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Appeal, Invoke, Persuade and Inspire – Revisiting the Independence Day speech of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Prime Minister Narendra Modi

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the rhetorical style and “addressing-the-nation” strategy of the two prime ministers of India – PM Manmohan Singh and PM Narendra Modi – specifically in their Independence Day speeches in 2013 and 2014 respectively. The analysis is based on Aristotle’s three means of persuasion – ethos, logos and pathos and Quintilian’s Five Canons of Rhetoric. The analysis provides an insight in the governing and leadership ideologies of the two prime ministers. For the process of analysis all the rhetorical factors – textual data, oratory style, language used and tone of speech – are being considered. The influence of this rhetoric on the minds of audience is not a part of this study although persuasion through effective communication is the ultimate goal of rhetoric.

Key words /phrases : political rhetoric, ethos, pathos, logos, Canons of Rhetoric,

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INTRODUCTION

The Independence Day speech of 2013 was crucial for PM Manmohan Singh as the 16th Assembly elections were due in a few months from then i.e. in April-May 2014. India had been under his prime minister ship for almost ten years then. The significance of this speech was a premature appeal to the voters. Similarly the Independence Day speech of 2014 was significant for PM Narendra Modi as this was his first Independence Day address to the nation as Prime Minister. His address was critically analyzed in the global political circles as this was the preamble to the political, judicial and governing policies that will be ensued in the future course of the party’s five-year tenure. For both the leaders this was the platform to voice out their political party’s beliefs, ideology, prospects and crucial plans for the betterment of the country.

The Independence Day speech is an address to the complete nation. Unlike the political rally speeches where the audience is generally the uneducated rural masses, the Independence day speech is a message delivered to all countrymen – educated, illiterate, rich, poor, residents, non-residents, working class, business class, men, women and children. PM Manmohan Singh addressed the nation for about 37 minutes while PM Narendra Modi addressed for about 63 minutes.

The relation between the speaker, set-up, environment and audience is a crucial factor for sustaining the attention of the listeners. The Independence Day speech is relayed across the country - it is telecasted live on all television channels and all radio stations. The direct audience is the large crowd at the Red Fort Ground who comes from all walks of life to listen to the Prime Minister, while the indirect audience is the larger number of television viewers and the radio listeners across the entire nation. The atmosphere around the direct audience is charged with the emotion of patriotism, pride and commitment to the progressive Indian nation. The environment around the indirect viewers is relaxed and engaging. The Independence Day being a holiday, most of the indirect audience sit in the comfort of their homes and watch the important event live on their televisions. Since all the TV channels telecast this event at the same time there is hardly any scope of diversion and channel browsing. More so, the mood of both the direct and the indirect audience is charged with the fervor of patriotism. This high fervor sometimes translates into commitments for social service and development. Hence, the environment around the audience during both the occasions of comparison is similar.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's 2013 Independence Day Speech

Aristotle considered *ethos* to be the strongest persuasion tool. The speaker is the prime ethos. The greetings of PM Manmohan Singh *"My dear fellow citizens, brothers, sisters and dear children"* calls attention of all the age groups and is an affable invitation. Immediately followed by the greetings is the reminder of losses faced by the nation. The tone for the recent losses in the natural disaster and accidents is sympathetic and reflective. Mentioning a series of losses at very beginning and opening the speech on a sad note is not very encouraging. Although as a Prime Minister it is befitting to be equitable, compassionate and sensitive.

- *"But on this celebration of independence we also feel pain in our hearts that our brothers and sisters in Uttarakhand had to face devastation about two months back. Our deepest sympathies are with all the families that suffered loss of life or property."*
- *We especially pay homage to the officers and men of the Air Force, ITBP and NDRF who sacrificed their lives to save others.*
- *We are also deeply pained that we lost the submarine, INS Sindurakshak in an accident yesterday."*

The speech starts with a defensive tone of how the government is functioning. Though PM Manmohan Singh talks about progress and development through the decades, he phrases it in a manner that seems to be only the contribution of Congress government and achievements of prime ministers belonging to the Congress party.

- *"If we look at our subsequent journey, we would find that our country has seen major changes every ten years."*
- *In the decade beginning 1950, India took its first steps as a democratic republic under the leadership of Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru.*
- *In the Sixties, Pandit Nehru set up new industries and factories, implemented new irrigation projects and opened new universities.*
- *In the Seventies, Indiraji boosted our confidence as a nation.*
- *In the next decade, Rajiv Gandhi ji set into motion the process of technological and economic modernization.*
- *In the year 1991, under the leadership of Shri Narsimha Rao, we successfully negotiated a major economic crisis and embraced reforms for strengthening our economy.*
- *I believe that the last decade has also been a decade of major changes in the history of our nation. In no other decade has our economic development increased as much as in this decade."*

He highlights the efforts of his political party rather than the entire worker community as such. The speech highlights the political achievements as a team while it doesn't highlight the personality pronoun "I". He used the word "I" only 8 times in the entire speech. This "I" is not an authoritative one rather it is only suggestive personal pronoun. The word "we" has been used by PM Manmohan Singh 65 times, and all these times it has been used in reference of his political party and team as such.

- *"The first UPA government came to power in May 2004. Ever since, we have worked with sincerity and honesty to build a progressive and modern India."*
- *We have envisioned a prosperous India.*
- *We have dreamt of an India where the youth get employment opportunities that enable them to contribute to the noble endeavour of nation building.*
- *We have strived for India's voice to be heard loud and clear at the international level. We have strived to build a nation that is looked at with respect and honour by the whole world.*
- *We have taken many measures to realise these dreams."*

Aristotle considers rational arguments to be strong *logos* that would persuade the audience. PM Manmohan Singh highlights the visions and proposals of his government rather than a vision for the future. Various factors like education system, healthcare and new rural employment policies as implemented by his government are mentioned. The rational argument could have been the effectiveness and the benefits of such proposals rather than to leave the audience to ponder over the setbacks and failures of such proposals. The *logos* of the argument are strengthened by statistics, figures, testimonies and comparisons which is almost missing in his speech. Achievements are highlighted rather than reasons. The entire speech is just a gist of developmental schemes.

PM Manmohan Singh stresses on secularism and the tone of preferentialism for any religion isn't visible in his words. The political ideology and beliefs are not linked to traditions or culture. The speech has a secular tone of tolerance and contentment.

"There can be no place for narrow and sectarian ideologies in a modern, progressive and secular country. Such ideologies divide out society and weaken our democracy. We should prevent them from growing. We need to strengthen those traditions of our country which teach us to promote tolerance and respect for thought processes different from ours. I would appeal to all political parties, all sections of our society and the public at large to work in this direction."

Though the speechwriter chose the words or ideas the style of delivery and rhetoric is the onus of the speaker. The modesty and reticence of his words depicted serenity and empathy which the political circles regard as cowardice.

*"The Food Security Bill is now before Parliament and **we hope** it will be passed shortly."*

In the golden days of Athens and Rome, oratory was a necessary skill and Cicero recorded – "voiceless - powerless – vulnerability". The confidence in voice reflects positivity and this propels ability of decision making and daresness to go ahead with the risk which was significantly missing in the tone. The words used didn't have a pattern of sound, rhythm or assertiveness. High pitch, involvement and rhythm attract and appeal to the audience but in this speech there is no force of confidence and assertiveness in the words uttered. Rather it is more of mumbling words with a sense of defense about being guilty. Good rhetorician normally concludes his speech or argument with promises for the future or plans for the future which highlights the developmental phase ahead and these promises strengthen the faith of audience in the speaker's intentions. PM Manmohan Singh used the phrase "*we will*" 9 times which is not appropriate enough to emphasize plans for a big country as India.

Conclusively the speech is a summary of the achievements made by his political party, but the stress on his achievements as a person and Prime Minister is not significant. Justifications have been provided at many instances and this confirms the guilt conscience.

- *"Many of our schools still lack drinking water facilities, toilets and other necessary infrastructure. There is a need to improve the quality of education."*
- *However, it (midday meals scheme) is necessary to improve its implementation.*
- *However, for relations with Pakistan to improve, it is essential that they prevent the use of their territory and territory under their control for any anti-India activity.*
- *Despite some worrisome communal incidents in 2012 and this year, the last 9 years have been good for communal harmony.*
- *We have not been successful in preventing Naxal attacks that happen from time to time.*
- *However, economic growth has slowed down at present and we are working hard to remedy the situation."*

Prime Minister Narendra Modi 2014 Independence Day Speech

The greeting phrase "*My dear countrymen*" is generalized address to all people of the nation which is in stark contrast to the personalized, passionate and encompassing tone of PM Manmohan Singh who said "*My dear fellow citizens, brothers, sisters and dear children*". The beginning phrase "*the prime servant of India extends greetings to all dear countrymen*" is catchy and sympathy seeking. It undermines the position of Prime Minister to prime servant. This sounds like a humble beginning to the ideology and dogma that "I belong to the masses" but the ethos of Prime Minister as a leader, as a role model is undermined. The speech starts with the call to service.

PM Narendra Modi gives more credit to the workers and the farmers rather than the politicians. While speaking about the progress of the country he highlights the contributions of others including all political parties and prime ministers. He "stoops down to conquer" while asserting his own individual progress from a modest family to the prime minister of the nation – the tone is that of self-pride and self-praise.

- *"This is the beauty of India's Constitution, this is its capability which has made it possible that today a boy from small town, a poor family has got the opportunity to pay homage to the tri-colour of India at the ramparts of Lal Quila (Red Fort)"*

The speech is mainly a narration of personal viewpoints. He majorly used enthymemes which rely on one's personal perception in contrary to being certainly true, measurable and tabulated facts.

- *"I can proudly say that the Session of Parliament reflects our thinking and it is a reflection of our intentions.*
- *From the ramparts of Red Fort, quite proudly I salute all the Members of Parliament; I also salute all the Political Parties.....*
- *I am an outsider for Delhi; I am not a native of Delhi. I have no idea about the administration and working of this place. I have been quite isolated from the elite class of this place but during the last two months while being an outsider, I had an insider view and I was astonished.*
- *When I came to Delhi and noticed an insider view, I felt what it was and I was surprised to see it.*
- *I observed that India's National newspapers, TV media were carrying these news items prominently.*
- *I am a person who has worked in public life. I have come across families with five sons, each having bungalows, access to fleet of cars, but parents are forced to live in old-age homes, Vriddhashrams. I have seen such families. I have also seen families with only daughter as progeny, that daughter sacrifices her dreams, doesn't get married, and spends entire life in taking care of old parents."*

PM Narendra Modi used the personal pronoun "I" 130 times in his speech. Each time an action is called for he used the pronoun "I" which suggests the preferential style of working as an individual rather than a team. This suggests the belief of commanding as a leader. He uses the strategy of "play God" to redefine democracy and re-democratize the existing system.

- *"I have started making efforts for razing those walls; I have started making efforts at making the Government, not an assembled entity, but an organic unity, an organic entity, a harmonious whole- with one aim, one mind, one direction, one energy.*
- *I want to awaken that power, I want to unite that power and want to accelerate the pace of the welfare of nation through that power and I shall definitely do it. I want to assure the countrymen that we will achieve that, we will definitely do that.*
- *I had gone to Nepal recently. There I said something publicly to draw the attention of the whole world.*
- *I appeal to all those people that whether it is the poison of casteism, communalism, regionalism, discrimination on social and economic basis, all these are obstacles in our way forward.*
- *Believe in my words, I do assure you. Shun all the sins committed so far, give up that way, follow the way of goodwill and brotherhood, and let's resolve to take the country forward. I believe we can do that.*
- *I have come here with a pledge to launch a scheme on this festival of Freedom."*

The words have been phrased in a manner to create a rhythmic pattern. The message spiced up with the canon of style actually stimulates the fun element and helps the audience to remember it longer. The alliteration enhanced the ornateness of his speech and reinforced the effective and precise communication technique.

- *"This nation has neither been built by political leaders nor by rulers nor by governments. This nation has been built by our farmers, our workers, our mothers and sisters, our youth.*
- *We walk together, we move together, we think together, we resolve together and together we take this country forward.*
- *Persons in government service are not doing "job", they are doing "service".*

Considering the canon of invention, PM Narendra Modi constructed his *logos* around simple yet relevant ideas. The stimulatory questions trigger the critical thinking cells of the audience and promote participation and interaction.

- *"How come we can take the country forward?*
- *Brothers and sisters, time has come to give a serious thought to the fact that whether we have a duty to create India of the dreams of those great people who gave us freedom, whether we have a national character?*
- *Can someone please tell me as to whether he or she has ever introspected in the evening after a full day's work as to whether his or her acts have helped the poor of the country or*

not, whether his or her actions have resulted in safeguarding the interest of the country or not, whether the actions have been directed in country's welfare or not?

- *How long these evils will continue? Whom does it benefit?*
- *Who is causing this imbalance in the society?*

This pattern of pausing after every few sentences ensures that the thought assimilation time of the listener increases. With the building up of the argument, the listener in this thought assimilation time connects mental references which result in being convinced with the speaker by the end of his argument. The ability of addressing complex and controversial issues through rationally stimulating questions evokes *pathos*.

He used many one-liners or catchy phrases in his speech. The poetical arrangement of words with appropriate body language conveys generates more pathos than plain words and facts.

- *"I am present amidst you not as the Prime Minister, but as the Prime Servant."*
- *This nation has neither been built by political leaders nor by rulers nor by governments.*

Although PM Narendra Modi has mentioned about secularity the preferential tone for vedic tradition and culture can't be ignored. The numerous assurances of belonging to a rich tradition and specific culture remind the followers of their elite stand in relation to other traditions and ideology.

- *This country has been built on such foundation of ancient cultural heritage, where we were told of only one mantra during Vedic period, which is indicative of our work culture, which we have learnt, we have memorized.*

Conclusively the speech is a kick start to his governing days which would implement schemes like "Come, make in India", "Sansad Adharsh Gram Yojana", "Swach Bharath" and others. The long address covers almost all areas of economic development like agriculture, manufacturing, IT and education which e binds together for holistic development of the nation. Though a big picture of development and progress is presented the working modalities and practicalities are not mentioned. The "I" factor of commanding, leading and directing is a precursor to the dictatorship style.

CONCLUSION

While politicians may be interested in how to gain support from the public, linguists and critical discourse, analysts might be interested in the way such support is enacted by language. (Khany, Hamzelou, 2014). A dictator's ascension speech usually seeks immediate outcome or reaction from the listeners, and is often times highly dramatic (Williams, 2011). To a despot, language is a vocal missile aimed at the weak and decadent citizens who must be set straight and on the right path as determined by the speaker (William, 2011). Democratic speeches are inherently deliberative, laudatory, conciliatory, consultative, co-orientational, and demonstrative (Williams, 2011). By its very representativeness, the language and the communication style of democratic governance and its elected leadership is sensitive, cautious, reflective, compromising, consensual, engaging, and thus deliberative in words choice towards policy options (Williams, 2011).

The eloquent delivery of speech by the speaker exhibits a tendency of familiarity and connection with his subject and ideology. While the study appreciated the rhetoric style of PM Narendra Modi it also suggested his progression to dictatorship style while immersing in self-pride and self-praise. While eloquence and clarity in speech is admired and lauded, mumbling, reading out from papers, and smoothly low tone of speech is regarded as a setback for even valid and rational *logos*. The study appreciated the sympathetic, equitable, ponderous and pensive tone of PM Manmohan Singh and it also pointed out at is neutral, skeptical and apologetic tone. An effective rhetorician has to invent one-liners or catchy phrases that the listeners can take home and remember longer. These phrases solidify the ideas into words, repetition of these words translates into belief and further beliefs become practice. This study summarized some of such one-liners used by PM Narendra Modi. This study thus analyzed the canon of invention, style, arrangement, memory and delivery of both the prime ministers. The study examined the effects of these five canons on the ethos, logos and pathos of the speakers. The observations, conclusions and derivations in this study may not be stringent phenomenon. However, they are suggestive of the leadership qualities and governance style.

Tools used : Ant Conc. Software

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