

India's Journey Toward Viksit Bharat: A Vision for Inclusive and Sustainable Development

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Abstract

India's journey from a colony to a global power is a truly remarkable story. The nation has moved past a difficult history of exploitation, partition, and poverty. Through grit and innovation, India has shown great resilience. Now, the country is entering "Amrit Kaal." This is the 25-year period leading up to the 100th year of independence in 2047. The goal is to build a "Vikshit Bharat," or a Developed India. This vision is not just about money. It is also about social fairness, protecting the environment, and leading the world with strong values. This paper examines how India's national plans align with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These goals are a global roadmap for fair progress by 2030. By looking at government reports and academic research, the study tracks India's success in key areas. These include reducing poverty, improving healthcare, and reforming education. It also looks at progress in gender equality and climate action. However, the study points out several serious hurdles. The gap between the rich and the poor, social bias, and a lack of modern skills are major concerns. Inefficient systems can also slow things down. These problems could delay the dream of a fully developed India. To help India grow, this paper suggests new strategies for agriculture, education, and healthcare. It also explores how the government and private companies can work together better. Environmental rules and global relationships are also part of this plan. The study makes it clear that the government cannot do this alone. Young people, businesses, and local communities must drive this change. India has a unique edge because of its large youth population and modern technology. These strengths, combined with India's cultural values, can create a new model for growth. This model aims to be fair for everyone and safe for the planet. In the end, this paper argues that "Vikshit Bharat" is about more than just numbers. It requires a moral commitment to help every citizen and protect the earth. India must focus on peace, justice, and uplifting everyone. By matching its national goals with global targets, India can reach its own dreams. In doing so, it can also become a leader in making the whole world a fairer and stronger place.

Introduction

India's journey from colonial subjugation to global prominence is one of the most compelling and transformative narratives of the modern era. For nearly two centuries, India endured the

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exploitative rule of the British Empire, which left deep scars on its socio-economic and cultural fabric. The trauma of partition in 1947, accompanied by mass displacement and communal violence, compounded the challenges of nation-building. At independence, India inherited a fragile economy, widespread poverty, low literacy rates, and deeply entrenched social inequalities. Yet, despite these formidable obstacles, the country embarked on a path of democratic governance, guided by visionary leadership and sustained by the resilience of its people.

Over the past seven decades, India has evolved into a vibrant democracy and a major global player. It is now the fourth-largest economy in the world by purchasing power parity and a leader in sectors ranging from information technology and pharmaceuticals to space exploration and renewable energy. The success of India's democratic institutions, its commitment to pluralism, and its capacity for innovation have earned it recognition as a rising power in the 21st century. However, this progress has not been uniform or inclusive. Persistent challenges such as income inequality, regional disparities, caste-based discrimination, and environmental degradation continue to hinder the realization of equitable development.

In this context, the Government of India has articulated a bold and transformative vision for the future: *Vikshit Bharat*—a fully developed India by 2047, marking the centenary of independence. This vision is embedded within the broader framework of *Amrit Kaal*, a 25-year period (2022–2047) identified as a time of opportunity, renewal, and accelerated growth. The term *Amrit Kaal*, derived from Vedic astrology, symbolizes a golden era—a time when the nation can transcend its limitations and fulfill its highest potential. The concept of *Vikshit Bharat* goes beyond economic metrics; it encompasses social justice, environmental sustainability, technological advancement, and moral leadership. It is not merely a policy goal but a civilizational imperative rooted in India's ancient values and constitutional ideals.

The Constitution of India, adopted in 1950, enshrines the principles of justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity. These values are echoed in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the United Nations in 2015, which provide a universal blueprint for achieving inclusive and sustainable development by 2030. The SDGs cover a wide range of interconnected issues, including poverty eradication, quality education, gender equality, clean energy, and climate action. For India, the SDGs are not external obligations but intrinsic to its national development agenda. They align with the country's long-standing commitment to uplift the marginalized, protect the environment, and promote peace and prosperity.

This paper critically examines India's developmental trajectory through the lens of the SDGs and the vision of *Vikshit Bharat*. It evaluates the country's progress across key indicators, such as poverty reduction, healthcare access, educational reform, gender empowerment, and environmental stewardship. It also identifies structural challenges that threaten to derail this progress, including economic inequality, governance inefficiencies, skill deficits, and social exclusion. Drawing on policy analysis, government reports, and academic literature, the paper proposes strategic interventions to address these challenges and accelerate India's journey toward becoming a developed nation.

The central argument of this study is that development must be inclusive, sustainable, and

participatory. Economic growth alone cannot guarantee human well-being or social harmony. True development requires empowering every citizen—regardless of caste, gender, religion, or region—to contribute to and benefit from national progress. It demands a shift from top-down planning to bottom-up participation, where communities, civil society, and non-state actors play a vital role in shaping policies and outcomes. Moreover, development must be ecologically responsible, ensuring that future generations inherit a planet that is livable and thriving.

As India stands at the threshold of *Amrit Kaal*, the choices it makes today will determine its destiny for decades to come. The vision of *Vikshit Bharat* offers a roadmap for a just, prosperous, and resilient society. By aligning national priorities with global goals, fostering innovation, and embracing diversity, India can not only achieve its developmental aspirations but also emerge as a moral force in the world—one that leads by example and inspires others to pursue a path of inclusive and sustainable progress.

Research Methodology

This study employs a mixed-methods research design that integrates both qualitative and quantitative techniques to provide a comprehensive analysis. The qualitative component involves a detailed document review of government policies, budget documents, strategic frameworks such as the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the National Food Security Act, as well as speeches and official communications related to *Vikshit Bharat* and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Additionally, content analysis is conducted to examine thematic narratives surrounding development, equity, and sustainability. On the quantitative side, the study draws on data from authoritative sources including NITI Aayog's SDG India Index, National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) surveys, World Bank reports, IMF datasets, and India Skill Reports. Key indicators analyzed include poverty rates, gender parity indices, energy mix statistics, and metrics related to education and health, enabling a robust evaluation of progress and challenges in achieving inclusive and sustainable development.

Historical Context and National Aspirations

India's independence in 1947 marked the beginning of a transformative journey toward self-reliance, dignity, and prosperity. Emerging from centuries of colonial exploitation, the newly sovereign nation faced daunting challenges—widespread poverty, illiteracy, communal divisions, and a fragile economy. Yet, guided by the ideals of *Ramrajya* as envisioned by Mahatma Gandhi, India committed itself to building a society rooted in justice, equity, and human dignity. These foundational values were enshrined in the Constitution of India, adopted in 1950, which laid the groundwork for a democratic republic dedicated to social justice, economic equality, and individual liberty. Over the decades, India undertook ambitious reforms and development programs to uplift its people and modernize its economy. The Green Revolution in the 1960s transformed agricultural productivity and ensured food security; the White Revolution boosted dairy production and rural livelihoods; and the economic liberalization of 1991 opened India to global markets, accelerating industrial growth and technological advancement. Despite these achievements, structural challenges such as poverty, caste-based discrimination, gender inequality, and regional disparities continued to hinder inclusive development. Recognizing the need for a more comprehensive and future-oriented

approach, the Government of India has articulated the vision of *Vikshit Bharat*—a fully developed nation by 2047. This vision aspires to transform India into a \$30–35 trillion economy, characterized by universal access to quality healthcare, education, employment, and environmental sustainability. More than just an economic goal, *Vikshit Bharat* embodies a moral and cultural renaissance, aiming to create a society that is not only prosperous but also compassionate, equitable, and globally respected.

Redefining Development: Beyond GDP

Traditional metrics of development, such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP), offer a narrow and often misleading view of a nation's progress. While GDP measures the total economic output, it fails to capture the nuances of social well-being, environmental health, and equitable distribution of resources. True development must go beyond economic aggregates and encompass a multidimensional approach that reflects the lived realities of citizens. Social equity is a critical component, requiring the reduction of disparities across caste, gender, income, and geography. In a diverse country like India, inclusive growth means ensuring that marginalized communities have equal access to opportunities and resources. Environmental sustainability is equally vital, as unchecked industrial expansion and urbanization have led to deforestation, pollution, and climate vulnerability. Balancing economic growth with ecological preservation is essential to safeguard the future. Good governance forms the backbone of sustainable development, demanding transparency, accountability, and active citizen participation in decision-making processes. Without robust institutions and ethical leadership, development efforts risk being undermined by corruption and inefficiency. Human development, which includes access to quality healthcare, education, and a decent standard of living, must be at the center of policy planning. India's alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provides a comprehensive framework to achieve these objectives. Adopted by 193 countries in 2015, the SDGs aim to

eradicate poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all by 2030. For India, these goals resonate deeply with its constitutional values and national aspirations, offering a roadmap for inclusive and sustainable progress that transcends mere economic indicators.

India's Progress on SDGs

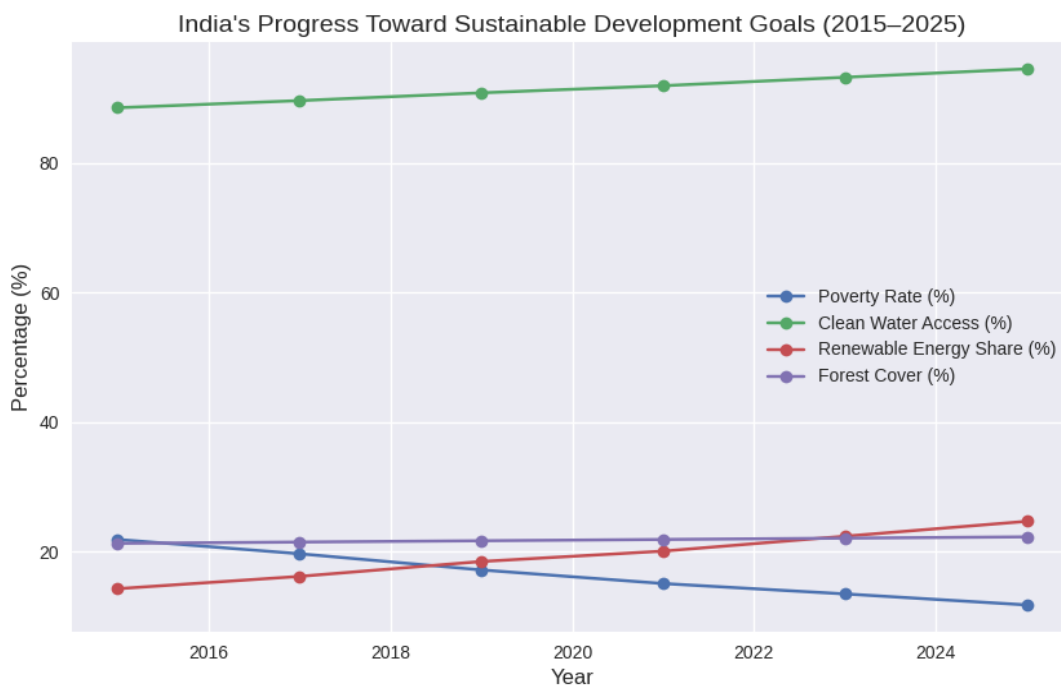
The SDGs resonate strongly with India's constitutional ethos. The Preamble's emphasis on justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity mirrors the core principles of the SDGs. Concepts like *Sarvodaya* (welfare of all) and *Antyodaya* (upliftment of the last person) reflect the spirit of "Leave No One Behind." India's development strategy integrates these values, ensuring that growth reaches the most marginalized communities. The SDGs also align with India's federal structure, allowing for decentralized implementation through state governments and local bodies. Initiatives like Aspirational Districts Programme and Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDPs) reflect this bottom-up approach. Moreover, India's cultural and philosophical traditions—such as *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* (the world is one family)—reinforce the global solidarity embedded in the SDGs.

Data-Driven Progress (2015–2025)

Year	Poverty Rate (%)	Clean Water Access (%)	Renewable Energy Share (%)	Forest Cover (%)
2015	21.9	88.5	14.3	21.3
2017	19.7	89.6	16.2	21.5
2019	17.2	90.8	18.5	21.7
2021	15.1	91.9	20.1	21.9
2023	13.5	93.2	22.4	22.1
2025	11.8	94.5	24.7	22.3

Source: NITI Aayog, Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE), Forest Survey of India (FSI).

Progress Made So Far



India has demonstrated commendable progress across several Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicators, reflecting its commitment to inclusive and sustainable development. The NITI Aayog’s SDG India Index serves as a vital tool for tracking performance across states and union territories, highlighting both achievements and areas requiring attention. In terms of poverty reduction (SDG 1), the country has made significant strides, with multidimensional poverty declining from 29% to 11.3% of the population. This improvement is largely attributed to targeted welfare schemes such as the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY), which provides

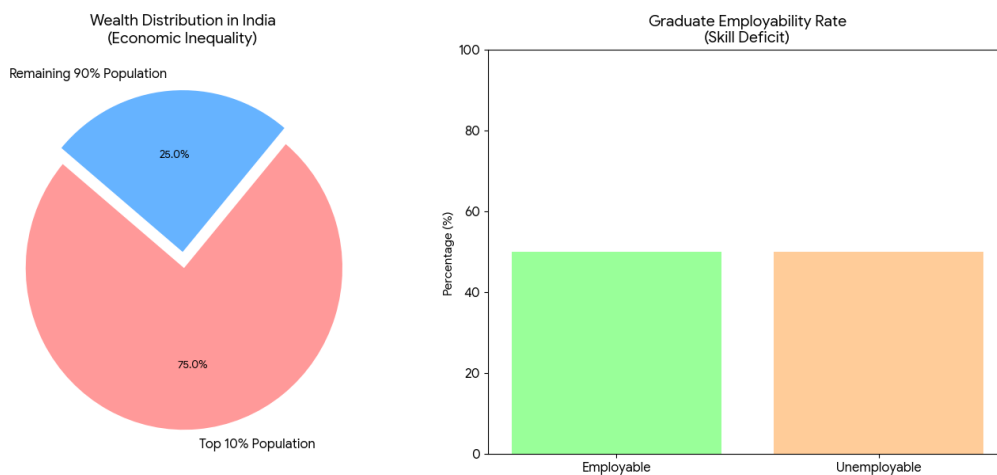
affordable housing, the Pradhan Mantri Poshan Yojana for nutritional support, and the National Food Security Act (NFSA), which ensures subsidized food grains to vulnerable populations. The PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana provided free food grains to over 800 million people during the COVID-19 pandemic, showcasing India's commitment to food security. Additionally, the implementation of Direct Benefit Transfers (DBTs) has enhanced efficiency and minimized leakages in welfare delivery.

In the domain of health and well-being (SDG 3), India has launched transformative initiatives like Ayushman Bharat, the world's largest health insurance scheme, covering over 500 million beneficiaries. The e-Sanjeevani telemedicine platform has facilitated more than 100 million consultations, effectively bridging the healthcare gap between urban and rural areas. India's robust response to the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly its vaccination campaign, further underscored its public health capabilities and resilience. Education (SDG 4) has also seen progressive reforms, especially with the introduction of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which emphasizes skill-based learning, critical thinking, and the integration of emerging technologies. Digital platforms such as SWAYAM and DIKSHA have expanded access to quality educational resources, promoting inclusivity and lifelong learning.

Gender equality (SDG 5) has gained momentum, with increasing female participation in governance, defense, and scientific research. Notable examples include Colonel Sofiya Qureshi and Anamika, whose leadership in military operations and media engagements reflect the changing landscape of women's empowerment. Government schemes like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao and Ujjwala Yojana have contributed to improved female literacy rates and health outcomes, particularly in underserved regions. On the environmental front, India's commitment to climate action (SDG 13) is evident in its energy transition, with 46% of its energy needs now met through non-fossil sources. The country plays a leading role in global initiatives such as the International Solar Alliance and the Global Biofuel Alliance. Furthermore, the Panchamrit targets announced at COP26 outline India's roadmap toward achieving net-zero emissions by 2070, reinforcing its position as a responsible global stakeholder in climate governance. Together, these efforts reflect India's integrated approach to achieving the SDGs and laying the foundation for a developed and equitable society.

Vikshit Bharat @2047: The Vision

The Government of India's Budget 2025–26 lays out a transformative roadmap for Vikshit Bharat @2047, envisioning a future where India emerges as a global leader not only in economic terms but also in moral and cultural dimensions. The vision rests on four key pillars: economic growth through the development of manufacturing and digital infrastructure; social inclusion by ensuring universal access to healthcare, education, and employment; environmental sustainability via promotion of green energy, circular economy, and climate resilience; and global leadership by championing equitable trade, climate justice, and democratic values.



However, realizing this ambitious vision requires overcoming several structural and functional challenges. Economic inequality remains a major concern, with the top 10% of the population controlling 75% of the nation's wealth, leading to a K-shaped growth pattern that threatens social cohesion. Social discrimination continues to plague marginalized communities, as evidenced by 376 cases of mass communal violence reported by the NCRB last year. The skill deficit is another pressing issue, with only half of graduates deemed employable due to outdated curricula and insufficient practical training, necessitating urgent reforms in education and vocational programs. Corruption and misuse of welfare schemes further hinder progress, as highlighted by the Comptroller and Auditor General's reports on inefficiencies and lack of accountability. Additionally, geopolitical risks such as terrorism, border conflicts, and global instability pose external threats to India's developmental trajectory, making strategic diplomacy and robust defense preparedness indispensable. Addressing these challenges is crucial to achieving the inclusive, resilient, and globally respected India envisioned in *Vikshit Bharat @2047*.

Strategic Interventions for Inclusive Growth

To address the multifaceted challenges hindering India's path to inclusive growth, a strategic and multi-dimensional approach is essential. Agricultural reforms must prioritize climate-resilient crops, water-efficient farming techniques, and diversification into millets and pulses, while rationalizing subsidies and integrating advanced technologies into farming practices. Human capital development requires strengthening health, education, and skill-building initiatives, plugging gaps in existing schemes, and ensuring effective last-mile delivery. Public-private partnerships can play a pivotal role by leveraging sovereign wealth funds and collaborating with private entities to boost infrastructure and innovation, particularly in green technologies and digital infrastructure. Environmental governance must be reinforced through impartial Environmental Impact Assessments, strict enforcement of regulations, and proactive promotion of renewable energy, afforestation, and efficient waste management. On the global front, development diplomacy should continue to focus on securing a permanent seat at the UN Security Council, shaping international norms, and advocating for climate justice and equitable trade. These strategic interventions collectively aim to build a resilient, inclusive, and globally respected India.

Role of Non-State Actors

Development in India is a shared responsibility that extends beyond the government, requiring active participation from non-state actors such as NGOs, civil society organizations, businesses, and individual citizens. These stakeholders play a crucial role in fostering inclusive growth by advocating for and implementing initiatives that reach the most vulnerable and underrepresented groups. Inclusivity must encompass gender minorities, differently-abled individuals, marginalized castes, tribal communities, and both urban and rural populations. By ensuring that every segment of society is empowered and given equal opportunities to contribute and benefit from development, India can unlock its full potential and build a more equitable and resilient future.

Demographic Dividend: India's Youth as a Catalyst

India's youthful population represents a powerful catalyst for national transformation, offering a unique demographic dividend that can drive innovation, entrepreneurship, and global leadership. To fully harness this potential, strategic investments in education, healthcare, and employment are essential. Initiatives such as Startup India, Skill India, and Digital India must be expanded and adapted to meet the evolving aspirations and challenges of the youth. Beyond economic empowerment, it is crucial to create avenues for meaningful participation in governance, civic life, and societal development. By recognizing young people not merely as recipients of policy but as active partners in shaping the nation's future, India can unlock a dynamic force capable of propelling the country toward inclusive and sustainable progress.

Persistent Challenges

Despite progress, several challenges persist. Economic inequality remains stark, with the top 10% owning 75% of the nation's wealth, according to Oxfam India's 2023 report. Social discrimination based on caste and religion continues, with 376 cases of communal violence recorded by NCRB in 2024. The skill deficit is another concern—only 50% of graduates are considered employable, according to the India Skills Report.

Corruption and misuse of schemes, highlighted in CAG audits, undermine policy effectiveness. Loopholes in implementation, lack of accountability, and political interference often dilute the impact of well-intentioned programs. Geopolitical risks, including terrorism, regional aggression, and global instability, further complicate India's development trajectory.

Environmental degradation, urban congestion, and water scarcity pose additional threats. Climate change-induced disasters—floods, droughts, and heatwaves—disproportionately affect vulnerable communities. The challenge is not just to grow, but to grow sustainably and equitably.

Policy Recommendations

To overcome these challenges, a holistic and inclusive policy approach is essential. Climate-smart agriculture must be promoted through the use of drones, millets, and drought-resilient crops. Public-private partnerships and sovereign wealth funds can accelerate industrial growth. Rationalization of schemes in health, education, and skill development will improve efficiency.

Environmental Impact Assessments must be impartial and transparent. India's development diplomacy should be strengthened to enhance its global leadership and secure strategic partnerships. Digital governance, data-driven policymaking, and citizen-centric service delivery must be prioritized.

Special attention must be given to tribal and marginalized communities. Culturally sensitive development models, community participation, and localized planning are crucial. The Aspirational Districts Programme should be expanded and deepened to ensure last-mile delivery.

Conclusion: Toward a Moral Force in the World

India stands at a pivotal moment in its journey toward transformation, poised to redefine its role on the global stage. By aligning the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with the ambitious Vikshit Bharat vision, the country has the opportunity not only to attain economic prosperity but also to emerge as a moral force guiding the future of humanity. This vision transcends material progress, aspiring to build a nation where compassion, equity, and justice are foundational values. A truly developed India will be one where every mouth is fed, every hand has meaningful work, and every citizen is empowered to contribute to a vibrant, inclusive society. Through collective resolve and strategic action, India can inspire the world with a model of development rooted in dignity, sustainability, and shared progress. As the vision declares: *"Food for every mouth, work for every hand, spark in every eye, joy in every soul."* This is not just a slogan—it is a promise, a commitment, and a call to action.

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