



SH. NARENDRA DAMODARDAS MODI'S MANN KI BAAT: CRAFTING SOCIO- ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL NARRATIVE THROUGH MASS MEDIA

Ajay Kumar,¹ Professor Dr. Ramesh Chauhan²

¹Ph. D. Research Scholar, School of Media and Mass Communication, Alakh Prakash Goyal (APG) Shimla University, Mehli Shoghi Bypass Road Shimla, Himachal Pradesh, India-171013

²Ph.D. Supervisor, School of Journalism and Mass Communication, Alakh Prakash Goyal (APG) Shimla University, Mehli Shoghi Bypass Road Shimla, Himachal Pradesh, India-171013

ABSTRACT:

This study examines Prime Minister Sh. Narendra Damodardas Modi's signature radio show "Mann Ki Baat" as a tactical instrument for mass participation and socio- economic and political communication. The paper critically analyzes how the program uses a no confrontational structure to combine governance, nationalism, social messaging, and cultural discourse to create a compelling political narrative. The study uses content analysis to show how Modi uses radio to go beyond gatekeepers in traditional media, interact directly with the public, and strengthen his reputation as a people-centered leader. Mann Ki Baat rethinks political outreach in the digital age by fusing personal narrative with more general policy topics. It is positioned as a potent case study in contemporary mass media communication and political branding as the paper delves deeper into its function in influencing public opinion, inspiring civic engagement, and advancing ideological narratives.

Keywords: Mann Ki Baat, Mass Media, Media Strategy, Radio Broadcast, Public Engagement, Citizen Outreach

Introduction:

Since its introduction on October 3, 2014, Prime Minister Sh. Narendra Modi's Mann Ki Baat has become a trailblazing channel for direct contact between the Indian public and the Prime Minister. With more than 120 episodes completed as of June 2025, the show has established itself as a vital instrument for policy outreach, civic engagement, and social engagement. Sh. Modi has covered a wide range of topics in this monthly radio show, from environmental preservation and youth creativity to women's empowerment and cleanliness¹.

The show's increasing cultural influence was demonstrated in April 2023 when its 100th episode was televised worldwide, even from the UN headquarters². By highlighting the accomplishments of citizens and grassroots projects, Mann Ki Baat has fostered a participatory model of governance that goes beyond political rhetoric³. By June 2025, it still serves as a conduit between public opinion and government efforts, reinventing political communication in the digital era.

Mann Ki Baat is an example of a well-planned, culturally-based, interactive, and emotionally compelling political communication technique. It is consistent with the global trend of populist leaders using alternative media outlets to speak directly to the public, changing the nature of political debate and the relationship between the media and the government. Crucially, the program has developed into a tool for creating a national narrative, showcasing grassroots experiences, encouraging behavioral change, and cultivating civic nationalism in addition to spreading official programs⁴.

The fact that Mann Ki Baat has made participatory communication possible is among its most significant effects. Feedback, experiences, and suggestions are solicited from the public and frequently featured in later episodes. By encouraging democratic participation and a sense of inclusion, this two-way paradigm strengthens the notion of a government that pays attention to and acts upon the wishes of its citizens⁵.

Moreover, the program has played a significant role in spotlighting social issues such as sanitation, women empowerment, water conservation, and drug usage. After being pushed on Mann Ki Baat, campaigns like Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, and Vocal for Local gained a lot of popularity, demonstrating the show's ability to impact behavior and public opinion⁶.

Conceptual Framework: Political Narrative and Media:

In the twenty-first century, political communication has changed dramatically, especially in democracies like India. Personalizing political narratives through direct communication between leaders and voters is one significant change⁷. Leaders or institutions use political narratives to explain national

identity, policies, and ideologies. These stories function as interpretive frameworks that help people comprehend governance; they are not only rhetorical⁸.

Modi creates a narrative of nationalism, moral citizenship, and participatory governance through Mann Ki Baat. For instance, personal accounts of sanitation workers and peasants were frequently weaved into Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (Clean India Mission) episodes, transforming a government policy into a moral crusade⁹. Listeners are encouraged to identify emotionally and get personally invested by such storytelling. By avoiding political conflict and concentrating on social issues like water conservation, education for girls (Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao), or local entrepreneurship (Atmanirbhar Bharat), Mann Ki Baat crafts a moral tale of independence and solidarity¹⁰.

Mann Ki Baat employs a hybrid media approach that blends digital amplification with conventional radio. To ensure greatest reach, it is streamed on YouTube, Twitter, and Sh. Narendra Modi's personal app in addition to being broadcast on All India Radio¹¹. Modi is able to create an unfiltered narrative by avoiding important gate keeping organizations such as mainstream news outlets thanks to his multi-platform presence. It is a prime example of a media strategy that blurs the boundaries between communication and propaganda by making a leader both the source and the topic of news¹². Additionally, vernacular idioms, stories, and a conversational tone are carefully incorporated into the script to improve reliability and cultural intimacy¹³.

Both practically and symbolically, Mann Ki Baat incorporates citizen participation:

Through Smartphone applications or MyGov.in, citizens are encouraged to contribute their experiences and recommendations. Listeners are given a sense of co-creation in the national conversation through the program's featured messages. Symbolic politics, which the state uses to portray itself as responsive and people-centered without resorting to institutional discussion, is embodied in this concept. Affective connections between the citizen and the leader are strengthened by the narrative format¹⁴. For example, the show highlighted the resilience of

Indian citizens, frontline workers, and traditional practices like yoga in episodes during the COVID-19 pandemic, transforming the national disaster into a story of civil solidarity and resilience¹⁵.

The Structure and Strategy of Mann Ki Baat:

Mann Ki Baat has an informal, monologic, yet adaptable, and anecdotally-rich format. It avoids confrontational politics in favor of uplifting tales, civic engagement, cultural heritage, and grassroots inventions¹⁶. Key strategic elements include:

Monologue Format with Conversational Tone:

The monologue format of Mann Ki Baat is its defining structural feature. However, it keeps a conversational and sympathetic tone, frequently sounding more like a private letter than a political speech. The message gains legitimacy and a sense of direct connection with the audience as a result of this leadership customization¹⁷.

Non-Political Contexts:

Despite coming from the highest political office, the show seldom ever discusses opposition criticism or party politics. Typically, the content focuses on moral principles, public initiatives, national pride, and inspirational citizen stories. The appeal transcends ideological divides thanks to this depoliticized context¹⁸.

Use of Vernacular and Regional References:

Modi regularly refers to different states and their cultures while using Hindi that is laced with regional idioms. This linguistic inclusion appeals to a variety of groups and improves national integration¹⁹.

Inclusion of Citizen Voices:

The inclusion of citizen stories and feedback, typically submitted through social media, letters, or MyGov.in, is a distinctive structural component. Modi strengthens participatory democracy and humanizes governance by addressing specific citizens by name²⁰.

Strategic Dimensions of Mann Ki Baat:

The following are the core strategic dimensions of Mann Ki Baat:

Soft Power Projection and Cultural Nationalism:

The program effectively promotes Indian customs, festivals, dialects, heritage, and unsung heroes, fostering national identity and cultural unity. Mann Ki Baat supports Modi's political philosophy by emphasizing the varied yet united Indian experiences, which is a fundamental component of his cultural nationalism agenda. Through storytelling, it creates a narrative of "unity in diversity" while maintaining a pan-Indian identity and providing room for regional perspectives²¹.

Direct Citizen Engagement and Trust-Building:

Mann Ki Baat, a monthly radio show by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has emerged as a strategic tool for direct citizen interaction and trust-building. By speaking to the country in a casual and conversational manner, the prime minister avoids using conventional political jargon and establishes a personal connection with people from all walks of life. By honoring their experiences and accomplishments, this program not only empowers citizens but also promotes solidarity throughout the country and a sense of shared responsibility. The program's apolitical tone and consistent style have strengthened participatory government and fostered public trust²².

Behavioral Change and Policy Integration:

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's monthly radio show, Mann Ki Baat, has become a potent tool for influencing public opinion and guaranteeing smooth policy integration. The program has effectively promoted programs like Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, and water conservation as mass movements by employing relatable storylines and culturally relevant messaging. In addition to increasing knowledge, Modi's persistent calls through Mann Ki Baat have inspired people to act in a pro-social manner, bridging the gap between the creation of policies and grassroots involvement.

Multi-Platform Media Ecosystem Strategy:

By utilizing radio, television, social media, and internet platforms to optimize reach and interaction, Mann Ki Baat is a prime example of a well-planned multi-platform media ecosystem strategy. The program's primary medium is still radio, but it also reaches both rural and urban audiences thanks to its simultaneous broadcast on Doordarshan, live streaming on official websites and mobile applications, and sharing on YouTube, Twitter, and WhatsApp. A coherent national narrative and interactive public discourse are produced by this integrated communication technique, which makes it possible for the message to cut through linguistic and technological boundaries²³.

Data-Driven Feedback Pool:

Through MyGov, the NaMo App, and other platforms, the public contributes to each episode of Mann Ki Baat. In addition to being symbolic, these citizen contacts provide the government with a data pool from which it may examine regional issues, popular attitude, and the emotional pulse. It establishes a methodical feedback system to adjust outreach and governance appropriately.

Influence on Media and Public Discourse:

The monthly broadcasts deliberate scheduling, which often occurs on the final Sunday, guarantees that media outlets will pick up and emphasize its themes all week long. The speech's reach and shelf life are extended by replaying and analyzing it in print, internet, and television media. Mann Ki Baat is transformed from a single broadcast into a month-long discussion because to this media synchronization. One message spreads across several media and audiences as a result, creating a layered communication strategy.

Concluding Remarks:

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Damodardas Modi's Mann Ki Baat initiative is a revolutionary approach to India's use of mass media for socio-economic and political communication. This radio show is a strategic tool that integrates communication, government, and citizen interaction into a single political narrative; it is more than just a monthly broadcast.

Modi's preference for a one-way, non-confrontational, and emotionally resonant media over traditional news conferences or interviews has contributed to the development of a new paradigm of leadership message that is per-formative, persuasive, and intimate.

A deliberate and intentional attempt to recast the Indian political leader as an engaged and sympathetic listener rather than a distant authoritative figure is at the core of Mann Ki Baat.

Despite being a monologue, the show expertly combines underlying ideological motifs that are in line with the ruling party's overarching vision with soft issues like cleanliness, education, culture, youth aspirations, environmental concerns, and traditional values to give the impression of direct intimacy with the populace. By doing this, Mann Ki Baat depoliticizes and politicizes discourse at the same time, avoiding overt political campaigning while promoting nation-building tales, emotive nationalism, and ideological symbols.

It was a calculated decision to use radio, a medium that is sometimes viewed as outdated in the digital age. Accessibility was guaranteed across geographic and socioeconomic barriers, even for rural and internet-disconnected populations. Furthermore, the Prime Minister's voice is given authenticity by its simplicity, which raises the level of trust and trustworthiness that goes along with his image. Ironically, this deliberate use of low-tech communication raises Modi's leadership's high-impact visibility inside the media landscape. The broadcast is a genuinely pan-Indian communication effort since it is translated into several languages and dialects, thus guaranteeing regional outreach and cultural inclusivity.

Mann Ki Baat is a powerful case study in agenda-setting, narrative control, and mass persuasion from the standpoints of political communication and media studies. Modi appears as a mentor, motivator, and defender of Indian values in this affective political arena, which is facilitated by the well-chosen tales of common heroes, the focus on moral teachings, the recall of shared past, and the celebration of civic responsibilities. While appearing to be nonpartisan, this subtle messaging quietly furthers the state's political goals.

To sum up, Mann Ki Baat is a prime example of how mass media can be seized as a platform for creating political symbols, emotional connections, and ideological continuity in addition to being a means for disseminating information. Without participating in traditional political discussions, it has

effectively molded public discourse through a special fusion of political theater and communication tactics. As a result, Mann Ki Baat represents a major shift in the way political leadership is exercised and viewed in modern-day India, turning it from a radio show into a symbol of political communication during the Modi administration.

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