

**Maya on the Spiritual Path:**

**A Stylistic Analysis of Her Speeches in The Mystery Cave**

**Pratibha Kumari Singh**

**Research Scholar**

**Ansal University, Gurgaon, India**

**Dr Indu Prabha Pathak**

**Assistant Professor**

**Ansal University, Gurgaon, India**

**Abstract**

*No previous attempt has been made to stylistically examine the central character of Maya in The Mystery Cave. In this paper, the authors aim to examine the speeches of Maya, particularly in part IV of the novella and claim that she evolves as a spiritually mature character towards the end of the story. This claim has been achieved by looking at the coherence and subject of her speech in part IV through stylistic examination. When we meet Maya in Part IV of the story, we see her as a Sadhavi, who gives well informed, structured and coherent speeches to her audiences. Her speeches analysed reveal her experiences and thoughtfulness of the concepts of society, religion and spirituality quite well. She talks about esoteric and exoteric religion and makes people understand the difference between the two and how to follow esoteric religion and become spiritual and humanitarian in ultimate terms.*

**Keywords: Stylistics, spiritualism, cohesion, coherence**

**Introduction**

*The Mystery Cave* can be called as the masterpiece of Dr PV Dhamija. Like his earlier novel, *Society on a Razor edge*, this novel too, is an acerbic satire. The subject of criticism in *Society on a Razor* was society; in *The Mystery Cave*, it is religion. Published in the June of 2012, this novel is of 143 pages and has achieved attention of critics claiming it to be a scathing social satire on [www.ijellh.com](http://www.ijellh.com)

the current religious practices in India. But besides this, there seem to be another higher objective of the novelist, to highlight the philosophy of esoteric religion for people to follow rather than chasing exoteric religion. The writer achieves it through the odyssey of central character Maya.

With intricate blend of fact and fiction, the novelist presents verisimilitudes of Maya's life through her intense sufferings, leading her to embark on the spiritual path and evolve as a humanitarian. The novelist, here, not only succeeds in presenting a poignant picture of Maya's traumas but also makes scathing remarks on the modern society and religion that are responsible for bringing tornadoes of afflictions in Maya's life. However, the same institutions become agents of change and transformation in her life, when she asks questions and seeks their relevance and meaning by self introspection and self interrogation.

Throughout the novel, *The Mystery Cave*, expertise of novelist is prominently visible in appropriate use of language according to character and context of the novel and the way he has inter-woven the story around the themes of love, friendship, suffering, hope and journey of one's life to attain its true meaning. Being a phonetician himself, his acumen shapes the speeches of his various characters. Hence, parallels can be seen in this novel wherein the author's voice becomes Maya's voice and reflects his own philosophy on religion.

The novelist dedicates this book, '**For all those who think rationally and work perseveringly to advance spiritually.**' Through Stylistics scrutiny, this theme unravels the view of religion through Maya's transformation there by affirming what is stated in the epigraph of the book, *The Mystery Cave*.

### **Summary of the Novel**

This novel is a story of two lovers. Maya Fernandes who is a Christian, loves Umesh Mehta, who is a Hindu. While love unites them, their religion separates them. Maya still 'a cute young girl in her late twenties' shares with Shantanu Kashyap, a friend of Umesh and also the narrator in this story, that even after 'eight years' neither her love for Umesh nor her parents view on the subject of her marriage has changed.

While Umesh is still a bachelor, Shantanu shares the news of Maya's wedding with John Rebello with Umesh, to which he does not respond. Umesh staunchly believes that 'this matter is over now' and it is not a matter of love but of pure 'politics' which is 'frozen' and thus there is no point flogging the dead horse. But for Shantanu, there is still a ray of hope.

This hope reawakens when Shantanu confronts Maya once again in the flight, but this time with a 'woe-begone' look on Maya's face making her appear 'much older' than what she was and speaking her unsaid pain. However, this pain disappears as soon as Maya shares her story of refusing the wedding vows with John and informed by Shantanu that Umesh is still unmarried. Giving her the address of Umesh, Shantanu tries to unite them but only to be separated again by their religion and their destiny.

On the decided day of their Wedding, the series of Maya's mysterious abduction starts one after the other. Searching her at Lucknow, Hyderabad and Chennai, Umesh thinks that 'Maya was an illusion, an integral part of the great cosmic *maya*.' Hence, her search is futile, but the 'incorrigible optimist' Shantanu, keeps on igniting the hope time and again with his 'Maya's' search and ultimately finds her at a charitable home in Kolkata and tells Umesh to go there.

Umesh is dumfounded to look at this Maya who shares her story with him narrating how she was sold to an Arab Sheikh in \$50 thousand and when failed to fulfill his lecherous needs, the Sheikh sold her to another Mr Shakeel Ahmed in \$75 thousand who took her to Doha in Qatar where again her resistance to 'play at bed' forced him to sold her to a Sikh, Mr Indeerjeet. And the new Maya, dexterously escapes herself from his cruel clutches to confront the unexpected. The story continues where in tracing her whereabouts, Umesh, Shantanu and his wife Sarita finally locate her as a *Sadhavi* in a 'Mystery Cave' in Sikkim. It is here that we meet a new Maya, a transformed one and one who is rationally and spiritually evolved.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Although there have been various approaches to analyse a text, however for the present study, an integrative model has been adopted, wherein the stylistic investigation has been made to see the way author has exploited the linguistic resources for the purpose of sketching Maya's character.

In addition to this, Maya's profiling from the speeches in part IV, using stylistics, has been attempted.

Stylistics is a systematic study of style in language. Among several different approaches to stylistics obtaining at present, the two most widely accepted ones among them are literary stylistics and linguistic stylistics. The present authors look at all these approaches as complementary aspects of only one kind of stylistics. Therefore, they are combined into one integrative approach and defined as one which is a systematic study of literary as well as non-literary kinds of writing from a linguistic as well as supralinguistic perspective ( Bradford, 1997; Enkvist, 1973; Leech 1969). The present paper is intended to see this integrative model of stylistics in practice. In this paper, it is being applied to a literary work, *The Mystery Cave*; in a sequel to this paper, it will be applied to a non-literary work. For a close examination of speeches by Maya, this study makes use of the taxonomy of cohesive relationship as provided by Halliday and Hassan (1976) to establish relationship within a text. Halliday and Hassan's taxonomy of cohesive relationship has given the most comprehensive treatment of the subject (cohesion in text) and has become the standard text in this area.

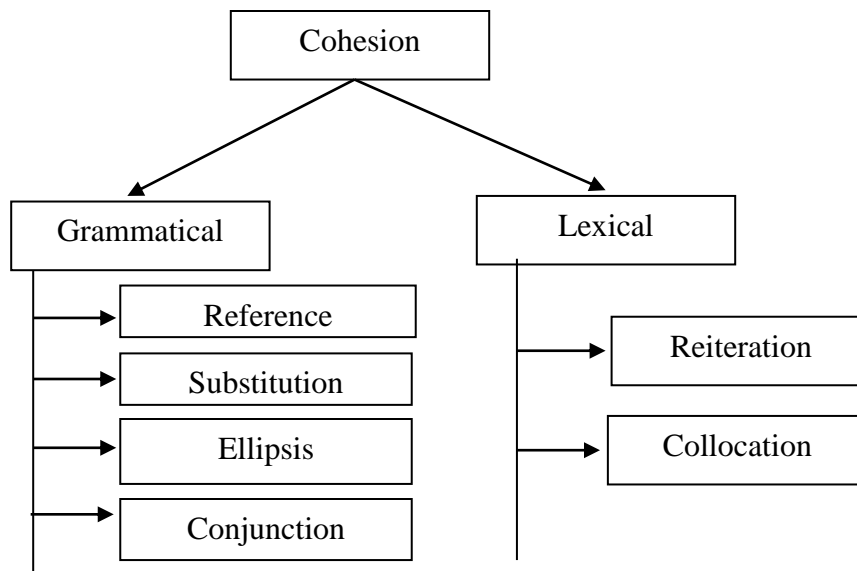


Fig 1: Cohesive Devices by Halliday and Hasan, 1976

Cohesion helps the text to be more comprehensible and, therefore, makes reader-friendlier by forming a unified whole rather than a collection of unrelated sentences, or, in Thornbury's words, 'it hangs the text together' (2005, p. 19).

### **Stylistic Examination**

For the purpose of examination, six samples of Maya's speeches have been selected. These passages are from the last section of the novella. Using the stylistic technique of looking at the linguistic features of the language with the use of Halliday and Hasan Model, we focus on three things to prove that Maya evolved as a highly rational, spiritual and humanitarian:

The signs of her rationality are present in her well organized and structured speeches. Her speeches are based on reasons and she gives examples to prove her arguments. Frankal (1959) opines that human spirituality is an attempt to understand and search for meaningfulness in one's life. In view of Weaver and Cotrell (1992) spirituality 'refers to matters of ultimate concern that call for releasing the passions of the soul to search for goals with personal meaning' (p.1). In words of Tolan (2002) spirituality is 'an individual's experience of and relationship with a fundamental, nonmaterial aspect of the universe.'

Maya's sufferings in the initial part of the story leads to catharsis and results in formation of a new Maya who is more empowered, explicit in her expression and has become spiritual through her meditation practices and has found meaning and purpose of true religion. The way she uses words and diction in her speech highlight her understanding of spiritualism and distinction between esoteric and exoteric religion. Her humanitarian aspect is revealed when she claims all are one and ends her final speech with the message 'all belong to only one family, called the human race, which is beautifully phrased in Sanskrit as *Vasudhaiva Kutumbhakam.*'

### **Analysis and Discussions**

Walking on the path of self actualization, Maya, from a simple middle class Christian-girl transforms into a *Sadhavi*. This transition has been achieved through the linguistic choices which the writer has made in delineating the character of Maya. Maya, whom we see in the first I of the

novel, a middle aged girl, ready to confront her parents for her love, fights with the abductors who forcefully try to engage her in their illicit relations, on the other hand, when we see Maya, in part IV of the novel, she is imparting healing words and heart transforming speeches to her listeners in the Mystery Cave.

Passage one, given below, is the very first speech that Maya gives when we meet her in Part IV, chapter 4 of the Novel.

*'Dear Brothers and Sisters:*

*Let me repeat, **first**, what **I've** been saying in the **last** few weeks and months.*

*My orange-yellow **robes** don't mean that **I'm** a perfect saint unlike any other mortal saint. **I** too have a past, which I've been trying to live down. I wear these **robes** and stay in this **houseless home** because I don't want to continue to be part of a **society** of **housed homes** and **prêt-a-porter** or **haute couture**. That **society** **I've** left behind because what they regard as **their strength** is **their greatest weakness**. **You might be wondering what could be that strange strength that is, in fact, weakness.**'*

*'That's **religion**,*' she resumed. *'**Religion** is a problem everywhere in society. **It's** divided man from man. **It's** fragmented man. **It's** killed man.'*

#### Passage 1

Maya opens her speech with proper salutation of addressing her audiences as 'dear brothers and sisters' and immediately establishes the camaraderie. She repeats what she has been addressing to her audiences since 'last few weeks and months' and explains why she wears 'orange-yellow robes.' She expresses explicitly why she has renounced the society because its strength turns out to be its 'greatest weakness.' This weakness is religion. Repetitive use of personal pronouns 'I' along with the word 'religion' throughout; and use of parallelism in the last sentence of the passage emphatically and persuasively highlight her individual thinking and thoughtfulness on the subject of religion respectively. The parallel structure used brings excess regularity in these sentences make them more emphatic (Leech).

Here, not only as a convincing orator she presents herself, but in the lines that follow in passage 2, we see a Maya who has experienced and practiced religion and explains to her listeners, what and how they should follow the spiritual path and connect with the lord.

Indexed, Peer Reviewed & Refereed Journal

*'Religion is the worst of all evils that society is afflicted with. Two of the more important other evils are caste and class. But they are not even half as bad as religion. Religion most easily takes the cake. Now, how has religion divided man from man? The answer is so obvious, my dear friends. I don't need to belabour it...*

*Over seven billion people find themselves in over seven airtight compartments. "Airtight" in the sense that they are tightly and rigidly exclusive of one another. Not only that. They preach hatred against one another. Since religion happened, there have been crusades, genocides, wars, holocausts, and recently widespread communal and caste riots. Behind them have been invariably man's ego, avarice, lust for power. Religions are just like political parties. The larger their following, the large their vote share and the greater their power. This ego-driven lust for power has divided men into herds, formally docketed with the branded labels of their particular herds.'*

*'Now, what, sorry, how has religion fragmented man? ... Man has lost his integrity, his individuality. His thoughts and actions have little mutual connection.*

*His actions are powered by his religion, or by what his religious leaders dictate.'*

*'And what do I mean by saying that religion has killed man?' she continued. 'I mean to say that when man loses his individuality, he's as good as dead. He can't live as he wants to; he can't say what he wants to; and he can't love as he wants to.'*

**Passage 2**

Camouflaging herself from her various abductors, Maya hides and takes shelter in a cave at Sikkim. In this cave Maya meditates and connects with deeper self to understand the purpose and meaning of her life. Continuing her speech, in passage 2 above, Maya underscores differences created by religion in society which has now become an evil. Caste and class, according to her are the other two evils besides religion that have fragmented man from man. Using rhetorical device in line 3 of passage two, she provides obvious answer to it. How religion has divided man from man? She elaborates by giving suitable examples of 'airtight compartment' and religion like 'political parties.' The frequency of collocation used in the above passage highlight the impact religion has on bringing sufferings in life of people. Words such as *crusades, genocides, wars, holocausts, and widespread communal and caste riots/ man's ego, avarice, lust for power* emphasise how religion has divided, impacted and affected society and man both.

*'What I've said, my friend, refers to **exoteric religion**, the kind of religion most of us understand as true **religion** and identify with. **Religion** in this sense is a confusing complex of rituals, ceremonies, sets of beliefs about man and God and all other kinds of **mumbo-jumbo**. All these things are arbitrary and different in different **religions**, and therefore they divide men into what I called "herds". It's **this religion** that divides men and fragments **them** and kills **them**.'*

### Passage 3

The use of cohesive devices provides strength to the overall texture of the speeches. In the passage above we find cataphoric references (forward looking) and anaphoric references (backward looking) giving direction to the speech wherein the reader of the text and the listener of Maya's speech do not get digressed from the main points of her speech. In this passage 3, again we see repetition of the word religion and Maya's explication on exoteric religion. Use of synonyms such as *confusing complex of rituals, ceremonies, sets of beliefs about man, mumbo-jumbo* in context of exoteric religion and use of word *herd* points out impact of religion on the psyche of man and how it divides, fragments and kills men.

*'That's **esoteric religion**, my friend. **It's pure spirituality**—the knowledge and practice of how an individual spirit can break out of its bodily confinement and unite with God, the free cosmic spirit that pervades every atom of the Cosmos.'*

### Passage 4

When asked by one of the listeners, 'What's the kind of religion, Your Holiness, which unites them and keeps them from becoming beasts?' Maya replies, 'esoteric religion.' It is through passage 4, we understand Maya's understanding of 'pure spirituality'. The density of lexical cohesive devices used here through words such as *individual spirit, bodily confinement, unite with God, the free cosmic spirit, pervades every atom, the cosmos*, signifies what she means to be a pure spirituality. The lexical cohesion is shown in words: *divides, fragments and kills men* when explaining exoteric religion, whereas, its contrast is shown through esoteric religion where antonyms are used: *unite with God* and let loose *the free spirit*, to show oneness.

When asked by Umesh to accompany them, Maya replies that she has some ‘accounts to settle here’. Unlike Maya of Part I, who would have immediately accompanied Umesh and tied in the nuptial knot for which she had been waiting since long and had suffered, Maya in Part IV, uses her conscious to take decisions and does not use her reflexes. She explains to Umesh in the most logical and rational manner, as shown in passage 5 below, what has been her ultimate purpose now and before she leaves this place and the Mystery Caves she has an aim to accomplish.

*‘I would’ve been only too glad to accompany you at once. But I have **accounts** to settle **here** before I leave **this** Cave.’*

*‘Accounts?’ Umesh raised **his** eyebrows.*

*‘By **accounts** I mean two things,’ she explained. **First**, I must return to the society what **they**’ve given me all **these** years. **Second**, I must round off the principles of life I’ve been “teaching” these devotees, who have been so faithfully listening and looking up to me since I’ve been here.’*

***This** impulse was instantly opposed by **my** goal to wallop the mindlessness of **this** exoteric religion.’*

*But don’t you think I should first do something so **that** some of these buggers, **these** brokers of this most **irreligious** religion may not dare to come between vital human relations?’*

*‘...my aim is to free man from the **shackles of shams and shibboleths**.*

#### Passage 5

Use of grammatical cohesive devices like personal pronouns ‘I’ and ‘me’ show her assertiveness and responsibility to complete her task. Repetition of word ‘accounts’ three times symbolise her spiritual and humanitarian debit and credit of societal responsibilities that she wants to clear before she leaves the Cave. Use of temporal conjunction here, *first and second*, shows the sequence relationship which exists between the sentences and also in the message that Maya wants to pass onto Umesh. Had she not been a transformed Maya, she would not have taken conscious decision to make her aim, which she claims in the last sentence, ‘to free man from the shackles of shams and shibboleths,’ and settle her accounts.

*I'm not saying anything different today. I'm only trying to say it a little more explicitly. All divisions caused by **exoteric religion** are false. The life on this planet has only **two** natural and true divisions: **human beings and non-human beings**. **Non-human** beings are countless species, **and I** don't know how **they** should live. Only nature perhaps decides their modes of living. **But I'm** pretty sure about **human beings**. They are all a single species, and their **division** into **religions, races and castes** is politically motivated **and** extremely **evil**. **Their** only **religion** is humanity. All our **evils** on earth have emanated from this division, and religion has **divided** us in more ways and more horrid ways than any other institution or agency. **I** don't want to say anything more today. **I** only want to repeat that your only **religion** is **humanity**, and you all belong to only **one family**, called the **human race**, which is beautifully phrased in Sanskrit as **vasudhaiva kutumbhakam**.'*

#### Passage 5

Before leaving the Mystery cave and bidding adieu to her followers, Maya gives a final speech, shown in passage 6, which establishes her as a humanitarian who believes in oneness of religion. The very opening line makes use of parallel construction, using the lexical reiteration to emphasise her message of the talk. Use of personal pronoun marks prominence of her individuality here. She raises herself beyond colour, cast, creed and religion and gives her final message as a rational and spiritual being who believes in oneness of all. The last message for her followers is to remember the meaning of esoteric religion which unites man living on this planet. And this religion connects all through a thread of humanity and all become part of '*one family, called the human race...in Sanskrit **vasudhaiva kutumbhakam**.'*

#### Conclusion

This paper, through stylistic examination of the speeches of Maya, shows her transformation. The novel begins as a saga of two lovers, whose love is matured by series of trials. Passing through the shades of hope and despair, sufferings and traumas, the lovers unite at the end. The only fault was that they were belonging to different religions. Thus through the findings from the novel it can be concluded that Maya, after going through trials, evolves as a rational, intellectual

and spiritual being who has developed into a self actualized person. Through her incessant hardships, she gets aware of her own self. Gaining knowledge and wisdom of the ages, she masters skills to escape from any risky situation and develops ability to survive amidst the most dangerous scenarios. She indeed has become more empathetic in her attitude towards people in her life. Remaining in hibernation for quite a sometime in cave, she unfolds the true meaning of religion and spirituality when she meditates and spends time in solitude. Amidst the layer of incidents in her life, she finds out her own connotation and definition of esoteric religion which she shares with her followers in the cave through her acts of speeches discussed in the paper. Use of appropriate diction, highly organized speech which is coherent with the use of cohesive devices indicates her intellectual and rational development. For her, religion unities and does not divide and what divides cannot be called as religion but 'frozen politics'. It is thus concluded that the novelist makes use of deliberate cohesive choices at the micro level which contribute in establishing the rational and spiritually evolved character of Maya towards the end of the story.

Through a stylistic analysis, it can be said that the linguistic weaving at the micro level in the Maya's speeches, significantly contributes in the thematic interpretation of the text where her spiritual growth at the macro level is shown.

Since no previous attempt has been made to explore and investigate the nuances of linguistic and stylistic features of this novel, therefore, it is my argument that through an integrative model of analysis within the sphere of stylistics (at micro level), this study has added new insights to the interpretation of the text at macro level.

**References:**

- Bradford, Richard. 1997. *Stylistics*. Routledge: London.
- Enkvist NE. 1973. *Linguistic Stylistics*. The Hague.
- Frankl, V. 1959. *Man's search for meaning*. New York: Praeger.
- Leech, Geoffrey N. 1969. *A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry*, Longman, London and Harlow.
- Leech, G. and Short, M. 2007. *Style in Fiction* (2nd ed.) Pearson Education Ltd.
- Halliday, M.A.K. and Hassan, P. 1976. *Cohesion in English*. London: Longman.
- Halliday, M.A.K. 1978. *Language as Social Semiotic*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Tolan, S. 2002. *Spirituality and the highly gifted adolescent*. Charlotte, NC: Author. Retrieved December 2016, from <http://www.stephanietolan.com/spirituality.htm>.
- Thornbury, Scott. 2005. *Beyond the Sentence: Introducing Discourse Analysis*. Macmillan.
- Weaver II, R. & Cotrell, H. 1992. A nonreligious spirituality that causes students to clarify their values and to respond with passion. *Education*, 112(3), 426.