



## THE ARCHITECTURE BEHIND THE EXTENSIVE UTILIZATION OF INDIRECT SPEECH ACTS IN KHUSHWANT SINGH'S 'TRAIN TO PAKISTAN'

**MILI BHATTACHARYYA SARMA**

MA, M Phil from Pune University  
Gopal Bazar (Lakhipur)  
District / P.S- Nalbari. PIN-781353  
(ASSAM) INDIA

### ABSTRACT

*Novelists make conscious attempts to use Indirect speech acts to enhance the power of acute observation and understanding among readers. In fictions, the business between the writer and the reader goes on at an emotional level. To fulfil his intention the author makes use of indirect speech acts in the form of Rhetorical questions, Proverbs, and Euphemistic expressions etc. These indirect speech acts can extract the authorial intention from the linguistic expressions that occur in different socio-cultural context of the novel. The present article explores how the analysis of indirect speech acts can enlighten the readers to simplify the complex web of meanings in the novel 'Train to Pakistan' by Khushwant Singh. This can be the finest way to reach the ultimate meaning and understanding of the fictions.*

**Key Words:** *indirect speech act, rhetorical questions, euphemistic expressions, proverbs, context. etc.*

### INTRODUCTION

Utterances are used in conversations inexplicitly. The comprehension of indirectness explores this implicitness. In different circumstances, interlocutors make conscious attempts to prevent themselves from being straight forward. The art of linguistic expression lies mainly on being indirect. A proficient interlocutor never gives a direct negative answer to any state of affairs which could be an invitation, a request, a refusal, an advice etc. a straight forward answer can ruin a relationship or may create a gap between interlocutors. The main fact that stimulates people to talk implicitly is to appear polite and diplomatic. Linguistic expressions are social interactions and by using it people also maintain their interpersonal relationships. Apart from

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its directive, informative, expressive functions, language is also used to establish, preserve, and consolidate social and interpersonal relationships. The same thing is relevant in the interpretation of a novel also. The author prefers indirect speech acts as they are the most skillful presentation of his/her artistic grandeur. The novelist makes earnest efforts to avoid being straight forward as indirect speech acts supply ample scope for creating witty characters and to construct intricate pattern of actions in the novels. Indirect speech acts are also used by the novelist/author as an instrument with the purpose of creating psychological impact on the readers. They yield insight in the main flow of action of the novel.

Again indirect speech acts are used effectively by the writers, because of their strong perlocutionary effects. It doesn't directly reflect its communicative purpose. The readers have to build a bridge of understanding between what is said and what is meant by the author through indirect speech acts. The base of this kind of study depends on the context of the novel, knowledge of the previous utterances and the author's intention in the novel. Lack of contextual knowledge may lead to confusion in the minds of the readers.

Some instances of indirect speech acts are cited from the novel 'Train to Pakistan' by Khushwant Singh to show how indirect speech acts are engrafted in the narrative design of the novel and how the author constructs the dialogues of the characters for better perlocutionary effects.

*Listen! He said, "There is the goods train." (p:15)*

In this speech situation, the dacoits were planning to rob Lala Ramlal, the money lender of ManoMajra. This linguistic expression is produced by one of the dacoits while they are proceeding towards Lala's house.

The daily life and work of ManoMajrans are regulated by the arrival and departure of the goods trains. They start their daily routine immediately after the trains come and resume their work also in the evening. Thus, the trains control every activity of ManoMajrans. At the surface level this utterance provides the information that the goods train is coming. At the deeper level the implied meaning is different. As by using the indirect speech act the dacoit indirectly warn his companions to get ready for robbery and to move towards Lala's house without wasting time. The illocutionary force of the utterance is a warning that it's time for robbery and as the perlocutionary effect the companions immediately join the leader. All of them understand the implicature because they knew the context.

Let's observe how an interrogative functions as an indirect speech act of threat in the novel---



*“Is this the way you treat your guests?*

*We come and you hide under a charpoy.”(p:18)*

Malli and his friends entered into Lala’s house with an intention of robbery. With fear Lalaji was hiding under the charpoy (bed).When the dacoits found him the leader used the above indirect speech act.

The speaker used an indirect speech act not to ask a question but to make an indirect complain against the listener. The context is that Indians treat their guests as God. Sarcastically the behaviour of Lala is a kind of insult to the dacoits, as they are the guests. Therefore, this speech event is an indirect threat to Ramlal than a complaint. Instead of saying ‘Come out’ directly, the dacoits used the indirect utterance to frighten Lala. The illocutionary force of the utterance is a threat and as a perlocutionary effect the listener gets frightened and used every possible ways to save his life from the clutches of the speaker, Malli.

The above indirect speech acts show how it is necessary to analyse them to get the proper meaning of the conversations in the fictions. The writer’s manipulation fulfils his immediate purpose of character delineation and the smooth running of the actions depicted therein.

The major tools of indirect speech acts that induce a novelist to be indirect in the linguistic behavior of the characters are rhetorical questions, euphemistic expressions and proverbs etc. The distinctive nature of **Rhetorical Questions** is its emphatic force. They are the ways of making point, persuade, dissuade, to chide, to express grief or to inveigh etc. to achieve a greater expressive force than a direct assertion. When in particular situation a speaker asks “Aren’t you ashamed of yourself?” it functions as a forceful alternative to the assertion “You are ashamed of yourself”. The additional emphasis created by these questions due to the reiteration of a known proposition couldn’t be created by a direct speech act. They are not generally used with the expectation of an answer but to attain better emphasis and persuasion M.H.Abrams describes the same as (1991:149) ---

*“A rhetorical question is a question asked  
not to evoke an actual reply, but to achieve  
an emphasis stronger than a direct statement.”*

As this figure is often used in persuasive discourse, and tends to impart an oratorical tone to an utterance, it can be an effective measure to be indirect for a novelist. Some of the instances are cited below from the novel ‘Train to Pakistan’-----



*“Why Babusahib, you have come to stop killing  
and you are upset with one murder?” (p:51)*

Iqbal, a social worker took permission to stay in the Sikh temple of Mano Majra for some days. Meet Singh the priest while talking gave him the information about the robbery and murder of Lala. By hearing this Iqbal gets scared and asks the speaker ‘Is the village a safe place for him to stay?’ As an answer to Iqbal’s question Meet Singh produces the above indirect speech act.

The speaker uses the rhetorical question without expecting an answer from the listener makes it interesting. The assertion created by the rhetorical question effects on Iqbal’s mind to make him aware about the degrading scenario of the village. Meet Singh used the indirect utterance to boost Iqbal to do something to resist the chaotic situation in ManoMajra.

Another effective use of rhetorical question from the same novel is —

*“Why don’t you people want to be free?  
Do you want to remain slaves all your lives?”(p:62)*

This linguistic utterance is used at the time when Hindu-Muslim riots were about to start. Though the Indian independence movement was going on all over the country the villagers being illiterate did not understand the real meaning of independence. By seeing their ignorance Iqbal got angry and produced the above utterance.

The speaker’s question is obviously infelicitous, for by means of the question he has no intention of drawing a yes-no answer from the hearer. It is a fact shared by the interlocutors that they are all slaves under the British rule for their whole life. By asking a question the answer to which is already known, the speaker tries to produce the illocutionary force of awareness about freedom and slavery in the minds of the simple villagers. The perlocutionary effect achieved by the utterance is that it changes the mindset of the listeners and they realize the bitterness of the British rule. It helps Iqbal again to become diplomatic in his assertion.

Another rhetorical question asked by Iqbal when the speaker and Juggut Singh both are in police lock-up—

*“Why don’t you do something? Don’t you see,  
he will kill the man?”(p:136)*



Malli and his friends are arrested by the police on charge of LalaRamlal's murder. For some diplomatic reasons police released Malli and his friends. While leaving the police station they started taunting Juggut Singh. Jugga got angry and suddenly gripped Malli and started beating him murderously. In this speech situation Iqbal uttered the above mentioned indirect speech act addressing the police.

This rhetorical question appears as an indirect request of Iqbal to the police man. The illocutionary force is to request the listener to protect the weak. This indirect speech naturally results into the perlocutionary effect of hitting Jugga violently and protect Malli from his clutches. The assertion here serves as an additional force of emphasis due to which the listener saves the life of Malli.

In another place the Lambardar made a skillful use of rhetorical question in the novel 'Train to Pakistan'—

*“One's self-respect is on one's own hands.  
Why should have myself insulted by having  
my turban taken off?”(p:99)*

The police came to the village to gather wood and kerosene oil from the villagers for the cremation of thousands of corpses carried by the ghost train. The police officer is somehow disturbed and busy with his work so he insulted Imam Baksh. The villagers smell something fishy and in eagerness they asked Banta Singh, the Lambardara, about what is going on? In such a speech situation he uttered the above mentioned rhetorical question.

This utterance is an interrogation without expecting any answer from the listener. The addresser makes an indirect complain through the interrogative. The nativization of the word 'turban taken off' is also having the indirect connotation of losing one's self-respect. The illocutionary force of the rhetorical question is to advice the villagers indirectly how to protect ones self-esteem. As a perlocutionary effect the villagers stop asking questions to the speaker. The interpersonal relationship between the speaker and listener is that they are fellow villagers. Therefore, though the speaker gets irritated by the question asked he answered them by using a rhetorical question. The rhetorical question is used here to maintain the sweetness of relation between the characters Thus, these questions become a very powerful tool in the hands of a strategic user of language.

Rhetorical questions are very effective indirect speech acts used as absolutely novel ways to express things by the novelists. To interpret and understand any rhetorical question context always plays an important role.



Another beautifully used indirect speech act device is **euphemistic expressions**. It is an inoffensive expression used in place of a blunt one that is felt to be disagreeable and embarrassing to a social stratum. Such consciously-avoided words and expressions can be considered as taboos. A **euphemism** is a word or phrase that is used in place of another word or phrase to "soften" or "tone down" the sentence in which it is used. E.g. the phrases like "passed away" or "departed" are euphemisms for "died"; the word "affair" is a euphemism for the word "adultery". The existence of taboos has created a need to find words and expressions that enable the writers to write about the subjects concerned without feeling uncomfortable or being afraid of hurting another person's feelings. It is a polite, pleasant word or expression that is used to refer something which people may find upsetting or embarrassing to talk about. It is a way of avoiding offence.

As Dr. Ashok Thorat rightly describes it as (2002:68) ---

*“Euphemism is a way of avoiding offence.  
It is the art of pleasant speaking. Without  
euphemism, the world would grind to a halt.  
Euphemisms are the oil that lubricates the  
functioning of individuals and groups in a  
society. If it were not for euphemisms, universal  
animosity would cover all. It is a way to sound  
good to others.”*

Under certain circumstances when one has to speak the unspeakable and express the inexpressible euphemisms help to lower down the negative meaning or connotation that those offensive or disgusting words or topics have. Euphemistic expressions can occur at all levels of society but it is seemed to use at a greater pace by the novelists in certain areas like sex, death, killing, prostitution, crime, disease and different functions of the human body etc which are considered as more uncomfortable and unpleasant to talk about.

The characters in the novel “Train to Pakistan” make very intelligent and effective use of euphemistic expressions.—

*“I will never come to see you again. If Allah  
forgives me this time, I will never do it again.” (p:24)*

Nooran by using the euphemistic expression tried to express her irritation indirectly regarding the sexual intercourse that has done by Juggut Singh with her.



Avoidance of taboos, obscene, and dirty words by the feminine gender in Indian culture encourages the use of Euphemism. Most of the times the females use euphemistic expressions to avoid offence. In the first sentence mentioned above, Nooran is making a simple complain that she will not come to meet Juggut Singh again. But in the second sentence by using substitute like 'This time' for 'pregnancy' and 'It' for 'sexual intercourse', she tries to save herself from being embarrassed. Here indirectness has manifested itself at the lexical level. The illocutionary force is to create a sense of repentance in the mind of the listener that they had committed something wrong. As a perlocutionary effect Jugga felt bad as he loved her and tried to make her quiet. It is an indirect attempt of Nooran to express her irritation in a proper and respectable circumlocution.

The example given below from the same novel uses euphemistic expression to avoid the vulgar and rude words to refer the sexual act---

*“There is no fun in marriage , Babuji .Where is the time or place for fun? In summer, everyone sleeps out in the open and all you can do is to slip away for a little while and get over with things before your relatives miss you.” “You seemed to know a lot about it, without being married Jugga laughed, 'I don't keep my eyes shut. Besides, even if 'I am not married, I do a married man's work.” (p:128)*

The above indirect speech act reflects how Iqbal and Jugga tried to avoid the taboo words in their conversation. The fact is that in Indian Society the adult males are to some extent free to use the taboo words. It also depends whether the situation falls in the public or the private domain. In Public domain the speaker tries to avoid such words. As the speech event occurs in the police station, the interlocutors try verbally to conceal the topic of their talk. As it is considered as dirty and obscene in Indian socio- cultural context, Jugga refers to 'sexual activities' as 'things' and 'married man's work'. By using such euphemistic expressions Jugga indirectly expresses the unpleasant things in a pleasant and socially acceptable manner. Another good example of avoiding the word 'prostitution' is seen in the same novel in the utterances of Hukum Chand, the district magistrate. The sub-inspector has made a good arrangement for the refreshment of Hukum Chand. Haseena, a prostitute is engaged to entertain Hukumchand. When he enquired about her profession he made the linguistic expressions ----

*‘How long have you been in ‘this profession?’  
‘What a silly question to ask! Why, ever since  
I was born. My mother was a singer and her*

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*mother was a singer till as long back as we know.'*

*'I do not mean singing. 'Other things', exclaimed*

*Hukum Chand, looking away.*

*'What do you mean by other things?'*

*asked the girl naughtily. 'We do not go about  
doing other things for money. I am a singer and*

*I dance ----- you just know about other things.*

*A bottle of whisky and other things. That is all? '(p: 120-121)*

Hukum Chand very tactfully uses the words 'this profession' and 'other things' to ask Haseena about her profession i.e. prostitution. Haseena immediately understood the implied meaning of the word 'other things' and answered that she doesn't do other things except singing and dancing. Thus, Hukum Chand tries to avoid the word 'prostitution' as the use of such words is considered as a sign of primitiveness in Indian Society. More than that Hukum Chand as a magistrate also tries to maintain the politeness strategy by expressing the inexpressible through euphemism. Both the speaker and listener understood the meaning easily as they are aware about the context. Hukum Chand used the euphemistic expression to avoid being embarrassed or to maintain the dignity of his post.

By using the euphemism broadly in fictions as one of the indirect ways of expressing the taboo words the novelists maintain the social norms. It is an effective indirect speech act to preserve the interpersonal relations with personal gravitas.

**Proverbs** are the most indirect ways to communicate the broadest meaning of the words. They are frequently used inventories of formulaic expressions that transmit the basic aspects of life. They impart insight to human life, relation and experiences. Use of proverbs enrich the conversation and also add variety and spice to a dull subject. Most important is that the meaning of a proverb lies in the context of the speech event. Proverbs are used for both positive and negative purposes. A speaker can complement, congratulate, encourage and at the same time he can also criticize, threaten, charge the listener through such expressions. Using the proverbs is a sort of indirectness strategy and it is also used by the writers to maintain the politeness strategy.

According to Dr. Thorat (2002:76) ---

*"The general nature of proverbs operates as a  
safeguard against the addressee, accusing the  
addressor or threatening the face of the former."*

In the novel 'Train to Pakistan' some proverbs are used by the author to link out

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What is actually said with the unstated assumptions....

*“A snake can cast its slough but not its poison.”(p:55)*

Jugga had been out of mischief since a long time. He was perhaps trying to reform his bad ways and earn his livelihood by farming. But still no one can take guarantee about Jugga's activities as he had dacoity in his blood. The above indirect speech act regarding Jugga's nature is used by Meet Singh

By using the proverb, Meet Singh compares Jugga with a snake and his anti-social activities with snake's poison. What Meet Singh wants to mean here is that a snake by slough throw out its old skin but it does not do the same with its poison. The poison is safely kept within so that it can use the poison anytime to harm anyone. Though Jugga has somehow changed himself but the criminal tendency is in his blood. Therefore, his behaviour is unpredictable like the snakes. He can do any crime at any time implies that Jugga may also fall back on his previous activities. The tactful use of proverb by Meet Singh reveals the different layers of indirect meaning.

Another glorifying example of the use of proverb in the same novel is seen while the villagers were talking about the growing crime rate in the village because of partition.

*“Bad acts yield a bitter harvest”.(p:143)*

India's partition aroused the bitterness among Hindu-Muslim in Mano Majra. The rumours of atrocities committed by Sikhs on Muslims and vice-versa disturbed the villagers. At the house of Banta Singh, the Lambardara and the villagers were discussing about the looting and killing that took place in the different parts of the country and showing their sadness against all these inhuman activities. At that very speech situation some of the villagers produce the above proverb.

This indirect speech act declares that destiny is the result of the performed actions. By using this proverb the villagers want to imply that may be they have done something wrong in their past. Therefore, this present scenario is the outcome of their past deeds. The villagers are blaming their actions for whatever has been happening. Again the context helps to understand the implied meaning of the proverb. The speaker tries to produce a sense of repentance as an illocutionary force by using the proverb. As a result, the listeners agree with the speaker is the perlocutionary effect of the indirect speech act.



Another good example of proverb by the novelist is in the utterances of Hukum Chand. Hukum Chand and Sub-Inspector both are disturbed by the political situation of ManoMajra. Sub-Inspector provides him news about the molestation of the refugees coming from Pakistan to Hindustan. They are scared that something may happen with the Muslim refugees of the village. Therefore, they plan to evacuate them quickly. At that time Hukum Chand uses the proverb-

*“A wise man swims with the current and still gets across.”(p:116)*

The indirect meaning is that it is very difficult to swim in the opposite direction of the currents. There is always a chance of drowning. So to save himself one should swim in the direction of the waves and can easily get across to a safe place. Like that in life also when opportunity comes we should grab it than to wait for a better one, because opportunity knocks the door once. By this proverb Hukum Chand tries to imply that whatever arrangements are ready to evacuate the Muslim refugees they should use them quickly otherwise it will be too late. By using the proverb he indirectly advises the inspector how to take quick action at the time of emergency. The illocutionary force of the utterance is to give advice to the listener and as a per-locutionary effect the listener is ready to take every possible step to save the lives of the Muslims.

## CONCLUSION:

A novelist makes deliberate efforts in the use of language in his/her literary creations. The lexical structure and stylistic presentation added to the aesthetic beauty of the work of art. The extensive use of indirect speech acts namely rhetorical questions, euphemistic expressions and proverbs in fictions not only focus the variety in the mode of expression but also help the novelist to design the characters and build up a complex socio-cultural network of relationships among the characters. The most important aspect of rhetorical questions is their emphatic force. The analysis of euphemistic expressions reveals the fact how the interlocutors maintain the social relationships without violating the social norms. Proverbs are also powerful indirect strategy in arguments. They are the expressions of popular collective experiences that work in conventionalized socio-cultural scenarios. The degree of indirectness at lexical, phrasal, sentence level reveals the different and complicated layers of meaning in fictions. Fictions provide a platform where indirect speech acts are often used as an extensive strategy that increases the author's creativity. It can also add to the readers' understanding, appreciation, and enjoyment of a literary text.



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