

Mandating Self-Imposed Curfew - An Analysis of PM Modi's Janta Curfew Speech

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Abstract

This study explores the persuasive strategies used by the Indian Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi to appeal to the citizens of India, to observe 'Janta Curfew' or People's Curfew, as a preventive measure to contain the spread of Covid-19 infections in India. The study maps the speech to established strategies and theories of persuasion such as Aristotle's Rhetorical Triangle, Elaboration Likelihood Model, Monroe's Motivated Sequence, and Cognitive Dissonance Theory; and ascertains the indispensability of the aforementioned theoretical frameworks. The study also identifies Modi's unique persuasive strategies such as wheedling, building-up (before delivering), complimenting before criticizing, Eutrepismus, and subtly titling the task; and analyzes their effectiveness in persuading the citizens of India to comply with Janta Curfew.

Keywords: communication, covid-19, lockdown, speech, persuasion

1. Introduction

1.1 Verbal Communication

Verbal communication is one of the important modalities of communication to transfer the intended message to the audience, and persuade them to act. Many scholars assert the significance of verbal communication in various contexts (Shang et al., 2012), (Zeki, 2009), (Leder, 1990), (Galishnikova, 2018). Though nonverbal signs of communication do play a pivotal role in communication (Hulbert & Capon, 1972), the indispensability of verbal communication is undeniable. This is true for even a micro level communication such as a one-on-one conversation in a day-to-day interaction. If verbal communication is so significant for such a miniscule-level communication, its significance in a Prime Minister's (PM) address to the nation, goes unsaid. For a nation like India, with a population exceeding 130 billion, and over 1650 spoken languages and dialects (Thingna, n.d.), it is paramount for the head of the nation to possess a phenomenal expertise in oratory, to communicate to the nation as a whole. Indian PM, Narendra Modi is one of such Heads that India has been witnessing these days, who, with a fitting rhetorical prowess, effectively communicates the message to his citizens.

1.2 PM Modi's Janta Curfew Speech

Modi is one of the PMs India has ever seen with a great eloquence. Despite the communal riots during his chief ministership in Gujarat, he managed to retain his position as a Chief Minister of Gujarat-five times, and rose to become the PM of India, twice. One of the pivotal factors that makes him what he is and achieve what he has, is his eloquence. Modi has made a few landmark addresses to the nation on important occasions such as demonetization on 08 Nov 2016,

and abrogation of Article 370 on 08 Aug 2019. He strategically articulated his thoughts on matters that required reciprocation from the citizens. Covid-19 pandemic was one such situation in 2020, and Modi made several addresses to the nation, to apprise the citizens of the pandemic's status quo and persuade them to take necessary actions in the fight against the coronavirus disease. According to BARC India, the monitoring agency for TV viewership, PM Modi's address to the nation on 19 March 2020, in which, he urged the citizens to observe a one-day 'Janta Curfew', was watched by 83 million viewers for 1.27 billion minutes. The speech was aired across 191 TV channels (Laghate, 2020).

At a time when the entire world was struggling to tackle the covid-19 pandemic, several nations resorted to a nation-wide lockdown (Dunford et al., 2020) as a preventive measure to stop the spread of covid-19, as per the directions of the World Health Organization (WHO). A nationwide lockdown was indispensable for a country like India, which has the second largest population in the world. At the same time, the repercussions of such a great measure for a nation with such a huge population is unignorable. According to The Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker (OxCGRT), India went on a nationwide lockdown with a 100 percent stringency from 25 March 2020 to 19 April 2020, and a 96.3 percent stringency from 20 April 2020 to 03 May 2020, both of which account for a total of 41 days of strict national lockdown (OxCGRT, n.d.). Shutting down a country of more than 1.36 billion population, for 41 days with a 96-plus stringency rate was inevitable, as no vaccine was developed. At the same time, the impact of such a huge move goes without saying. So, PM Modi, before locking down the country for 41 days with a 96 plus stringency rate, went for a trial run: a lockdown for 14 hours—from 7 AM to 9 PM on the 22nd of March, 2020. Modi, very subtly, named that lockdown as 'Janta Curfew' meaning 'People's Curfew'. In PM Modi's words, "a curfew imposed for the people, by the people, on the people themselves" (Modi, 2020). Modi also hinted that the lockdown imposed on the citizens of India on 22 March 2020 was a trial for a prolonged lockdown to follow in the successive days, when he said that the success of 'a people's curfew' on 22nd March, and the experience gained from it, would prepare the people for their upcoming challenges (Modi, 2020).

Thus, to get the entire population oblige to the self-imposed lockdown, the government of India didn't pass a government order or communicated the intended message through the Minister of Health and Family Welfare. Instead, The Prime Minister, who is the chief head of the government and the country, made a televised address to the nation for a length of 28 minutes and 55 seconds on 19 March 2020. In his speech, PM Modi persuaded the people to adhere to the lockdown mandate, and legitimized his move for a nationwide, strict lockdown using various discourse strategies and discourse variables.

1.3 Objectives

1. To map Modi's Janta Curfew speech to established strategies and theories of persuasion
2. To study the effectiveness of the identified strategies of communication
3. To identify Modi's unique styles of persuasion and analyze their effectiveness

1.4 Literature Review

An acclaimed orator of our times and political figure of a high rank, PM Modi has been a constant source of research for many researchers in the broad field of communication, for his rhetorical prowess. Visoba Khechar, a political analyst reasons out why Narendra Modi is considered India's best orator. He identifies certain patterns—gradual increase in speech rate and loudness of voice, questioning the audience, and usage of wordplays and easy-to-understand words—that Modi follows to make his speeches effective (Khechar, 2019). Vanky lists 10 public speaking lessons that can be learnt from Modi. (Kataria, 2019). Priyambada has analyzed Modi's demonetization speech using the tools of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The researcher uncovers the latent ideologies of the government, the power relations, and the rhetorical strategies that Modi uses to convince the audience about demonetization (Pal, 2017). Shalini and Nitin have analyzed the elements of pathos used by PM Modi in his Mann Ki Baat, a public relations campaign aired on All India Radio between October 2014 and March 2019. The analysis revealed that there was a tremendous increase in positive sentiments during the last 100 days of his public relations campaign (Upadhyay and Upadhyay). Kanki Garg has done a sentiment analysis of PM Modi's Mann Ki Baat speeches aired in the year 2018, and the people's reactions to those speeches on twitter. The researcher has found that the sentiments of the people are high for certain topics addressed in the speeches, and low for certain other topics. Basing the research on lexicon method, the researcher claims that the results are 85.4% accurate, with term-frequency (Garg, 2019). Syeda and Heeba have analyzed PM Modi's four speeches in foreign soils using three key strategies of content analysis: textual analysis, rhetorical criticism, and thematic analysis, while putting in perspective and establishing the relationship between his speeches and policies. The researchers explicate how Modi uses speeches as a means to build his own image resembling that of Mahatma Gandhi and the image of the nation (Afshana & Din, 2018). Daneshwar and Akash have explained Modi's use of Motivating Language Theory (MLT) in his monthly radio addresses, *Mann Ki Baat*. Using the ML scale and the Leader effectiveness scale in a survey, the researchers have found that Modi has effectively used the "direction giving,

empathetic, and meaning-making language” components of motivating language to increase his leadership effectiveness (Sharma & Dubey, 2021). Kumar et al. have investigated the role of amplitude modulation, pitch, speech rate and speech pause in the speeches of Narendra Modi and Rahul Gandhi during their political rallies, interviews and parliamentary debates. The researchers have analyzed how both the leaders use different amplitude modulation to increase the effectiveness of their speeches (Kumar, Shrotriya, & Chandra, 2021).

Jean-Thomas and Christophe have made a discourse analysis of Modi’s 720 interventions between 2010 and 2017, comprising 1.6 million words. The scholars highlight how Modi’s dexterity as an orator, has contributed to his rise to power from a state’s chief minister to a nation’s prime minister. The scholars also identify how Modi uses populist language to appeal to the masses, establishing himself as the leader of the nation (Martelli & Jaffrelot, 2017). Syed has made a critical discourse analysis of PM Modi’s Independence Day speech of 2014, to reveal how Modi made use of various types of persuasive strategies to achieve political and ideological aims (Umer Ahmad Qadri, 2018). Nonica brings out Modi’s oratorical skills exhibited in his emotion-packed speeches, that are indicative of his extended political language (Datta, 2013).

Modi’s speeches during covid-19 pandemic, have not escaped the critical lens of researchers. Kaur and Mishra have analyzed how PM Modi has communicated the right message to the citizens of India on taking necessary precautionary measures to combat the spread of covid-19. The researchers did a content analysis of his addresses to the nation through television and Mann Ki Baat episodes, from March 2020 to June 2020. Besides highlighting the important themes, he had covered in his speeches, the scholars have also identified 13 mantras, PM Modi had propagated among the citizens, to fight against covid-19. (Kaur & Mishra, 2020). Anirban has highlighted Modi government’s refusal to involve citizens in the decision-making process and its secrecy on future policies with respect to two major issues: concerns with medical infrastructure and problems faced by migrant laborers (Chanda, 2020).

While the researches specified above contribute to the various aspects of PM Modi’s communication, this study seeks to analyze his first national address in the context of covid-19, to find out how effectively he persuades the citizens to adhere to lockdown measures and legitimizes the idea of a nationwide lockdown.

2. Method

Speech analysis is a subset of discourse analysis or discourse studies, which cuts across a variety of disciplines to analyze any significant semiotic event. In this research, PM’s Modi’s address/speech to the nation, urging the citizens to observe Janta Curfew, is mapped to the theoretical frameworks laid down by four notable theories of persuasion—Aristotle’s Rhetorical Triangle, Elaboration Likelihood Model, Monroe’s Motivated Sequence, and Cognitive Dissonance Theory,—and specific discourse variables and discourse strategies that Modi used in his speech are analyzed, for their role in making the power-packed speech spur the intended audience to comply with the intended idea, and execute the intended action.

2.1 Review of Related Theories

2.1.1 Aristotle’s Rhetorical Triangle

According to Aristotle’s treatise on rhetoric, "rhetoric" is "the ability, in a particular case, to identify the available means of persuasion" (Aristotle et al., 2010). Aristotle condensed the infinite ways of persuading audiences into three broad categories, which are called the modes of persuasion. This Aristotle’s categorization is also known as Aristotle’s Rhetorical Triangle comprising the three modes of persuasion or rhetorical appeals: Ethos, Pathos, and Logos.



Figure 1. Aristotle's Rhetorical Triangle

Logos is related to the message. It appeals to the reason. Logos can also be thought of as an argument which could be

inductive or/and deductive, evidenced by empirical proofs such as research, question, and testimonies. **Ethos** is related to the speaker. It concerns with how the speaker establishes his/her credibility, authority, and reliability. **Pathos** is related to the audience. It refers to how the speaker can create the intended response from the audience. To get the intended response from the audience, the speaker uses all possible strategies in terms of both substance (vocabulary, rhetorical devices, and discourse strategies) and style (kinesics, haptics, vocalics, proxemics, and chronemics). All the three appeals are to be initiated and maintained by the speaker. Besides the above three rhetorical appeals, scholars have also added a few more appeals for effective persuasion as proposed by Aristotle. They are: **Telos**, a term Aristotle used, to refer to the ultimate purpose of a speech, and **Kairos**, referring to the elements of a speech, that acknowledge and draw support from the setting, time, and place in which the speech occurs. It also refers to a propitious moment for decision or action (Aristotle et al., 2010).

2.1.2 Monroe's Motivated Sequence

Alan H. Monroe, during his service as a speech professor at Purdue University, developed a 5-part framework known as Monroe's motivated sequence, to make effective and persuasive speeches that would deliver results. They are Attention, Need, Satisfaction, Visualization, and Action. Firstly, the speaker needs to grab the attention of the audience using a story, or a humor, or a shocking statistic, or a rhetorical question, or anything else that would captivate the audience's attention. Secondly, in order to persuade the audience, the speaker needs to establish the need for what is being propagated in the speech. Thirdly, the speaker needs to satisfy the need, which the speaker had just established. Fourthly, the speaker needs to visualize the future. The speaker should describe what will happen if the listener does nothing in the future. It is the speaker's job to persuade the listener to agree with him or her and adopt similar attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs. The speaker should assist the audience in imagining what might happen if they follow the speaker's instructions. In order to achieve this, positive, negative, and contrast approaches can be used. Finally, the speaker must present, exactly what he or she wants the audience to do and how it should be done. (Monroe, 1958)

2.1.3 Cognitive Dissonance Theory

In 1957, Leon Festinger wrote a book on the theory of cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957) and outlined a detailed understanding of cognitive dissonance. The theory holds that when individuals encounter dissonance (inconsistencies in beliefs and actions), it results in a psychological tension. Individuals do not like to maintain such inconsistencies. Thus, speakers can use this conflict to persuade the individuals by resolving the conflict with their ideas and beliefs which they intend the audience to comply with.

2.1.4 Elaboration Likelihood Model

Elaboration Likelihood Model of persuasion was proposed by Petty and Cacioppo in 1986 (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). In this model, the term 'Elaboration' refers to the quantum of thought or cognitive potential an individual uses to process the content of a message conveyed. Audiences, generally analyze the content of a message in two ways: The Central Route, in which, the recipients process the message extensively analyzing the reasoning and the logical coherence behind the message conveyed to them. This results in a high elaboration of the message on part of the audience; and The Peripheral Route, in which, the recipients process the message superficially, captivated by 'peripheral cues' such as humor, credibility of the source, fear, or desire. The theory proposes that persuasive endeavors should take into consideration the inclinations of the audience: the motivation to understand a message and the ability to understand that message. Generally, the central route of persuasion, always yields the best persuasive results.

3. Modi's Speech within the Select Frameworks of Rhetorical Theories and Strategies

Of the different theories and strategies of persuasion discussed in the previous section, certain theoretical components are found in more than one theory or strategy, and are expressed in different nomenclatures. Aristotle's 'Logos' component in the 'modes of persuasion' is conceptually similar to the 'Satisfy the need' phase in Monroe's motivated sequence, and 'the central route' in 'Elaboration Likelihood Model' of persuasion. In all these three instances, the emphasis is on convincing the audience with a logical reasoning that appeals to the intellect of the target audience, which in turn persuades the audience to act in accordance to the speaker's views and instructions.

Similarly, the 'Pathos' element in Aristotle's 'modes of persuasion' can be likened to 'the peripheral route' in the 'Elaboration Likelihood Model' of persuasion. In both the theories, it refers to the appeal a speaker can make, to the feelings and emotions of the audience, persuading them to do the intended action.

Modi's Janta Curfew speech fits partly or fully within the select theoretical frameworks mentioned above.

3.1 Modi's Speech within the Framework of Aristotle's Rhetorical Triangle

3.1.1 Elements of Pathos in Modi's Speech

When it comes to rhetoric and persuasion, one cannot escape the Aristotle's 'modes of persuasion'. Aristotle, a

philosophical giant of his time, not only belongs to the classical age but has also made immortal contributions, that are of a 'classic' status, to the field of rhetoric, and modes of persuasion or the rhetorical triangle is one of them.

Modi's Janta curfew speech has a lot of 'pathos' elements, appealing to the emotions of the people, persuading them to comply with the 14-hour lockdown. There are seven instances where PM Modi appeals to the emotions of the citizens.

Pathos Element 1

"In these two months, the 130 crore citizens of India have ably dealt with the global Corona pandemic and have exercised due caution" (Modi, 2020)

"Over the past 2 months, 130 crore Indians, each and every citizen, has taken on this national crisis as one's own and done whatever possible for society and the nation." (Modi, 2020)

PM Modi makes these statements in the very beginning of the speech. He appeals to the emotions of the people, lauding them and appreciating them that they have fought against this grave corona virus. When this speech was made (19 March 2020), there were only 194 cases in India. Most of the citizens of India were not aware of the virus, and even if they had heard about it, they had not taken any measures of 'dealing with the corona pandemic' such as wearing masks, social distancing, and washing hands using soap or sanitizers. But Modi credits the entire population of the country, the merit of 'ably dealing' with coronavirus, raising the morale of the citizens to prepare them for a stronger fight against coronavirus.

Pathos Element 2

"Whenever I asked you for something, you have never let me down" (Modi, 2020)

PM Modi has all the rights to demand and force the citizens to observe a 14-hour curfew. Instead of being authoritative, he appeals to the citizens as though he seeks a favor from them. He does not say, "I would like to ask you something, please do not let me down". Instead, he carefully chooses the word 'whenever' and the phrase 'you have never let me down' intending to make the citizens believe that they have 'never' let him down, and have 'always' given him what he had asked for. By the aforementioned statement, he drives in the thought that they must give him what he asks—observe the Janta curfew; and not let him down.

Pathos Element 3

"Our efforts succeed, only on the strength of your blessings." (Modi, 2020)

This is another statement Modi uses to persuade the citizens to observe Janta Curfew by appealing to the emotions. He hints about the magnitude of efforts required from the people, in the collective ('our') efforts to combat coronavirus. Though the efforts are collective ('our efforts'), the success of the efforts is solely ('only') dependent on the strength of the citizens' blessings. The implications of the word 'blessings' cannot be undermined. For a country which is known for its religious devotion, the usage of the word 'blessings' to denote the people's compliance is a good example of pathos.

Pathos Element 4

"I request the business world and high-income segments of society to as much as possible, look after the economic interests of all the people who provide them services. In the coming few days, it is possible these people may not be able to come to office or your homes. In such a case, do treat them with empathy and humanity and not deduct their salaries. Always keep in mind that they too need to run their homes, protect their families from illness." (Modi, 2020)

The above statements by PM Modi are a blend of pathos and logos. The first three statements in the above excerpt have a logical appeal. Modi hints to the citizens that a single day's 14-hour long Janta curfew is a trial run for more such curfews in the days to come, when he says "people may not be able to come to office or your homes". He appeals to the business world and the high-income segments, not to deduct their salaries. India is a country where only a fraction of the entire population belongs to the business and high-income segments. The masses are mostly service providers. Therefore, statements such as "do treat them with empathy and humanity and not deduct their salaries" and "they too need to run their homes, protect their families from illness" appeal to the masses who may be greatly impacted by the curfew.

Pathos Element 5

"I have full faith that you will in a similar manner, continue to carry out your responsibilities and duties in the time to come." (Modi, 2020)

PM Modi makes another appeal to the emotions of the citizens. The words to note are "I have full faith that you will...". An Audience is likely to be moved to fulfill a speaker's expectations when the speaker expresses that he/she 'trusts' or

‘has faith on’ or ‘believes’ the audience. Anybody would want to be trustworthy. The devotion to remain trustworthy is high when a person of a high rank and position, such as the Prime Minister of the largest democracy says, “*I have full faith that you will... carry out your responsibilities and duties in the time to come*”.

Pathos Element 6

*“It is wrong if you believe that you are okay and nothing can happen to you, and you can continue roaming around in markets and streets as usual and remain unaffected. **By doing this, you will not only be unjust to yourself but also to your family.**”* (Modi, 2020)

India is a country that values family, an important institution that plays a pivotal role in the Indian society. Modi talks about the economic interests of the family (Pathos Element 4) and its health (as quoted above). He logically and emotionally appeals to the minds and the hearts of the people, that if they don’t comply with the curfew and ‘roam around’, they will be ‘unjust’ to themselves and their families.

3.1.2 Elements of Logos in Modi’s Speech

Logos is one of the three modes of persuasion as formulated by Aristotle. It refers to the author’s appeal through the reasonableness of the message and text characterized by reason. Aristotle claims that the inner consistency and logic of the text, which is often deemed persuasive, speaks for itself, and be compelling enough on its own merits to persuade the audience. Modi includes sufficient reasoning to convince the citizens of India about the necessity of imposing a 14-hour-long curfew, and if required, a strict nationwide lockdown in the subsequent days. Some of the statements in the speech with the elements of logos are as follows.

“Till now, science has not been able to find a definite solution to save us from the Corona pandemic...neither has a vaccine been developed.”

“Study of the countries most affected by Corona virus has revealed another aspect. In these countries, the spread of the disease has witnessed almost an explosion after the initial few days.”

“...a few countries have controlled the situation by taking swift decisions and isolating its people as much as possible.”

“...the government has decided to set up a COVID-19 Economic Response Task Force under the leadership of the Finance Minister. It will also ensure that all steps taken to reduce the economic difficulties are effectively implemented.”

“I request the business world and high-income segments of society to as much as possible, look after the economic interests of all the people who provide them services.”

“I would like to reassure all Indians that all steps necessary are being taken to ensure there is no shortage of essential items like milk, groceries and medicines.” (Modi, 2020)

PM Modi reasons out the necessity for a Janta curfew and a similar curfew in the successive days, on various viewpoints. He validates the need for a Janta curfew on the basis of four arguments:

- i. Science has not found a definite solution
- ii. Vaccine has not been developed
- iii. Spread of disease proliferated after the initial few days, and
- iv. Situation is controllable by isolating people as much as possible.

The above factors provide a logical reasoning, validating the need for a 14-hour long Janta curfew.

PM Modi’s drives his message about the need for a 14-hour lockdown, providing not just the reasoning for the necessity of a lockdown, but also the logical solution to the problems caused by such a lockdown. So, his speech comprises a convincing reasoning for both the need for a Janta curfew and the solution to the consequences that could be caused by Janta curfew. He specifies four different solutions to the challenges that could arise by observing Janta curfew and a nationwide lockdown in the successive days. The four solutions are as follows:

- i. COVID-19 Economic Response Task Force
- ii. Steps to reduce economic difficulties will be effectively implemented
- iii. Business world and high-income segments to look after the economic interests of all the service providers, and
- iv. All steps will be taken to ensure availability of essential items like milk, groceries, and medicines.

3.2 Modi’s Speech within the Framework of Monroe’s Motivated Sequence

Modi’s speech fits the theoretical framework of Monroe’s motivated sequence. The mapping of Modi’s Janta curfew speech to the five aspects of Monroe’s motivated sequence is presented in the table given below.

Table 1. Modi’s Speech within the Framework of Monroe’s Motivated Sequence

Sequence of Actions	Key Strategies	Instances in Modi’s Speech
Get the Attention	Present a shocking Statistic	<i>“World Wars 1 and 2 did not impact as many countries, as has Corona affected them today”</i>
Establish the Need	Convince the audience that the status quo needs a change	<i>“...it is appearing as if we have averted the crisis”</i>
	Explain the consequences of maintaining the status quo	<i>“Complacency in respect of a global pandemic like Corona is not appropriate. It is wrong to assume that India will not be impacted by it.”</i>
	Show how the problem directly affects the audience	<i>“If you believe that you are okay and you can continue roaming around... you will not only be unjust to yourself but also to your family.”</i>
Satisfy the Need	Present the solution	<i>“I appeal to you all that for the next few weeks, step-out of your homes only when absolutely necessary.”</i> <i>“We must all resolve to not get infected ourselves, and prevent others as well from getting infected”</i>
Visualize the Future	Present a hypothetical future describing what the situation will look like if the audience does/does not what the speaker says	<i>“This people’s curfew will in a way be a litmus test for us, for our nation. This is also the time to see and test how prepared India is for fighting off a Corona like global pandemic.”</i>
Actualize the Solution	Leave your audience with specific things that they can do to solve the problem	<i>“This Sunday, that is on 22nd March, all citizen must abide by this people’s curfew from 7 AM until 9 PM”</i>

3.3 Modi’s Speech within the Framework of Cognitive Dissonance Theory

Cognitive dissonance theory stands out to be a unique theory of persuasion as its premise is grounded on psychology. According to this theory, the speaker causes tension in the minds of the audience, by presenting contents that are contrary to the audience’s beliefs and behaviors. And, audiences would always try to alleviate this discomfort caused by the dissonance cognized as a result of contradictory factors. A speaker can make use of this dissonance in the audience’s minds to persuade the audience by providing solutions to the conflicts and dissonances. PM Modi in his Janta curfew speech has made such statements.

“It is wrong if you believe that you are okay and nothing can happen to you, and you can continue roaming around in markets and streets as usual and remain unaffected. By doing this, you will not only be unjust to yourself but also to your family.” (Modi, 2020)

To impart the message of self-quarantine, PM Modi tries to create a discomfort in the minds of the audience, underscoring the consequences of not staying at home, and roaming around as usual; He intensifies the discomfort by stating that if people did not remain at home, individuals would affect not only themselves but also their families.

After creating a discomfort and intensifying the same, he goes on to deliver the message he intends to convey, in the next sentences. He makes use of the discomfort created and persuades the audience to practise ‘self-isolation’ or ‘self-quarantine’ as a solution.

“Keeping this in mind, I appeal to you all that for the next few weeks, step-out of your homes only when absolutely necessary. As far as possible, try and do your work, whether related to business or job, from home.” (Modi, 2020)

4. Modi’s Unique Persuasive Strategies

While the previous section maps how different parts of Modi’s address to the nation on Janta Curfew fits certain aspects of established rhetorical theories, this section discovers unique strategies, which may be better tagged as the ‘Modi-an’ strategies, employed by Modi to persuade the audience to observe the people’s curfew.

4.1 Wheedling

The Oxford Language dictionary defines ‘wheedling’ as “the action of flattering or coaxing someone in order to persuade them to do something or give one something”. PM Modi wheedles the audience when he says,

“In these two months, the 130 crore citizens of India have ably dealt with the global Corona pandemic and have exercised due caution.”

“Over the past 2 months, 130 crore Indians, each and every citizen, has taken on this national crisis as one’s own and done whatever possible for society and the nation.” (Modi, 2020)

As discussed in the previous section, these statements signify the ‘pathos’ element in the speech. At the same time, when viewed from a different perspective, it is evident that Modi wheedles to prepare them to accept the mandate he was going to make after a few minutes. When the vast majority of the audience, had not even known about the coronavirus, Modi cajoles them that they had ably dealt with the coronavirus. He tries to give the audience the notion that they have already been doing what he was expecting them to do; and just an additional action is required as an extension of their efforts.

4.2 Building-up (before Delivering)

The key objective of PM Modi’s speech on 19 March 2020 was to urge citizens of India to observe Janta Curfew, a 14-hour curfew, on Sunday, 22 March 2020. In fact, the webpage of Modi’s website, which has the transcript of Modi’s address to the citizens on 19 March, is titled as “Urge citizens to observe ‘Janta Curfew’ on 22nd March: PM Modi”.

In his 28 minute 55 second speech, Modi speaks about Janta curfew only from the 13.57th minute. He almost exhausts 50% of his total speech time, to prepare the minds of the audience so that the intended message is easily accepted by them. In that first-half of his speech, he uses various persuasive techniques as discussed in the previous sections.

Occasionally, Modi hints the audience that he is going to ask the audience their time:

In the 3rd minute of his speech, he says,

“Today, I am here to ask you, all my fellow citizens, for something. I want your coming few weeks from you, your time in the near future.” (Modi, 2020)

In the 10th minute of his speech, he says,

“I appeal to you all that for the next few weeks, step-out of your homes only when absolutely necessary.” (Modi, 2020)

In the 11th minute of his speech, he says,

“I also appeal that the elderly, senior citizens, and those above 65 years of age in our families, not leave homes for the next few weeks.” (Modi, 2020)

He registers in the minds of the audience that he is going to ask them their time; not a few minutes or hours, but a few weeks. Thus, for an audience, which is expecting a serious task for ‘a few weeks’, a 14-hour Janta curfew will not seem to be a 14-hour-long curfew, but just a 14-hour curfew. Only after these three instances, he gives specific details in the 14th minute,

“This Sunday, that is on 22nd March, all citizen must abide by this PEOPLE’S CURFEW from 7 AM until 9 PM.” (Modi, 2020)

This is a unique strategy Modi uses in this speech to convey the key message to the audience, and persuade them to follow it.

4.3 Complimenting before Criticizing

Complimenting before criticizing is another unique strategy that PM Modi uses in his speech. Modi wanted to convey that the people were not exercising the due precautions to protect themselves from coronavirus. But, before conveying this negative message, Modi compliments the citizens of doing the opposite, i.e., ‘ably dealing’ with the global corona pandemic. He says,

“...the 130 crore citizens of India have ably dealt with the global Corona pandemic and have exercised due caution.”

“However, in the past few days, it is appearing as if we have averted the crisis.”

It is important to note that in his complimentary statement, the subject of the sentence is the audience, the 130 crore citizens of India. But in the next statement, which is critical of the status quo, he includes himself by using the first-person-plural pronoun ‘we’ – in Hindi ‘hum’, when he says, “**we** have averted the crisis”. This is another minute technique Modi uses to subtly make a negative comment about the audience.

4.4 Eutrepismus

Eutrepismus is a rhetorical device in which a speech is separated into numbered parts, giving the audience a clear line of thinking to follow. Modi employs this device twice in his speech.

“It is imperative to keep two key factors in mind: Determination and Patience.” (Modi, 2020)

“During such a pandemic, only one mantra can take us through – ‘Hum Swasth, toh Jag Swasth’, that is the world will be healthy, if we stay healthy” (Modi, 2020)

It is noteworthy that Modi does not go for many numbers. He says, “two key factors” and “one mantra”. The less the number of separated parts, the more is the clarity. Modi limits the numbered parts to a maximum of two. The two key factors to bear in mind: Determination and Patience. In the following sentences he says that the audience should have the determination: not to get infected and prevent others from getting infected, and the audience should exercise patience by not leaving their homes.

Instead of saying plainly: ‘don’t step out of your homes’, Modi gives the practice of remaining indoors or self-isolating, a status of a virtue by terming that act, an expression of ‘patience’. This is another unique technique employed by Modi.

4.5 Subtle Titling of the Task

As discussed in the previous sections, the key objective of Modi’s speech was to urge citizens to observe a 14-hour curfew on Sunday, 22 March 2020. To get the citizens to comply with the idea, Modi subtly titles the curfew as ‘Janta Curfew’ meaning ‘People’s Curfew’. He makes the following statement:

“I request my fellow citizens for support on one more issue, that of people’s curfew. People’s curfew means a curfew imposed for the people, by the people, on the people themselves.” (Modi, 2020)

Modi tweaks the words of Abraham Lincoln and defines People’s curfew as a curfew imposed for the people, by the people, on the people themselves; foregrounding the people’s role and obligation in observing the curfew.

5. Discussion

Modi’s Janta Curfew speech was Telecast live on satellite channels and webcast live on various social media. People flooded the social media in solidarity with PM Modi’s appeal (Sengupta, 2020). People from various sections of the society—general public, experts in various fields, celebrities, and political leaders (including the opposition party)—expressed their support.

Rajat Sharma, Editor-In-Chief and Chairman (India TV), tweeted, *“Prime Minister’s address to the nation had the touch of a statesman. His #JantaCurfew idea is praiseworthy. I fully support his appeal. Let us all join hands to defeat #Coronavirus”* (Sharma, 2020).

Modi’s speech also witnessed a bipartisan support. *“Hon’ble Prime Ministerji has clearly spelt out the dire circumstances following the outbreak of #CoronaVirus in India. These are testing times for the nation and we must fight with resilience and social distancing”* tweeted, N Chandrababu Naidu, one of the leaders of opposition (Naidu, 2020).

Sandip Ghose, a marketing executive and political commentator said, *“His speech on the coronavirus pandemic was a master class in communication”*, on his interview to ThePrint media (ThePrint Team, 2020).

On 22 March 2020, obliging to the appeal of PM Modi, millions of Indians gave “an unprecedented and overwhelming response” to Modi’s appeal, by staying indoors, and coming out briefly at 5 PM to show gratitude to health and other essential service providers (PTI, 2020).

While the entire nation’s observation of Janta curfew itself is a strong witness to the effectiveness of Modi’s speech, quite a many, had attributed their compliance to Modi’s appeal, to the way PM Modi delivered the Janta Curfew speech. Anirudh Ganu, a lawyer from Mumbai tweeted, *“The speech was simple, straight and to the point, but communicated with surgical precision to reach every person and touch every heart.”* (Ganu, 2020). Alok Gupta tweeted, *“An address par excellence - Pointed, precise and very motivating. It provided the much-needed soothing touch to citizens while also reassuring all that “All is well”. We will surely follow Janta curfew.”* (Gupta, 2020).

Even people who were critical about the idea of Janta curfew, admitted that the speech was great. Twinkle Khanna tweeted, *“Have written against many govt. moves; but this was a speech that ... staves off panic without undermining the gravity of the situation”* (Khanna, 2020).

6. Conclusion

PM Modi’s televised address to the citizens of India on 19 March 2020 urging them to observe Janta Curfew or People’s Curfew is a distinctive rhetorical artefact that has elements found in notable strategies and theories of persuasion such

as Aristotle's Rhetorical Triangle, Monroe's Motivated Sequence, Cognitive Dissonance Theory, and Elaboration Likelihood Model. Besides possessing the aforementioned elements in his Janta Curfew speech, PM Modi saturates his speech with some exclusive techniques such as Wheedling, Building-up (before Delivering), Complimenting before Criticizing, Eutrepismus, and Subtle Titling of the Task to persuade the audience to comply with the Janta Curfew. As evidenced in the discussion section, the persuasive effect of those exclusive 'Modi-an' strategies in making the Janta Curfew a grand success, is undeniable.

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