

VIKSIT BHARAT@2047: ASSESSING INDIA'S PROGRESS AND PATHWAYS FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

"Viksit Bharat," or Developed India, envisions a high standard of living, economic growth, social equity, and environmental sustainability. India's journey from independence in 1947 has seen significant strides, from the Green Revolution to economic liberalization in the 1990s. However, challenges like poverty, inequality, and infrastructure deficits persist. The vision of Viksit Bharat encompasses economic prosperity, social equity, environmental sustainability, technological advancement, good governance, and global integration. This vision aligns with global goals like the UN's SDGs. Key milestones include industrialization, the Green Revolution, and recent digital initiatives. India's economic policies have fostered growth, with significant contributions from the IT sector. Infrastructure development and industrial diversification remain critical. Technology and innovation, especially in digital services, are transformative. Despite challenges, opportunities like leveraging the demographic dividend and renewable energy potential exist. Successful initiatives like the Green Revolution and Swachh Bharat Mission offer valuable lessons. Future development strategies emphasize inclusive growth, technological advancement, and sustainable practices. Stakeholders, including the government, private sector, civil society, and international community, play crucial roles in realizing Viksit Bharat. Achieving this vision requires addressing structural challenges and capitalizing on growth opportunities through collaborative and inclusive efforts.

Keywords: Viksit Bharat, Sustainable Development, Economic Growth, Social Equity, Environmental Sustainability.

Introduction

The concept of "Viksit Bharat," or Developed India, encapsulates a vision of India achieving a high standard of living, robust economic growth, social equity, and environmental sustainability. This vision has been shaped by India's unique historical, socio-economic, and political landscape.

India, with its rich cultural heritage and a diverse population, has traversed a complex path of development since gaining independence in 1947. The early decades post-independence were characterized by efforts to build a self-reliant economy through industrialization and agricultural reforms. The Green Revolution of the 1960s and 70s significantly boosted agricultural productivity, while the liberalization of the economy in the 1990s paved the way for rapid economic growth and integration into the global economy (Panagariya, 2008);(Ahluwalia, 2002).

Despite these strides, India continues to grapple with challenges such as poverty, inequality, infrastructure deficits, and environmental degradation. The demographic dividend, with a large youth population, presents both an opportunity and a challenge for sustainable development (Bloom, 2011)

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Furthermore, rapid urbanization and technological advancements are reshaping the socio-economic fabric of the country(Kundu, 2011).

In this context, the vision of Viksit Bharat is not merely an economic milestone but a holistic framework for inclusive and sustainable growth. It encompasses goals such as universal access to quality education, healthcare, clean energy, and digital connectivity, alongside robust governance and environmental stewardship.

Definition and Vision of Viksit Bharat

Viksit Bharat envisions an India where every citizen has access to opportunities that enable them to lead a dignified life. This vision is multidimensional, encompassing various aspects of human development and societal progress. Key components of this vision include:

- **Economic Prosperity:** Achieving high and sustained economic growth that ensures job creation, increases per capita income, and reduces poverty. This includes fostering innovation, entrepreneurship, and making strategic investments in infrastructure and industrial development(Commission., 2012)
- **Social Equity:** Ensuring that the benefits of development reach all segments of society, particularly marginalized and vulnerable groups. This includes providing quality education and healthcare, promoting gender equality, and ensuring social justice(Sen, 2000).
- **Environmental Sustainability:** Balancing economic growth with ecological conservation. This involves adopting sustainable practices in agriculture, industry, and urban development, as well as investing in renewable energy and biodiversity conservation(Narain, 2012).
- **Technological Advancement:** Leveraging technology to drive innovation, improve efficiency, and enhance the quality of life. This includes expanding digital infrastructure, fostering a knowledge-based economy, and bridging the digital divide (Prasad, 2013).
- **Good Governance:** Establishing transparent, accountable, and participatory governance systems. This includes strengthening democratic institutions, ensuring rule of law, and promoting civic engagement(Mundle, 2016).
- **Global Integration:** Enhancing India's role and influence in global affairs through strategic partnerships, trade, and diplomacy. This includes contributing to global peace, security, and sustainable development(Mehta, 2011)

The vision of Viksit Bharat is aligned with global development agendas such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), aiming to create a resilient and prosperous nation by 2030 and beyond. This vision requires a concerted effort from all stakeholders, including the government, private sector, civil society, and the international community, to collaborate and innovate towards a common goal of holistic development.

Evolution of Developmental Goals in India

India's developmental goals have evolved significantly since its independence in 1947. The initial focus was on building a self-reliant economy through industrialization and agricultural reforms. The first Five-Year Plan (1951-1956) aimed at addressing the immediate needs of food production, controlling inflation, and improving infrastructure. Emphasis was placed on heavy industries in the subsequent plans, with the establishment of public sector undertakings to drive economic growth (Chakravarty, 1987).

In the 1960s and 70s, the Green Revolution marked a major shift in agricultural policy, leading to a substantial increase in food grain production and making India self-sufficient in food (Rao, 1975). This period also saw the launch of several poverty alleviation programs aimed at addressing the socio-economic disparities prevalent in rural areas.

The economic liberalization in 1991 was a watershed moment in India's development journey. Faced with a severe balance of payments crisis, the government introduced sweeping reforms to open up the economy, reduce trade barriers, and attract foreign investment (Ahluwalia, 2002). These reforms led to a significant acceleration in economic growth and integration into the global economy.

In recent years, the focus has shifted towards sustainable development, inclusive growth, and technological advancement. Initiatives such as Digital India, Make in India, and Skill India reflect the contemporary goals of harnessing technology, boosting manufacturing, and enhancing human capital to drive economic growth (Prasad, 2013).

Key Milestones in India's Development Journey

Several key milestones have marked India's development journey:

- **Independence and Economic Planning (1947-1960s):** The adoption of a planned economy and the launch of the Five-Year Plans laid the foundation for India's economic strategy. The emphasis was on self-reliance, with substantial investments in infrastructure and heavy industries (Chakravarty, 1987).
- **Green Revolution (1960s-1970s):** The introduction of high-yield variety seeds, chemical fertilizers, and advanced irrigation techniques revolutionized Indian agriculture, leading to increased food production and rural prosperity (Rao, 1975).
- **Economic Liberalization (1991):** Facing an economic crisis, India embraced liberalization, privatization, and globalization. These reforms dismantled the License Raj, reduced tariffs, and encouraged foreign direct investment, spurring economic growth and modernization (Ahluwalia, 2002).
- **Information Technology Boom (1990s-2000s):** The IT and software services sector emerged as a major driver of economic growth, positioning India as a global leader in technology and outsourcing. This sector significantly contributed to employment generation and export earnings (Heeks, 1996).
- **Social Sector Reforms (2000s-present):** The implementation of schemes such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) and the Right to Education Act highlighted a renewed focus on social equity and inclusive development (Drèze, 2013).
- **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Alignment (2015-present):** India has aligned its developmental agenda with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, emphasizing poverty eradication, quality education, gender equality, clean energy, and climate action (Aayog., 2020).

These milestones reflect the dynamic nature of India's developmental goals, shaped by changing economic conditions, technological advancements, and socio-political priorities. The journey towards Viksit Bharat continues to evolve, aiming for a balanced and inclusive approach to development.

Economic Development

- **Growth Trajectories and Economic Policies**

India's economic development has followed diverse growth trajectories influenced by various economic policies since its independence. The initial phase (1950s-1980s) was characterized by a mixed economy with a significant role for the public sector. This period saw the implementation of the Five-Year Plans, which aimed to boost industrialization and self-reliance (Chakravarty, 1987). The Green Revolution in the 1960s and 70s marked a major shift in agricultural productivity, enhancing food security and rural incomes (Rao, 1975).

The economic liberalization of 1991 was a pivotal moment, introducing market-oriented reforms that dismantled the License Raj, reduced import tariffs, and attracted foreign direct investment (Ahluwalia, 2002). These reforms led to accelerated economic growth, with GDP growth rates averaging around 7-8% in the subsequent decades. The services sector, particularly IT and IT-enabled services, became a significant contributor to economic growth, employment, and exports (Heeks, 1996).

In recent years, economic policies have focused on inclusive growth and sustainable development. Initiatives like the Goods and Services Tax (GST), the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), and the Make in India campaign aim to streamline the business environment, enhance industrial productivity, and attract investment (Singh, 2018). The government's focus on digitalization and financial inclusion through schemes like Digital India and Jan Dhan Yojana reflects a commitment to leveraging technology for economic development (Prasad, 2013).

- **Industrialization and Infrastructure Development**

Industrialization has been a cornerstone of India's economic strategy since independence. The initial focus was on heavy industries and infrastructure development, driven by the public sector. The establishment of major public sector enterprises in steel, heavy machinery, and power generation laid the foundation for industrial growth (Chakravarty, 1987).

The post-liberalization era saw a shift towards a more diversified industrial base, with an emphasis on private sector participation. The automotive, pharmaceuticals, and consumer electronics

industries emerged as key growth drivers. Special Economic Zones (SEZs) and industrial corridors were developed to boost manufacturing and exports (Kumar, 2011).

Infrastructure development has also been a critical focus, with substantial investments in transportation, energy, and urban infrastructure. The National Highway Development Project (NHDP) and the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) have significantly improved road connectivity (Bhagat, 2002). The development of metro rail systems, airports, and smart cities reflects ongoing efforts to modernize urban infrastructure and enhance the quality of life (Mitra, 2012).

- **Role of Technology and Innovation**

Technology and innovation have played a transformative role in India's economic development. The IT revolution of the 1990s positioned India as a global leader in software services and IT-enabled services, contributing significantly to GDP growth and employment (Heeks, 1996). The success of Indian IT firms in global markets underscored the potential of technology-driven growth.

Recent years have seen a surge in innovation across various sectors. The government's focus on fostering a start-up ecosystem through initiatives like Start-up India and the Atal Innovation Mission has catalyzed entrepreneurship and innovation (Niti, 2019). India's space program, led by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), has achieved remarkable milestones, including the Mars Orbiter Mission and the Chandrayaan missions, showcasing India's capabilities in advanced technology (Siddiqi, 2013).

Digitalization has been a key driver of economic transformation. The Aadhaar biometric identification system and the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) have revolutionized financial inclusion and digital payments, bringing millions into the formal financial system (Prasad, 2013). The Digital India initiative aims to enhance digital infrastructure, improve digital literacy, and provide government services online, further integrating technology into daily life (DigitalIndia, 2018).

Challenges and Opportunities

- **Key Challenges Facing India's Development**

India's development journey is marked by significant challenges that need to be addressed to achieve the vision of Viksit Bharat. One of the primary challenges is poverty, with a substantial portion of the population still living below the poverty line. Despite economic growth, income inequality remains a persistent issue, exacerbating social and economic disparities (Himanshu., 2011).

Another major challenge is the state of infrastructure. While there have been improvements, many areas, especially rural regions, still lack adequate infrastructure such as roads, electricity, and sanitation facilities. This infrastructure deficit hampers economic activities and impacts the quality of life (Bhagat, 2002).

The education sector faces significant hurdles, including low literacy rates, high dropout rates, and inadequate quality of education in many public schools. These issues limit the human capital potential of the country (Drèze, 2013). Similarly, the healthcare system struggles with underfunding, inadequate facilities, and a shortage of healthcare professionals, particularly in rural areas (Patel, 2015).

Environmental sustainability is another critical challenge. Rapid industrialization and urbanization have led to severe environmental degradation, including air and water pollution, deforestation, and loss of biodiversity. Addressing these issues is crucial for sustainable development (Narain, 2012).

- **Opportunities for Accelerating Growth**

Despite these challenges, India has numerous opportunities to accelerate its growth. One significant opportunity lies in leveraging its demographic dividend. With a large and young population, India can harness this potential by investing in education, skills development, and employment generation, thereby driving economic growth (Bloom, 2011).

The digital revolution presents another substantial opportunity. Digital India and other initiatives aimed at enhancing digital infrastructure and literacy can propel India towards a knowledge-based economy. The expansion of digital services can improve access to education, healthcare, and financial services, fostering inclusive growth (Prasad, 2013).

India's renewable energy potential is vast, offering opportunities for sustainable growth. Investments in solar, wind, and other renewable energy sources can reduce dependence on fossil fuels, mitigate environmental impacts, and create jobs (Kumar R. , 2016).

Moreover, the Make in India initiative aims to transform India into a global manufacturing hub. By enhancing ease of doing business, improving infrastructure, and fostering innovation, India can attract domestic and foreign investments, boost industrial production, and create employment (Mehra, 2015).

Case Studies of Successful Initiatives

Several initiatives in India have demonstrated significant success and offer valuable lessons for accelerating growth.

- **The Green Revolution:** Launched in the 1960s, the Green Revolution transformed Indian agriculture, significantly increasing food grain production through the use of high-yield variety seeds, fertilizers, and irrigation techniques. This initiative not only ensured food security but also contributed to rural development and poverty reduction (Rao, 1975).
- **The Mid-Day Meal Scheme:** This program provides free lunches to primary school children, improving nutritional status and school attendance. It has been instrumental in addressing child malnutrition and promoting education, particularly among disadvantaged groups (Drèze J. &, 2003).
- **Swachh Bharat Mission:** Launched in 2014, this mission aims to eliminate open defecation and improve solid waste management. It has significantly enhanced sanitation infrastructure and hygiene practices, contributing to public health and environmental sustainability (Jha et al., 2016).
- **Aadhaar Biometric Identification System:** This initiative has provided a unique identification number to over a billion residents, facilitating access to government services, financial inclusion, and targeted delivery of subsidies. It has streamlined welfare programs and reduced leakages (Prasad, 2013).
- **Ayushman Bharat:** This healthcare initiative aims to provide health coverage to over 500 million Indians, focusing on preventive, promotive, and curative services. It addresses healthcare affordability and accessibility, particularly for vulnerable populations (Patel, 2015).

Future Roadmap

Strategic Vision for 2030 and Beyond

The strategic vision for India in 2030 and beyond focuses on achieving sustainable and inclusive growth, transforming India into a developed nation by embracing technology, innovation, and comprehensive development across all sectors. The vision aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure) (Nations., 2015).

By 2030, India aims to eradicate extreme poverty, ensure access to quality education and healthcare, and provide sustainable livelihoods for all its citizens. Economic policies will prioritize high growth rates while ensuring that growth is inclusive and environmentally sustainable (Aayog., NITI, 2018). The vision includes significant investments in infrastructure, renewable energy, and digitalization to support a modern and competitive economy.

Policy Recommendations

To realize this strategic vision, several policy recommendations are essential:

- **Economic Reforms and Ease of Doing Business:** Continuing economic reforms to simplify regulatory frameworks, enhance transparency, and reduce bureaucratic hurdles can foster a more conducive environment for business and investment (Singh, 2018). Policies should focus on encouraging entrepreneurship, supporting startups, and attracting foreign direct investment (FDI).
- **Education and Skill Development:** Investing in education and vocational training is crucial for building a skilled workforce. Policies should aim to improve the quality of education at all levels, promote STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education, and expand access to vocational training and lifelong learning opportunities (Drèze J. &, 2013).
- **Healthcare and Social Security:** Strengthening the healthcare system by increasing public health expenditure, improving healthcare infrastructure, and expanding health insurance coverage is essential. Social security measures, including pensions and unemployment benefits, should be enhanced to provide a safety net for vulnerable populations (Patel, 2015).

- **Infrastructure Development:** Prioritizing investments in infrastructure, particularly in rural areas, can bridge the urban-rural divide and promote balanced regional development. This includes improving transportation networks, ensuring reliable electricity supply, and expanding access to clean water and sanitation (Bhagat, 2002).
- **Sustainable Development and Environmental Protection:** Policies should focus on promoting renewable energy, enhancing energy efficiency, and enforcing stricter environmental regulations. Efforts to combat climate change, preserve biodiversity, and promote sustainable agricultural practices are crucial for long-term sustainability (Narain, 2012).

Role of Stakeholders in Achieving Viksit Bharat

- **Government:** The government's role is pivotal in setting the policy agenda, providing the necessary infrastructure, and ensuring effective implementation of development programs. It must also focus on building strong institutions, ensuring good governance, and maintaining social harmony (Aayog., NITI, 2018).
- **Private Sector:** The private sector can drive economic growth through investments, innovation, and job creation. Companies should adopt sustainable business practices, invest in corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives, and contribute to skill development and capacity building (Singh, 2018).
- **Civil Society:** Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community groups, and other civil society organizations play a critical role in advocacy, service delivery, and social mobilization. They can help ensure that development initiatives are inclusive, participatory, and address the needs of marginalized communities (Drèze J. &, 2013).
- **International Community:** International partnerships and cooperation can provide valuable support in terms of technical assistance, funding, and best practices. Collaborative efforts with international organizations, development agencies, and foreign governments can enhance India's development outcomes (Patel, 2015).

Conclusion

The comprehensive examination of India's development trajectory reveals both significant achievements and persisting challenges. Despite substantial progress in areas such as economic growth, infrastructure development, and social welfare, key issues such as poverty, income inequality, educational deficiencies, and inadequate healthcare services continue to hinder the nation's advancement (Drèze J. &, 2003)(Bhagat, 2002). The historical perspective highlighted the evolution of developmental goals and key milestones in India's journey, underscoring the importance of strategic planning and policy reforms (Aayog., NITI, 2018). India's economic policies have fostered considerable growth, particularly through initiatives like Make in India and Digital India, which have bolstered industrialization and technological innovation (Mehra, 2015)(Prasad, 2013). However, infrastructure deficits, especially in rural areas, and environmental challenges require urgent attention to sustain long-term development (Narain, 2012).

The analysis of challenges and opportunities revealed critical areas for intervention, such as addressing poverty and inequality, improving educational and healthcare systems, and investing in renewable energy and digital infrastructure (Patel, 2015)(Kumar R. , 2016). Case studies of successful initiatives, like the Green Revolution and the Mid-Day Meal Scheme, demonstrated the impact of targeted strategies and the importance of policy continuity and adaptability (Rao, 1975)(Drèze J. &, 2003).

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