

Exploring India's Economic Achievements after Independence" – Some Observations

Mrs. Rajashree Das Gupta

Assistant Professor, Department of Economics Ramkrishna Nagar College,
District-Karimganj, Assam,

Introduction :

India celebrated her 75th Independence Day on 15th August 2021. In March 2021 the government of India announced the celebration of its "Azadi ki Amrit Mahotsav", a two-year-long nationwide initiative to commemorate the milestone. India's economy has travelled many ups and downs since independence. Once branded as a 'third world country' a term used for underdeveloped countries, India is now among the biggest economies of the world. There is still a long journey for India to be a successful economy.

The journey of India's development over the last 75 years has seen significant milestones and reforms that enabled it to achieve substantial progress in many areas including raise in income levels, growth, literacy, life expectancy and a wide variety of other economic indicators. As India commemorates 75 glorious years as an independent nation, let's look back at some of the significant achievements of our economy over the years.

Achievements Of Indian Economy:

India has made decent progress in several areas during the last 75 years. The greatest achievements of the Indian Economy in the last few decades have been summarized below:

- 1. Fastest Growing Economy In The World:** India's average GDP growth during the 1970s and the 1980s was 4.4%. This improved to 5.5 % during the 1990s and jumped to a 6.5 % level during the last decade, excluding the pandemic year 2021. IMF projections for FY 2022 show that India will reclaim its status as the fastest-growing major economy in the world. India, with a GDP of over \$ 2.6 trillion, is on its way to becoming the fifth largest economy in the world. Despite several hiccups in the global economic situation, India continued to exist as the world's fastest-growing large economy growing at a rate of 8.2 % in the first quarter of 2018-19. In the World Economic Outlook published in October 2021, the IMF projected that India's GDP will grow at 9.5% and 8.5% during 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 respectively. If it becomes true, then India will be amongst the fastest growing economies in the world. Whereas at present, India is the Sixth-largest economy behind the U.S.A, China, Japan, Germany, and the U.K..
- 2. 6TH Largest Economy:** India is now an economic powerhouse. In terms of Gross Domestic Product, internationally India is ranked 6th. Its rank was 18th in 1991. In dollar terms, India's GDP has grown by 9 times during this period from \$ 266 billion in 1991 to \$ 2.7 trillion in 2020.
- 3. Per Capita Income 5 Times Of 1991 (Dollar Terms):** Per capita income, which was \$ 300 in 1991, has grown by more than 5 times to the \$ 1,900 level today even after the sharp contraction in economic growth due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the consequent nationwide lockdown. The share of food in consumer expenditure is down from 63% to 49%, which is a sign of rising incomes.
- 4. Development In Agricultural Sector:** Agriculture is the most important sector in the Indian economy since independence and it generates livelihood for more than 50% of the population. The real gross value added by the agriculture, forestry and allied sectors went up from around Rs.1.502 billion in 1950-51 to around Rs.22.263 billion as per the 2011-12 calculations. The conception of the green revolution during the 1960s was a game-changer for the country. It saw the adoption of modern technology and methods to produce high yielding variety seeds that significantly raised agricultural productivity and increased food grain production.
- 5. Millions Helped Out Of Poverty:** Poverty is defined as failing to reach a certain minimum consumption standard. The distribution of wealth in India is improving since the adoption of the liberalization of the economy and the poverty rate has significantly decreased. To eradicate poverty, the government over the years has changed its policy giving importance to education, reservation of seats in government jobs, and increasing empowerment of women. With the increase in per-capita income levels and increased governments support, the population below the poverty line (BPL) has been steadily declining. BPL population which was around 34% in 1991, has declined to 22% at present. India has pulled at least 17 crores of people out of poverty since 1990.
- 6. Prices Under Control:** Inflation in India was in double digits during the 1991 crisis. It was 16.7% in 1991. The average consumer price index during 1980-2000 was 9.05%. Inflation has decreased to a 6.33% level during the past two decades making goods and services more affordable.
- 7. India Reaching Closer To 100% Literacy:** Literacy levels in India were low at 52.21% in 1991, Improvement in education infrastructure, an increase in the number of teachers, and an increase in enrollments of children in the schools of rural areas, literacy rate has increased and presently it is 77.7%. The Gross enrollment ratio for higher education has increased from 6% in 1991 to 27% in 2020.
- 8. Population Growth Has Slowed:** An Improvement in living standards and levels of educational attainment has contributed to lower population growth of 1.2% during 2010-2019 in comparison to 2.16% during 1981-1991.

9. People In Pucca Houses More Than Doubled:

The number of people who have pucca houses has more than doubled from 32% in 1993 to 71% in 2015. The 'Housing for All' mission and the schemes like 'Indira Awaas Yojana' and 'Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana' have contributed to this development.

10. Life Expectancy High:

Life expectancy has improved to more than 70 years currently from 59 years in 1991. This is a result of better health facilities and the availability of nutritional food for the population.

11. Healthy And Fit India:

The number of doctors has now increased three times to 9.59 lakh from 3.65 lakh in 1991. The infant mortality rate has declined to 22.71 in 2021 from 86.56 in 1991. The maternal mortality rate has declined from 437 per 1000 in 1991 to 113 per 1000 in 2021.

12. Food Production:

Achieving "self-sufficiency" in food grains has been Independent India's biggest achievement from receiving food aid in the 1950s and in the 1960s to becoming a net exporter. India has seen notable progress in food production. The total food production, which stood at 54.92 million tons in 1950, rose to 305.44 million tons in 2020-2021.

13. Access To Electricity (Rural Areas):

The supply of electricity to rural India has been one of the goals of India's socio-economic policy. According to the ministry of power, in 1950, electricity could be transmitted to only 3,061 villages. In 2018, the Indian government announced that all of India's villages— 5,97,464 in total had been electrified, with 10 per cent of households in a village having access to electricity. There are millions in the country, still who live without electricity.

Indian Railways And Roadways: India already had one of the biggest railways and longest tracks in the early years of Independence. In Independent India, the Indian Railways focused on unifying all rail gauges, electrification of railway lines and connecting northeast India to the mainland.

Concentration on the construction of roads connecting all the states of the country has improved the road connectivity between the states and generated employment in the process as well. The dream project like the 'Silchar-Sourashtra Mahasadak' during the year 2003-2004 has the vision to connect this part of the country directly to other parts, although for some reasons it has slow progress in the south Assam region leading to a break in the connectivity, which needs to be addressed immediately and sincerely. Further, there has been tremendous progress in road infrastructure since 2014 apart from the continuation of construction of rural roads under the scheme 'Pradhan Mantri Gramin Sadak Yojana' (PMGSY), which has a positive effect on the rural economy of our country.

14. Research And Development:

India's space research has experienced phenomenal progress since independence. Satellites and rockets are successfully sent to space on several occasions. India's ambition to send its own spacecraft to Mars has been successful. Many countries of the world now send satellites to space with the help of India and its space research organization. On the other hand, the nuclear programme conceptualized and initiated by Dr. Homi Bhabha has also attained success in nuclear science research in India. His programme has made possible the utilization of nuclear energy in defence, power generation, medicine and allied areas successful. Peaceful use of nuclear energy has raised India's reputation as a mature and responsible player in the field.

Conclusion:-

India has secured an important position in the world in economic development over the decades after independence. India has been considered as the biggest market for many International consumer brands which in turn also encouraged the international community to invest in India in manufacturing and infrastructural field. The outline of achievements highlighted above evidence that India has achieved phenomenal progress in its economy during the last 75 years, despite having experienced crises and/or contractions in between.

References:

1. Misra & Puri: Indian Economy, Himalaya Publishing House, 38th Revised Edition, 2020.
2. Sanjiv Verma: 'The Indian Economy'. Unique Publishers. Economic Survey (2020-21).
3. P.K. Dhar: Indian Economy- Its growing dimensions. Kalyani Publishers, Edition:23rd, 2015.
4. Ahluwalia M.S. (2016): The 1991 reforms, How Home-grown Were They. Economic and Political weekly. Vol. 51, Issue No.29, 16 Jul, 2016.
5. Mohan R. & Ray P. (2019). Indian Monetary Policy in the time of inflation targeting and demonetization. Asian Economic Policy Review, 14 (3) DOI:10.1111/1 aepr 12242.
6. Rangarajan C (2014): Report of the expert group to review the methodology for measurement of poverty. Planning Commission, Govt. of India.
7. Rodrik D & Subramaniam A. (2004). From "Hindu Growth" to productivity surge: The mystery of the Indian growth transition. IMF Working Paper. WP/04/77. May, 2004..
8. ASER Centre (2017). Annual Status of education report (rural): 2016.
9. DeLong J. Bradford (2001). India since independence: An Analytic Growth Narrative (PDF).
10. Kuchal S.C., Industrial Economy of India.
11. Dhar P.N., Small Scale Industries.
12. Dhar and Lyndall. The Role of Small Enterprises in Indian Economic Development.