



# THE IMPACT MODEL OF MANN KI BAAT: A RADIO REVOLUTION

**Dr. Uma Maheswari V**

Assistant professor

B.S. Abdur Rahman Crescent Institute of Science and Technology, India.

[uma@crescent.education](mailto:uma@crescent.education) / [maheswaridgp@gmail.com](mailto:maheswaridgp@gmail.com)

**Abstract:** Mann Ki Baat (MKB) is a popular, monthly radio programme hosted by the Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi. The programme depicts Modi's 'passion for dialogue with his people' and 'development of his own country from a strategic and long-term perspective' according to Abe, the former prime minister of Japan. MKB is marching towards 100<sup>th</sup> episode and it has enormously succeeded in creating awareness of various government schemes, highlighting contributions of individual citizens and achieving development goals. This paper makes an attempt to create the impact model of MKB within the framework set by Eliana La Ferrara who submitted a discussion paper on Mass Media and Social Change to the Centre for Economic Policy Research, UK, in 2015. The framework interprets media effects on socioeconomic outcomes on three parameters which are (i) information provision, (ii) role modeling and preference change and (iii) time use. The content and the structure of MKB are also critically examined from different perspectives to understand the reason for its popularity and success in India which is a multilingual and multicultural country. The article further brings out how subtly the boundaries between what is educational or informative and what is ideological are balanced by a democratically elected leader to add credibility to the programme.

**Index Terms:** - Mann Ki Baat, radio, mass communication, social change, impact model

## 1. INTRODUCTION

On October 3, 2014, nearly four months after his massive electoral win, Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India, hosted the first episode of Mann Ki Baat (MKB), a monthly radio programme. The 100<sup>th</sup> episode will be aired in April 2023 and it is scheduled to continue all through his tenure as Prime Minister. Through this programme Modi addresses the nation and interacts with people on various issues of national importance. Radio is considered outdated in this digital era, but the innovative program MKB has proved that a radio program can cause revolutionary changes in the attitude as well as behavior of people and help augment developmental programs of the government.

Media have the potential to trigger changes in the society and various theories try to define this process from various viewpoints. Mokhtari (2007) says that media today bring about calm and low cost changes in sociocultural spheres. According to mass theory media act as a guide by meeting the psychological needs of the individuals (Mehrdad, 2001). The theory of social learning proposes that when the mass media present constructive arguments on the need for change, the people adopt new modes of behavior without much resistance (Bandura et al, 1961). Marxist theory upholds the view that media exploit relationship, conceal and legitimize capitalism (Schiller, 1996) implying that the media have the power to transform the society in any manner. According to change theory the role of the media is transfer of individual values and innovations, psychological and mental stimulation and strengthening of conscience (Mostafavi Kohangi, 2015). Further the stimulation ought to set a context for fulfilling the actual and psychological needs of the audience. However any medium can be considered as only a tool and it is as good as the man who controls it. MKB exemplifies that tapping into the positive potential of media serves mankind in many ways.

The radio programme Mann Ki Baat has been instrumental in bringing both tangible and intangible improvements in the society and the vast country. An understanding of the content and structure of the episodes

is important before analyzing the success of the programme within the framework set by Ferrara who submitted a discussion paper on Mass Media and Social Change to the Centre for Economic Policy Research, UK, in 2015.

## 2. MANN KI BAAT

Mann Ki Baat is an half an hour programme that is broadcast on Sunday at 11.00 a.m. every month on AIR (All India Radio). The prime minister of India addresses the nation in this broadcast. The title of the programme means speech from the heart in English. Solar power, swachhata (cleanliness), volunteering, water conservation, waste management, clean rivers, fit India, examinations, women empowerment, khadi, jawans (soldiers), freedom fighters, girl child, specially-abled people, organ donation, yoga, sports, nutrition, festivals, digital economy, Indian space programmes, disaster management, drug menace, incredible India, election process etc. are some of the topics touched upon and told in depth by Modi in his speeches. The topics and the tone of the speaker attract similar vibes, magnifies positivity and spreads it across the country through the medium of radio. The use of certain key words, stock phrases and thematic clusters of facts in every episode enhances the focus of the audience as Dauda et al mention in their study (2018). A vocabulary-profile was done to find out the most repeated words in MKB. A corpus of 119045 words of 50 episodes of MKB was created and analyzed to find out the frequency and distribution of the words across the different frequency bands. It has been found that the most frequent word excluding the articles and prepositions is 'country' followed by 'people'. The word country occurs 670 times and the word people occurs 606 times in fifty episodes. 'Friends', 'today' and 'work' are a few other high frequency words that have set the direction of the programme which is inspiring people to work for the country now. While delivering his speech Modi's tone is direct, soft, coaxing, pleading, applauding, inspiring and friendly but never authoritative. The fact that he does not speak in a condescending tone standing on a pedestal makes the listeners feel equal to him and they are ready to lend him their ears willingly and enthusiastically. Modi, the communicator in the said programme, acts as an informer, interpreter, examiner, advisor and a social commentator prioritizing and popularizing issues of national and global importance. He also facilitates consensus building and creates a connection among scattered activities of the people of India through this programme.

## 3. IMPACT ON SOCIETY

Prime Minister Modi informs the people about the initiatives and welfare programmes of his government and also explains the rationale behind them. Then he beseeches people to get involved in the programmes by appealing to their humanity and social responsibility as the citizens of the country. The impact on people is immeasurable as the results are both tangible and intangible. On 24 April 2016, Modi himself acknowledged and appreciated the ten million people who had surrendered their subsidy on cooking gas to help the poor who did not have access to clean cooking fuel. In his very first episode of MKB Modi appealed to people to buy khadi, - a homespun cotton fabric - products as it would help the poor artisans of the country. Khadi sales touched Rs. 66.81 lakh the next day. The sale of khadi crossed 10 million mark 12 times in a single showroom in New Delhi between 201 and 2020. The chairman of Khadi and Village Industries Commission Saxena says (2016) that the growing buzz around Swadeshi (made in India) has significantly helped lakhs of village industries prosper even during the challenging times of Covid 19 pandemic. On the birthday of Mahatma Gandhi Modi urged the people to buy khadi products and bring prosperity in the lives of the poor. On 24 September 2017 Modi announced about the revival of the Khadi ashram in Varanasi. Modi's repeated references to khadi thus transformed Khadi movement which was launched in 1920 as a political weapon by Gandhi into a philosophy of social sustenance. Modi has made similar requests repeatedly to promote handicrafts, village industries and rural economy through MKB.

In yet another episode on 24<sup>th</sup> June 2018 Modi spoke on Yoga that breaks the barriers of caste, creed and geography to unite the people of the entire world. Basavaraddi, Director of Morarji Desai National Institute of Yoga says that the young generation is getting several job opportunities through Yoga that offers immense health benefits. In the 92<sup>nd</sup> episode Modi talked about the nutritious value of Indian millets and declared the year 2023 as the International Year of Millets. This episode kindled the curiosity of youth in traditional Indian crops and they have started supporting and popularizing the same. On one hand people move towards healthy and natural way of life; on other hand the rich tradition and practices are preserved for posterity.

Thus the impact of MKB is felt at different aspects of the people and the nation. At individual level it provides proper perspective of programmes launched by the government and presents the benefits of the same.

At national level, it leads to successful implementation of the programmes and strengthening of the social, cultural and economic factors of a country.

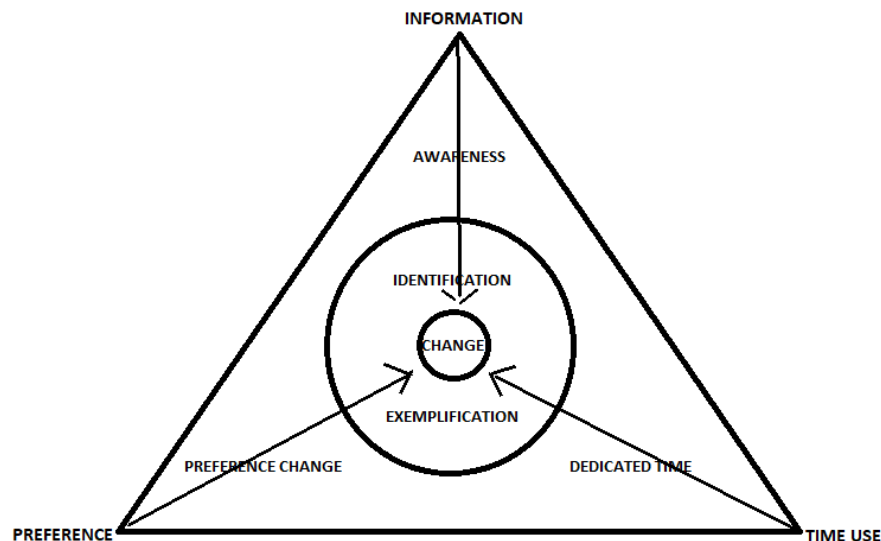
#### 4. CHANNELS OF IMPACT

The media effect and impact on society can be analyzed from various perspectives and theories. However a simple framework for interpreting media effects proposed by Ferrara in a discussion paper submitted to the Centre for Economic policy research, UK in 2015 has been taken for this study. The framework that has been chosen is pertinent to the study as it is the result of extensive data collected in African and Asian countries and application of economic, psychological and communication theories to find out the most common, effective and simple channels that will help study the socioeconomic outcomes of media programmes. Mann Ki Baat is neither purely educational nor entertainment; hence the program taken for study in this paper can be considered similar to other programmes studied by the author for forming the framework. Moreover India is a developing country in Asia and the framework fits well in the present study.

The success of Mann Ki Baat broadcast through an obsolete medium of radio speaks about the communicative skill of the speaker and the vision of the speaker. He had been a pracharak or a publicist of a powerful social organization of India traversing the country before becoming the chief minister of the Indian state of Gujarat and later the prime minister of India. The social transformation he has brought out through this program is due to his thorough understanding of the psychological and real life needs of the people.

Although the impact that the communicator wants to create on the audience through the exposure to the media depends on different channels, the framework deals with three channels, which are information, preferences and time use. New information or providing a new perspective to a known information updates the knowledge of the audience. Changing individual preferences by either new information or projecting role models is the second channel through which media can bring out desired changes in social behavior. The third channel of time use denotes the time dedicated to spend exclusively for watching or listening to the programme.

The model of impact of Mann ki Baat as caused by information, preferences and change that is discussed in this paper is presented in Figure 1.



**Figure 1:** The Impact Model of Mann ki Baat

##### 4.1 INFORMATION

Information denotes to news programmes as well as information embedded in other programmes directly or indirectly. When the information is passed on orally or visually through mass media, the impact will be considerable especially when there are illiterates among the target audience. The literacy level of India is 77.7% and rural India is 73.5%; the penetration of print media is 49% (Krishnan, 2022). Though the penetration of electronic media is higher than the print media, the viewers devote more time to watching movies, tele-series and soaps than news or informative programmes. Hence it is challenging to spread information as news or documentaries; instead the information has to be presented in an entertaining manner. Modi's MKB redefined the word entertainment and added a new dimension to it. The interactive speech of the prime minister of a country

has been well-structured with a blend of address, sharing of information, dialogues with common men, presenting role models and cleverly disguised appeal to the countrymen to contribute to the country and humanity on the whole.

In the second episode broadcast on 2 November, 2014 Modi put forward the government initiatives of providing scholarship and grants to educational institutions to help the disabled children. In the 92<sup>nd</sup> episode he mentioned the launch of Poshan (Nutrition) Tracker to monitor the accessibility of anganwadi (child care centres) services to promote nutrition of children. He also highlighted the project called Sampurna implemented in a village in the state of Assam to educate the mothers of malnourished children about nutrition-related information so that their children are given nutritious food. Wherever needed he brought in experts in the field to provide authenticity to the information. MKB was very useful during the pandemic when the citizens were constrained in their houses. MKB gave information on vaccinations, medical facilities and supply of free food grains and other essentials. The 88<sup>th</sup> episode saw Modi brought in Shashank, a medical practitioner, to talk about vaccination and other experts to render their voice on issues like panic management. The programme, thus, is meticulously structured to add authenticity to the information and assurance from the head of a country.

The programme is unique in spreading information as the information is provided as information instead of embedding it in entertainment. MKB is neither news nor edutainment, but it still has a huge audience of people of all walks of life. Modi has finely balanced boundaries between what is informative and what is ideological as it is a sensitive ethical issue considering that he is the head of a vibrant democratic country.

#### 4.2 PREFERENCES

While information provision is the prime purpose of MKB, the success of the programme lies in its ability to transform the preferences of the people. It induces desired behavior by projecting positive role models before them. The effects get magnified if the role models possess admirable qualities, values and respect for tradition (Hassim et al 2019). Two steps are involved in this process – identification and exemplification. Identification and exemplification are impossible tasks for those who are caught in an ‘aspiration trap’. The poor and the underprivileged perceive certain goals are beyond their reach, do not dare to aspire and continue in the state of poverty as a result (Genicot and Ray, 2015). India has 228.9 million poor people (Singh, 2022) according to the Multidimensional Poverty Index released by United Nations Development Programme and they require strong motivation to break the ‘aspiration trap’. The ‘aspiration trap’ need not be restricted to economic aspiration; it includes aspiration for recognition, appreciation and awards too. Hence identification and exemplification are crucial to break the traps and change the mental models of potential achievers.

MKB addresses the problem precisely. Common people of normal background who dared to aspire and achieve are identified and presented before the audience. Such vicarious motivators share their vision, their hard work and success stories with the audience. The audience could easily identify with the role models who are introduced and applauded by the prime minister of their country. MKB brings role models every week and keeps strengthening the aspiration of the audience which transforms their preferences in a positive manner in due course. It brings intangible benefits besides tangible benefits by creating collective consciousness of hope and happiness.

In the January edition of MKB in 2018 Modi mentioned about Laxmikutti, a teacher in Kallar in the state of Kerala residing in a small hut thatched with palm leaves. She has made five hundred herbal medicines and is serving the society. Herbal medicines are the cultural treasure of India and mostly the preparations are handed down orally. The attempt by the simple and unassuming woman to safeguard the treasure and serve humanity has not escaped the eyes of the prime minister of the land. The mention of her contribution and exemplification of her has brought before the audience a live role model who is one among them. Further audience have been motivated to do what they could to preserve the knowledge and culture of their country.

Similarly Subhasini Mistri who lost her husband at the age of 23 working as a maid and vegetable seller was introduced by Modi to the people through the radio programme. Her contribution to the society was building a hospital for the poor and her aspiration was contagious. The audience were told that lack of money, power and popularity would not be an impediment if one really wanted to achieve. An octogenarian shepherd Kame Gowda was referred to as a water warrior as he had dug sixteen ponds over the past few decades. His voice was heard in the 66<sup>th</sup> episode June 2020. Tech savvy teachers like Dilip was praised by Modi in the December episode of 2020. Manzoor, a Srinagar resident cut down his power expenditure by installing solar rooftop plant in his house and he was introduced to the audience in the October episode of 2022.

Similar anecdotes about individual heroism, awareness of tangible benefits and constitutional rights are used as powerful tools to change preferences and break aspiration traps in MKB.

#### 4.3 TIME USE

Time use is the time spent to watch or listen to a programme by crowding out other activities at that time. Mann Ki Baat is broadcast at 11 a.m. on a Sunday every month. There were much deliberations before the programme was launched about its name, time and frequency. It was christened Mann Ki Baat. Working days were ruled out and Sunday was chosen. Sunday evening and early morning timings were rejected as unsuitable for such a programme. Eleven in the morning was finalized because the question of assumed effect of alternative use of time that individuals would make at this time of the day does not arise. Only half an hour was allotted to the programme. While the programme aims to create awareness leading to change, increasing the time duration will not lead to increase in the level of information gathered by the audience. It is similar to the Laffer curve in economics. (Figure 2). So a balance needed to be maintained to provide optimum information in the given time slot and half an hour duration was agreed on by the producers.

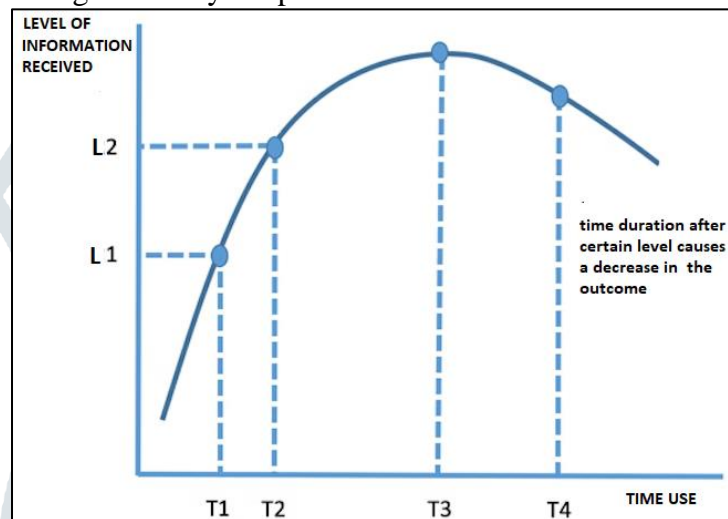


Figure 2. Laffer curve

Thus the time allotted is only half an hour in a month though the programme is re-broadcast in regional languages. Community centres and schools record every episode and play it again whenever needed. For example programmes on exam preparation and advice to students appearing for school final exams every year are played to students again and again to motivate them. In one of his earlier addresses, on February 22, 2015, he asked the students to look for motivation around them and write the exam without getting discouraged by their performance in previous exams like a cricketer playing every ball without any pre-determined thought. He cited the example of Bubka who kept breaking his own records in the sport of pole vault and advised the students to compete with themselves. He further told the students to be warriors and not worriers. He triggered their patriotism by telling that brighter students make brighter India. Such episodes are aired in the month of February every year before the exams that start in March.

The episodes broadcast during festivals and national events are broadcast in community centres and town halls. People assemble in such centres and the time duration of half an hour is dedicated to listening to the programme. Community radio centres play an important role in developing countries. The positive and persistent changes in behavior effected by community radio have been studied by Cheng (2012) in Cambodia, Keefer and Khemani (2011) in Benin. Gandhi et al (2017) conducted a study in the state of Tamilnadu in South India and found that people liked the interactive nature of the programme where the prime minister himself is answering the questions and giving assurances on the outcome of welfare schemes and innovative projects of common men.

The cumulative reach of the viewership of MKB ranges between 60 million and 1.43 billion during the period 2018 -2020 according to data released by Broadcast Audience research Council of India. The choice of time and relevance of topics are the causative factors for the large audience.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Mass media have the power to bring social transformation, behavioural changes and environmental awareness which in turn augment developmental outcomes. MKB is a testimony to the fact that mass media programmes can complement other forms of development policy. The skillfully designed structure incorporates narrative persuasion, gentle coercion, exemplification, identification and other communicative skills. At the same time the audience engagement is enhanced by their direct participation in the programme. The initial impact of the programme on the audience is to trigger their instincts and emotion and the next is to raise their collective consciousness in order to facilitate positive change. The programme continues and the success of MKB in a country of 1.4 billion people is mighty impressive. An exciting agenda lies ahead as the radio revolution and marvel of MKB has made the programme an interesting case study on communication.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Ahuja, R. (2016). Modi's mann ki Baat is a masterstroke. *Daily Pioneer*.  
<https://www.dailypioneer.com/2016/columnists/modis-mann-ki-baat-is-a-masterstroke.html>
- [2] Bandura, A. (1976). *Social Learning Theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- [3] Bandura, A., Ross, D., & Ross, S. A. (1961). Transmission of aggression through imitation of aggressive models. *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 63(3), 575–582.  
<https://doi.org/10.1037/h0045925>
- [4] Cheung, M. (2012). *Eduainment Radio, Women's Status and Primary School Participation: Evidence from Cambodia*". Stockholm University, Working Paper.
- [5] Dauda S, & N N Hasan (2018) Framing the Sustainable Development Goals in Malaysian Online News. *SEARCH: The Journal of the South East Asia Research Centre for Communication and Humanities* 10(1), 1-24.
- [6] Gandhi A P., & Balamurugan J. (2017). Mann Ki Baat - Present and Future. *Journal of Advanced Research in Journalism & Mass Communication* 4 (1&2). 1–4.
- [7] Genicot, G. and D. Ray (2017). Aspirations and Inequality, *Econometrica* 85(2), 489-519
- [8] Hassim N, S Y Jayasainan & N L Khalid (2019) Exploring viewer experiences with sageuk K-dramas from a parasocial relations perspective *SEARCH* 11(1), 77-94.
- [9] Keefer, P., and Khemani, S. (2011). *Mass Media and Public Services: The Effects of Radio Access on Public Education in Benin*. Policy Research Working Paper Series 5559, The World Bank.
- [10] Krishnan, A. (2022). India. <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-newsreport/2022/india>
- [11] Mehrdad, H. (2001). *Introduction to the concepts and concepts of mass communication*. Tehran. Faran Cultural Research Institute
- [12] Mokhtari, M.A. (2009). Media and orientation of public opinion in public decision-making, *Social Sciences*, 24, 70-77
- [13] Mostafavi Kohangi, F. (2015). The Role of the Media in Social Security. *Police Knowledge of the Capital Police*, 8 (1), 134-135.
- [14] PM Modi's 'Mann Ki Baat' Radio Programme Generated Rs 31 Crore Revenue Since 2014: Govt Tells Parliament (20 July 2021). *Swarajyamag*. <https://swarajyamag.com/news-brief/pm-modis-mann-ki-baat-radio-programme-generated-rs-31-crore-revenue-since-2014-govt-tells-parliament>
- [15] Schiller, H. (1996). *US Mass Media and Emperorship* (Translated by Ahmad Mir Abedini). Tehran: Soroush Publications
- [16] Singh, Y. (2022). Number of poor people in India fell by about 415 mn between 2005-06 and 2019-21, a 'historic change'. *Economic Times*. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/number-of-poor-people-in-india-fell-by-about-415-mn-between-2005-06-and-2019-21-a-historic-change-un/articleshow/94910830.cms>