CHAPTER - III

ANALYSIS OF INDIRECT SPEECH ACTS-I
3.1 Preliminaries

Language is basically applied in various real life situations. These situations may be social, political, cultural, professional etc. Literature is not only a reflection of life but also of language used in varied circumstances by people, playing myriad roles in the age, they live. Dialogue is one of the major elements of drama. In fiction too dialogues are seen in the form of conversation taking place among characters. Such conversation enables the reader to evaluate or sketch the character of interlocutor/s. The context of any conversation makes it easier to comprehend the speech situation and thereby the literary work containing conversation.

Conversation proceeds through Speech Acts. These Speech Acts are either Direct or Indirect. As has been stated in the second chapter Direct Speech Acts are those in which form and function conform to each other such as using interrogative for asking question or for seeking information or answer. However, in Indirect Speech Acts form and function do not match with each other such as asking question for requesting i.e. using imperative function. It is observed that the interactors in their conversation most of the time prefer Indirect Speech Acts rather than the direct one. This may be an attempt of the interactor to be polite or diplomatic. The speaker uses Indirect Speech Acts, in the words of Nozar Niazi,
To minimize the risk of threatening the face of the other, people usually use indirect mode of speaking, hedging, apologizing, telling white lies, speaking: off-record, giving reasons for not accepting an invitation or complying with a request, etc. (2006:64)

The present research aims at analysing the major motives and consequences of selecting Indirect Speech Acts in the novels under consideration. It is noteworthy that the selected novels are written by immigrant writers. One of the intentions of the present study is to examine the ways in which these writers have applied Indirect Speech Acts through the means of the characters in their novels.

3.2 Analysis of Indirect Speech Acts

Reconsidering the difference between Direct and Indirect Speech Acts, Searle says,

Indirect Speech Acts are cases in which one illocutionary act is performed indirectly by way of performing a direct one. (1979:60)

Thus, when there is a direct relationship between form and function of the utterance, it is called as a Direct Speech Act, whereas when there is an indirect or implicit relationship between its form and function, the utterance is considered as an Indirect Speech Act. Varieties of questions will be investigated in the present chapter from its indirect point of view.
3.2.1 Rhetorical Questions

Rhetorical questions do not conform to its form or structure. Although the structure of the rhetorical question is that of interrogative, it is not a usual question seeking any answer, but in fact is a statement usually negative, for example, if a wife asks her husband,

“Who cooks food for you and the children every day and keeps this home clean?”

She does not expect any alternative arrangement or another woman as a response to this question but she wants to assert that nobody else but it is she who takes care of her husband, children and their home. Thus, to assert her importance in his life she takes the aid of a rhetorical question which is obviously more effective than an ordinary statement. It is in this sense; the rhetorical question differs than normal questions. As per given in A Handbook of Literary Terms by M. H. Abrams/Geoffrey Galt Harpham,

“A rhetorical question is a sentence in the grammatical form of a question which is not asked in order to request information or to invite a reply, but to achieve a greater expressive force than a direct assertion.” (2009:268-269)

Speakers usually make use of rhetorical questions for diverse purposes, such as, to convince, to deter, to express astonishment, anger, sorrow, pain etc. The perlocutionary effect of rhetorical questions is stronger than that of Direct Speech Acts. Indirect assertion is the fundamental characteristic of rhetorical question as
explained above. Certain other characteristics as well as contribution of the rhetorical questions in the novels under study are categorized below.

3.2.1.1 Characterization

The rhetorical questions in the novels under study contribute significantly in delineating the protagonist as well as other characters’ personality, their mode of thinking, behaving etc. The following rhetorical question in *The White Tiger* casts light on the character of Vikram Halwai, Balram’s father.

‘How many times have I told you: Munna must read and write!’ (2008: 28)

The pet name Munna refers to Balram Halwai, a son of a rickshaw-puller Vikram Halwai. The context is that Vikram Halwai’s mother ‘Kusum’ tells him that Munna has stopped going to school due to some fear. Balram’s father gets furiated to listen this and indignantly asks the above rhetorical question to his mother. Obviously the question is not asked for obtaining any answer but to assert indirectly and forcefully that he has told her so many times that Munna must read and write. This single rhetorical question unfolds the far-sightedness of Munna’s father. His earnest wishes for his son’s future, his bright vision as well as plans are concerned for his son- Balram. Although he himself is an ordinary rickshaw- puller, lacking proper education, he wants his children, especially Munna, to take education and come out of the darkness of poverty. The family background of Balram Halwai is also revealed through this rhetorical question. However, the perlocutionary effect of this
Indirect Speech Act is unexpected. Kusum, instead of accepting her guilt, complains that Munna is a coward boy who runs back from school. She even suggests that Munna should do some work in the tea-shop and make some money.

Characters can be compared and contrasted with each other through their speech acts. On another occasion, when Mr. Ashok, a son of Thakur Ramdev, Roshan, a son of Mukesh sir and Balram, their junior taxi driver play cricket, Roshan calls himself as ‘Azharuddin, captain of India’ every time when he hits a six or a four. Listening to this, Ramdev Thakur advices Roshan to call him Gavaskar as Azharuddin is a Muslim. Mr. Ashok expresses his disapproval to this advice of his father in the following words,

‘Father, what a silly thing to say!
Hindu or Muslim, what difference does it make?’

(The White Tiger, 2008: 70)

The generation gap between Mr. Ashok and his father is clearly apparent in the above rhetorical question. One can easily sketch the character of Ramdev Thakur as an old Indian man believing in the difference between a Hindu and a Muslim as well as the character of Mr. Ashok, a representative of the advanced Indian youth who denies accepting this discrimination. By using the above rhetorical question Mr. Ashok firmly asserts the equality of Hindus and Muslims who both constitute India. The rhetorical question is very significant here as it indicates the changing mode of thought and behaviour of Indian people.
In the following question answer pairs, the questions are not asked in the anticipation of any answer but to assert something different. The conversation takes place between the two brothers Mukesh and Ashok who are in the car with their driver Balram Halwai.

‘Are you lost again, driver?’ (1)
‘Don’t go after him again.’ (2)
‘Why do you always defend him, Ashok?’ (3)
‘Don’t we have more serious things to discuss? (4)
Why are we always talking about this driver?’ (5)
‘All right, let’s discuss the other things, then. (6)
First let’s discuss your wife, and her temper tantrums.’ (7)
Do you really think that’s more important than the tax thing? (8) (The White Tiger, 2008:120)

The above conversation marks the contrasting nature of Mr. Mukesh and Ashok. In Delhi, the two brothers are returning to their residence while Balram, the driver has lost his way once again. The question asked by Mukesh (1) is superficially direct but the illocutionary force of it is an expression of irritation over the driver for losing the ways recurrently.

The irritation of Mukesh over Balram is protested by Mr. Ashok in (2) directly. Listening this, the fury of Mukesh aggravates more and he asks an indirect question in (3), the illocutionary force of which is ‘complaining’. It is an indirect complaint of Mukesh that Ashok always defends their driver. As the question is rhetorical, Ashok does not answer it. He reciprocates by using another rhetorical question in (4) and (5). He asserts that they have more important issues to discuss than the topic of their driver and hence they should
not talk about their driver every time. Finally, Mukesh gives up the topic and opens up a new subject of Ashok’s wife to tease him in (6) and (7). Here Mukesh mocks over the moody nature of Mr. Ashok’s wife. Mr. Ashok responds via a rhetorical question in (8) and states that the topic of the tax is more important than that of his wife or their driver. Thus, the diverse aspects of Mr. Ashok and Mr. Mukesh’s characters can be noted through the above conversational piece containing varieties of rhetorical questions. It is interesting that the rhetorical question can be responded via another rhetorical question. People ask rhetorical questions to complain, protest, and tease or to express anger. The rhetorical question in the above example are put in ascending order implying dissention of opinion between the two brothers whose way of thinking and behaviour is contrastive to each other. One can begin, proceed and conclude one’s quarrel by applying rhetorical questions. It is one of the uses (or misuses?) of rhetorical question which is noteworthy in the context of this conversation.

One day when their car gets jammed between heavy traffic, Mr. Ashok says,

‘In Beijing apparently they’ve got a dozen ring roads. (1)
Here we have one. (2)
No wonder we keep getting jams. (3)
Nothing is planned. (4)
How will we ever catch up with the Chinese?’(5)

(The White Tiger, 2008:138)

The above utterance displays a contrast between India and other countries. The rhetorical question in (5) suggests indirectly that we will never be able to catch up with the Chinese. China is far ahead of
us. The numerical words ‘dozen’ and ‘one’ symbolically imply the vast difference between India and China. Mr. Ashok’s far sightedness is highlighted through the rhetorical question in (5). The word Chinese implies an extended meaning because Balram, after murdering his master Mr. Ashok, writes an e-mail to Wen Jiabao, the premier of China at Beijing, the Capital of China. It is through this mail that the story is unfolded before us. The implicit intention of the writer behind the rhetorical question in (5) is to create awareness in Indian people concerning the status and level of India in the world.

The narrow-mindedness of Mr. Mukesh is quite apparent when he scolds Balram for giving a rupee to a handicapped man. Mr. Mukesh gives vent to his anger in the following words,

‘Who the hell told you to do that?’ (1)

‘Sorry sir,’ I said. (2)

‘Why the hell did you give that beggar a rupee? (3)

What cheek...’ (4)  

(The White Tiger, 2008:241)

The rhetorical questions in (1) and (3) are not asked for expecting any reason from Balram but they are an expression of annoyance over the act of Balram (giving a rupee to the man without legs). Mr. Mukesh continues,

‘Don’t we give money each time we go to the temple?’

(The White Tiger, 2008:241)

The indirect question is an intentional reminder to Mr. Mukesh that each time they visit the temple they offer money to the God. Mr. Ashok joins hand in hand with his brother and uses a rhetorical question to emphasise that the taxes in India are very high.
‘Do you know how high the taxes are in this country?’

(The White Tiger, 2008:241)

Obviously, Ashok is not expecting any answer from Balram here but his real intention is to vent his indignation over Balram. Mr. Ashok is indirectly connecting his previous anger over Balram by stating the reason of it in the above rhetorical question. Further he says,

‘If we gave any money, what would we have to eat?’

(The White Tiger, 2008:241)

Thus, by applying rhetorical question again, Mr. Ashok asserts that they should not give any money to anyone otherwise nothing would be left for them to eat. The rhetorical question of Mr. Ashok expresses his miserly nature. It is indeed ironical that in spite of being very rich they do not like their driver to give a rupee to the beggar. On top of it, they offer a bribe of millions of rupees for saving themselves from paying taxes.

The same complaining nature of Mukesh is seen in the character of the judge in The Inheritance of Loss by Kiran Desai. In the beginning of the novel when the judge is eagerly waiting for tea and snacks, he finds that the tea is served only with biscuits. Sai, his granddaughter explains that there is no snack because the baker has left for his daughter’s wedding and hence, there is nothing to eat except biscuits. The following conversation takes place between the Judge and Sai in this context.

“How dare he go for a wedding? (1)
Is that the way to run a business? (2)
The fool. (3) Why can’t the cook make something?” (4)
“There’s no more gas, no kerosene.” (5)
“Why the hell can’t he make it over wood? (6)
All these old cooks can make cakes perfectly fine by building coals around a tin box. (7)
You think they used to have gas stoves, kerosene stoves, before? (8) Just too lazy now.”(9) (2006: 3)

The question in (1) is insincere as the Judge is quite aware that Sai cannot tell the answer. It is in fact, an indirect expression of anger. The form of the question in (1), (2) & (4) is interrogative but its function is assertive. It can be stated as, The baker should not go for a wedding. (1) This is not the way to run a business. (2) The cook can make something. (4)

The illocutionary force of the question in (1) is an indirect complaint against the baker, while in (2) it is an indirect suggestion. In the rhetorical question (2) the judge protests the baker’s way of running a business. The utterance in (3) is an elliptical statement. The complete sentence should be - The baker is a foolish man. The interrogative in (4) is an indirect complaint as well as suggestion diverted towards the cook. In (5), Sai directly tells the reason for the inability of the cook to make anything. The Judge again, indirectly complains and suggests that the cook should make snacks over the wood. The statement in (7) which is a Direct Speech Act is used as a supporting point of the utterance in (6). The question in (8) is insincere. It is not meant for deriving information from Sai but for providing it to her. The opinion expressed in (9) is the Judge’s personal opinion, the illocutionary force of which is criticizing the cook.
The above interaction between the Judge and Sai is significant from the point of view of the characterization of the Judge. It seems that the nature of the judge is very complex. He is impatient, short tempered and adamant. He is so selfish that he does not like the baker to go for his daughter’s wedding just for the sake of his snacks. He is miserly and proud. He pays the cook very less salary but expects him to cook on wood or coals. Ironically, he calls the cook lazy who is actually doing all the household chores single handedly.

3.2.1.2 The Power Structure (the High and Low Class People)

The following conversation between the judge and the cook significantly contributes in comparing and contrasting the characters of the judge and the cook i.e. the master and the servant. As has been stated earlier, the judge is a miserly man and pays the cook very less salary. His last raise had been only twenty five rupees. In the background of this context, the following interaction takes place between them.

“But sahib,” he had begged ‘how can I live on this?”(1)
All your expenses are paid for- housing, clothing, food, medicines. (2)
This is extra,” (3) growled the Judge.
“What about Biju?”(4)
“*What* about Biju? (5) Biju must make his own way. (6)
What’s wrong with him?”(7)

*(The Inheritance of Loss, 2006: 54)*
Here, the cook pleads for his salary to be increased but the judge is determined not to budge an inch. As the cook is a servant, he cannot directly tell the judge to increase his salary. Hence, he uses a rhetorical question in (1). It is an indirect assertion that can be interpreted as, ‘I cannot live on this.’ Had the cook said this directly it would have appeared impolite. Being powerless and helpless he has to be polite and yet get his desire fulfilled. That is why; he takes the shelter of the rhetorical question. It is one of the ‘face’ saving strategies. The judge, being the chief of the house, exercises his might on the servant. He is dominant and obviously disagrees with the cook. Fruitlessly, the cook attempts to remind the judge about his only son ‘Biju’ who is an illegal immigrant in America. The cook indirectly states in (4) in the form of a rhetorical question that it is very difficult for him to bring up his son in such a low salary. The judge turns a deaf ear to this and reacts with the same rhetorical question in (5). At this point the intonation pattern of the judge’s voice must have risen to show his authority over the cook. The judge, by his response implies that the cook need not worry about his son as he himself can earn his living. (6) In the rhetorical question (7), he states that there is nothing wrong with him (Biju) and he is capable to look after himself. The rhetorical questions of the judge imply an indirect refusal to the plea of the cook regarding the hike in his payment. The judge is neither polite nor co-operative in this linguistic interaction. He has breached the maxims of agreement and sympathy here. He has even violated the principles of quantity and relation superficially. Thus, it is again evident that a rhetorical question can be responded via another rhetorical question (4 and 5) as the function of these rhetorical questions is of an assertion and not
of an interrogation. The power structure of the high and the low class and their relationship with each other can be exemplified in the following way. The powerful status of Thakur Ramdev is revealed in the following rhetorical question in *The White Tiger*.

‘Of course, sir – people say, “Our father is gone, Thakur Ramdev is gone, the best of the landlords is gone, who will protect us now?”’ (2008:61)

The above utterance casts light on various aspects of Indian village life such as,

1. relationship of the rich and poor, the landlords and peasants
2. the superiority of landlords and the inferiority of others etc.

The context is that Balram lands up at the gate of Thakur Ramdev’s house in search of a job as a taxi driver. Thakur Ramdev, originally, a landlord of Laxmangarh has now shifted to Dhanabad. Laxmangarh is the native place of Balram. When Thakur Ramdev asks Balram out of curiosity whether the people of Laxmangarh still remember him, he responds in the above quoted words. Balram uses two address terms here, ‘sir’ and ‘father’. Sir is an English address term which is a title whereas ‘father’ is a typical Indian kinship term. The amalgamation of the terms of English and Indian language displays the adaptability and hybridism of Indian English. The address term ‘Our father’ indicates the superiority of higher status of the landlords as giver or lender and the inferiority of the people of Laxmangarh as debtors to him. These terms bear an ironical touch as Balram uses these words just for the sake of getting the job as a driver. In reality, he has no respect for Thakur Ramdev at all. The rhetorical question ‘Who will protect us now?’ puts Ramdev Thakur
on the highest position as a supreme master of Laxmangarh. The illocutionary force of these rhetorical questions is that of ‘praising’. It’s flattery for the sake of getting the job. The perlocutionary effect of this flattery is the achievement of Balram’s goal. He gets the position of a junior ‘driver’. When Balram is asked about his expectation of salary, he uses the same tactics. He says,

‘Absolutely nothing, sir. You’re like a father and mother to me, and how can I ask for money from my parents?’ (2008:65)

It is noteworthy that poor people of India are usually very polite before their masters. They are very well acquainted with the politeness principle and follow it sincerely. The rhetorical question ‘... how can I ask for money from my parents?’ displays Balram’s unwillingness to express his expectation. He flouts the quality and quantity maxims for the sake of being polite. It is obvious that cooperative principle too is flouted to observe politeness principle. The illocutionary force of this utterance is again of ‘praising’ his master and the perlocutionary effect of this Indirect Speech Act is that Balram is offered ‘eight hundred rupees a month’ the amount which is much more than his expectation. Thus, sugar coated words with the combination of a rhetorical question are much more effective than a plain direct statement.

3.2.1.3 Expressing Frustration

When people get frustrated, they use Indirect Speech Acts in general and rhetorical questions in particular. Generally, on the occasion of mourning, people usually say (rather cry), ‘How can I live without
you?’ or ‘Why did you leave me alone? Or ‘Oh, God why don’t you take me too? etc. Thus, rhetorical questions are means of letting out one’s intensive feelings of agony. The same can be explained by giving relevant examples from the novels under consideration. In the novel *Afterwards* Rahul Tiwari, the protagonist as well as the narrator goes to Kerala from London for the purpose of learning Mridangam. However, this visit of Rahul to Kerala twists and turns his life upside down. ‘Maya’ a beautiful neighbour is the main cause behind this consequence. In an attempt to relieve Maya from her husband’s cruel clutches Rahul hurriedly leaves Kerala with Maya and her daughter Anjali. In London, they get involved with each other gradually. However, Maya suddenly dies in an accident. When Rahul’s parents receive this bad news, his father calls him and says,

‘Rahul, my son, what can I say to you... what can I say?’ (2004: 112)

Being a rhetorical question, the form and function of the above interrogative do not go hand in hand. The question can be interpreted as I just cannot say anything in this situation or I am speechless/wordless etc. Thus, expressing sympathy to the concerned person is equally difficult in plain statements. At such situations people generally seek the aid of rhetorical questions such as, ‘What is the point of crying now?’ or ‘Can your tears bring back him/ her’ or ‘In what words should I soothe you?’ or ‘What is there in our hands? etc. In the same way Rahul’s father is using a rhetorical question. As a response, Rahul assures his father that everything is alright. When Rahul asks him about his health, he says,
‘As well as can be expected son… how can a father cope with such terrible news, eh?’

(Afterwards, 2004: 113)

Rahul’s father by applying one more rhetorical question, ‘How can a father cope with such terrible news, eh?, simply conveys his feelings that he is very sad to hear the news and is unable to cope with the situation. Similarly, Rahul’s mother enquires about Anjali, Maya’s daughter in the following words,

‘Oh,’ bechari, what can the poor child think of all this. (P: 113)

Thus, Rahul’s mother is not only worried about her son but also about Anjali, a small girl who even cannot understand the meaning of death. In the same way, Rahul’s Aunty Bulwant too calls him and expresses her sympathy in the following words,

‘Beta!’ she wailed, ‘what can I say to you! Such terrible news!’ ‘How can you be coping!’

(Afterwards, 2004: 147)

It seems that all the three close relatives of Rahul Tiwari sympathies with him by taking the shelter of rhetorical questions as mentioned above. The exclamation mark in the above expressions clearly displays the contrast between form and function of these sentences. In the company of his intimate friend, Kavin, Rahul vents out his deep agony over the permanent departure of his beloved Maya. He recollects Maya and says,

‘How much she must have gone through, losing her whole family like that. (1)
All that suffering … just for this? (2)
Weird, isn’t it? (3) Is this some sort of punishment, do you think?’(4) (2004: 156)

Maya leaves Kerala to save herself but it also meant leaving all the relatives especially her family. All her life she strives for freedom but as soon as she achieves it she dies all of a sudden. It is her death that manifests the bitter truth that life is pointless. The above rhetorical questions (1, 2) bear an ironical touch too. It implies that like Maya, we struggle for achieving something all our life but when we obtain it with hard work it seems fruitless. The charm surrounding the aim achieved with hard work fades away. Rahul suspects whether Maya’s death is a God given punishment to her for hurting her dear ones. The illocutionary force of (4) expresses the illocutionary force of ‘doubting’ indirectly.

Mr. Ashok in The White Tiger gets frustrated when his wife Pinky leaves him permanently and goes back to America, her motherland. Life seems meaningless to him and in utter desperation he tells Balram,

‘Sometimes I wonder, Balram. I wonder what’s the point of living. I really wonder ...’ (2008: 186)

Through this utterance Mr. Ashok points out the pointlessness of life and implies his desire to die due to his wife’s separation. Ironically and unexpectedly, the perlocutionary effect of this utterance creates humour because Balram, instead of worrying for his master Mr. Ashok, thinks about his salary as to who would pay him, if Mr. Ashok dies.
3.2.1.4 Arguing

People use rhetorical questions not only in frustration or on the occasion of somebody’s death but also when they argue with each other. In *The Inheritance of Loss*, Sai, the granddaughter of the judge and Gyan, Sai’s tutor quarrel with each other. Gyan being a Nepali, protests Sai’s celebration of Christmas because she is a Hindu girl and Christmas is a western festival. However, Sai disagrees with his opinion and points out that Christmas is an Indian holiday too. Gyan who is unable to find any valid reason to prove his point calls her ‘FOOL’. Obviously Sai gets infuriated and a quarrel breaks out between them in the following manner,

“Well, why don’t you go home then?
If I’m such a fool? (1)
What is the point of teaching me?” (2)
“All right, I will. (3) You are right. (4)
What is the point of teaching you? (5)

(2006: 164)

The first rhetorical question is an implied suggestion for Gyan to go home. The second rhetorical question can be interpreted as ‘there is no point of teaching me’. This rhetorical question bears a sarcastic tone. Gyan too sarcastically accepts Sai’s implied suggestion and asserts firmly via the rhetorical question in (5) that there is no point of teaching her. Although the rhetorical question in (2) and (5) are almost same, their implication is quite different. The rhetorical question in (2) implies that Gyan is a fool as he teaches ‘Sai’ whom he considers foolish and the rhetorical question in (5) implies that Sai is a fool and hence, Gyan should not teach her. Utterance (5)
does not indicate that Gyan is a foolish boy. Thus, the same rhetorical question can be interpreted differently as per the speaker’s perspective, especially, when they are arguing on a trivial issue.

After their quarrel Gyan feels guilty and tries to reconcile their relation by admitting his mistake. For the time being Sai forgives him but the previous intensity of their love deteriorates. When Gyan takes his leave and goes out, Sai thinks about their quarrel and a feeling of hatred crawls upon her mind. In this context the conversation between the cook and Sai bears varieties of rhetorical questions with layers of different meanings.

“Where did he go so soon?” (1) asked the cook later that evening. “Who knows?” (2) She said. “But you’re right about the fish and Nepalis. (3) He isn’t very intelligent. (4) The more we study, the less he seems to know, and the fact that he doesn’t know and that I can tell- it makes him furious.”(5) (2006:175-176)

The direct question of the cook in (1) is responded to indirectly by Sai using the rhetorical question in (2). It can be interpreted as ‘I do not know’. However, the rhetorical question implies Sai’s indifference towards Gyan. It also implies Sai’s bitterness towards him. Utterance (3) implies Sai’s approval to the opinion of the cook regarding Gyan. The word Nepalis refers to Gyan who is a Nepali. Utterance (4) is in a form of understatement recognized as ‘litotes’. As per ‘A Handbook of Literary Terms’ by M.H. Abram’s /Geoffery Harpham,
‘A special form of understatement is litotes (Greek for “plain” or “simple”), the assertion of an affirmative by negating its contrary...’ (2009: 133).

In litotes a negative statement is applied to indicate something affirmative or positive. As the utterance is negative but the interpretation is positive it can be considered as Indirect Speech Act as something different is stated than said. Sai’s remarks about Gyan in (4) imply that he is stupid or dull. Utterance in (5) is an evidence to support her assertion made in (4). In (5) Sai indirectly asserts her superiority over Gyan.

3.2.1.5 Expressing Anger

If one’s blood relation or friend deceives one then the indignation over this misdeed comes out naturally and is expressed usually by using rhetorical question. ‘Maya’, in Afterwards is supposed to deceive not only her husband but also her parents by running away with Rahul without informing any one. Maya’s mother reacts over this act of her daughter very bitterly she says,

‘How could she expect us to accept what she did to him, to Govind?’ (2004: 260)

The context is that after Maya’s death and Anjali’s departure to India with her father ‘Govind’, Rahul decides to visit Maya’s parents for various reasons. First of all he decides to ask them why they performed Maya’s death rites even before her death. When he meets Maya’s mother he asks her the same question. The above utterance is the response of Maya’s mother. The response is obviously given
in a rhetorical question. It can be meant as; ‘She could not expect us to accept what she did to Govind.’ Govind is the name of her husband who was distressed a lot due to his wife’s so called or supposed elopement with Rahul to England. Maya’s father had been extremely angry over his daughter’s treachery and to protest Maya’s elopement, he performed her death rites to prove that his daughter is dead for him. Above rhetorical question carries multiple functions. Firstly, it is an expression of anger over Maya’s misdeed. Secondly, it is an explanation of Maya’s mother as to why they performed her death rites even when she was alive. In Indian culture a daughter’s elopement is considered as humiliating to her family members. On the top of it, Maya being a married woman and having a daughter cannot be expected to elope in such a manner. Certainly, her elopement cannot be expected and accepted at this stage of her life. That is why; her mother again protests through the following rhetorical question,

‘How could she do that?’ (2004: 261)

It simply means, ‘she should not have done this’. It was a grave indiscretion done by Maya in her life. It is unbelievable that Maya could have done this shameful act.

3.2.1.6 Insincerity

On certain occasions rhetorical questions are insincere. Insincere questions are those that do not fulfil Searle’s felicity condition/s on questioning. The real intention of these questions is not seeking any information but rather providing it to the listeners. The speaker is already aware of the answer of the question, he asks.
The following example from *The Inheritance of Loss* illustrates the point. The judge attempts to expose the ignorance of the cook in the following conversation that gives rise to humour. The cook begins thus,

“The priest has said the balli must be done at *amavas*, darkest no-moon night of the month. You must sacrifice a chicken.” (1) The Judge refused to let the cook go. “Superstition. You fool! Why aren’t there Ghosts here? (2) Wouldn’t they be here as well as in your village?” (3) “Because there is electricity here,” said the cook, “They get a scare from electricity and in our village there is no electricity, that’s why ....” (4) “What has your life been for? (5) said the judge, “You live with me, go to a proper doctor, you have even learned to read and write a little, sometimes you read the newspaper, and all to no purpose! Still the priests make a fool of you, rob you of your money.” (6)

(2006: 179)

The context of the above conversational exchange is that the cook’s wife falls from a tree and dies instantaneously. The villagers frighten the cook that the ghost of his wife will take Biju, their son along with her because she is killed violently and unexpectedly. Hence, the priest of the villager insists the cook to offer the balli that is a killed animal at no moon night of the month as a remedy to this problem. The cook decides to offer the balli. For this purpose he asks the judge for a leave and tells him the real reason for the leave. Being honest, the cook uses Direct Speech Acts. However the judge, a
foreign returned well educated man gets irritated to listen to his nonsense talk and asks him the insincere rhetorical question in (2&3). The judge already knows the answer of these questions still he asks them because his intention is quite different.

The judge wants to convince the cook that there are no ghosts in the world, neither in the village nor in the city. However, the cook being ignorant and innocent responds to these insincere questions very sincerely. It is this sincerity and ignorance of the cook that gives rise to humour in this conversation. The reader is amused while observing the cook’s responses. The judge, instead, gets infuriated and again uses insincere question in (5) which can be inferred as the life of the cook is useless. It is ironically ridiculous that in spite of going to a doctor, and learning to read and write the cook is following superstition blindly. (5) However, the perlocutionary effect of the judge’s words is unexpected and undesired. The cook tells the judge dishonestly a false invented reason, and finally goes to his village. The above conversational exchange incites irony and humour simultaneously. The combination of irony and humour is highly effective.

In ‘The White Tiger’ Balram overhears following conversation of two customers at the tea shop,

‘You know, sometimes I think I did the wrong thing in life, becoming a miner.’ (1)
‘Then? What else can people like you and me become? (2) Politicians?’(3)
‘Everyone’s getting a car these days- and you know how much they pay their drivers? (4)
In the above conversation, one man is repenting as he has become a miner which according to him is a mistake. The rhetorical question in (2&3) is insincere because the other man doesn’t expect any answer from the listener but asserts that people like them cannot become politicians. The man who is repenting obviously does not answer to this question but asks another insincere question in (4). As the speaker already knows the answer of his own question he tells the same in (5). The intention of asking this question is not seeking any answer but providing information concerning the salary of drivers. This conversation is very vital hearing which Balram decides to be a driver.

The following rhetorical question is ironical asked by a common man to a guard of a shopping mall in the same novel.

‘Am I not a human being too?’ (2008: 148)

The shopping malls in Indian cities are usually built only for the rich and not for the poor. The guard prohibits the man having sandals on his feet to enter in the shopping mall. The sandals are the indirect exposition of poverty whereas shoes indicate richness. The guard just points out the man’s feet and prohibits his entry. The man, instead of going back, asks the above rhetorical question. All of us are quite aware that we are human beings. Still the man poses the above question because the implication of the question is different than what is stated. The implication is that, if all are human beings, there shouldn’t be any difference among them. The question stated
above is an indirect criticism on Indian urban shopping malls. The perlocutionary effect of this speech act is that the common man is allowed to enter in the shopping mall. The reason behind this permission of entry in to the mall may be that the guard too is a common poor man. The insincere question is strongly effective as it achieves its goal of entering in to the shopping mall. As both interlocutors – the guard and the man wearing sandals are at equal power position the insincere question achieves its aim. Thus, it can be inferred from the above example that people of equal power position can understand each other whereas superior people humiliate the inferior generally. Thus, it can be stated that it is the power that speaks usually.

3.2.1.7 Expressing Anxiety

Generally, when people feel helpless or restless they tend to ask rhetorical questions. It can be observed in the cook’s expressions when a gang of Nepali boys barge into the Judge’s house in The Inheritance of Loss. These boys snatch away the guns of judge and cause a lot of nuisance to all the members (the judge, Sai, the cook) present there. Especially, the cook is terribly frightened and he laments,

“Humara kya hoga, hai hai, humara kya hoga,” he let
his voice fly. Hai hai, what will become of us?”

(2006: 8)

Obviously, in the above question the cook doesn’t expect any answer from anyone but simply gives vent to his fear and anxiety. This is a fine example of code mixing and code switching. The cook has used
both Hindi and English languages simultaneously. It is one of the linguistic features of Indian English. The timidity of the cook in particular and that of the Indian servants in general is exposed through these insincere questions.

3.2.1.8 Provoking and Motivating

On some important occasions, people, especially leaders, ask rhetorical questions to motivate or provoke people against something. In *The Inheritance of Loss*, Gyan observes one Nepali man standing on the bench and addressing the other Nepalian people crowded there in a provocative language. The response of the people to the questions of the man seems very energetic. The man asks the following series of questions to the people over there.

“Here we are eighty percent of the population, ninety tea gardens in the district, but is even one Nepali owned?” asked the man.

“No”

“Can our children learn our language in school?”

“No.”

“Can we compete for jobs when they have already been promised to others?”

“No” (2006: 159)

All the above questions are provocative. The speaker already knows the answer of the questions, he is asking. People too know this reality; still they answer these questions promptly and seriously. Naturally the doubt arises as to why the speaker is asking such questions, the answer of which is already known to everybody. To
fathom the satisfactory reason of this doubt we have to peep into the context in which these questions are asked.

The Nepali people have sneaked in to the hills of Darjeeling. Their population is considerably large in this area, However, Bengali people too live here and dominate the Nepalis. These Nepalis seek for freedom from the Bengali’s domination. For this purpose they want a separate state for them in this area. They have formed a political group entitled ‘Gorkha National Liberation Front’ (GNLF). The speaker of the above conversation is communicating his thoughts to other gathered crowd of the Nepalis. The domination of the Bengalis and State Government has made them cruel. They crave for political freedom in the hills of Darjeeling. For the sake of freedom they demand a separate nation or state. They are determined to achieve it by hook or crook but their demands are ignored. This political revolt or uprising of the Nepalis governs the whole novel. The goal of the speaker is to motivate the Nepalis to achieve their ends. Like Indian freedom movement GNLF’s spokesperson tries to create awareness in the Nepalis dwelling in that area about their slavery. The man not only provokes them but also tries to form a unity amongst them to achieve their target of getting separate nation or state. It is for this effect these insincere questions are asked purposely. It is indeed ironical that in spite of their majority in this hilly area a number of Nepalis work as labourers on tea plantations. The Nepali language is not taught in the schools. They are not offered the job, they desire. This ironical condition of the Gorkha has been highlighted sharply through the above questions. The quick and prompt response of the Nepalis gathered there implies their
strong participation and support to the movement against the Bengalis who exploit them.

### 3.3 Form and Function of the Utterance

The formal structure and literal meaning of an utterance is not the exact meaning of the utterance. Context is equally essential to comprehend the meaning. The form of an utterance does not always co-relate with its function. An interrogative may be used for requesting that is for the imperative purpose and declarative can be used for asking question (interrogative) and vice-versa. This section of the chapter aims at analyzing some examples of declaratives, imperatives and interrogatives that fulfil more than one function. An attempt will be made to illustrate how more is communicated than said.

If the form of the utterance is interrogative but the function of it is imperative like requesting, suggesting or ordering it is called as Indirect Speech Acts. There are many examples of interrogatives functioning as imperatives in the novels under analysis. The following utterances taken from the novel *The White Tiger* (2008) are questions intended for suggesting, requesting or commanding by various characters.

‘Sir... can’t you ask the taxi men if they need someone?’ (P: 59)

‘Can you talk now, Ashoky? Can you answer my question?’ (P: 89)

‘Son, won’t you hold the spittoon for me?’ (P: 105)

‘Can’t you make them take me?’ (P: 107)
‘... why don’t you try yoga and meditation?’ (P: 189)
‘Can you leave me alone for just five minutes in a day?
Do you think you can manage that?’ (P: 192)
‘Don’t you see a human being is trying to eat?’ (P: 204)
‘... Balram, why the hell haven’t you turned the music down?’ (P: 267)
‘Sir, will you step out, there is a problem.’ (P: 282)

Following examples are taken from *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006)

“I don’t you leave me alone?” (P: 143)
“I wonder why you have to dress in such a gaudy manner?...” (P: 172)
“Will all visa applicants line up at window number seven to collect a number for visa processing.” (P: 183)
“Can you prove to us you won’t stay?” (P: 184)
“Should we order some dinner?” (P: 206)

Following examples of the same type of questions are given from *Afterwards* (2004)

‘Couldn’t we just play, Mr. Pannicker?’ (P: 25)
‘Look, why don’t you come over tomorrow... for dinner.’ (P: 36)
‘Could I have some more chilli sauce please?’ (P: 89)
‘Mr. Tiwari, do you think you could help me put a few things together for Anjali?...’ (P: 97)
‘Could you follow me, perhaps in your car?...’ (P: 102)
‘Would it be possible for me to see her, take her out perhaps?’ (P: 108)
‘Would it be possible... you haven’t by any chance got Anjali’s father’s address and telephone number on you, have you?’ (P: 109)
‘Beta, why don’t you just take some leave and come here....’ (P: 113)
‘Why don’t you leave her parenting to me,’ (P: 123)
‘Shall we go into the toilets here to wash them, do you think?’ (P: 135)
‘Can we go home?’ (P: 135)
‘Why don’t you take some leave, Rahul?’ (P: 142)
‘Why don’t you decide, Carol....?’ (P: 149)
‘Why don’t you two go for the house red,...?’ (P: 151)
‘What do you think of tomorrow, Mr. Tiwari? (P: 166)
‘Why don’t you start by saying, “Hello papa, how are you?” Much nicer, don’t you think?’ (P: 168)
‘Could I call you a little later,’ (P: 179)
‘Why don’t you come down to India instead,’ (P: 194)
Do you think you could come to our office at eleven a.m. tomorrow? (P: 197)
‘... can I please ask for your various suggestions, starting with you, Mr. Warrier.’ (P: 202)
‘Why don’t you sit on your chair there and supervise, huh?...’ (P: 209)
‘Could I have her address, do you think?’ (P: 247)
‘Could you ask him, Mammookka if that’s the biggest bottle he has?’ (P: 276)

All the above examples demonstrate that both ‘wh’ type and ‘verbal type’ of questions either affirmative or negative can be used for
commanding, requesting, suggesting or expressing wish. It is noteworthy that most polite requests are uttered in *Afterwards* and the least polite requests are observed to be found in *The White Tiger*.

The following examples will display how interrogative forms are used for the declarative purpose (function) and hence they are Indirect Speech Acts. Let’s begin with the examples from *The White Tiger* (2008)

- How the fuck can I help you? (P: 59)
- ‘...Don’t we want someone older?’ (P: 66)
- ‘Why do we even need a driver? Why can’t you drive, like you used to?’ (P: 81)
- ‘Five thousand- where will I get such money?...’(P: 107)
- ‘Doesn’t he have the right to read his own letters?’(P: 189)
- ‘Brother, do you have to do your work here? (P: 204)
- ‘How stupid can you people get?’ (P: 205)

In *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006) too some examples of interrogative functioning as declaratives are found as follows.

- Can you believe it? (P: 22)
- ‘__where will that get him? Phtoo!  (P: 112)
- “How can you not know???” (P: 143)
- How could this be? (P: 143)
- Are you mad? (P: 172)
- “Wouldn’t it be nice to live there?” (P: 196)
- What choice did we have?  (P: 239)

Only two examples of the above type of question are found in *Afterwards* (2004)
‘I mean, why would I be worried...’ (P: 36)

‘Why are you such a perverse child?’ (P: 131)

It is noteworthy that most of the above affirmative questions are intended to extend its negative function in the form of implied declarative. Of course, there are certain exceptional questions like – ‘Why are you such a perverse child?’ extending that ‘You are a very perverse child’ and the question ‘Are you mad?’ indirectly states that ‘You are mad’ and ‘How stupid can you people get?’ means ‘You people can get very stupid’. Thus, the questions that are usually inclined towards exclamation or sudden expression of intense feelings extend the same form that is positive to positive and negative remains negative inference.

Similarly, declaratives are used for fulfilling imperative function. That is statements are used for requesting, ordering or suggesting. Examples can be taken from the novel *The White Tiger* (2008) as below.

‘The air conditioner should be turned off when you are on your own.’ (P: 141)

‘Music should not be played when you are on your own.’ (P: 141)

Just below the spot where you’re going to sign. (P: 169)

‘... You’re going to drive me’ (P: 181)

‘For all the good you are going to do me, sir’. (P: 300)

In *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006) also a few examples are found.

“If I were a young man I would go back to India...”(P: 98)
“Photography strictly prohibited on the bridge.” (P: 216)

Following examples are found in *Afterwards* (2004)
‘I’d like some more chilli in that sauce please, I don’t mean the oil.’ (P: 89)
“If you’ll wait here one moment I’ll go and fetch her for you...’ (P: 120)
‘Gentlemen, this is not the time for recriminations, I’m sure you’ll agree.’ (P: 204)
‘It’s important that you redevelop your bond with her before taking her back to India ...’ (P:212)
‘Oh, and if you can stop for a minute down where those shops are, I need to buy something.’ (P: 275)

It is worth noticing that by using if clause or a conditional clause, the speaker can suggest the listener something in the form of declarative statements. Statements seem to be more polite than the direct order or direct speech acts.

Amazingly, declaratives also can be applied to put forward questions. Such examples are observed only in *Afterwards*. They are as follows.

‘You must be very keen to see Rukmani chechi?’ (P: 248)
‘You are not eating saar?’ (P”251)
‘This place, saar, Tirumala, it is very nice. You have gone before?’(252)

In all the above three examples the structure of the utterance is that of declarative that is subject followed by verb and object. However,
it is due to the question mark and shared contextual background one realizes them to be questions and not statements. In spoken communication the question is hinted via the change in intonation pattern. Thus, even the structure of statements can be used for asking casual questions.

Some conversational pieces need special attention to explain that the form of the utterance may perform more than one function indirectly. For example, if the following utterance of the stork - one of the landlords of Laxmangarh and master of Balram Halwai in *The White Tiger* taken without considering its contextual background, then the meaning of the utterance cannot be carved out.

‘The water’s gone cold’ (2008: 70)

Superficially, the utterance seems to be a statement that is declarative stating the fact that the water has turned cold. But, if the contextual background is examined, different meaning of the same utterance can be dug out. Hence, to understand the exact meaning of the utterance, let’s see its thorough background.

I had to heat water on the stove, carry it into the courtyard, and then lift the old man’s feet up one after the other and immerse them in the hot water and then massage them both gently; as I did this, he would close his eyes and moan. After half an hour, he would say, ‘the water’s gone cold, ‘and then I had to lift his feet out, one at a time, from the bucket, and carry the bucket in to the toilet. I had to fill the bucket with fresh hot water, and bring it back. (2008: 70)
It is after comprehending the minute details of the context, one can search out the meaning of the utterance ‘the water’s gone cold.’ The master by stating that the water has turned cold indirectly orders Balram to bring hot water again. Thus, a statement is applied for giving order in this utterance. However, it is striking that when the landlord uses the same utterance for the second time, the inference changes into something quite different as follows,

When the stork said, ‘The water’s gone cold,’ for the second time, and took his feet out of the bucket, my work was done. (2008: 72)

Here, the stork not only repeats the same utterance but even associates his non-verbal physical action- taking his feet out of the bucket with the verbal action that is ‘the water’s gone cold’ The accompaniment of both verbal and non-verbal actions represents the inference of the utterance that is, ‘Stop massaging my feet now.’

Thus, again a declarative is used for imperative function but with different inference. It can be illustrated further by taking the example, from *The Inheritance of Loss*. The following utterance of the cook cannot be understood without knowing the situation in which it is uttered.

“Ai aaa ai aaa” he joined his palms together, begging them, “please I’m a poor man, please.”(2006: 5)

Here, in one and the same utterance the cook is using a declarative along with an imperative word, ‘please’. Out of context the same utterance loses its interactional value. To understand the situation we have to see its context in detail.
The cook was hiding under the dining table and they dragged him out. “Ai aaa ai aaa,” he joined his palms together, begging them, “please, I’m a poor man, please.” He held up his arms and cringed as if from an expected blow.

“He hasn’t done anything, leave him,” said Sai, hating to see him humiliated, hating even more to see that the only path open to him was to humiliate himself further. “Please living only to see my son please don’t kill me please I’m a poor man spare me”. (2006:5&6)

It is after reading Sai’s utterance which is a Direct Speech Act, we come to know that the cook is exhibiting his poverty for requesting something. The non-verbal action of the cook ‘cringing with fear’ proves this to be true. The repetition of the same utterance of the cook makes it clear that the cook is requesting the gang of Nepali boys not to kill him as he is a poor man who is living only to see his son.

Thus, by explaining one’s helplessness and by humiliating oneself the speaker can request the listener to do or stop doing something. The declarative is used by the cook for the imperative purpose (requesting). The utterance of the cook has the perlocutionary effect of persuasion. The cook is conveying his request through an indirect, humble and mild way. It is in fact an act of camouflaging the same meaning with different linguistic forms.

The gang of Nepali boys understands the cook’s request and respond,
“Who wants to kill you?” they said to the cook. “We’re just hungry, that’s all. Here, your Sahib will help you. Go on,” they said to the judge, “you know how it should be done properly.” The judge didn’t move, so the boy pointed the gun at Mutt again. The judge grabbed her and put her behind him. “Too soft-hearted, Sahib. You should show this kind side to your guests, also. Go on, prepare the table” (2006: 6)

The interrogative, “Who wants to kill you?” is a rhetorical question functioning as declarative that is ‘nobody wants to kill you.’ The second utterance in the form of declarative- “Here, your sahib will help you” is an indirect order to the judge to help the cook. Again the utterance, “you know how it should be done properly” is an indirect order to the judge - ‘Do it properly’. However, the judge remains motionless and so by pointing the gun at Mutt – the non verbal action of communicating threat the boys threaten the judge that if he does not obey their orders, they will kill to Mutt. The judge understands this non-verbal communication quickly and protects his Mutt. As a reaction, the utterance of the boys, ‘You should show this kind side to your guests also’ is in the form of declarative functioning as suggestion and order combinely to the judge.

It is noticeable that the declarative or statements can be employed to order or to request that is for imperative function. In the same novel the following conversation explicates how declaratives are used for imperatives.

“Go, will you?! Bhago,” (1) a man said, pointing now with his rifle. Biju turned, “But give us your wallet
and remove your shoes before you go.” (2) He turned around again. “His belt is also nice,” (3) said another of the men, eyeing the leather. “Such nice clothes you get in America. (4) The quality is very good”. (5) Biju handed over his wallet. He took off his belt. “You’re forgetting your shoes.” (6) He took them off. Under fake soles were his savings. “Your jacket.”(7) And when his denim jacket was off, they decided even his jeans and T-shirt were desirable. (2006: 317)

It is interesting to note that in the above conversation, direct order has been given only in utterances (1 & 2). However, indirect order in the form of declaratives has been given in (3, 4, 5, 6&7). Utterances (4&5) are ironical as it is a false or insincere praise. The perlocutionary effect of ‘praising’ others should be pleasing others as per the approbation maxim of politeness principle. However, the GNLF men are praising the clothes and belt of Biju for humiliating him for their benefit. Praising Biju’s articles is an indirect way of ordering Biju to give those things to them. Utterances (6&7) too are Indirect Speech Acts as they are disguised orders covered in statements.

In Afterwards Rahul tells his friend Kevin and Carol that Anjali will have to go back to India to her biological father due to Maya’s (her mother’s) death. Actually, Anjali has been attached to Rahul though he is not her biological father. But the social workers give importance to the biological father. Carol, Kevin’s girl friend is obviously shocked to learn this and says,
‘But couldn’t they make some other kind of arrangement for her here? (1) They could help you to care for her, couldn’t they? (2) Put something in place to make it possible, surely...’ (3) Carol seemed genuinely concerned, indignant. ‘Maya ... Maya told me once that there had been no contact at all with Anjali’s father since they left India ...’ (4) It was a question more than a statement and Carol was waiting for a reply. (2004: 159)

Carol’s question in (1) and a question tag in (2) are indirect suggestions. Her utterance in (3) though begins with the verb ‘put’ is not an imperative sentence but an elliptical expression in which the subject and helping verb that is ‘They can’ is avoided. Hence, this assertive sentence too is a suggestion. Thus, the utterances in (1,2&3) do not co-relate with their function whereas the declarative in (4), is functioning as a question. Via her utterance in (4) Carol expects Rahul to clear her doubt about any other solution for taking care of Anjali as they had not been in contact with Govind. To sum up, it has been observed that the concepts of form and function of the utterance or the sentence are deceptive and can overlap to each other.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter is a modest attempt to analyze various forms of questions to reveal their significance in the development of the novels under study. Rhetorical questions have been specially considered due to their indirect function. These questions
considerably contribute to the thematic and structural significance of
the novels under study. It has been observed that the characters in
the selected novels use rhetorical questions frequently. These
questions have performed multiple functions such as imparting
information, complaining, asserting something strongly, expressing
feelings like anger, resentment, astonishment, helplessness, sorrow,
frustrations, for achieving the intended (perlocutionary) effect, etc.
The study of these questions casts light on the ways, attitude and
behaviour of the relevant characters. Thus, rhetorical questions
prove a great help towards the characterization of the interlocutors. It
is an attempt to guess the nature of those characters and identify
their traits and peculiarities via the questions they use from the
indirect point of view.

In the second part of the chapter form and function of the utterance
has been analysed from its indirect point of view in detail. It has
been observed that the incongruity between form and function of
speech acts displays that one type of sentence may perform the
function of other type of sentence. Thus, a question may perform the
act of request, order, assertion or suggestion. Similarly, a declarative
sentence may perform the act of order, request or interrogation. It is
this fact that gives rise to Indirect Speech Acts.