



International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews

Journal homepage: www.ijrpr.com ISSN 2582-7421

Narrating the Nation: Mann Ki Baat and the Convergence of Mass Media and Political Public Relations

Ajay Kumar¹, 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:

Through a thorough examination of Mann Ki Baat, a monthly radio program broadcast by Indian Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, this research study investigates the strategic use of mass media in political communication. The program's role as a vehicle for creating national narratives, influencing public opinion, and establishing a direct line of communication between citizens and political leadership is examined in this study. Mann Ki Baat offers a distinctive fusion of traditional media (radio) and digital amplification (social media, television, print, and YouTube), resulting in a hybrid public sphere that cuts across barriers of class, caste, and geography in the digital age, where political messaging is frequently dispersed across platforms.

In order to comprehend how the program reframes governance in terms of emotions and culture, the study looks at its rhetorical strategies, inclusive language, and thematic coherence. It also assesses Mann Ki Baat's contribution to eschewing traditional journalistic filters, advancing a well-manicured leadership image, and creating a long-term public relations strategy based on narrative construction. This study shows that Mann Ki Baat is more than just a radio speech; rather, it is a purposeful act of nation-narration that harmonizes governmental messaging with individual narratives, drawing on media theory, political communication studies, and content analysis. In the end, this study sheds insight on how political participation is changing in India and how media convergence is being used to create strong and convincing political identities in the twenty-first century.

Key Words: *Political Communication, Media Convergence, Public Relations Strategy, Nation-Building Narratives, Radio Broadcasting, Public Reception*

Introduction:

Due to the rapid development and convergence of mass media technologies, political communication has undergone an unparalleled transformation in the twenty-first century. More individualized, direct, and real-time connections between political leaders and their audiences have replaced the traditional paradigms of mediated political messaging, which were formerly filtered through newspapers, radio, and television. Political public relations (PR), a strategic discipline that combines media outreach and marketing principles to manage reputation, influence public opinion, and rally political support, has emerged as a result of this global trend¹. Leaders in democracies all over the world have come to accept mass media as a platform for identity projection and narrative construction, in addition to using it as a means of disseminating information.

With the rise of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's monthly radio show Mann Ki Baat, India provides an interesting case study in this regard. Bypassing the gate keeping of traditional media and providing a carefully selected narrative from the country's highest political office, Mann Ki Baat, which was launched in October 2014, signals a strategic change toward direct leader-to-citizen contact². In contrast to traditional press conferences or parliamentary speeches, the broadcast serves as a private but widely disseminated monologue in which the prime minister converses with the public about civic responsibilities, national values, motivational tales, and government programs—all without the use of journalistic interrogation³.

¹ McNair, Brian, *An Introduction to Political Communication* (Routledge, 2017)

² Rajagopal, Arvind, *Politics After Television: Hindu Nationalism and the Reshaping of the Public in India* (Cambridge University Press, 2001)

³ Kumar, Shanti, "Modi's Mann Ki Baat and the Re-Invention of Political Communication", Vol. 44, No. 4, *Media Asia* 236–241 (2017)

A larger shift in Indian political discourse from deliberate institutional engagement to emotionally charged, leader-centric storytelling is highlighted by the combination of political PR and mass media in Mann Ki Baat. This change demonstrates how state authority today uses communication technology to influence national imagination and democratic engagement, in addition to reflecting worldwide trends in the personalization of politics⁴.

Mann Ki Baat: Structure, Strategy, and Format:

Prime Minister Narendra Modi introduced Mann Ki Baat, a monthly radio show, in 2014 with the goal of interacting directly with Indian citizens. Its meticulously planned format, which usually lasts between 25 and 30 minutes, combines citizen personal stories, anecdotal storytelling, and government efforts into a coherent communication piece⁵. The program's approach is casual and customized, eschewing political discourse in favor of emphasizing cultural heritage, grassroots initiatives, and shared values⁶.

By strategically avoiding traditional media filters, Mann Ki Baat enables the Prime Minister to establish the agenda and establish a relationship with the general public. By giving the appearance of one-on-one communication, it increases accessibility and trust⁷. The style is participative in character, utilizing a conversational tone that is punctuated by allusions to listeners' letters and messages⁸.

It guarantees greatest reach, particularly to rural and remote populations, by being broadcast on Doordarshan, All India Radio, and other digital channels. Mann Ki Baat is an example of a hybrid media strategy that represents the convergence of political public relations and mass communication in modern India by combining traditional and digital media⁹.

Conceptual Framework: Mass Media, Political PR, and Nation-Building *vis-a-vis* Mann Ki Baat:

Mass media has emerged as a crucial platform for the creation, dissemination, and contestation of political narratives in the twenty-first century. The nature of nation-building in contemporary democracies is changing as a result of the growing convergence of political public relations (PR) and mass media. One notable example of mediated political communication in India is Prime Minister Narendra Modi's radio show Mann Ki Baat. Using Mann Ki Baat as a focal point, this article creates a conceptual framework to comprehend the relationship between political PR, mass media, and nation-building.

Historically, the mass media have served as a forum for democratic engagement and public discussion. Mass media changed from being a passive source of information to an active participant in influencing public opinion with the introduction of radio, television, and eventually digital platforms. In this situation, political players are using the media more and more to communicate with the public directly, circumvent established institutions, and shape their public image. A crucial component of contemporary political PR tactics is the emotional connection that is fostered with the people by the personalizing of political leadership through the media¹⁰.

A variety of tactics used by political leaders to develop their image, manage the framing of their stories, and acquire legitimacy are together referred to as political public relations. Political PR's primary goals are to convince and emotionally engage in addition to providing information. Through Mann Ki Baat, Modi's media team presents the prime minister as a cultural unifier, an understanding leader, and a humble listener. It is a prime example of how political leadership can be turned into a brand, with the voice of the leader serving as the primary emblem of governance¹¹.

The novel Mann ki Baat concept provides a strictly regulated public relations vehicle that is pre-recorded, meticulously planned, and free of dissent. Although the message is one-way, it creates the appearance of democratic interaction by citing letters and listener recommendations to mimic debate. Additionally, Mann Ki Baat is able to reach both rural and urban audiences thanks to the nostalgic medium of radio and its simultaneous broadcast on digital and social media platforms. As a result, it is a media hybrid that combines new and old technologies to maximize effect and reach¹².

In modern India, the intersection of mass media, political public relations (PR), and nation-building is best illustrated by the Mann Ki Baat Model. Bypassing the filters of traditional media, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's monthly radio program engages residents directly and promotes narratives of togetherness, development, and cultural pride. This concept is in line with international political communication trends that use the media as a soft power

⁴ Thussu, Daya Kishan, *Communicating India's Soft Power: Buddha to Bollywood* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013)

⁵ Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, *Mann Ki Baat: A Social Revolution on Radio* (2023)

⁶ Rajagopal, A., *Politics After Television* (Cambridge University Press, 2021)

⁷ Thussu, D. K., *Communicating India's Soft Power* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

⁸ Srivastava, S., "Mediatized Politics in India," 55(34), *Economic and Political Weekly* (2020).

⁹ Mehta, N., *Television in India: Satellites, Politics and Cultural Change* (Routledge, 2019)

¹⁰ Supra note 1 at 6-7

¹¹ Louw, Eric, *The Media and Political Process* (SAGE, 2010)

¹² Chatterjee, P., "Radio Politics and the Modi Persona: The Making of Mann Ki Baat", 49 (2), *Media Asia* 78-91 (2022)

instrument to influence national identity and public opinion. Mann Ki Baat celebrated its 100th episode in 2023–2024, signifying its ongoing contribution to the development of a political culture that encourages participation¹³.

By focusing on topics like environmental preservation, innovation, cleanliness, youth empowerment, and cultural heritage, Mann Ki Baat purposefully steers clear of party hyperbole. By acting as a mentor and motivator rather than a political candidate, this narrative technique promotes the prime minister's image as a unifying national figure. The program aims to transcend divided politics and advance shared civic principles by emphasizing optimism and social progress¹⁴.

Mann Ki Baat: From Broadcast to Engagement- The Participatory Dimension:

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's monthly radio show Mann Ki Baat has become a powerful emblem of the revolution of political communication in India. Since its launch in October 2014, the program has changed from being a conventional broadcast medium to a forum for active participation, establishing itself as a conduit between the government and its people. That started out as a top-down communication campaign has progressively embraced tools that promote and represent popular involvement, changing the face of political debate in the digital era.

Mann Ki Baat deviates from traditional political speeches by prioritizing grassroots projects, societal values, and personal tales over overt political discourse. The way the program solicits citizen input using a variety of platforms, including as the MyGov portal, NaMo app, social media sites, and toll-free phone lines, demonstrates its participatory nature. The public is invited to submit questions, anecdotes, and ideas, many of which are acknowledged or discussed in later episodes. By encouraging a dialogic framework as opposed to a monologic one, this model turns listeners into content co-creators¹⁵.

The program's participatory approach is in line with broader worldwide trends in political communication, which prioritize user participation and interactivity, especially when it comes to digital governance. The two-way symmetrical model of communication, which emphasizes discussion and feedback in building public relations and policy narratives, is in line with the transition from broadcast to engagement¹⁶.

Crucially, Mann Ki Baat has been successful in creating a fictionalized national community. The program promotes a sense of community and shared identity by highlighting grassroots initiatives, highlighting local heroes, and exhibiting regional languages. The participatory mechanism democratizes the media landscape and promotes civic engagement by guaranteeing that regular people, not just political elites, have a voice on a national scale¹⁷.

Additionally, a broad media ecology, including print, radio, television, YouTube, and podcasts, has institutionalized the program, increasing its reach and possibility for participation. Discussion boards, analytical pieces, and social media exchanges frequently follow each broadcast, allowing viewers to analyze, react, and discuss the topics brought up. This longer involvement area enables Mann Ki Baat to develop into a lengthy public discussion rather than just a 30-minute event¹⁸.

Critics counter that the program largely supports the ruling regime's strategic communication goals and that, despite the collaborative façade, final editorial authority is still centralized. However, Mann Ki Baat's ability to combine digital interaction with traditional media has established a standard for how political leadership might use communication tools to promote a 21st-century kind of participatory democracy¹⁹. Mann Ki Baat signifies a dramatic change in the public-political leadership dynamic. It has transformed political broadcasting into a participatory conversation, albeit one that is curated, by recognizing, embracing, and engaging citizen perspectives.

Crafting National Identity: Mann Ki Baat as a Public Relations Tool:

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's monthly radio speech, Mann Ki Baat, has developed into a potent vehicle for national storytelling in modern India. It serves as a tool for strategic public relations (PR) as well as a means of creating a cohesive national identity. The initiative allows the leader and residents to communicate directly, avoiding the filters of traditional media and encouraging a sense of closeness and participatory governance. In order to appeal

¹³ Press Information Bureau (PIB), Government of India. "100th Episode of Mann Ki Baat", April 2023. Available at <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1919653>(<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1919653> accessed on 13-05-2025

¹⁴ Kumar, Sanjay, "Mann Ki Baat and the Crafting of a New Political Persona", Vol. 53, No. 47 *Economic and Political Weekly* (2018)

¹⁵ Rajagopal, Arvind, *Politics After Television: Hindu Nationalism and the Reshaping of the Public in India* (Cambridge University Press, 2001)

¹⁶ Kirti Makwana and Amit P Ganatra, "Textual Data Analysis of 'Mann Ki Baat' Show", 15 (37), *Indian Journal of Science and Technology* 1859–1867 (2022)

¹⁷ Garg Ritu and Singh Kuldeep, "Need and Significance Mann Ki Baat (Radio Revolution): Narendra Damodardas Modi", Volume-14, Issue-I, *International Advance Journal of Engineering, Science and Management* 104-106 (July-December 2020)

¹⁸ Udupa, Sahana. "Social Media, 'Modi-fication' and the Sociopolitical Mediation of Hindu Nationalism in Indi,." Vol. 19, No. 4, *Television & New Media* 314–329 (2018)

¹⁹ Thorsen, Einar and Chindu Sreedharan, "Modi's Media: Political Communication and Journalism in the Digital Age" in *India Election 2019: Mapping the Political Landscape* (Routledge, 2020)

to a wide range of Indian society and reaffirm common values like patriotism, cleanliness, ingenuity, and perseverance, Modi frequently incorporates personal tales, cultural heritage, and citizen-led projects into his narratives²⁰. In addition to enhancing the leader's personal brand, this well-chosen messaging quietly aligns the public's perception with the government's ideological and developmental agenda²¹.

Themes like women's empowerment, environmental responsibility, and young innovation²² are prioritized over overt political conversation or policy debate in Mann Ki Baat. By doing this, the prime minister is positioned as a national unifier and moral leader rather than a party figure. Students, farmers, and innovators are among the grassroots voices that the program deftly integrates, turning them into emblematic representations of the country's goals. Effective public relations are characterized by this kind of inclusivity, which supports the government's vision of a "New India" in which all citizens participate in the development of the country²³.

Additionally, Mann Ki Baat achieves multi-platform outreach²⁴ by reviving radio, which has long been regarded as an outdated medium, and fusing it with digital platforms like YouTube, social media, and mobile apps. The modern political PR playbook, which uses visual storytelling, emotional appeal, and controlled dissemination to influence public opinion, is best illustrated by this intersection of conventional and new media. The program institutionalizes state propaganda in household spaces by fostering regular listening habits through the establishment of a recurrent, predictable framework²⁵.

Crucially, academics, policy think tanks, and media organizations also record and study the show's content, confirming its status as a political and cultural artifact²⁶. In this way, Mann Ki Baat serves as both a PR tool and a dynamic history of modern-day India under Modi's rule. From commemorating regional festivals to evoking Mahatma Gandhi, its deliberate use of symbols helps to ground modern administration in India's cultural ethos²⁷. The end effect is a subtle but powerful narrative device that connects personal choice to the fate of the country.

Thus, Mann Ki Baat shapes national identity through the tools of contemporary public relations, functioning at the nexus of communication, culture, and political strategy. It serves as an example of how, in addition to legislative power, statecraft in the twenty-first century increasingly relies on narrative control and emotional involvement.

Mann Ki Baat: At the Crossroads of Media Convergence and Strategic Messaging:

A paradigm change in the use of media for strategic political communication may be seen in Mann Ki Baat, India's distinctive radio show. Mann Ki Baat, who stands at the nexus of digital media convergence and traditional broadcasting, is a prime example of how a political figure can use converged media platforms to reach out to the public directly and get past traditional press filters. The show exemplifies the ideas of media convergence, where different communication channels cooperate to spread the message across linguistic, regional, and demographic barriers. It is a monthly radio address that is simultaneously broadcast on FM/AM radio, television, social media, and mobile apps²⁸. This deliberate blending of old and new media technologies facilitates the cultivation of a national listening public, while reinforcing a centralised narrative that aligns with the ideological, cultural, and governance-oriented vision of the leadership.

From the perspective of strategic communication, Mann Ki Baat is more than just a monologue; it is a carefully constructed story that incorporates political messages into societal themes, cultural idioms, and moral arguments. By avoiding direct political criticism and emphasizing the experiences of common people, environmental preservation, young accomplishments, and cultural pride, Modi's rhetorical approach fosters an impression of inclusive governance and participatory democracy. This indirect yet potent form of message dissemination aligns with the broader objective of political branding, where the leader's image is not that of a ruler but of a compassionate listener and national guide²⁹.

Furthermore, participatory engagement is made possible by the interaction made possible by citizen submissions and featured stories, which promotes a feeling of group involvement in governance³⁰. Mann Ki Baat is positioned at the center of contemporary public relations tactics, grounded on emotional

²⁰ Kumar, Sanjay, *The Modi Effect: Inside Narendra Modi's Campaign to Transform India* (Hachette, 2015)

²¹ Chatterjee, Partha, *Politics of the Governed: Reflections on Popular Politics in Most of the World* (Columbia University Press, 2004)

²² Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, *Mann Ki Baat* (Analysis Report, 2022)

²³ Nalin Mehta, *The New BJP: Modi and the Making of the World's Largest Political Party* (Westland, 2022)

²⁴ Rajagopal, Arvind, "The Indian Public Sphere: Structure and Transformation" Vol. 29, No. 1, *Media, Culture & Society* 105–112 (2007)

²⁵ Supra note 1 at 34–37

²⁶ Observer Research Foundation (ORF), *Decoding Mann Ki Baat: Themes and Reach* (ORF Report, 2023)

²⁷ Sharma, Jyotirmaya, *Hindutva: Exploring the Idea of Hindu Nationalism* (Penguin, 2015)

²⁸ Jenkins, Henry, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (NYU Press, 2006)

²⁹ Kaur, Raminder, and Ajay J. Sinha, *Bollywood and Globalization: Indian Popular Cinema, Nation, and Diaspora* (Anthem Press, 2012)

³⁰ Mehta, Nalin, *India on Television: How Satellite News Channels Have Changed the Way We Think and Act* (HarperCollins, 2008)

resonance, symbolic narrative, and nation-building discourse, thanks to its multi-platform, audience-inclusive style. As a result, it goes beyond the limitations of a traditional broadcast and develops into a political communication tool that combines technology, narrative management, and strategic outreach to create a cohesive national identity³¹.

Public Reception and Influence of Mann Ki Baat:

Several indicators, such as listenership, social media engagement, academic interest, and policy resonance, can be used to gauge how well Prime Minister Narendra Modi's monthly radio speech, Mann Ki Baat, is received and how influential it is. The show has a regular audience of over 100 million listeners, according to All India Radio (AIR), and its reach is growing beyond linguistic and regional barriers through foreign broadcasts, 22 Indian languages, and 29 dialects³². According to a 2022 survey conducted by the Indian Institute of Mass Communication (IIMC), 65% of participants said the show fostered national unity and civic awareness, while 73% of respondents found it to be instructive³³. Its reach is further evidenced by social media stats, which show that each episode generates millions of impression on platforms such as Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook, where Modi's digital presence amplifies the messages from the broadcast³⁴.

Additionally, Mann Ki Baat has influenced public discourse's thematic agenda, frequently resulting in grassroots movements. Campaigns like Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, and Fit India Movement, for example, acquired popularity after being featured on the show; in the days after their particular episodes, there were increases in online searches and public participation³⁵. Furthermore, it is now a topic of academic research and institutional analysis, demonstrating how deeply ingrained it is in India's media-political culture. References to the program can be found in more than 150 scholarly articles and media research projects, demonstrating its growing significance as a case study in mass media studies, political science, and communication³⁶.

Additionally, citizen participation is promoted through websites and applications like MyGov and NaMo App, which enable users to propose subjects and promote a two-way communication model in a medium that is typically one-way³⁷. The program's credibility and emotional resonance are greatly increased by this participatory format. Furthermore, according to Nielsen surveys, more than 80% of rural respondents said that Mann Ki Baat mirrored their hopes and worries, indicating its profound influence on rural imaginations³⁸.

Overall, the influence of Mann Ki Baat extends beyond mere broadcasting—it is a strategic narrative vehicle that shapes perceptions, encourages behavioral change, and enhances citizen-government engagement in a digitally hybrid public sphere.

Concluding Remarks:

The study has examined how Mann Ki Baat signifies a fundamental change in how mass media is used for political public relations in modern-day India. By addressing a broad range of social, cultural, and developmental issues, the show goes beyond conventional political broadcasts as a special channel of direct communication between the prime minister and the populace. In order to create a coherent, emotionally compelling representation of Indian identity, it skillfully combines personal narrative with national concern. By doing this, Mann Ki Baat serves as a carefully chosen national story that encourages active listening, symbolic inclusion, and a sense of psychological closeness between the people and the government, rather than just being a monologue.

The evolution of democratic engagement in the digital era is reflected in this convergence of mass communication and political public relations. The program's framework, which is both highly political and strategically non-political, uses social media, mobile platforms, television, and radio to develop a multifaceted communication strategy. It reinvents political image-making by telling tales of hope and resiliency, as well as commonplace problems and citizen contributions, rather than by engaging in overt political debate. By doing this, it quietly creates consent, instills civic virtues, and combines the objectives of governance with the interests of the general public.

³¹ Thussu, Daya Kishan, *News as Entertainment: The Rise of Global Infotainment* (Sage Publications, 2007)

³² All India Radio Report, *Prasar Bharati Annual Report* (2023)

³³ IIMC Survey on *Public Engagement with Mann Ki Baat* (2022)

³⁴ Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, *Digital Engagement Report* (2023)

³⁵ Press Information Bureau (PIB), *Campaign Impact Assessment* (2021)

³⁶ Google Scholar database search results, 2024

³⁷ In 2025, MyGov India saw significant citizen engagement. Notable highlights include the "Pariksha Pe Charcha" with over 3 crore participants and the "National Creators Awards" garnering 1.5 lakh nominations; see <https://www.mygov.in/>

³⁸ Nielsen Media Research, *Rural Listening Trends for Mann Ki Baat*, 2021

Additionally, Mann Ki Baat is a perfect example of how political leadership can be turned into a brand, where image, message, and media come together to create a leadership narrative that is ubiquitous, approachable, and deeply ingrained in culture. The prime minister's prominence in the public consciousness is strengthened by this type of political narrative, which is supported by state apparatus and media convergence.

In conclusion, Mann Ki Baat is a narrative tool that functions at the nexus of nation-building, political communication, and mass media. It is not merely a broadcast. It marks the beginning of a new public arena in which the leader serves as the protagonist and narrator of the country's narrative. It creates new opportunities for participatory government, but it also brings up important issues about agenda-setting, media control, and the personalization of political discourse. Mann Ki Baat will continue to be an important case study in comprehending how political communication shapes collective national consciousness as India's democratic processes develop.