images. He asserts, "I seem to have an irrepressible urge to recapture, at least imaginatively, the prelapsarian simplicity and innocence." Though he writes on a variety of subjects such as poverty, unrequited love, and cultural interactions, he is more known as a poet of love and sex.
O.P. Bhatnagar, through his seven volumes of poetry, concentrates on a number of issues of the Indian society and politics. He tackles the political themes more firmly than any other Indian English poet, and he touches on almost all the aspects of socio-political scenario of the last quarters of the 20th century. He voices the anguish of the modern man coming to terms with the changing socio-cultural moralities.

R.K. Singh, with his fifteen collections, is an emerging voice. He uses the facts of sexuality to criticise the contemporary socio-political culture. As G.D. Barche points out, “The poet uses sex images as a means to self-oblivion and resurrection just as he highlights both the rejuvenating and destroying processes of sex.” The poet is remarkable for the compactness of his verses that blend personal and social criticism and reflect outer and inner restlessness, corruption, ignorance, misery, and identity.

P.Raja, another notable poet, shares with readers his subtle observations and evaluations, and thus, creates new experiences for them. Like R.K. Singh, he too exploits sex imagery very gently and deftly to develop his own spiritual ethos, social criticism, and poetic vision. He often sounds sarcastic, witty, ironical, and humorous, with thriftiness of expression.

S.L. Peeran, a late bloomer and bilingual like Shiv K. Kumar, has been very prolific, producing thirteen volumes of poetry in quick succession. He is reflective, idealistic, and rich with spiritual insights. His world view blends Sufistic and Islamic ethos and creates a new language a la Indian culture and tradition.

R.R. Menon, too, is a multilingual poet, writing in English, Malayalam and Kannada. As he shares his intellectual subtlety along with other contemporary poets, Menon prefers the long narrative pattern in his quest for the sublime. In his eleven books of poems, he writes about socio-cultural, political, and religious issues, without excluding the themes of love, corruption, and family relationship. The general tone of his poems is ironic and sarcastic.

I.H. Rizvi is another bilingual poet notable for his originality, thematic variety, and flawless craftsmanship. He is essentially romantic and his diction is marked by simplicity of
language and use of similes, metaphors, alliteration, clichés and trite phrases, archaic and elliptical phraseology.

Keshav Malik, ex-secretary of the Sahitya Akademi, has four collections of poems to his credit. His poetry is a fine fusion of sound and colour displaying his image-making capacity. His early poems move in the world of love and romance rather than the harsh realities. His later poems probe the mysteries of life and death.

P.C.K.Prem is yet another multilingual poet, who reveals life in all its facets. Within the narrative mode, he exposes the hypocrisy and degeneration prevalent in the personal, socio-cultural, political, moral, and religious spheres. The poet communicates his anger and protest using striking imagery, birth and death metaphors, myths, and philosophy.

D.C.Chambial, who has been editing Poetcrit for over 25 years, is notable for his concerns for Nature and society. In his six collections of poetry, he deals with poverty, corruption, selfishness, and exploitation at all levels with a touch of irony and satire. Chambial is a lyrical and accessible voice, trying to find a purpose or meaning in life.

T.Vasudeva Reddy’s poetry is remarkable for rural sensibility. He demonstrates his keen perception, psychological insight, socio-cultural consciousness, natural simplicity, and a spark of Indian sensibility. There is also an undercurrent of irony and satire. The poems are charged with intense humanism as the poet bemoans the loss of values, so as to dream for harmony and a better future.

Ranjit Hoskote records the train of responses evoked by a set of events and shows a difference from the general ironic views of life. Sometimes events such as massacre, death, and historical personages become a source of the poetic process besides mythologies and legends that are also exploited by the poet for his communication.

P.K.Joy’s poetry is a reflection on life and society with irony and humour at its core. As a social realist, Joy articulates humanitarian values, love, and compassion. Even as his vision
embodies hope and empathy he exposes hypocrisy in everyday life and various relationships.

While these few poets, along with others, provide a perspective to recent Indian English poetry, the contribution of some female poets cannot be ignored. In fact the works and merits of poets such as Kamala Das, Gauri Deshpande, Monika Varma, Mamta Kalia, Margaret Chatterjee, and Eunice de Souza have been well recognised, but poets such as Esha Joshi, Christine Krishnasami, Sudha R. Iyer, Mani Rao, Vijaya Goel, Anuradha Nalapet, C.D.Irene, Asha Viswas, Tejinder Kaur, Mamang Dai, Angelee Deodhar, and several others continue to remain unrecognised. Their feminine sensibility and quest for identity adds to the variety of Indian English Poetry today. They negotiate differences through introspection and adaptability with imaginative insight. They mirror the broad social conditions as well as their own personal state with perceptions that are different from those of the male poets. Yet, their communicative efficacy rises with irony and satire in the poetic discourse.

Thus, recent Indian English Poetry is deficient neither in terms of quality nor in quantity. Poets like O.P.Bhatnagar, Shiv K. Kumar, P.Raja, R.K.Singh, P.K.Joy, Nar Deo Sharma, Gopal Honnalgere, I.K.Sharma, and Maha Nand Sharma construct their discourse with irony, satire, wit and humour, and present the common sight in an uncommon way. Shiv K. Kumar uses irony for ridiculing the politicians who are unprincipled and time-servers, and mocks at the prevalent hypocrisy in the society. O.P.Bhatnagar is ironical when he highlights the degradation in the moral values. R.K.Singh, P.Raja, I.H.Rizvi, Nar Deo Sharma, and others display irony in their day to day experiences and surroundings, and come heavily on the worn out traditions and prevalent corruption, and degenerating political system and values.

1.1.3. Maha Nand Sharma and I.K. Sharma: An Introduction

Maha Nand Sharma’s brilliance lies in generating satire and sarcasm to underscore the widespread moral degradation of the contemporary people, their changing lifestyle, and
falling ethical values and principles. I.K. Sharma, too, uses irony in a very subtle manner to laugh at the way of the world, to mock the existing practices, and to ridicule the double-standards of the political parties and politicians. Both Maha Nand Sharma and I.K. Sharma seek to bring about a change, to reform and resurrect the society. They construct poetry of experimentation, innovation and craftsmanship. Through employment of modernist poetic techniques, concrete imagery, and subtle interplay of words, they present their vision of life and whatever they observe around them. They celebrate Indianness, spread Indian sensibility, and communicate Indian thoughts, feelings, and experiences. There is perhaps no match to them in Indian English poetry in displaying a discourse of wit, and constructing humour, irony, and satire.

1.1.3.1. Maha Nand Sharma: Social and Poetic Vision

Maha Nand Sharma writes poetry with a purpose, and that is to see a wave of resurrection and reformation in the degrading contemporary social scenario, at all level, through the medium of his poetry. He firmly believes that poetry has the inbuilt capacity of initiating a revolution. He uses poetry as a lever to pull out the modern society sunk deep in the mire of materialism. He is against the existentialist notion found in the present day poetry and is of the opinion that poetry should depict or suggest that what should ideally exist, along with the depiction of what exists in the present. He admits that poetry should move up with times, as it has a higher goal—the goal of elevating the people from what they are. He always strives to encourage the readers to mend their ways and live an ideal life. He also uses his poetry as a medium to celebrate the rich Indian culture and tradition. He talks very high of Indian values through his poems and presents the teachings of ancient scriptures. Therefore, his poetry is not only worthy of respect and admiration by the scholarly class, but also by other literary luminaries. His poems exhibit simplicity of truth. His poetry communicates his philosophical and spiritual leanings. His poems aim to teach the concepts of meditation, nishkaam karma, chastity, charity, diligence, patience, kindness, humility, religion, self-discipline, self-sublimation, and self-realization. His poetry not only presents the malady of
the present world, but also suggests panacea to all the existing evils of the society. Overall, his poetry presents a moral view of life.

1.1.3.2. I.K. Sharma: His Worldview

I.K. Sharma, generally, writes poetry with no pre-determined goal or objective. He keeps himself away from any doctrine guiding the writing of poetry. He just finds poetry a suitable medium to express himself: "Poetry is lib, the poet’s lib / from the spectre of the present / the weight of the past / the shadow of the future." He wants poetry to be a mirror to the society and not function merely as a moral preaching source. He writes poetry to entertain, amuse, inform, and unveil, but never with a hard core intention of passing moral instructions. He leaves it solely to his readers that how they receive his poetry. His poems examine reality on the margins of his personal observation and experience to develop a critique of the society. Amalgamating the concerns of poetry and the concerns of life, he composes poems with quite intensity which is his very strong point. His mind creatively processes the fractious emotions and tries to verbalise his tensions and anxieties in a form which is aesthetically satisfying. He is a poet who has been successful in collocating his emotions of all different sorts with the medium of expression to achieve a harmonious effect without contaminating or tainting the texture. His poetry seems to be a part of his quest for liberation from inhibitions that fetter him in the narrow world. He strenuously works out his poems to reflect on the disorder and disharmony, and in the process, prefers to unveil his social vision. One finds him structuring his sensitivities drawing on themes and images from everyday life and highlighting how the forces of anarchy have added to an all-round exploitation of common man. The poet’s inner tension, dissatisfaction, disappointment, bitterness, and frustration lead to continual deeper thinking, or may be brooding, and sometimes, mild protest, which all constitute both his critical opinion and perspective. He highlights what ails the contemporary social, political, and economic set-up. His poems also highlight the degenerating value system, contorted interpersonal relationships and decline in the norms of behaviour, beliefs, and moral uprightness. The poet stands for social stability, political honesty, and respect for the traditions that keep one’s moral and spiritual integrity
intact even as one seeks to be modern and liberated from inhibitions and age old shackles of the society. Overall, I.K. Sharma believes in exposing rather than reforming, although he expects a certain degree of reformation and resurrection as the impact of his poetry. He does not demonstrate any idealistic notion as such without any disrespect to the moral uprightness that Maha Nand Sharma holds.

1.2. Objective of the Study

The study aims at examining the *oeuvres* of Maha Nand Sharma (1924-2007) and Indra Kumar Sharma (1932- ) in terms of poetic communication, with specific attention to syntactic, semantic, pragmatic, and discourse features, as delineated in the beginning of the chapter. The two poets, who make their appeal via irony, humour, satire, sarcasm, and wit, have remained virtually unexplored despite their verbal and technical finesse. The critical approach, which is linguistic and literary at the same time, is also fresh for comparing the two poets' communicative brilliance, as most of the scholarly studies related to Indian English Poetry are concerned with themes, imagery, or stylistic features but none deal with *Poetry as Communication*. The wit, humour, irony, and satire noticed in the two poets have been treated as part of the discourse and the poets' communicative devices.

1.3. The Theoretical Approach

1.3.1. The Poetic Text

The process of communication that unfolds between a text and its reader is not the same as that involved in so-called *normal* communication. The reader's encounter with the literary text is an experience of something unique: the words and their sense; the sound or vision; the message of the medium via *style* which includes grammatical deviation, ambiguity, non-verbal or paralinguistic aspects, as also schemes and tropes such as use of pun, understatement, overstatement, paradox, antithesis, cacophony, metonymy, synecdoche, etc. that add to the dynamics of the text. The text's ungrammaticalities that lead to *ambiguity* invite the reader to explore what is hidden: the deictic features (that encode what is hidden)
and the hermeneutic features (that indicate the ways to know what is hidden) make one aware of the multiplicity of representations that the text may impose on the reader. The reader keeps on "pushing the meaning over to a text not present in the linearity". This operation, constantly reiterated, is what creates significance, which may be defined as "the reader's praxis of the transformation". From this standpoint, reading is more than a simple one-way operation of identifying signs put down on paper. According to Riffaterre, the text makes it apparent that "[it] is constructed in such a way that it can control its own decoding" and consequently, it acts on the reader as much as the reader acts on it. Literary communication, thus, remains a mutually inclusive traffic between the reader and the text. Therefore, a proper mediation is required between the two elements, i.e. the reader and the text, to make literary communication effective and easy-going. In other words, it helps for example, to understand and appreciate writings whose effect might otherwise have been unduly limited because of certain strangeness, most typically the strangeness of literary works produced during some earlier historical period, or within some alien cultural tradition. The pragmatic condition for literature as a genuine form of communication has been the main blindspot arising from literary theoreticians’ particular kinds of focus.

Recent studies have evolved literary writing and reading as uses of language which amount to interpersonal activity, and therefore, communication can be thought of as a semiotic process by which people try to negotiate a balanced view of an entity or subject. The literary communication theory, whose model is the focus of study in the thesis, may be said to be an offshoot of the language communication theory. Language communication is generally discussed in terms of certain binaries of sender/receiver, speaker/hearer, writer/reader, narrator/narrate, and so on. The sender, speaker, writer, or narrator is often prioritized while the receiver, hearer, reader, or narrator is associated with a kind of passivity. Indeed senders, speakers, writers, and narrators are the initiating participants in the act of communication and, therefore, their role can never be more decisive for how the communication actually turns out. It cannot be denied that the perlocutionary effect may bear little relation to the illocutionary act, i.e. the words can be taken in a very different way by one party from that intended by another. This underlying gulf between the illocutionary acts (author/poet) to the
perlocutionary effect (reader/listener), especially in literary texts, creates multiplicity of meanings for the same text. The presence of this multiplicity of meanings makes a literary text complex, and invites the different school of thoughts/criticisms to operate. Each approach provides a new perspective/insight into the text, and a reader may explore different meanings of the same text with different critical approaches. Therefore, there is the need for a certain critical school of thought or a new approach, which is an eclectic approach of all the available approaches, to decode the meaning encoded in the literary work. Such a new approach would, undoubtedly, enhance literary understanding.

1.3.2. Words: ‘Emotive’ and ‘Suggestive’

One important aspect of consideration whenever poetic communication is discussed is the semiotics of communication. The fact cannot be denied that society and culture play a great role in the process of communication. Poetry is generally composed of emotive language which is more massive and denser with association than the expository referential language. It contains emotion words, as well as the devices such as sound, rhythm, images, stanzaic pattern, topography, and so on. The emotive use is followed from the emotive meaning of words, even as the verbal medium of the poet shapes according to his/her own pace and will. The poet uses words in such a manner that the meaning remains fluid, and relatable for readers according to their own background, culture, or reference. He/She may be explicit and suggestive at the same time. In fact, the soul of the suggestive language is implicit, that is, the literal meaning is subordinated to the suggested meaning(s), as Anandavardhana points out. The emotive use of words co-exists with the symbolic use of words, even if the emphasis may be on the former. Christopher Norris too opines: Poetry is seen as an emotive use of language, as opposed to the cognitive or referential uses available to the sciences. With emotive language, the poet creates a verbal structure adequate to express the balanced poise of impulses that constitute his aesthetic experiences. In short, the poet is basically a communicator, and his/her major concern is to master the art of communicating with the reader, the equilibrium of impulses he/she experiences via the art of making-with-words, or poiesis.
The poet evokes a language that moves beyond the literal. As M.H. Abrams says: "A work of art is essentially the internal made external, resulting from a creative process operating under the impulse of feeling, and embodying the combined product of the poet’s perceptions, thoughts and feelings. The primary source and subject matter of a poem, therefore, are the attributes and actions of the poet’s own mind, or if aspects of the external world, then these only as they are converted from fact to poetry by the feelings and operations of the poet’s mind." We may, therefore, agree with the view that the referential meaning is contextually determined.

Further, poets use words in a very intriguing manner to interact with readers. They use varied figures of speech, rhetorical devices, and ungrammaticalities to make their communication richer and more appealing to the senses and intellect of the reader. They use uncommon words, or diction, to make a familiar world seem strange and new at the same time. They use different poetic forms with different language features, including rhyme, metre, and imagery, on the one hand and simile, metaphor, and personification, on the other. Their pervasive use of metaphor, which lies at the heart of poetic language and communication today, creates something fresh, and makes possible for us to have a deeper understanding and interpretation of life, nature, history, myth, or the present. With the aid of the metaphor, the poet illumines the interrelation of sense, tone, feelings, and intentions, extending over the boundaries between language and thought, semantics and pragmatics, and rational communication and casual association. As pragmatic theorists such as Searle, Martinich and others recognise, while speaking metaphorically, one exploits the conventional meaning of the words uttered in order to make the speech act rich with distinct propositional context.

### 1.3.3. Rhetorical Devices

Metaphor is not only a matter of style but it also creates realities that guide the future and reinforce interpretation. Lakoff and Johnson suggest that metaphors reflect schemas which are constructions of reality. One also observes the use of metonymy, which is a source of realism, exactness, and detail, helping one to conceptualize various experiences. Apart from
the use of powerful verbs, adjectives, inverted and unusual words or word-combinations, the poet’s language includes imagery, symbol, personification, hyperbole, etc. and other figures of speech, in keeping with his own bhaavana, bhaava, rasa, and the like. It is what Coleridge terms as emotive imagination or imaginative power, or in our context, the words’ unique (or oblique) use which lies at the core of poetic communication.

The reader generates meaning from contexts as guided by the syntactic, semantic, pragmatic, and discourse elements of the poems. Within their narrative and descriptive mode, there lies hidden the effects such as wit, irony, humour, satire, sarcasm, and tone, that the imagery, symbols, and metrics may reinforce.

The use of rhythmical language imparts a high degree of organization to the poem just as the stanza pattern provides an impression of unity and certain formality to the text. The meter may be subtly used to emphasize and de-emphasize. In the process, he may also turn out to be what has been termed as ‘deviant’, ‘artistic’, or ‘unique’. His meaning may even radiate outwards in too many different directions to have any particular relevance for specific context and human relationships.

Against such a perspective, poetic communication becomes a matter of pragmatic communication, involving semiotics, syntactic and semantics, and negotiating differences with empathy and tolerance. It is not creating or advocating literary experiences in the same way but rather facing up to both the sameness and variation, and trying to relate them, as much as possible to the contexts of writing and reading alike.

The attempt is to derive meaning(s) from the text in context, stepping over the time-boundaries, and paying due attention to syntactic, semantic, pragmatic, and discourse features, without excluding what the Sanskrit aestheticians characterise as abhidha (denotation), lakshana (metaphoric indication), and dhvani (suggestion), the three semantic powers of the word. It also includes metaphors and metonymy in language at the level of the word use besides relating symbols to culture, emotion and embodiment. Since the human importance of the literary work is sought to be discussed in terms of creation and reception,
it also deals with prosody; elements of dialogue such as tone, gesture, satire, wit, irony, humour, etc; discourse markers; coherence, conflict and expectation; and the cultural dimensions of the language use.

1.4. Maha Nand Sharma: An Overview

Maha Nand Sharma, born on July 11, 1924 at Bulandshahr in Uttar Pradesh, received his education at Kanpur, Meerut, Agra, Allahabad, and Hyderabad. He was a Reader in the Institute of Advanced Studies, Meerut University. Apart from being a poet, he was a short-story writer and a critic. Language was never a barrier to him, and he excelled in the use of English, Hindi, Sanskrit, and also Urdu as a medium of expression. He marked his presence in the field of Indian English poetry way back in 1956 with his first publication The Pageant of Seasons (1956), which is a long poem, presenting the march of seasons in three hundred lines. The poem displays his talent in the use of blank verse and also reflects the influence of Milton and Wordsworth upon him. One remarkable feature of this long poem is the effective and apt use of imagery, which bespeaks Sharma’s hidden poetic talent. Although this long poem could not make any deep impact on the readers, academicians or critics, it promised the emergence of a new talent in the sphere of Indian English Poetry.

Sharma came up with his second collection Flowers and Buds (1984) after a long interval of 28 years. This long gap matured him as a poet, and made his presence on the poetic scene noted. The next two collections A Rudraksha Rosary and Other Poems (1987) and A Spiritual Warrior (1991) gained him praises from readers, academicians, as well as critics in the country. Both of these poems, i.e. A Rudraksha Rosary and A Spiritual Warrior are long narrative poems written in epic mode, one highlighting the exploits of Lord Shiva, and the other dealing with the conflict between the senses and the spirit of Bhism.

Apart from the celebration of rich Indian culture, tradition, legends, and mythological beliefs, Sharma decides to share his personal experiences and observations in the form of small poems which were published in two volumes Scattered Leaves (1991) and Gushing Streams (1996). The two collections clearly manifest his wide experiences and personal
beliefs. Then, he published his collection titled *Divine Glimpses* (1996), which is a compilation of a number of narrative poems based on religious preaching, spiritualism, and folktales. In 1998, Sharma published another long narrative poem *Flowering of a Lotus* (1998), which is a poetical narration of the career of Bhartrahari. And then, he published his last collection *Autumn Strains* (2004), which records twenty six sonnets in the Shakesperean style, containing a total number of forty nine poems divided in four different sections.

A remarkable feature of Maha Nand Sharma’s poetry is that he associates, and finally, culminates most of his themes into the depiction of contemporary society, and unveils all its ills by drawing a comparison between the contemporary scenario and the past. He firmly believes that life and art must connect at some point, and elevate people spiritually. As a sensitive poet, Sharma responds to the social problems and issues, and his poetry reflects his social concern. He very subtly infuses didactic messages coated with sweet syrup of rhyme, rhythm, imagery, connotations, or comparisons. He recreates the old myths in the modern perspective. The poet never raises a voice of protest, but only expresses his disgust or detestation. In other words, it may be stated that the poet has acquired the supreme virtue of "impotence" like the observers who "impose nothing, take no positions" and who can "watch a game of chess silently." (quote mine)

As far as the handling of rhyme and rhythm is concerned, Sharma displays an interesting variety and skill in his poetry. Most of his poems are accent-based and rhythmical. Usually, the lines in a stanza are not arranged in any uniform pattern, and one witnesses alterations in the rhythmical pitch. There is no space for monotony in his verse. It may be said that his style is not just derivative, but has an individuality of its own. As is evident throughout his poetry, and in his style too, one notices strict adherence to the roots. In his desire to portray the minutest detail of everything that is Indian, he at times attempts to describe "the indescribable" Such a poetic process not only helps him achieve a remarkable precision and subtlety in describing the indescribable, but it also helps his poetic self.

Maha Nand Sharma is a poet with vision, and his quest and sensibility has earned him a position among great Indian English poets such as Sri Aurobindo, Swami Vivekananda,
V.K. Gokak, and the like. He makes rich use of myths, legends, and history to weave his poems around the themes such as love, man-woman relationship, family, politics, education, corruption, poverty, materialism, etc. in the contemporary society. One finds him to be a very successful communicator in verses.

Yet, the poet has not received the academic and critical attention he deserves. The only major critical work available is *Maha Nand Sharma as a Poet: A Study of his Art* by Mamta Sharma trying to encompass all the prominent aspects of his poetic art. Apart from a few articles such as *Maha Nand Sharma: A New Epic Genius* by Rashbehari Ghosh, *The Poetry of Maha Nand Sharma* by V.K. Arora, *Imagery in Maha Nand Sharma* by Mamta Sharma, *Maha Nand Sharma (1924– )* by Dr. Satish Kumar, *The Poetry of Rasa in Maha Nand Sharma* by Mamta Sharma, *Rediscovering Indianness in the Poetry of Maha Nand Sharma* by Ram Kulesh Thakur and Rajni Singh, *Maha Nand Sharma: Champion of a Tradition* by Bernard M. Jackson, and some book reviews in periodicals and journals such as *Link*, *Indian Book Chronicle*, *Metverse Muse*, *Kavita India*, *The Quest*, *Brain Wave*, *Bhavan’s Journal*, *Creative Forum*, *The National Herald*, *Poetcrit*, *Poetry Time*, *The Journal of Indian Writing in English*, etc., there has been no criticism available to facilitate serious research. The present study, therefore, is an attempt not only to bring Maha Nand Sharma’s poetry to lime light but also to explore its merits in communicational perspective.

### 1.5. I.K Sharma: An Overview

I.K. Sharma, born on January 01, 1932 at Shamli in Uttar Pradesh, has served the English Department of the University of Rajasthan, Jaipur for over thirty years. He has written poetry in Hindi, Rajasthani, and English, and has also translated Hindi and Rajasthani Poetry into English. His poems in English have appeared in six collections namely, *The Shifting Sand Dunes* (1976), *The Native Embers* (1986), *Dharamsala and Other Poems* (1993), *Camel, Cockroach, and Captains* (1998), *My Lady, Broom and Other Poems* (2004), and *End to End* (2008), and over twenty anthologies. Honoured by the Rajasthan Sahitya...
Akademi in 1979 and an invitee to the Fifth and Tenth World Congress of Poets held at San Francisco and Bangkok in 1981 and 1988 respectively, he has been a strong supporter of new poets all these years.

In the very first collection of poems, *The Shifting Sand Dunes* (1976), Sharma gives evidence of his poetic sensibility and mastery over the English Language. The poems are woven out of his personal observations. With felicity, he shifts stances from biting irony to plain fun and from sarcasm to seriousness. In all his collections, he exposes the naked unpalatable truth, sometimes criticising the strange behaviour and attitude of the people and sometimes raising a voice of dissent and protest against them. In some of the poems he expresses disgust, but it is temporary in nature. He sounds hopeful and optimistic about a better future.

Another most conspicuous quality of I.K. Sharma is his experiment with **form** and **style**. Some of his poems reverberate with meanings expanding in new contexts. His themes encompass cultural exposure, personal experiences, reflections on the society, social criticism, and exposure of political reality. As the major section of his poetry is concerned with social and political reality, he has emerged as a poet of political and social reality considered from creative and critical standpoints. One finds his poetry to be a new found treasure, rich in evocative meaning, powerful in the use of image and metaphor, and profound in its message. His images are clear and sharp, his mode of presentation is witty, and there are latent meanings and messages that appeal to the senses of perceptive reader. The latent images in his poems are compressed with a wonderful economy of words. The poet has the talent to convey forcefully more than what the lines carry verbally.

I.K. Sharma’s diction is a brilliant combination of intellectual subtlety, a command of the literary traditions for parodic purposes, brevity, modernisms, and even slang. The tone of some of his poems is conversational. His poems reflect his dexterity in coining striking phrases. He also has the capability of throwing a sweet feminine aura around inanimate objects by using expressions evocative of amorous feminine behaviour, which makes such poems more interesting. The occasional use of apt onomatopoeic words makes the idea
vivid, and the poems lure the reader with their sweetness. I.K.Sharma is unmatched for his wit to draw the attention of scholars and intellectuals; for irony, satire, and sarcasm to gain the appreciation of academicians, critics, and all serious readers; and humour to appeal and lure the senses of light hearted readers.

Although a few attempts have been made to explore the poetic credentials of I.K.Sharma, there has not been a full-fledged study of his poetry yet. One finds only a few stray critical articles on his poetry that celebrate his style and themes. The critical articles such as, "The Unsure Idiom" by V. D. Singh, "I.K.Sharma: We Tell Your Fever Well" by R.K. Singh, "Nativism to the Fore" by M.Prabha, "Conceptual Deviance in the Poetry of I.K. Sharma" by T. Vasudeva Reddy, "Political Reality in I.K.Sharma's Poetry" by H.S.Bhatia, "Dimensions of Anger in I.K. Sharma's Poetry" by R.K. Singh and Mitali De Sarkar, "The Poetry of I.K.Sharma" by B. K. Pandey, "Small is Beautiful: The Eloquence of Suggestiveness in the Poetry of I.K. Sharma" by O.P.Mathur, "Movement in I. K. Sharma's My Lady, Broom and Other Poems" by Tisha Roy, "Humour in the Poetry of I. K. Sharma" by Kalpana Rajput, "I. K. Sharma: An Indian Poet of Material Wastelands" by O. P. Mathur, "K. V. Raghupathi, "Introduction to Collected Poems" by Rita Nath Keshari, "The Poetry of I.K.Sharma: Vision and Voices" by O.P.Mathur, "The Comic Mode in the Poetry of I.K.Sharma" by N. P. Singh, "Plenty: An Overview of I.K.Sharma's Poetry" by V.V.B. Rama Rao, etc. bring forth only certain aspects of his poetry and a lot remains undiscovered. None of these critical papers explore the communicative aspects of the poet. One also comes across a few reviews of his collections, and the notable reviewers include M. K. Naik, O. P. Bhatnagar, R. K. Singh, G. D. Barche, B. Cauveri, D. C. Chambial, Patricia Prime, B. C. Mohanty, V. D. Singh, and a few others, who published their comments in small journals such as Indian Book Chronicle, Poetcrit, Poetry Today, Metverse Muse, Poetry, Triveni, and a few others. None of these articles and reviews, however, explores the poet's competence as a communicator.
1.6. Scheme of the Study

The present study attempts to make a comparison between the two poets, Maha Nand Sharma and I.K. Sharma, on the basis of their communicational contexts. The end-effect of their communicative act (each poem is a communicative act) not only depends upon the message encoded in the text but also the style in which it is composed and delivered across (to the reader or listener). A specific rasa oozes out of the communicative act in each case that characterises the discourse. The study is based on the exploration of the communicative aspects of their poetry to reach to the effect left over the reader. It characterises the effects into four major categories: wit, irony, humour, and satire and sarcasm. It bases all its findings on the evolution of wit, irony, humour, satire, and sarcasm, i.e. construction of the discourse of each specific type.

The findings would be based on the text-centred analysis at four levels: Syntactic, i.e. the lexical items and their respective arrangement in the poem; Semantic, i.e. the meaning (both, implicit and explicit) of the lines; Pragmatic, i.e. the role of the context in the determination of the meaning, and the multiplicity of the meaning; and Discourse, i.e. the message communicated and its effect on the reader. The critical studies till date have not explored poetry in the said light, and therefore, the present study attempts to approach and appreciate poetry on its communicative aspects, rather than merely analysing its extrinsic characteristics or features.

The different chapters of the thesis study the two poets in the light of the nature of the discourse that they construct, and its impact/effect on the reader. The following four chapters discuss the poems of both the poets in terms of wit, irony, humour, and satire and sarcasm respectively as an integral element of their discourse. They display layer after layer, the working of the communicative process, and elucidate the role and effectiveness of poetry in the contemporary age. The chapters unveil how an embedded idea, thought, or experience (which the poet attempts to communicate) in a poem evokes, or transports, similar feelings/experience in the reader. The chapters demonstrate an analysis of the language used in the construction of the poem, and critically investigate the poetic/rhetoric devices such as
metaphor, metonymy, simile, personification, image, symbol, etc. and other essential features such as tone, rhyme, rhythm, etc. that guide the reader to the communicated (intended) message. Thereafter, each chapter draws a comparative study of the two poets on the basis of their respective discourse features (wit, irony, humour, satire and sarcasm) to highlight their poetic vision and worldview.

It is expected that this new approach (communicational approach) to poetry would revive the interest of the present generation of readers in poetry, and it would help one in foreseeing the charm or aesthetic pleasure implicit in a poem. Though Roger D. Sell’s concern is revival of interest in literary study with tolerance for conflicting views of critics, the focus in the present study would be on the intrinsic merit of the two Indian English Poets, Mahanand Sharma and I.K. Sharma, and encourage literary/critical dialogue about what/how they communicate through their poetry.

References:

2. Ibid.
11. Ibid.


42. Ibid. pp. 33-40.

43. Ibid. pp. 43-57.


52. Ibid. pp. 290-294.