

**A Linguistic Analysis Jawaharlal Nehru's *Tryst with Destiny* Speech**

**Syed Umer Ahmad Qadri**



[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jawaharlal Nehru gives his %22tryst with des  
tiny%22 speech at Parliament House in New Delhi in 1947 \(02\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jawaharlal_Nehru_gives_his_%22tryst_with_destiny%22_speech_at_Parliament_House_in_New_Delhi_in_1947_(02).jpg)

**Abstract**

In some general sense, Hallidayan Linguistics is mainly concerned with examining text by recounting the use that certain lexico-grammatical features. The Hallidayan model helps comprehend the communicative properties of texts. Using a Hallidayan approach this paper will study and examine the style and communicative function of Nehru's speech *Tryst with Destiny*. This paper will disclose how the style and communicative functionality of Jawaharlal Nehru, enriched by his experimental, interactive and textual meanings, result from the energetic relation between transcript and its background.

## **Nehru's Political Speeches**

The political speeches of India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru transformed the notion of India. Jawaharlal Nehru was not only a statesman and nation-builder par excellence, he was also an amazing intellectual who epitomized modern scientific values. His thoughts and political philosophies are an ultimate intermingling of western pragmatism and Indian cultural awareness. Nehru's greatest influence on India is the importance that he had given to science, technology and industrial development without which economic and social justice advancement would be impossible. He was aggressive against the main undercurrents of socio-cultural life in the country. He was against traditions and superstitions that kept India backward.

At the time when the country was suffering from the sickness and ailment of communal hatred and violence, industrialization and economic development was the primary condition for the successful dedication to secularism in the country. This was the opinion of Jawaharlal Nehru.. Nehru always placed importance and significance on the scientific outlook. He was of the opinion that the virus of communalism, regionalism, and regional loyalty, backwardness can be eliminated only with scientific temperament, secularism, democracy, economic planning modernization and socialism. In order to live in the modern world as an independent country, keeping intact the independence, a modern outlook of life, modern techniques of economic development should be employed.

### **Secularism Became an Article of Faith for Nehru**

In binary division of science and misconception, motivation and visionless faith, humanism religious bigotry, Nehru's vision of modern India revolved around science, motivation and humanism. This is particularly accurate when we deliberate Nehru's views and understanding on problems of religion, religious groups and the role of the state in dealing with them. He was not only secular in his style, but a different variety of secularism appears from his thought. His philosophy of secularism was not fully guided by the western concept of secularism nor it was totally homegrown. His philosophy of secularism appeared out of the everyday challenges of the governance of a plurilingual, pluricultural and pluri-religious country like India. In view of the

importance of accepting all languages, all religions and all faith in the nationalist movement, secularism became an article of faith for Nehru.

### **Focus of This Paper**

This paper is an effort to analyze and understand the nature and extent of secularism in Nehru's ideas. The paper focuses more unambiguously on the idea that the arrangement of the speech has an aim to create a unity of the speaker and the audience in order to deliver the message. A close look at the paper suggest that Nehru maintains the atmosphere of unity throughout the speech and therefore the speech produces a mesmerizing effect on the audience.

The persuasive strategies employed in the speech of Jawaharlal Nehru will also be examined in the present paper. The aim is to analyze how the use of a number of linguistic strategies creates a speech which senses an agreement and cooperation between Nehru and his audience.

This study attempts to make an analysis of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's "Tryst with Destiny Speech". It specifically focuses on the standards of cohesion, coherence, acceptability and situationality of the speech delivered by Nehru. The Hallidayan framework and other communication theories especially the theories of persuasion set with a mission to unravel the spell binding elements in the speeches which saw Nehru's triumph overwhelmingly over his rivals will be employed to examine the text. This framework allows for an interpretation of both circumstantial and linguistic factors, thus empowering a more comprehensive analysis of the relations between language use and context than a purely linguistic analysis could provide.

### **Analysis**

In this section the paper presents analyses Nehru's "Tryst with Destiny Speech". The speech addresses Indigenous issues, especially reconciliation and the Nehruvian concept of India

### **Contextual Analysis**

### **Genre type and subtypes**

The text under study is an elucidation. It belongs to the subtype of explanatory elucidation as it attempts to persuade people to do what it argues.

### **Context of situation**

- a. **Mode:** Spoken discourse is the mode of the speech delivered on the eve of India's Independence, at the Indian Constituent Assembly in The Parliament, towards midnight on 15 August 1947
- b. **Tenor:** Prime Minister of India (speaker) → Audience (members of the constituent assembly), in the first instance, but, in reality, the Prime Minister of India Jawaharlal Nehru is addressing all Indians. Although as national leader the speaker has more institutional power than his hearers, as an elected leader he is also expected to adopt a suitably humble and respectful tone, especially given the sensitive subject matter. The speaker here adopts an appropriate tone and level of formality on the basis of this relationship.
- c. **Field:** The speech of Nehru captures the spirit of the successful conclusion of the principally non-violent Indian independence tussle against the British Empire in India
- d. **Purpose:** The speech focuses on the aspects that rise above India's history This speech is envisioned to acknowledge past and present problems and to persuade its hearers to carry out some suggested solutions to existing problems.
- e. **Institutional practice:** The speaker is expected to track definite linguistic conventions while addressing the audience in this background and this is reflected in the language and structure of the text, which is less formal than a parliamentary motion, but more structured than an off-the-cuff media interview.
- f. **Sociocultural context.** The setting of the speech is also significant as it is delivered in the Constituent Assembly of Indian Parliament to an audience celebrating the Indian Independence.
- g. **Linguistic analysis**
  1. Linguistic features
    - a. Experiential meaningsProcess types and participant roles

Material processes (verbs/verbal groups of doing things) are the most common process type in the text, followed by Mental processes (which denote ways of thinking, perceiving and feeling) and Relational processes (which denote existence or states of being or having), then Verbal processes (ways of communicating something).

### A. Participants

1. The pronoun ‘we’, referring to all Indians including the speaker, is by far the most common participant in the text. It is most frequently employed as an Actor in material processes, as in the following examples:

<b>We</b>	Made	Long years ago <b>we</b> made a tryst with destiny,
<b>Actor</b>	<b>Process : material</b>	<b>Goal</b>

<b>We</b>	shall redeem	and now the time comes when <b>we</b> shall redeem our pledge
<b>Actor</b>	<b>Process : material</b>	<b>Goal</b>

<b>We</b>	Celebrate	The achievement <b>we</b> celebrate today is but a step, an opening of opportunity, to the greater triumphs and achievements that await <b>us</b> .
<b>Actor</b>	<b>Process : material</b>	<b>Goal</b>

<b>We</b>	to grasp	Are <b>we</b> brave enough and wise enough to grasp this opportunity and accept the challenge of the future?
<b>Actor</b>	<b>Process : material</b>	<b>Goal</b>

<b>We</b>	have endured	Before the birth of freedom <b>we</b> have endured all the pains of labour
<b>Actor</b>	<b>Process : material</b>	<b>Goal</b>

<b>We</b>	have to labour	And so <b>we</b> have to labour and to work, and work hard, to give reality to <b>our</b> dreams.
<b>Actor</b>	<b>Process : material</b>	<b>Goal</b>

An “essential function of the ‘we discourse’ is the denial of personal glorification and its dislocation on to the Indian as a whole in the sense that what many people believe cannot be wrong”

- The next most common participants in the text are variations of ‘India’, the most frequent being the pronoun ‘she’ which appears most often as an Actor in material processes:

<b>India</b>	will awake	to life and freedom
<b>Actor</b>	<b>Process : material</b>	<b>Goal</b>

<b>India</b>	<b>Started</b>	At the dawn of history <b>India</b> started
--------------	----------------	---

		on <b>her</b> unending quest,
<b>Actor</b>	<b>Process</b> : material	<b>Goal</b>

We	take the pledge	We take the pledge of dedication to the service of <b>India</b> and <b>her</b> people	to the service of <b>India</b> and <b>her</b> people
<b>Actor</b>	<b>Process</b>	<b>Goal</b>	<b>Experiencer</b>

<b>She</b>	Has never lost sight	Through good and ill fortune alike <b>she</b> has never lost sight of that quest or forgotten the ideals which gave <b>her</b> strength.	which gave <b>her</b> strength.
<b>Actor</b>	<b>Process</b>	<b>Goal</b>	<b>Experiencer</b>

3. The next important participant in the speech is

the <b>world</b>	Sleeps	when the <b>world</b> sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom.
<b>Actor</b>	<b>Process</b> : material	<b>Goal</b>

Indian with positive processes is highly significant, realising a version of events more suited to arguing the Jawaharlal Nehru's position, which appears to be: 'we' INDIANS need to acknowledge that we did these things, so we can try to put things right.

### **Grammatical metaphor/Nominalisation**

Nominalisation plays a significant part in realising the persuasive function of the text. One role of nominalisation is to restrict the arguability of statements, which it does by fully packaging propositions as ‘things’. This text uses nominalisation to ‘establish’ the existence of certain propositions before presenting claims that are definitely arguable in themselves, but because they are directly linked to what has just seemingly been established are harder to contest. A closer look at the clauses in question will reveal how this is achieved. First, the use of ‘the starting point’ in the following clause signals the existence of a problem that requires attention from now on; that the problem exists cannot be disputed, perhaps only how to approach it.

The text develops this line of argument with further nominalisations: It begins, I think, with the act of recognition. Recognition that it was we who did the dispossessing. The nominalisation of the mental process of recognising after careful modalisations, changing what is an arguable process into something whose existence is more difficult to question, appears calculated to make the controversial claims that follow less contestable. The choice of the nominal ‘the dispossessing’ again presents a proposition as a ‘truth’: that dispossession did take place and all that is required now is to recognise who did it. The speaker then delivers, in definitely arguable clauses, his version of events with a clear verdict on who was responsible for them:

The future beckons to us. Whither do we go and what shall be our endeavour? To bring freedom and opportunity to the common man, to the peasants and workers of India; to fight and end poverty and ignorance and disease; to build up a prosperous, democratic and progressive nation, and to create social, economic and political institutions which will ensure justice and fullness of life to every man and woman.( Nehru 1947)

We have hard work ahead. There is no resting for any one of us till we redeem our pledge in full, till we make all the people of India what destiny intended them to be. We are citizens of a great country on the verge of bold advance, and we have to live up to that high standard. All of us, to whatever religion we may belong, are equally the children of India with equal rights,

privileges and obligations. We cannot encourage communalism or narrow-mindedness, for no nation can be great whose people are narrow in thought or in action. (Nehru 1947)

The text has a persuasive and convincing function and urges and exhorts people to do what its arguments propose. It is more specific and unambiguous, arguing that all Indians need to take certain practical actions. The text has abundant example of ceremonial style. Its construction and the arrangement of some of its lexis reflects the highly ceremonial and grand style, rather subdued nature of its purpose and setting. It also seems very ‘one way’ in that it does not ask much of its hearers beyond accepting what it says.

The speech of Jawaharlal Nehru uses an exclusive ‘we’ throughout, distancing its hearers and making it seem very impersonal. These factors are most obviously related to the settings in which the speeches are made. However, the tones adopted also reflect Nehru’s communicative purposes, with Nehru trying to persuade people to accept his arguments

## Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to expose how linguistic features in the style and communicative functionality of Nehru’s speeches result from the dynamic relation between text and context. Analysis of the experiential, interpersonal and textual meaning choices of the speech has exposed how these communicative strategies were comprehended. The lexico-grammatical aspects of the speech emerged from Nehru’s style of expression. And sharing a situational context, namely having a Mode, Field and Tenor.

---

## References

Augustinos, M., LeCouteur, A., and Soyland, J. (2002) Self-sufficient arguments in political rhetoric: constructing reconciliation and apologizing to the Stolen Generations. *Discourse & Society* 13/1, 105–142.

Barkan, E. (2000) *The Guilt of Nations: Restitution and Negotiating Historical Injustices*. New York:

Norton. Billig, M. (1996) *Arguing and Thinking: A Rhetorical Approach to Social Psychology*. Second edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Butt, D., Fahey, R., Spinks, S. and Yallop, C. (2000) *Using Functional Grammar: An Explorer's Guide*. Sydney: National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research, Macquarie University.

Dickerson, P. (1997) "It's Just Not Me Who's Saying This. . ." The deployment of cited others in televised political discourse. *British Journal of Social Psychology* 36, 33–48.

Halliday, M. A. K. (1994) *An Introduction To Functional Grammar*. Second Edition. London: Edward Arnold.

Halliday, M. A. K. (2001) "Literacy and Linguistics: Relationships between Spoken and Written Language." In Burns, A. and Coffin, C. (eds.) *Analysing English in a Global Context*. London: Routledge. pp. 181-193.

Halliday, M. A. K. and Hasan, R. (1989) *Language, context and text: Aspects of language in a social-semiotic perspective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

=====  
Syed Umer Ahmad Qadri  
Research Scholar  
Department of Linguistics (LAMM)  
Aligarh Muslim University  
Aligarh  
Uttar Pradesh  
India  
[suaq786@gmail.com](mailto:suaq786@gmail.com)