

# The Essence of Aatmanirbhar Bharat

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## Abstract

The self-reliance of India was the key factor which contributed in making it a global leader during the ancient times. The invaders from different parts of the world ravaged this status and destroyed the social, economic and political superiority of Bharat. Since Independence, government has been working laboriously to make India Aatmanirbhar, once again. Aatmanirbharta, in real sense is not just about self-reliance in the economic sphere but is also about that in the social and the political world. Various measures have been taken and policies have been implemented to attain this goal. The COVID 19 pandemic has, yet again, emphasized the need for self-reliant India. The paper makes an attempt to study the economic, social and political self-reliance in India and provides suggestions in this direction so that India once again can attain the status of 'Global Leader'.

**Keywords:** Aatmanirbhar Bharat, Self- Reliance, Social Upliftment, Small Scale Industries, Political Empowerment, Pandemic

## Introduction

74 years back at the stroke of the midnight hour on 14 August, the faces of Indians lit up with happiness and hope as India became independent. When the Britishers finally lost, their ego was hurt and so they took away an integral part of the Indian mainland, Pakistan. They had ruined the Indian economy by destroying its local industries. Even after being victims of such atrocities, Indians never lost hope and worked tooth and nail to make India 'Aatmanirbhar'.

## Objective of the Study

The objective of the study is to analyse the steps taken by the Indian Government to make India Aatmanirbhar and give suggestions to bring about the factor of self-reliance in the political, economic and social arena of India. It also aims to study the immediate need created in the country to bring about Aatmanirbharta in order to break free from the shackles of the Pandemic and emerge stronger.

## Review of Literature

The concept of Aatmanirbhar Bharat has been emphasized since ancient times in one way or the other. The economic, political and social condition of the country was very strong; however, this scenario had changed during the medieval period and under the British Empire (Indian Economic Development, 2019). Sadhvi Khosla (April 6, 2020), too, in her article has brought out the supremacy of India during ancient times. She further asserts that pandemic has given India tremendous opportunity to rise by following its ancient wisdom and tradition. The Government of India has tried to make the country self-reliant after independence and has once again adopted the scheme of 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' during the pandemic in this direction. The Free Press Journal (May 13, 2020) clarifies the meaning of Aatmanirbhar Bharat and illustrates the measures taken. The Independence Day speech by Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has emphasized the need of self-reliant India with due weightage given to the development of infrastructure (Business Standard, Aug 15, 2020). However, all the studies, measures and policies for aatmanirbhar bharat are restricted to the economic sphere only, whereas aatmanirbharta in true sense has a much wider meaning and application.

## Background

The trend of Aatmanirbhar Bharat might be in vogue now, but it definitely isn't a new thing for the Indians and is merely a repetition of what was already there in the country before it was exploited and subjugated to the atrocities of its loathsome neighbours and trading partners. The concept of self-reliance is, in fact, as old as the Vedas and the Shastras

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itself. It was what helped India become Sone ki Chidiya and a dominating power during ancient times. India was the largest exporter in the world with negligible imports. But on second thought, wasn't it the fact that India being Sone ki Chidiya attracted the invaders? The Mughals, the Afghans and the Turks did come to India to look for diamonds and gold. Ghazni looted the Somnath temple, Macaulay did confess during his speech at the House of Commons that India was so rich that gold was lying like grains in the houses of people in India. Since it was India's exquisite self-reliance which helped it gain that title, did being Aatmanirbhar led to its downfall?

### **Importance of Aatmanirbhar Bharat in shaping Indian Economy**

After Independence, when India was finally transformed into a democracy, a government of the people, by the people and for the people, Aatmanirbhar Bharat looked like the way forward. It indeed was, as the Indian economy at that time was vulnerable. Local industries, especially the textile sector, formed the framework of the Indian economy prior to the British rule. The Britishers transformed India into a raw material generating machine for the industries in Britain, thereby, ruining the indigenous industries. So, reviving these units became the topmost priority for the Indian government post-independence. As a method to promote Indian industries and to safeguard them from foreign competition, the Indian government adopted the policy of import substitution and export promotion under which the foreign imports were discouraged and domestic production was encouraged. In doing so, various tariffs were levied and quotas were imposed on the import of foreign produce. In 1990s, it was felt that the Indian economy has revived and was ready to be back in the game. This further gave a boost to industries as now they were competing worldwide and were getting a chance to prove their worth. This had prepared the Indian economy to an extent that all economic problems including the Great Recession of 2008 were a cakewalk for it. This is an apt portrayal of Aatmanirbharta in the Indian economy. At present, 'Make in India' scheme is a grassroot level effort by the government to make India 'Aatmanirbhar'. Under this scheme, the government has tried to facilitate investment, infrastructure, skilled labour and other basic necessities for production and has thus, aimed to make India a centre for manufacturing. This scheme has given a sudden boost to local small-scale industries. In ancient times, self-reliance was attained as the Indian economy was run by small scale businesses and industries which in turn helped in making the smallest area self-sufficient. The time has come when small scale industries should be promoted again to make India attain the position of a global leader.

### **Social and Political Aatmanirbharta**

Aatmanirbhar Bharat, in true sense, is not just about making the country economically independent but is also about the social and political empowerment of all sectors of the society. A plethora

of measures has been taken for social upliftment of the backward section of society. Seats have been reserved for SCs, STs and OBCs in government educational institutes, parliament, government services etcetera. While this has proved to be successful to a great extent for the people defined as socially backward by a definition given a long time back, it's high time now for the definition to be revamped. Reservation should now be based on the economic condition of people i.e., people under the category of below poverty line should be given the benefits needed for their upliftment. Such a measure will help in building an Aatmanirbhar Bharat from the grassroot level. Untouchability has also been abolished and the National Commission for the protection of their rights has been formed. Women, too, are Aatmanirbhar as now they are competing and proving their worth in almost all areas of society. They have been provided an apt representation in the local councils and a bill for their reservation in the parliament is pending. The women's reservation bill was introduced in 2008 and even after repeated readings, the bill has failed to become a law. Passing of this bill should be done at the earliest so as to make women politically Aatmanirbhar and thereby, enabling them to empower their fellow females and in turn the society. Equal pay acts, workplace safety laws have also encouraged women to become independent.

India is home to one of the largest democracies in the world. Various amendments have been made for the social, political and economic upliftment, as the country advances. Amendments such as the twenty-first amendment, ninety-second amendment were made to recognize various regional languages. This has helped people, indigenous to these languages, gain job opportunities and has thus helped in making them self-reliant. The Eighty-sixth amendment made education compulsory for children aged between six and fourteen. This has proved to be a ground-breaking change as education is the first step to become self-reliant and self-sufficient. Sixty-first amendment reduced the voting age from twenty-one to eighteen. This step has helped in inducing a sense of responsibility among the youth at an early age, thereby, making it possible to channelize their energy for the development of the nation.

### **The heightened demand for Self-Reliance during the Pandemic**

The Pandemic has once again accentuated the need for India to become Aatmanirbhar and reduce its dependence on its foreign counterparts. India failed to suffice the needs of its people, grasping for a thing as basic as oxygen during the second COVID wave. There are as usual two schools of thought on this issue, with one blaming the poor administration of the government and the other believing in the actual shortage of oxygen in the country. Going with the second school of thought, one is left to wonder as to why India hasn't been self-sufficient in this regard. Even the smallest of countries, with not as rich in resource reserve as India

like Thailand, Bahrain, Pakistan, have offered or have helped India during this crisis. But the ground reality is that most of the medical supplies including Oxygen concentrators needed by the country were imported from China, its sworn enemy. Though the help from China is appreciated, is the condition in India that bad that on one hand the Indian brave hearts are protecting their country from the Chinese troops at high altitudes and on the other hand, India is dependent on China for its vital needs?

The Pandemic has further laid the spotlight on the drawbacks of Globalisation. What happened in a random part of the world ended up bringing the worst recession since the Great Depression of 1929. The economies of various countries are now deeply intertwined with each other as each one is dependent on the other for one thing or the other. While Globalisation has a multitude of benefits, its drawbacks might prove to outweigh them, especially during a global calamity like the Pandemic. Countries should now prioritise the needs of their people over earning foreign exchange and recognition through exports. In fact, most of the developed countries have started prioritizing their national interest for the past many years and due to this they have managed to minimise the effect of the Pandemic on their economy to a large extent. India, too, should consider focussing more on the welfare and requirements of its people rather than the rest of the world. Also, currently India exports most of its raw material to other countries and buys the finished products from them at a much higher price. Under this condition, developing a strong manufacturing base in the country itself can also help India become Aatmanirbhar.

### Suggestions

To promote aatmanirbharta various remarkable policies have been started by the Indian government like Make in India, Digital India, Start-up India, Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojna but unfortunately, they have not been implemented properly. These policies can do wonders if executed in a correct manner such that its benefits reach one and all. More importantly, the government should encourage the youth to start their own businesses by providing benefits like tax reimbursement, provision of basic necessities like electricity- water at a subsidised cost and by ensuring that projects are not only given to big and established brands but also to the small and relatively new businesses. The ease of doing business should be promoted and quick approval of business proposals must be ensured while keeping a check on corruption. This will also help the government control brain drain. The condition is such that most of the Indian youth, especially, those from the top Indian educational institutes prefer to work abroad in lieu of better job opportunities and work-life balance. Even the ones who want to start their own business prefer to do it abroad or simply do a job because of factors such as high level of corruption, poor implementation of various schemes and inability to avail the benefits of government policies. A

conducive business environment will contribute towards the national income and will also create an abundance of job opportunities from the ground level, thereby, helping India to become Aatmanirbhar.

Politically, India should take a lesson from its past mistakes. Despite being a global leader during the medieval period, India was vulnerable to foreign invaders due to its political instability. Aatmanirbharta should be brought about in the country from the grassroot level such that every village and every town is self-sufficient in its needs as much as possible. But, at the same time political unity is of utmost importance so as to prevent history from repeating itself. It's critical for the leaders to leave behind their petty interest and come together to work for the welfare of the country as a united body.

### Conclusion

India has been marching on the road of development since independence. Various steps have been taken and strategies are framed to build a self-reliant India. However, the policies adopted so far were influenced by the Western development models. Globalization has taken a front seat in the journey of economic, social, political, educational and spiritual advancement. Though lately, it has been felt by the by nations worldwide that nationalism should be promoted and development models must be shaped according to the needs of the country. The present scenario of the Pandemic has emphasized the need for an indigenous Indian development model, which will once again make India 'Aatmanirbhar' as it was in the ancient times.

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