

NEED FOR SWADESHI STRATEGY IN THE INDIAN ECONOMY

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Abstract

Swadeshi has been the basic of our economic development model since ages that is inclusive and sustainable and this is forward looking with capacity to modernize and be efficient with global integration. However, this Sanatan model was altogether ignored after the independence by the Nehruvian model of mixed economy that made a strange blending of the western and eastern models and both were not time tested. This created new challenges and dualism was strengthened where development and growth proceeded giving rise to poverty, inequality and unemployment. In fact, India needs to promote Swadeshi for the larger interest of the India's growth and development with inclusiveness and sustainable pattern of development while taking care of the nature, natural resources and rest of the world. Therefore, India must go on the path of Swadeshi with greater determination for self-reliance and developed India.

Keywords: Inclusive development, Mixed economy, Sustainable development, Swadeshi

1. Introduction

India has been under foreign rule, partially or largely, for the last almost one thousands of years. We have been struggling to get rid of the foreign attackers and rulers. There has been continuous struggle. The struggle has been in different dimensions and at different levels as the intruders had very ulterior intentions. However, it was not easy nor possible to fully restore our past glory when the country attained *partitioned independence* in 1947. We lost many fine ingredients of our culture, society, lifestyle, economy, glory, heritage, science and technology, etc. Yet, the worse in India happened after the Independence in 1947. It was in the form of abandoning the India's long cherished economic strategy, that is, Swadeshi. Swadeshi strategy evolved over a period of the thousands of years of practicing, learning, modifying, improving and enriching it. The mixed economy model has caused more harm than the good. It caused damages what was in-built in it. Besides, it damaged our system and legacy. Swadeshi and self-reliance are intertwined to make the country

progressive and prosperous. The nature and structure of India is such that it requires largely the Swadeshi on which Prime Minister Narendra Modi is also putting strong emphasis. This paper is largely in two parts. First part examines the negative fallouts of the mixed economy model particularly the impact of the western model in India. Second part tries to understand the need for Swadeshi strategy in India.

2. Mixed Economy Model in India

India got its share of Independence in 1947 from the British rule. At that moment the country was not in good shape if we can sketch the poor economic conditions prevailing in the country. Moreover, there were varying views to develop the economy of India and its people. However, things took a totally weird turn. Prime Minister Jawahar Lal Nehru at that time went for the mixed economy model. This is seen from the Industrial Policy Resolution Act 1950 and Industrial Policy Resolution Act 1956. This may well be seen from the documents of the Second Five Year Plan that established Nehruvian Model in the country. This was a

blending of the two foreign models of the east and west. It blended the socialism from the east and Market system or the capitalism from the west. This type of experiment has not been practiced anywhere around the world except India. It was just like blending two different blood groups in a body. It is also to be noted that the socialism was not matured when it was adopted in India. This was the origin of the twentieth century only that did not have faced any serious reality checks. By the turn of the twentieth century, the socialism seems to have stopped being functional anywhere around the world. And hence, its usage in India was uncalled for. Similarly, when the Indian leadership adopted the western model of the market system or the capitalism, its recorded history was less than two hundred years since Adam Smith came out with his work *Wealth of Nations* in 1776. At that moment (around 1950s), the western economic system was still evolving and randomly trying to solve the puzzles being generated by the market forces. However, till now the western model is evolving and could not solve the problems of the global economy. Rather, it seems to create more challenges around the world.

In fact, the leadership of Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru avoided the Indian model of development altogether. The cause for ignoring this *Sanatan* model is not known precisely. However, it may be speculated that he might have been greatly influenced by these two systems as nowhere else was the Indian model operative. Secondly, the Indian economy went down significantly under the British rule whereas the British economy and the American economy, representing the western economic model, were growing and expanding profusely. So this might have created a misunderstanding about the Indian model in the eyes of the policymakers of that time. But they failed to make any proper comparative analysis of these three models. It would have been done keeping in mind the context and the evidence gathered from the long period of data and evidences. The available indicators suggest that within a span of almost two centuries, the western model has made the world more unequal and unsustainable. No doubt, the wealth creation has been

very rapid and technological advancements have been more pronounced with the western model, but these are simultaneously causing more serious and irreparable damages to the global economy as well as various planets in this universe. Within this limited span many essential natural resources are on the verge of extinction like coal, petroleum products; serious loss to biodiversity; climatic change leading to difficult life despite increasingly available technological support; global inequalities; loss to forest resources; disturbances to the eco-system; etc. Moreover, the western model has been causing serious damages to human and social relations. Unlike this, the Indian model of development is highly inclusive, progressive, eco-friendly and sustainable. By following the mixed economy model has suffered many contradictions. Let us cite few examples.

3. Challenges of Developmental Paradox

The western model has an in-built structure of paradox. This model lacks in terms of truth and ethics. This model claims to be humane, yet the available evidences suggest that this model is always against the humanity as it is irrationally developing technologies which goes against the humanity. This model claims to solves the problems of the people, society, economy, yet this model has least expertise in solving the basic challenges of the mankind. It creates more disorders and paradox. For example, if the USA tried to solve the problem of growing insomnia among the American people, it came out with commercial pills. It did not solve the real problem but enriched the pharma companies. Similarly, in every situation, west look for new commercial gains instead of tackling the real issues. This further creates new problems. This situation has been gaining grounds in the Indian economy in many ways.

4. Growing Missed Opportunities

As the Indian economy largely got moved away from its natural course of economic model, the economy started facing the challenge of natural synchronization. This created frequent mismatch and generated decoupling among the activities, sectors, policies, etc.

This weakened the linkage effects in the economy making the economic system less efficient impacting the economic growth relatively unsustainable. We may cite several missed opportunities in the Indian economy. A green revolution technology to boost the food output was introduced from 1966 and it resulted in bumper food output. Soon it became surplus. But instead of capitalizing on it, due to lack of sequencing and synchronization in the Indian context, it has become a liability to the farmers. Similarly, our demography get younger and younger since 1951, instead of it getting converted into dividend, it turned out to be a case of piling up of unemployment under the effect of the western model. We may quote so many such cases.

5. Paradox of the Green Revolution

India suddenly started suffering from food shortages in the country after the Independence. This got further worsened due to the frequent drought conditions and growing population. There was one more reason for this. The mixed economy model had left the farm sector to its own fate. The government support and investments were the least. As a result, by the mid-1960s, the country started suffering from acute food shortages. Therefore, the country went for new food production technology where HYV seeds, chemical fertilizers, insecticides and water played the key role. This led to growth in food output making the country surplus in food supply. However, this had a very negative impacts on some significant parameters. First, it has disturbed the cropping pattern where the millets crops are worst hit. Secondly, it has increased the cost of production in a sustained manner making the farmers miserable. Thirdly, this technology has grossly damaged the natural resources like the soil, ground water, earthworms and others. Fourthly, the production from such technology is harming the health of the humans and animals due to excessive use of chemicals. Top of that, the production structure is economically inefficient.

6. Increasing Food Surplus and Growing Poverty and Unemployment

It is irony that at a time when the food production in India was increasing at a sustained pace and mountain of surplus foodgrains production was getting financially unviable for the nation, the country was getting trapped into a new situation. The poverty ratio was rising and foodgrains surplus was mounting. Besides, the country was growing and the unemployment was rising. This has not been seen anywhere around the world. This might be the byproduct of the western model of development at the expense of the Swadeshi model of development.

7. Damage to our Business Structure

The unstoppable western model of governance and development has been highly detrimental to the domestic business culture and ethics. There have been multidimensional attacks on the Indian culture to establish the western business model for the greed of faster growth and profit earnings. It encouraged harm to the age old business ethics and cultural relations. As a result, at a very fast pace the business and small scale entrepreneurship was discouraged and ultimately damaged. This created a new challenge in the society leading to people moving away from their traditional family business. Only few could succeed elsewhere in in business set up. Majority started seeking jobs and became dependent on others. This did not only create a new type of instability in the existing set-ups, but also created long run increasing crisis by replacing the Swadeshi strategy by the western model.

8. Damage to MSMEs

Micro, cottage, small and small enterprises (business, services and production units) have been the basic ingredients of the Indian economic system. All these reflected self-sustaining economic activities where their dependence on the government was minimum. Family resources and self-employment have been the major driving force. This strengthened family bonding and social relations were the by-product of such economic activities. Similarly, better family bonding and social relations leads to prosperity through self-enterprises at any level. However, the western model has costed heavily on these enterprises that has aggravated the poverty and unemployment situation in

the country. Such enterprises have been environment friendly as well.

9. Damage to Farming and Rural Economy

The mixed economy model largely ignored the rural economy including the farm economy where the India has the largest population dependency who have been largely self-driven. However, for further growth the farm sector as well as the rural economy required huge investments and modernization. However, this could not be done. As a result increasing population pressure was shouldered by this sector without additional investments leading to low labour productivity and disguised unemployment. Gradually it resulted in the migration of the youths to the urban sector where the situation also deteriorated. All these resulted in marginalization of the farm sector, rural economy and the rural households including the farmers. In fact, ignoring the farm sector as well as the rural economy was the offspring of the western economic model.

10. Damage to Natural Resources

Western economic model and strategies are largely responsible for exploiting without consideration the natural resources in such a manner that these are getting depleted rapidly around the world without any possibility of renewal or replacement. Besides, its production structure has been such that there is growing threat of the climate change and its adverse effects on the earth and all the fauna and flora. Already we are facing the challenges due to all these which is getting severe with the passage of time. All this has been largely since the last over two centuries and India is equally facing the challenges after abandoning its Swadeshi production structure and lifestyle. Besides, there is increasing damage to the biodiversity. All these are now visible to the common man in India also who are now repenting to adopt the western lifestyle and production structure. The west seems to be least concerned about all these damages if we look at their efforts to resolve these intricacies. Our production structure and lifestyle needs to be emphasized once again with the strong sense of modernization so that we may move on sustainable and nature friendly production structure where the biodiversity, climate,

environment and natural resources are not only preserved but nurtured further.

11. Damage to Family System

Western model of development does derive its strength from the society and family system. The way things are explained and practiced under this model, it promotes individualism for larger growth of GDP and not for the welfare of the families. In India, when we adopted this model, we did not examine its suitability in our larger context. As a result, the family system is gradually weakening. The large family system initially downgraded to the nuclear family system and later the worse situation is emerging now when even the nuclear family system is under threat. This goes against the India's *Sanatan* social system where the families acted a strong cushion against any adverse situation and where the need for expenditures was low. This was helpful in the economies of scale that helped in saving the resources and providing larger social, economic and emotional welfare. An economic system cannot sustain itself in isolation and hence the Indian model of development or the Swadeshi model is indispensable in India.

12. Dent to Cultural Heritage

The west has altogether different cultural settings that do not match at all with the India's thousands years of cultural heritage and legacy. India's culture is highly time tested and sustainable in various dimensions including environmental preservation; climate care; preserving natural resources; social blending; care for the elders, children and women; responsible social system and society led development; keenness to learn from the new settings to customize in the local contexts; thrust on skill development and entrepreneurship; etc. However, overarching influence of the western model under the support of the government policies since the independence has caused serious dent to our cultural heritage that used to be a very strong propeller for sustainable and inclusive economic development. *Maha Kumbh* 2025 at Prayagraj is the latest example of the India's rich cultural legacy that has been the most powerful propeller to economic growth with inclusiveness and sustainability.

Table 1: Top Ten Items of Imports (2024-25)

S.No.	Commodity Description	% Share
1	Mineral Fuels, Oils, Distillation Products (Crude Petroleum & Coal)	30.2906
2	Pearls, Precious Stones, Metals, Coins (Gold, Diamonds, etc.)	12.3372
3	Electrical Machinery and Equipment and Parts Thereof	12.2846
4	Nuclear Reactors, Boilers, Machinery and Mechanical Appliances	8.916
5	Organic Chemicals	3.687
6	Plastic and Articles Thereof	3.0666
7	Animal or Vegetable Fats and Oils Their Cleavage Products, etc	2.4392
8	Iron and Steel	2.4127
9	Optical, Photographic Cinematographic Measuring, Checking Precision, etc.	1.9193
10	Inorganic Chemicals, Organic or Inorganic Compound of Precious Metals	1.5775
TOTAL		78.9307

Source: Economic Survey 2024-25

13. Increasing Dependence on External Forces

The impact of the western model has been such that the Indian economy has become increasingly dependent on the external economies to fulfil the requirements of the economy while replacing the local talent, skills and resources even though they needed not to be replaced fully in several contexts. Although in the changing global economic scenario, we may not avoid the increasing imports for increasing production for domestic consumers and also for increasing exports, yet with the thrust on Swadeshi economic strategy we may develop such strategies where imports could be reduced aptly while exports may be promoted more. The increasing pace of imports are highlighted in Table 1. Now, we have started emphasizing the Indian model and Swadeshi strategies which are visible in several dimensions at increasing pace.

From these narrations, it may be derived that the Government of India led by Jawahar Lal Nehru's method of mixed economy model has been highly detrimental to the cause of growth and development in the Indian economy. It sidelined largely the Swadeshi approach that has been practiced for ages. As a result,

the India economy started facing the challenge of growing intensity of dualism where poverty, inequality, unemployment became rampant. The damage to nature and natural resources kept on increasing. Our dependence on the foreign countries particularly the west became more critical. This did not augur well for the Indian economy.

14. Need for Swadeshi Strategy in India

At a time when the current political leadership of India is openly underlining the need for Swadeshi, it becomes essential to understand that why Swadeshi is *sine qua non* for a country like India. Swadeshi is not a slogan for India and nor even it is a political slogan for India. Even it is not a strategy against any other country. Swadeshi is a long tested economic strategy in India. However, before elaborating on these issues, let us understand first why Swadeshi can't have a choice in India.

14.1 To Sustain Rich Cultural and Economic Heritage

It is imperative that India must not only safeguard its rich cultural and economic heritage that has been evolving and benefitting the society since ages. This is

the only country now around the world with such long period heritage for thousands of years without interruption. However, it has been facing severe challenges to its culture and the economy due to the invasions by the Muslims from abroad and then by the British rule. Our culture and economic development are interrelated. Therefore, it is essential to not only preserve these but also further nurture. This would call for strong emphasis on Swadeshi. In fact, now *SWA* is emphasized in all the areas of the life and the nation like our own languages and dialects, culture, lifestyle, knowledge reservoir in all walks of life, economic production methods, thrust on nature, natural resources, biodiversity, lifestyle, etc.

14.2 India is a Country of Big Population

India is a country of currently above 1.4 billion. This population was 36 crores in 1951. Thus, in over a period of seven decades, the population of the country has become four times. Now, India is the largest country in terms of population leaving behind China. Every sixth person on this earth is Indian. It means, this country of Prabhu Shri Ram and Prabhu Shri Krishna requires one-sixth of all the resources on this earth. However, in practice it is not possible. Therefore, this country requires such strategies and practices which are capable to supply the requirements to this huge population on a sustainable basis. Definitely, dependence on the foreign countries cannot be the sustainable alternative. Therefore, we should move towards Swadeshi as much as possible a lasting solution to our consumption requirements as well as for pushing the growth and employment within the country.

14.3 Need for Food is Very Huge in India

India is home to more than 1.4 billion people on a much smaller land area compared to its share in the global population size. After the independence, the country started facing food shortages in the increasing order due to issues like higher growth rate of population, ignoring the farm sector in terms of investments, infrastructure and the technology, frequent drought conditions, etc. There are numerous researches that the wage goods shortages slowed down the economic growth rate in the

country as the scarce resources were now directed to import the food items besides the higher inflationary tendencies causing reduced demand for non-wage goods. However, when the green revolution technology was applied and more investments flowed towards the farm sector, the country became self-dependent in terms of food supply. Therefore, it is quite important that the country continues to produce enough food with enough varieties locally to meet the demands of the growing population in India. In case there is food shortages in the country, it would not be possible to meet the import expenditures on food items. Besides, it would cripple the overall economic development. Besides, now the issue of Swadeshi technology also gets imperative for sustainable food production for efficient and healthy production structure for Atmanirbhar Bharat.

14.4 India is Having Varied Geography and Specialization

India is such a country that has a highly varied topographical and climatic conditions. Can we imagine the variations across the east and west, north and south? If Kerala specializes in one type of production, Jammu and Kashmir specializes in the other, while Assam specializes in altogether different items, Odisha is known for different items, and so on and so forth. In fact, these states or not competitors in many ways to each other. Rather, all these are complementary to each other. However, the irony is that each states are having surplus production of the items they are specializing in production. But these items are required by all or many other states. Take the case of coconut, spices, different fruit items, cereals, pulses, oilseeds, cotton, sugarcane, etc. In such a situation, if the states are meeting the requirements of each other and then they are exporting if there is national surplus. Therefore, the Swadeshi strategy brings about effective equilibrium in the country.

14.5 Economies of Scale

As discussed earlier, the Swadeshi model of development in India has great potential to promote the economies of scale. This is made possible if the

different geographical locations and their cultural settings and legacy engage in a particular types of products and services. Other states or geographical locations are not much involved in such types of production. Thus, only one or more than one state/locations may go for the large scale of production to meet the demand requirements all across the country and if possible these might be exported elsewhere. This brings about the cost efficiency. For example, the chikan clothes manufactured in Lucknow are supplied all across the country after their embroidery and exported as well. Similarly, the apples in Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh are the cases of the economies of the scale. All these are possible if we promote Swadeshi for Atmanirbhar Bharat.

14.6 New Specialization and Opportunities

Complementarity also brings about the specialization and creates new opportunities that benefits not only the locations where these are manufactured are serviced but also this benefits the entire Indian economy and its people. There might be some natural types of specialization like the locks from Aligarh in Uttar Pradesh, woolen clothes from Ludhiana, etc. If the governments of the Centre and states are active, they may develop new locations through Swadeshi strategy for specialization and new opportunities.

14.7 Local Talents and Skills Gets Rewarded

Swadeshi gives opportunities to local talents and skills. Since it promotes and supports using local resources and talents, there is ample opportunities for promoting the local talents and skills. Since the people in India have been working in different areas and specializing in their works and professions since ages, there has been pools of skilled and talented people. But they have been largely in the indigenous methods. These could further get capitalized if the Swadeshi model is applied. No doubt, Indians are smart to accommodate new technology and skills with their existing ones. These are generally more cost effective particularly in the MSME sector.

14.8 Entrepreneurial Inheritance Sees a New Dawn

India has been a country and culture of

entrepreneurship. Moreover, India has not been a country of servants traditionally. Generally, all Indians in their own set ups have been engaged with one or the other professions. Many professions have now eloped due to the changing economic conditions and the impact of modernization. Nonetheless, since the Indians have been traditionally entrepreneurs and skilled in some way or the other, with some effort they may be upgraded and customized to new set ups. In this case, the Swadeshi culture becomes more relevant and purposive.

14.9 Swadeshi Boosts the Modern Technology

It is not that the Swadeshi strategy is static and stagnant. Swadeshi has been highly dynamic futuristic and at the same time rooted in the Indian culture, ethos and topography that has the capacity to benefit outside the country as well. Given this, the Swadeshi method is adapting to the new global orders. Hence, Swadeshi is no longer confined to low level of production and distribution. The recent experiences clearly establish that with the support of the governments or with the support or the initiatives of the corporate sector, now the Swadeshi strategy is fast upcoming at larger levels that have the international comparisons. The 4G technology in the telecom sector is the glaring example and so is the defence and space sectors. These examples clearly suggest that the Swadeshi method is highly dynamic and has the capacity to adjust to the changing challenges with much effectiveness and efficiency.

14.10 Inclusive Growth and Development

The western model is inherently divisive and it does not promote inclusive development and growth. Available data shows that after the independence, there has been the beginning of economic growth and development. However, it is also noticed that as the momentum of growth and development picked up, the poverty, inequality and unemployment increased faster causing severe economic stress in the Indian economy. It is since 2014 that we find inclusive growth strategies getting reflected in the outcomes. This has been made possible because we have been modifying our growth strategies which is towards Swadeshi model of

development. As a result, there has been rapid decline in poverty and inequality.

14.11 People-led Development

The western model is highly dependent on the state led development where role of the people gets dwarfed. On the other hand, the India legacy tells about the people led development where the society and the households play vital roles in promoting growth and development. This is more efficient, relevant and inclusive. This is part of the Swadeshi strategy. Now it is being emphasized once again. We may find good outcomes of the people led initiatives in the case of improved sex ration and greater participatory development in the form of successful Swachhta Abhiyaan.

14.12 Sustainable Development

Our earth planet has already been damaged severely in the last over two centuries of the western economic models. However, a country like India has a long history of making progress without harming the mother nature and natural resources and the biodiversity. This way the development and growth cannot sustain and all the efforts would be counterproductive. Moreover, harming first and then waiting others to repair the damages is not a sustainable strategy. We may learn from our Swadeshi model that has been in practice with advanced technologies for thousands of years that how to customize our lifestyle and economic activities in a manner that is having the least adverse effects on the nature and natural resources. This got an in-built strategy in India and now it needs to be once again emphasizes as much as possible despite the overarching roles of the western models in India as well.

14.13 Swadeshi Paves the Way for Global Leadership

Thus, Swadeshi has a huge potential. India shared around 27 per cent of the global GDP before over one thousand years. But the western influence has ruined our economy like anything. We have always been self-reliant in a significant manner. But the western influence crippled us and made largely dependent on them. India has been undertaking trade across the globe

when it was at its prime of the economic development when the other countries were not even noticed globally who now claim to shape the economic fortune on this earth. However, now things seem to be changing in India due to Swadeshi for Atmanirbhar Bharat strategy for Viksit Bharat@2047. We have given ample hint that if our shift towards Swadeshi is further scaling up, we may do much better for the global welfare particularly the Global South. We may cite the examples of supplying food to more than one hundred countries during the Covid pandemic; we have been responsible country to supply Covid vaccine to over one hundred countries; we have been making new heights in space technology; developing digital infrastructure at rapid pace for inclusive and sustainable development; etc. Thus, our Swadeshi model of development has altogether different vision for global partnerships and support in the form of *Vishwa Guru*.

From the above discussion, it may be inferred that India has been practicing its own development model that is described as Swadeshi. This model has been in vogue since ages and there have been improvements and updating in it without harming the basic ingredients of the model. This has been a participatory strategy with thrust on inclusiveness and sustainability among others.

15. Conclusion

The above discussion brings forth the fact that when we were practicing our own model of Swadeshi and self-reliance, the Indian economy has been at the peak of the economic growth and development. However, when the foreign invaders and rulers came to India, they dented our culture and society that damaged the economic system and economic growth. The western model focused on the state led development, whereas the Indian model has been people led development. The latter is now being promoted and its positive outcomes are easily visible now. Yet, we have to do a lot to make the Indian economy once again a global leader as the world is now looking at us with hopes and aspirations. Therefore, we have to effectively promote Swadeshi strategy for economic development and growth. It is

because India has a huge population and its requirements cannot be fulfilled through imports. We have variety of topography, culture and natural resources in different locations. These might be helpful in promoting specialization and economies of scale while the domestic market itself is very huge. Since we can move on low cost efficient production, this might be helpful in promoting exports and fulfilling the needs of the global south and others. The Swadeshi strategy of India is being practiced since ages that has the capacity of inclusive and sustainable growth and development while taking care of the poor, marginalized, children, elders, women, nature and natural resources. Participatory development strategy strengthens the capacity of the Swadeshi strategy which is now being practiced in increasing order. Simultaneously it has the capacity of promoting self-reliance for Viksit Bharat@2047.

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