



The Cultural Narrative of "Mann Ki Baat" in a Multilingual Setting: A Minor Study

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Abstract

This paper aligns with the stated objective of this conference to examine language's role in shaping cultural identity and heritage. As an English teacher educator in Kerala with two decades of experience, the investigator has consistently navigated the delicate balance of content selection in language education to ensure inclusivity and avoid offense. Furthermore, the National Educational Policies of 1985 and 2020 have consistently emphasized national integration as a core principle of educational programmes. Since 2014, under the leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, the central government has launched various initiatives to promote national integration. Among these are over twenty flagship schemes under the "Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat" program (The Print, 2019). "Mann Ki Baat," a widely listened-to Indian radio programme hosted by the Prime Minister, is one such significant initiative where he addresses the nation. The study critically analyzes the English transcripts of two recent "Mann Ki Baat" programmes (May 2025 and April 2025) to identify how a cultural narrative is constructed within a multilingual context. The findings reveal the Prime Minister's adeptness in navigating complex themes and emotions in a diverse linguistic environment, showcasing effective communication skills. The content is engaging, informative, and motivational, serving as an excellent example of delivering cultural narratives in a diverse setting. It is hoped that this study's findings will encourage further exploration of such radio broadcasts, especially given the strong preference for smartphone-based multimedia content among Indian youth. The study also aims to sensitize educators to the use of inclusive language, which projects a global perspective and enhances impact when delivering talks in a multilingual country like India.

Keywords: culture, national integration, national education policy, mann ki baat, multilingual

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By examining the ways in which narratives are constructed and disseminated, researchers can gain insights into the power dynamics that shape our social and cultural landscapes.

-Sarah Lee (2025)

Introduction

The Executive Academic Head of the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts recently observed that for many visitors, India's true identity lies in its

cultural heritage, which serves as a binding force for the entire world. This sentiment echoed in an Allahabad University newsletter titled 'India isn't a land of many cultures; It is a land with myriad cultural expressions.' Indians have long recognized that the nation's rich linguistic and cultural diversity presents both unique challenges and significant opportunities for national integration and identity formation. In recent years, government-led initiatives like "Mann Ki Baat," a radio program hosted by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, have emerged



as crucial platforms to foster a shared cultural narrative across multilingual India (1). This study examines how "Mann Ki Baat" constructs and communicates cultural narratives within a multilingual setting, highlighting the intricate roles of language, content, and communication strategies in shaping cultural identity and promoting national unity.

Objectives

Researchers in Culture Studies have long been fascinated by the exploration of cultural narratives and their role in shaping perceptions and attitudes. This study of the monthly radio address delivered to the nation by the Prime Minister of the world's largest democracy has the following objectives:

1. To analyze the content and predominant themes of two recent "Mann Ki Baat" episodes.
2. To evaluate the Prime Minister's use of language and communication strategies within a multilingual context.
3. To assess the effectiveness of "Mann Ki Baat" in fostering national integration and cultural cohesion.

Statement of the Problem

In a country as linguistically diverse as India, fostering a unified cultural identity through mass communication presents a complex challenge. While "Mann Ki Baat" serves as a significant platform for national dialogue, it is crucial to critically examine its effectiveness in managing linguistic diversity and constructing a shared cultural narrative. This study aims to explore the strategies employed by the Prime Minister to navigate multilingualism and communicate messages of national pride, unity, and cultural heritage.

Hypothesis

The Prime Minister's "Mann Ki Baat" effectively employs multilingual communication strategies and culturally inclusive content to enhance national integration and project a unified cultural narrative across India's diverse linguistic landscape.

Methodology

Data Collection: This study employs textual analysis of the English translations of two recent episodes of "Mann Ki Baat" (May 2025 and April 2025).

Analytical Approach: Critical discourse analysis was applied to examine key themes, language choices, emotional appeals, and cultural references. The focus is on understanding how cultural narratives are constructed through the content, linguistic strategies, and emotional undertones present in the selected episodes.

Critical Analysis of the Cultural Narrative in Two Talks

The following excerpts from the transcript effectively convey a cultural narrative in India's multilingual and diverse context by highlighting national solidarity, regional contributions, historical milestones, and cultural symbols.

Talk No. 121: April 27, 2025

1. "My dear countrymen, Namaskar." The greeting '**Namaskar**' is a culturally rich salutation used across many Indian languages, reflecting linguistic diversity and inclusivity.
2. "No matter which state one belongs to, no matter which language one speaks, one is feeling the pain of those who have lost their loved ones in this attack." This emphasizes **unity beyond linguistic differences**, recognizing India's multilingual fabric.
3. "This attack in Pahalgam shows the desperation of the patrons of terrorism; displays their cowardice... at a time when peace was returning to Kashmir, there was a vibrancy in schools and colleges, construction work had gained unprecedented pace, democracy was getting stronger, the number of tourists was increasing at a record rate, people's income was increasing, new opportunities were being created for the youth." This highlights **regional progress and cultural renaissance** in Kashmir, a region with diverse linguistic and cultural identities.



4. "Today the world is watching, after this terrorist attack, the whole country is speaking in one voice." This reflects **national unity** expressed through multiple languages and regional voices aligning in solidarity.
5. "Global leaders have called me up as well; written letters and sent messages too. Everyone has strongly condemned this heinous terrorist attack." This demonstrates **global multilingual engagement** and recognition of India's diversity.
6. "Friends, the talent of Indian youth, modern education, Space-Science." This underscores the **diversity of India's intellectual and cultural pursuits**.
7. "India's Space Programmes that moved forward under his guidance gave global recognition to India's efforts." The Prime Minister highlights **international acknowledgment** of India's scientific and technological contributions, a source of pride across linguistic communities.
8. "Many countries of the world take help of ISRO for their Satellites and Space Missions." This clearly demonstrates India's **global cultural and technological influence**.
9. "Friends, when we see a Satellite launch by ISRO, we are filled with pride." It expresses a **collective sense of pride** that unites people across regions and languages.
10. "The Indian team rescued an elderly woman of more than 70 years of age who was buried under the debris for over 18 hours." This showcases the **universal values of compassion and resilience**, shared across cultural lines.
11. "We are very proud of all those who participated in Operation Brahma. We have our tradition, our values, the sentiment of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' – the whole world is one family." This explicitly references a classical Sanskrit phrase that embodies the **inclusive, universal spirit of Indian culture**.
12. "Indians living in Ethiopia have taken the initiative to send children who are suffering from heart disease since birth to India for treatment." This highlights the **global Indian diaspora's cultural unity** and commitment to service.
13. "India has also sent a large quantity of vaccine for the people of Afghanistan." It emphasizes India's **cultural values of compassion and service** extending beyond borders.
14. "India's readiness as the Vishwa-Mitra in times of crisis and India's commitment to humanity is becoming the hallmark of our identity." The use of the Sanskrit-derived phrase '**Vishwa-Mitra**' (friend of the world), reinforces India's cultural identity rooted in ancient values.
15. "Our tradition, our values, the sentiment of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' – the whole world is one family." This reiterates a **core cultural philosophy** that unites India's diverse linguistic and cultural groups.
16. "Brothers and sisters, many more indelible chapters of the freedom struggle are associated with April itself." This connects **historical events with cultural pride** and shared heritage.
17. "The marks of this blood stained history are still present on the soil of Punjab." It reminds of **regional historical sacrifices** that are integral to Indian identity.
18. "All of you must be aware that another son of Bihar also contributed a lot to this Satyagraha, who became the first President of the country after independence." This celebrates **regional contributions to national history**, fostering regional pride within a larger cultural narrative.

These selected lines collectively weave a narrative that celebrates India's rich, multilingual, and regional diversity while emphasizing shared values, history, and cultural symbols that foster national pride and unity.

Talk No. 122: May 25, 2025

1. "My dear countrymen, Namaskar." The greeting '**Namaskar**' resonates across multiple Indian languages and cultures, setting a tone of inclusivity and respect.
2. "Today the whole country is united against terrorism; filled up with anger and resolve." It emphasizes **national unity** transcending



- linguistic and regional differences in the fight against a common threat.
3. "The valour displayed by our forces during Operation Sindoor has made every Indian proud." It celebrates **patriotism** rooted in the collective pride of the diverse Indian populace.
 4. "...painted it in the hues of the tricolour." This symbolically references the **national flag**, a unifying cultural emblem.
 5. "Tiranga Yatras were organised... Thousands of people came out holding the tricolour, to pay their respects & honour to the country's armed forces." This highlights widespread participation across different regions and languages, fostering a sense of **shared cultural identity**.
 6. "Poems were being written on social media, songs of resolve were being sung. Little children were creating paintings that carried great messages hidden in them." This demonstrates how diverse forms of **cultural expression** (poetry, music, art) are used across communities to reinforce national values.
 7. "In Katihar in Bihar, Kushinagar in UP, and many other cities, children born during that period have been named 'Sindoor'." It reflects **regional traditions** and the integration of cultural identity into personal lives, even through naming.
 8. "...the pride in Dantewada's education achievements, where Maoism was once at its peak." It signifies **regional transformation and resilience**, reflecting cultural strength and hope.
 9. "The Lion Census was conducted in 11 districts, in an area of 35 thousand square kilometres." It connects **conservation efforts with Indian natural heritage** and cultural reverence for wildlife.
 10. "Crafted Fibers is a beautiful confluence of Sikkim's tradition, the art of weaving, and the sense of fashion today." This showcases **regional craftsmanship**, blending tradition with modernity, and promoting local culture.
 11. "He thought... 'why not give a new dimension to weaving!' And this thought gave birth to Crafted Fibers." It emphasizes **innovative cultural entrepreneurship** rooted in regional tradition.
 12. "Jeevan Joshi; age 65 years. Now imagine, how full of life one who has 'Jeevan' in one's name itself must be." This personalizes cultural narrative through **individual stories** that embody resilience and creative spirit.
 13. "His work is not just art, it is a sadhana." This connects **art to spiritual and cultural practice**, integral to Indian identity.
 14. "Women who are working in the fields as well as touching the heights of the sky. Yes! You heard it right, now the women of the village are flying drones as Drone Didi." It celebrates **women's empowerment** across rural India, blending traditional roles with modern technology.
 15. "Friends, the land of Bihar is very special. Many unique things happened here in this event." This highlights **regional pride and cultural heritage**.
 16. "The land of Bihar is very special." It reinforces **regional identity** within the national fabric.
 17. "The 'Ashtalakshmi Mahotsav' dedicated to the strength of the North East." It celebrates **regional festivals** that embody local cultural values.
 18. "Dr. Chewang Norbu Bhutia. He is a Veterinary Doctor by profession and a true Brand Ambassador of Sikkim's culture by heart." It showcases **regional cultural personalities** contributing to national identity.
 19. "He connected traditional weaving with modern fashion and made it a social enterprise." It demonstrates how **regional cultural traditions are innovatively integrated** into contemporary contexts.
 20. "Jeevan ji lives in Haldwani, Uttarakhand. During childhood, polio took away the strength of his legs, but polio could not snatch his courage." This personal story reflects **resilience** rooted in cultural values of perseverance.



Findings

The selected excerpts from both "Mann Ki Baat" episodes collectively craft a powerful narrative that celebrates India's rich tapestry of languages, traditions, regional identities, and collective achievements, fostering pride and unity within a multilingual and multicultural setting. The analysis showcases a cultural narrative that effectively highlights India's diversity, national unity, and regional contributions. The strategic use of culturally rich salutations like "Namaskar" and phrases such as "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" (the whole world is one family) underscores an emphasis on inclusivity and shared values.

The Narrative Skillfully Weaves Together Various Themes, Including

- National solidarity in the face of adversity (e.g., terrorism).
- Regional achievements and contributions (e.g., Kashmir's progress, Bihar's historical significance, Dantewada's educational advancements, Sikkim's craftsmanship).
- Cultural symbols (e.g., the national flag, traditional weaving, "Vishwa-Mitra").
- Historical milestones (e.g., the freedom struggle, Operation Sindoor).
- Collective pride and unity across diverse languages and regions.

The transcripts also consistently highlight India's global engagement, technological advancements (e.g., ISRO's successes), and commitment to humanity (e.g., aid to Ethiopia and Afghanistan), reinforcing a strong sense of national identity and pride.

The critical analysis of the two talks reveals that the Prime Minister utilizes content emphasizing shared cultural values, national achievements, and regional pride to effectively reach diverse audiences and foster a sense of collective identity. The communication style is consistently motivational, engaging, and inclusive, making complex themes accessible to a broad audience. The use of emotionally charged narratives and culturally

relevant references significantly enhances listener engagement and reinforces national unity. Both talks demonstrate an effective navigation of linguistic diversity, serving as a model for inclusive communication in multilingual settings. This analysis leads the investigator to affirm the hypothesis: "Mann Ki Baat" effectively employs multilingual communication strategies and culturally inclusive content to enhance national integration and project a unified cultural narrative across India's diverse linguistic landscape.

Scope for Further Research

Further research could expand this analysis to include a larger sample of "Mann Ki Baat" episodes over an extended period. Additionally, studying audience reception and impact through surveys and social media analysis could provide valuable insights. Comparative studies of "Mann Ki Baat" with other national communication platforms across different languages, as well as an investigation into the role of digital and multimedia adaptations of "Mann Ki Baat" in reaching younger audiences, are also areas worth exploring.

Limitations of the Study

This study's scope is limited to the textual analysis of two "Mann Ki Baat" episodes, which may not fully capture the program's broader impact or the nuances of its audio delivery. Furthermore, this investigation did not include an analysis of audience perception and reception, which could provide additional critical insights into the programme's effectiveness.

Conclusion

"Mann Ki Baat" exemplifies how effective communication in a multilingual country can cultivate a shared cultural narrative and promote national integration. The Prime Minister's strategic use of language, emotionally resonant content, and inclusive storytelling demonstrate the profound power of media in shaping collective identity. This minor study highlights the importance of linguistic sensitivity and cultural inclusiveness in mass communication, offering valuable insights for



educators, policymakers, and communication strategists aiming to foster unity in diversity. It is perhaps most appropriate to conclude by quoting Singh (2024), who, in a study of All India Radio's role in shaping India's identity during the Nehruvian era, observed that AIR has served as a medium for mass communication playing a pivotal role in shaping India's political, social, and cultural landscape. It has become an indispensable tool for political communication through its reach, combined with its ability to convey authoritative yet empathetic messaging. This sentiment resonates strongly with the observed impact of "Mann Ki Baat" today.

Notes

1. 'Mann Ki Baat' is a unique initiative of the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi to reach the masses across the country through the Radio (My Gov). Translations into English of the talks originally delivered in Hindi are available online. By the last week of June 2025, 123 episodes have been broadcast by All India Radio.

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