CHAPTER - I

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1.1 Preliminaries

The present research entitled ‘A Study of Indirect Speech Acts in the Selected Novels of Indian Writers in English,’ is principally aimed at investigating and examining the application of Indirect Speech Acts in various conversational pieces in different incidents taken from the selected novels and their significant role in the development of the novels. It is an endeavour to compare these novels in the light of Indirect Speech Acts due to certain resemblance observed between them. The selected novels for the purpose of analysis are:

*The White Tiger* by Aravind Adiga- 2008,
*The Inheritance of Loss* by Kiran Desai- 2006,

The central concept of Pragmatics is the Speech Act Theory. The core of the Speech Act Theory is the notion that the speaker performs actions via words. Performing actions with words is called Speech Acts. Various actions are performed via words such as requesting, asking, ordering, suggesting, promising, complaining and so on. Austin’s Speech Act Theory was further expanded by Searle who divided Speech Acts into Direct and Indirect Speech Acts. Direct Speech Acts are those where the utterance and intention of the speaker is one and same such as asking a question for seeking an answer. On the contrary, when the speaker’s intention behind the utterance is different than its literal meaning, it is called as Indirect Speech Acts such as asking a question for requesting or pursuing the
listener to do something. Keeping this distinction in view the present research aims at establishing a link between human utterance and human behaviour.

1.2 Hypothesis

The study is based on following hypothesis,

• Indirect Speech Acts contribute to the skilful use of language and perform many functions at a time.
• The significance of Indirect Speech Acts may be revealed both literally and practically to the reader.
• Inference of the utterance is mainly based on its illocutionary force, which in turn relies upon the shared contextual background of the speaker, the listener and the reader as well.

1.3 Scope and Limitations

The present analysis is a pragmatic approach applied on the selected novels. The study of Speech Act Theory is vast. It covers both Direct and Indirect Speech Acts along with conversational principles and significant terms and concepts related to it. Only Indirect Speech Acts have been selected to reveal their significance in the selected novels for certain practical purposes. The analysis will be based on the collected and segregated data. Austin’s Speech Act Theory and Searle’s expansion of it will be discussed in detail. The conversational principles also will be considered wherever required. It is an attempt to reveal the significance of Indirect speech Acts in the development of the plot and characterization of the selected
novels. Certainly, it is a different and novel way of interpreting literary works, especially, novels via Indirect Speech Acts. As the selected novels consist of ample examples of Indirect Speech Acts, a conglomeration of Indirect Speech Acts may be identified and analysed as per their performance.

The novelists of the selected novels are immigrant hence, a comparison between India and other countries will certainly come out in the light of the present study. The comparison and contrast between Indians, NRIs and the English will be inherently brought forward in the process of the analysis. Thus, an implicit comparison of cultural, social, political etc. difference between India and other countries will be made wherever observed.

However, the present study has certain limitations. The focal point of the study is limited to Indirect Speech Acts found only in the selected novels, Therefore, Direct Speech Acts, Five major speech acts, the constituents of speech acts, conversational principles etc. will be paid only occasional attention as per their relevance and significance. Indirect Speech Acts found in various forms such as questions, figures of speech, illocutionary forces, emphatic statements, circumlocution hedging and denial etc. will be analyzed in detail. The present study does not include the comparison between the works of Immigrant writers and the works of Indian writers in English or that of English writers. It has to be noted that excess use of Indirect Speech Acts will lead to ambiguity and obscurity in life. The simplicity of language may be lost due to its extreme use.
1.4 Significance of the Research

Pragmatics has cast a new light on the study of language used in human communication. It also explores the various shades of implied meaning in an utterance. The significance of the research is not only limited to its attempt to apply the Speech Act Theory in the selected novels, but it is an endeavour to explore and expand Direct Speech Acts in general and Indirect Speech Acts in particular and evaluate their contribution in the development of the novels under consideration. If the selected novels are studied as a linguistic interaction between characters by using different Speech Acts, the reader can interpret the utterances from not only author’s point of view but also from a contextual perspective. It is an attempt to exemplify how Indirect Speech Acts help to understand literary works, especially novels. The study aims at demonstrating the importance of context in interpreting various shades and layers of Indirect Speech Acts. The present research will broaden a student’s point of view and level of comprehension concerning novels. A pragmatic approach will increase a student’s interest in reading and appreciating novels. Understanding Indirect Speech Acts is not only important in reading literary works but also in seeking the concealed intention of the speaker behind the utterance in day to day life. Indirect Speech Acts contribute to the skilful use of language and thereby developing the personality of the speaker.

The selected novels are written by immigrant writers. The effect of varieties of Indirect Speech Acts used in different situations in the proceeding of conversation and behaviour of interlocutors is indeed important. The value of the application of Speech Acts in the
proceeding of the novels is immense as the behaviour of the concerned character is often based on what others say about him/her in particular situation. The conclusions may give a new dimension to the reader’s perception of the novel.

1.5 Selection of the Novels and the Methodology for analysis

The proposed research designs to adopt the following methodology: The primary source of research is J.L. Austin’s book, *How to Do Things with Words* (1962) and John Searle’s development and expansion of Austin’s theory in the book, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (1969) and the selected novels for analysis.

The secondary source will be various reference books, researches and journals related to the present area of research. Other pragmatic concepts and conversational principles will also be applied as per the examples. The collected data will be segregated and applied wherever needed.

After explaining the theoretical framework in detail, the highly significant Indirect Speech Acts in the selected novels will be identified. These Indirect Speech Acts will be segregated according to their function and analyzed minutely. Possible conclusions will be laid down eventually.

Regarding Indirect Speech Acts, various questions will be categorized into rhetorical questions, and those questions that perform more than one function. Other forms of Indirect Speech
Acts like different figures of Speech, emphatic statements, circumlocution, hedging and denial etc. will be analyzed. Similarly, those conversational pieces, the interpretation of which is different than literal and intended meaning will be given separate space. Indirect Speech Acts in these novels will lead to the internal comparison among different Indirect Speech Acts used in diverse context. The contribution of Indirect Speech Acts will be brought out and explained in detail.

The novels selected for the purpose of analysis as mentioned earlier are *The White Tiger* by Arvind Adiga (2008), *The Inheritance of Loss* by Kiran Desai (2006) and *Afterwards* (2004) by Jaishree Misra. These novels are selected due to certain resemblance found in them. First of all, these novels are written by immigrant writers. Secondly, they offer broader (globalized) point of view encompassing India and other countries than the writers residing only in India who extend their views confined to Indian culture and Indian lifestyle.

A comparison between India, Indians and foreign countries, natives/foreigners as well as NRIs is possible due to the present analysis. The novel, *Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri was also considered for the analysis. However, very few significant Indirect Speech Acts were found in the novel and hence Jaishree Misra’s novel *Afterwards* was replaced due to the ample use of euphemism and other Indirect Speech Acts found in this novel. All the selected novels are recent. They are published after the year 2000 and hence, they can be compared with each other as they belong to the same period.
1.5.1 *The Inheritance of Loss*

Kiran Desai, a daughter of a well known Indian author, Anita Desai, was born on 3rd September in the year 1971 in India (Chandigarh). Her first book, *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* was published in the year 1998 and was appreciated well. *The Inheritance of Loss* is her second book for which she received the 2006 Man Booker Prize and 2006 National Book Critics Circle Fiction Award.

*The Inheritance of Loss* is set in the Indo-Nepal insurgency period. Kalimpong, a small border town near Darjeeling is the main setting of the novel. It is a novel of complex plot and Kiran Desai deals with the recent problems emerging in India like issues of fundamentalism, social unrest, problems of illegal immigrants and thereby cultural identity. The central character of the novel is Jemubhai Patel, a judge who has been to England and has been greatly impressed by its culture. The judge does not get a decent rank in the IFS exam. He gets married to a woman whom he hates a lot. He finds his wife to be unsuitable to his status. He continuously humiliates her and finally abuses her physically too. He forces her to go back to her maternal house where she gives birth to a daughter. However, her uncle drives her out of house and she has no choice than her sister’s home who welcomes her, but the husband of her sister manages to get her burnt and she dies pitifully. Thus, the end of Nimi, the wife of the judge is pathetic that creates the feelings of pity and fear. The judge is ironically relieved and breaks all his relation with his daughter whom he never sees in his life time. The daughter and son-in-law of the judge (Mr. & Mrs. Mistry) are killed in an accident in Russia. Ultimately, their daughter Sai, the granddaughter of the
judge is sent back to him for further care. Sai’s arrival revives the memories of the judge and it is the recollection of the past memories that unfolds his life before the reader. Sai falls in love with Gyan, a Nepali young boy, her home tutor.

One of the subplots of the novel is the story of the judge’s cook and his son Biju. Biju, an illegal immigrant in America is tossed from one job to another as a waiter and finds it difficult to adjust with American life style. A major event that takes place during these stories is the GNLF agitation that becomes severe in the town. The Gorkha boys revolt and start robbing the people. Lola and Noni, the two helpless sisters living in Mon Ami are robbed and even their premises are occupied illegally by these Nepali boys. Meanwhile, Father Booty is found to be residing in India illegally and this ‘Indian Foreigner’ staying in Kalimpong is warned to leave Kalimpong within two weeks by the local police. His friend uncle Potty assures him that he will take care of his cows and asks him to come back as soon as the trouble gets over. Sai begins to hate Gyan due to his active participation in the rebellion. Gyan and Sai transfer arguments between them. Sai becomes the emblem of the rich and Gyan becomes the representative of the rebels and the poor. Finally, a riot breaks in the town and people of all classes are tortured and they suffer trauma.

At the concluding part of the novel, the judge’s pet dog, Mutt whom he loves most of all is kidnapped by a poor couple. The loss of Mutt makes the judge more cruel and impatient. Biju, craving for returning back to India manages somehow to reach his homeland. But he is robbed and humiliated by the Nepali rebels. He returns
home bruised and almost half dead. Thus, almost all the characters are destined to a permanent sense of loss. The judge becomes a stranger in his own country and Biju is treated like a stranger in India. Biju, the judge, Sai, Gyan, Father Booty etc, suffer from the agony of the ‘inheritance of loss’

1.5.2 The White Tiger

Arvind Adiga was born in Madras (Chennai) and grew up in Mangalore in the South of India. His first novel, The White Tiger won the Man Booker Prize for fiction in 2008. He is the fourth Indian to achieve this prize. This novel was adapted in to a film according to an announcement made in April 2009. His second book, namely, Between the Assassinations that depicts 12 interlinked short stories was released in November 2008 in India and in 2009 in the US and UK. His next book, Last Man in Tower is published in Sept. 2011.

The White Tiger is a harsh and realistic novel. The culture of servitude in India and the conflict between the rich and the poor has been brought forward wittily in this novel. It is narrated by the protagonist Balram who travels from the post of a driver to a successful entrepreneur. The development of the contemporary Indian society has been mirrored through the development of the protagonist Balram Halwai. Dark humour and moments of introspection are abundant in the novel. Especially Indirect Speech Acts in this novel are highly loaded with layers of meaning covered under simple and basic utterances. The novel has been written over a period of 7 days and addressed to the Premier of China-Wen Jiabao.
It is an implicit satire on Indian politics and politicians, corruption, feudal system, cast system, election system etc.

It is the story of Balram Halwai, the son of a rickshaw puller who kills his master and prospers to become an entrepreneur eventually. The backward village Laxmangarh where Balram, has been brought up is described as the darkness of India. Corrupt politicians misuse the villagers and their constitutional rights to win elections repeatedly. Although Balram could not complete his school education, he proves to be the smartest of all classmates. When he learns driving, he gets a job at the landlord’s residence as a junior driver. Balram names the landlords with animal epithets such as ‘the Mongoose’, ‘The Stork’ etc. Along with Mr. Ashok, his master, he shifts to Gurgaon, the advanced city in India.

Mr. Ashok, the America returned son of the local politician has to bribe the powerful and the politicians to get illegal and unethical jobs done. As a man used to America, Mr. Ashok finds it difficult to adjust with Indian corrupted system. He has to bribe the politicians, whether he likes or not.

Mr. Ashok’s wife, Pinky hates living in India and one midnight she flees to America without informing her husband. Balram too begins to behave in a wrong way like his master. He visits brothels, lies to his master, collects money unethically and finally murders his master for the sake of seven hundred thousand rupees and proves himself the white tiger- the wild and ferocious animal. One of the major reasons behind Balram’s transformation is the fact that Mr. Mukesh –the brother of Mr. Ashok forces Balram to accept the
responsibility of killing a beggar in an accident to save Pinky from imprisonment as she is the main culprit of the accident.

Due to his common looks, he escapes easily to Bangalore after killing his master Mr. Ashok. He establishes ‘White Tiger Drivers’ that offers a taxi service to pick up and drop call centre employees at night and thus becomes a car rental entrepreneur. He assumes a new name Mr. Ashok Sharma – the name of his former master whom he had killed. Though he cannot forget the heinous act performed by him and is always under the pressure of being caught, he decides to lead his life positively. Diverse conflicts have been exposed in The White Tiger; psychological, social, economical, educational, political etc. significantly. In the words of Sebastian as cited by Patil G.B. in Asian Quarterly, An International Journal of Contemporary Issues (2013:48)

Balram the killer, metamorphoses into his master’s replica after his heinous crime. By crime and cunning, in the name of the social justice due to existing rich-poor divide in India, Balram rules his entrepreneurial world. (Sebastian 2009:229)

1.5.3 Afterwards

Jaishree Misra was born in New Delhi and shifted to England when she was only one year old. Her first novel, Ancient Promises is semi-autobiographical. The description of Delhi and Kerala is given in this novel. Her big historical novel based on the life of Rani Laxmibai was banned by the Uttar Pradesh state government.
Afterwards was written in 2004 that unfolds the complexity of love and relationships. A series of three successive novels, Secrets and Lies 2009, Secrets and sins 2010, and A scandalous Secret the last in this series deals with the relation of mothers and daughters.

The central character in Afterwards Mr. Rahul Tiwari comes to Kerala from London to learn Mridangam. He is attracted towards his neighbour- Maya Warrier a very beautiful lady having a one and a half year old daughter Anjali. Maya seeks the help of Rahul to escape away from her suspicious husband – Govind Warrier, who does not allow her to take further education or to go outside the house without his consent. Govind sees Rahul, the neighbour, coming out of his (Govind’s) gate and suspects an illicit relationship between his wife and Rahul and threatens Maya that he will destroy her beautiful face which according to him has been the main reason behind her (supposed) infidelity. Due to the fear of Govind’s violence Maya and Rahul hurriedly leave Kerala and settle down in London. However, Maya’s supposed elopement brings shame on her parents’ honour and in a fit of anger her father arranges for her death rites even though she was alive at that time. Maya and Rahul spend almost three years with each other and develop a sense of affinity and love for each other. However, paradoxically, Maya dies in a car accident instantaneously and leaves behind her daughter, Anjali who is now around four years old. As Rahul had not applied for parental responsibility for Anjali, the social workers decide that Anjali should go with her biological father Govind Warrier in India. Thus, within three years Rahul loses both Maya and Anjali. He decides to go back to India to immerse Maya’s ashes and to ask her parents why they performed her death rites when she was alive at the time. However,
when he meets Maya’s lonely mother whom he finds leading austere life in a temple and learns the tragic consequence of Maya’s elopement to London with him, he forgives them. Maya’s hasty departure brought great shame to the family honour. Govind Warrier was completely disappointed and the paternal grandmother of Maya died of shock. Due to this entire degradation Maya’s father who found himself completely unable to cope with this humiliation, decided to perform Maya’s death rites even when she was alive at the time. Later he too died due to excess grief and shame. Maya’s mother has sent her only son to a boarding school and is living the life of a saint in that temple. Rahul understands the mentality of Maya’s mother and his anger is pacified. After Rahul releases the box of Maya’s ashes in to the river he feels relieved. Maya’s mother advises him to carry on his life positively, as if, she had guessed that Rahul might commit suicide after this visit. Thus, the novel ends on a positive note. Rahul decides to carry on his life without Maya and Anjali. Thus, one hasty decision becomes responsible to destroy the lives of all those who were related to Maya.

1.6 Conclusion

The chapter begins with the introduction of the present thesis in which a brief introduction of the title of the research and pragmatic concepts are given in a nutshell. The scope and limitations, the significance of the research, selection of the novel and the methodology for analysis have been given in detail. The information of the writers as well as the plot of the selected novels have been explained in depth. Thus, the essential background of the study has been constructed in this chapter.