

# Swadeshi

## PATRIKA

January 2025



**Are Donald Trump's Decisions  
Economically Prudent?**



# Swadeshi Activities

## Swadeshi Meetings

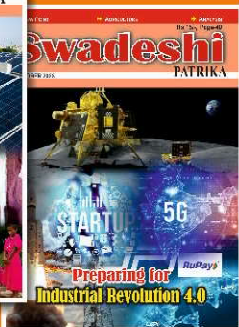
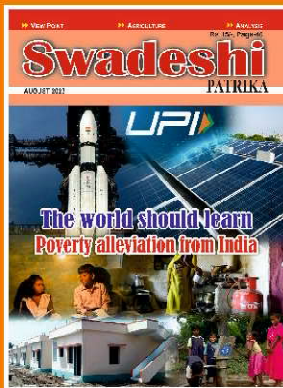
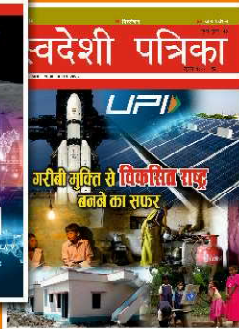
Pictorial Glimpses



Swadeshi Mela, Karnataka



Swadeshi - Mahakumbh



# VOICE OF

SELF RELIANT INDIA

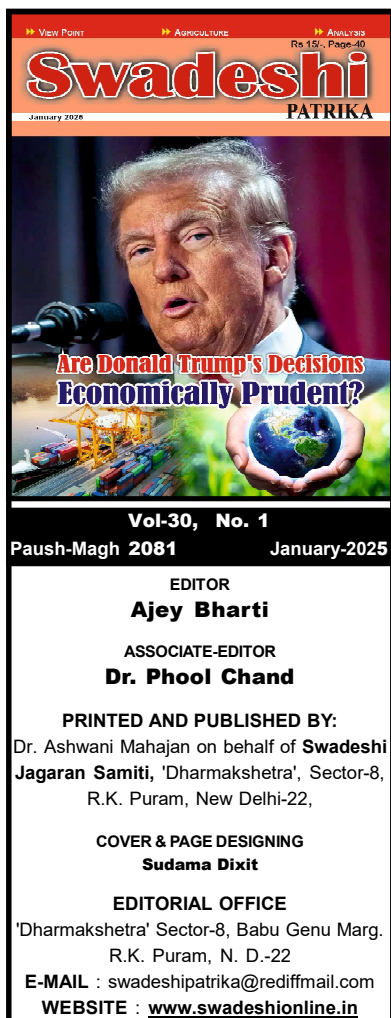
# SWADESHI

Patrika

# स्वदेशी

पत्रिका

# पढ़ें और पढ़ायें



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Dr. Ashwani Mahajan



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## Mahakumbh Mela 2025

The Mahakumbh Mela, a 144-year-old religious pilgrimage, proves to be a significant economic boon for India. The massive influx of devotees and tourists generates substantial revenue and employment opportunities. India's tourism sector, a major contributor to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), stands to gain considerably. This event, with its potential to attract millions, can revitalize local economies and create numerous jobs.

Past Kumbh Melas (held every 12 years) clearly demonstrate this economic impact. The 2013 Prayagraj Kumbh Mela generated 12,000 crore Rupees in revenue, while the 2019 Ardh Kumbh Mela, which saw the participation of 5 crore devotees, generated 1,200 crore Rupees. The 2025 Mahakumbh is projected to boost India's economy by approximately 2 lakh crore Rupees, with Uttar Pradesh's GDP expected to rise by over 1%. Specific sectors like the daily essentials trade (estimated 17,310 crore Rupees) and the hospitality sector (estimated 2,800 crore Rupees) are poised for significant growth.

However, organizing an event of this scale presents numerous logistical challenges. Effective infrastructure management, crowd control, and environmental sustainability are crucial. Addressing these challenges requires a collaborative approach between the government and the private sector, involving comprehensive planning and resource allocation. Only through careful preparation can India fully capitalize on the Mahakumbh Mela's economic potential, stimulating local economies, promoting tourism, and generating widespread benefits.

— Vijeet Kumar, Delhi

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## Quote-Unquote



**Swami Vivekananda is an eternal inspiration for youth, who continues to ignite passion and purpose in young minds.**

Narendra Modi, Prime Minister, Bharat



**The Government is transforming the Armed Forces into a modern warfare machine in view of dynamic geopolitical world orders.**

Rajnath Singh, Defence Minister, Bharat



**We will refine DPDP Rules further to take the power of technology to children while saving them from many harm ... Sector-specific guidelines may be issued if the need arises and only after consultation with sectoral experts and stakeholders.**

Ashwini Vaishnaw, IT Minister, Bharat

# Pleasant Change in Health Landscape: Government Taking Greater Responsibility

Union Budget 2025-26 allocates expenditure of Rs 103280 crores on health and family welfare, Ayush and health research. If we see over last 11 years there has been an impressive, 8.3 times increase in expenditure on health and family welfare, Ayush and health research, from Rs 12482 crore in 2014-15 to Rs 103280 crores in Budget 2025-26. It's notable that during this period the size of Union Budget has increased by hardly 2.8 times. Ten years ago, public expenditure on health was nearly one percent of GDP. In 1990-91, total public expenditure on health (which included medical and public health, family welfare, water supply and sanitation, nutrition, child and disabled welfare) was 2.36 per cent of GDP. Although, public education and health institutions were never excellent, even in the pre-LPG era, these facilities were largely kept at the heart of government policy making. With the advent of privatization, under LPG policies, people were left to the mercy of market forces for education and health. By 2013-14, public expenditure on health had come down to its low of one percent of GDP. This resulted into deterioration in public health facilities. From 2014-15, public health services have improved significantly, making it possible to reduce out of pocket expenditure by the people. We see that in 2004, the total health expenditure as a percentage of the GDP was 4.2 percent, and out of this, 2.59 was contributed by the private out of pocket expenditure. The concern was that the public expenditure was ridiculously low, below 1 percent of the country's GDP. Studies have highlighted severe negative impacts of high out of pocket expenditures on socio economic status of households; especially it drastically affected people belonging to economically poorer sections of society. Further many people in middle income category were also forcibly impoverished. It puts poorer people into vicious cycle of poverty. At the macroeconomic level, it undermined the government efforts in eradicating poverty and brings the general economic welfare at low level.

NCDs have also significantly contributed to the high out of pocket expenditure as a percentage of either total health expenditure or the Gross Domestic Products (GDP) of country. Thanks to positive and significant intervention by the government in the last one decade, despite greater incidence of NCDs, out of pocket expenditure has been coming down continuously, which is giving a big sigh of relief to the masses in general and poor in particular. Till 2013-14 out of pocket expenditure remained high at nearly 2.5 percent. The out of pocket expenditure as a percentage of the GDP was 2.58 in 2004-05, remained at 2.43, even in 2013-14, despite tall claims of the then government about public health care. With the augmentation of the public health expenditure, we see a gradual decline in the private out of pocket health expenditure. However, the more rapid decline in out of pocket expenditure as a percentage of the GDP was seen after 2015-16. From 2.32 percent of GDP in 2015-16, it declined to 1.54 percent in 2019-20, 1.66 in 20-21, and 1.55 in 21-22.

However, a major relief for the common man is that the governments in India have started sharing the burden of health expenditure to address ever increasing need to take care of health needs. The government expenditure on health as a percentage of the GDP has been increasing as it was 0.22 % of the India's GDP in 1950-51, 0.81 in 1975-76, 0.96 in 1990-91, 0.88 in 1995-96, 0.96 in 2005-06. Between 2007-08 to 2013-14, somewhat this figure moved close to 1 percent of GDP. However, the consistent increase has been seen after 2015-16 as it was 1.02 of the GDP in 2015-16, 1.17 in 2016-17 and 1.35 in 17-18, 1.28 in 18-19, 1.35 in 19-20, 1.6 in 20-21, and 1.84 in 21-22. In the case of India, the introduction of Ayushman Bharat has helped significantly in reducing private out-of-pocket healthcare expenditure. The Ayushman Bharat scheme consists of two segments- one related to upgradation and creation of health infrastructure known as Pradhan Mantri-Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission (PM-ABHIM) and the other towards providing health insurance known as Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY). By December 2024, a total of 1.75 lakh Ayushman Arogya Mandirs (AAMs) were either established or upgraded from existing Primary Health Centres (PHCs) and Sub-Health Centres (SHCs).

The Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY), aims to cover health expenses upto to 5 lakh for secondary and tertiary health expenses. Initially its coverage was limited to social and economically backward groups of the society. But, later on, the ambit of this scheme is expanded to all people who are aged 70 years or above. The Government of India (GoI) had allocated Rs 1998 crore in 2018, which gradually increased upto Rs 6185 crore in 2022, which has benefited millions of people. Besides this, the GOI has also put a price ceiling for the Aayushman Card holders to hospitals, whereas, the actual price for non-card holders is much greater. Moreover, the cost of health care in India is much cheaper in comparison to the western countries, that is why India has emerged as a preferred destination for medical tourism. It is true that during these years we have strived towards providing equitable health care by strengthening public health infrastructure, public insurance based treatment, provision of generic medicines and diagnostic services at affordable prices, promoting traditional knowledge system of wellness. Along with this we need to strengthen our medical industry so that new cutting edge innovations and technologies are developed in this field that can handle the need of evolving nature of diseases across and globally. It can contribute to our economy in many ways. It will provide a healthier work force, help in reducing poverty, as well as help in mobilizing foreign exchange. Thus, in this endeavour, all tiers of government, namely local, state and union government, need to work in synergy.

# Are Donald Trump's Decisions Economically Prudent?



*Most economists of the world do not agree with the decisions of the newly elected President and they feel that Donald Trump is talking about 'America First', but his decisions will not only have an adverse effect on the American economy and the American environment, but America will be isolated from the rest of the world, apart from making life difficult for US people.*

**Dr. Ashwani Mahajan**

The newly elected President of America, Donald Trump, who is known for his unpredictability, from his past tenure, is again making headlines by his statements, after winning Presidential contest, and more so after assuming power.

## Tariff War

Donald Trump says that other countries of the world impose high tariffs on American products, so he will also impose raise tariffs on imports coming to USA, to stop the goods coming from outside and encourage production in the country. Since his first tenure as president, he has consistently been saying that he wants to restart the rusting factories of USA. He says that the import duties of India, China, Brazil and many other countries are very high, so he will also impose heavy tariffs on imports from these countries. He feels that due to low import duties in USA, American industries suffer huge losses, as the country's production is shifted overseas. Therefore, Donald Trump also says that on one hand the employment of US people is destroyed, and on the other country loses on revenue; and to compensate the loss of income from import duties, he has to impose more taxes on US people. In the first instance he has raised tariffs on imports coming from Canada, Mexico and China, and these countries have started retaliating.

Donald Trump further says that he will abolish income tax and compensate the same, with import duties. It is worth noting that in his previous tenure too, Donald Trump had reduced taxes on rich Americans. But at that time, even though US had symbolically increased tariffs, and taken many actions, such as excluding many Indian products from the General System of Preferences (GSP; but import duties were not increased on most of the imports coming to US. But this time Donald Trump's repeated emphasis on increasing import duties and announcements of abolishing income tax seems unusual. Not only this, Donald Trump is also talking about reversing the decision of former President Joe Biden, according to which income tax was increased on ultra rich people.

Donald Trump says that he will tax other countries and reduce taxes on Americans to make them rich. By reducing taxes, he intends to increase the disposable income of individuals and families and make America rich. He reminds that the period from 1870 to 1913 is the best period in the history of US economy, when a tariff-based economic system was in place and US earned huge revenue by imposing tariffs.

## Advice to American Companies Abroad

Along with the announcement of increasing import duty, Donald Trump has also advised US companies to shift their production units from foreign lands to US. If they do so, they will be saved from paying high tariffs and income tax. Donald Trump believes that due to low tariffs, the country's ability to build ships and defense equipment has eroded. He says that there was a time when America

used to build a ship every day, but now ship-building has almost shifted abroad.

Donald Trump says that US companies that bring back their factories to US, will be given incentives, especially in pharmaceuticals, semi-conductors and steel manufacturing.

### **Sacrificing Environment and Make US Great Again**

On one hand, Donald Trump talks about increasing tariffs, while on the other hand he believes that America has been harmed in the name of protecting the environment. In such a situation, he has also ordered that all wind energy and solar energy plants be removed, because they destroy land and reduce land prices. In such a situation, Donald Trump has expressed his desire to remove the obstacles in the way of mining of rare earth mineral products. He says that US has a large reserve of rare earth mineral products, but obstacles are created in their mining in the name of environment protection. He has announced that he will work to remove these obstacles and increase their domestic production.

The conclusion of Donald Trump's proposals is that he will make radical changes in America's trade system to protect the interests of American workers and their families. Although Donald Trump claims that this will improve the income of the American people and they will be able to live a better life. But will this be possible? This has to be evaluated on the basis of the principles of economics.

First of all, we have to understand that increasing tariff on import of goods can increase production in the country, but for that it is necessary that the country cur-

rently has the excess capacity to produce those goods. It is true that most of the goods in America were being produced in the past. Steel, shoes, clothes, defense equipment, ships, medicines, chemicals, all types of products were used to be produced in America. But due to the high cost of US industries and cheap imported alternatives, all those industries have since been closed and today America depends mostly on foreign countries for all these goods. In such a situation, increasing import duty may not lead to increased production, but it would make imported alternatives costlier and hence increase inflation, further burdening the Americans.

Secondly, the policy to raise tariffs on foreign countries, fails to account for retaliation by foreigners. latest retaliatory tariffs by Canada in response to 25 percent tariff on Canadian products, and advice to Canadians, not to holiday in US, is only a trailer of what's in store for future. In international relations, such kind of retaliations are very common. One needs to calculate the losses, which US can suffer because of these retaliatory measures by other countries.

Thirdly, if US decides to abolish income tax, then it will have to be compensated by increased budget deficit, because the increase in import duties will not be able to compensate for loss in income tax collections. In such a situation, due to increase in budget deficit, inflation in US may further worsen.

Fourthly, due to increase in inflation, interest rates will also have to increase. Already the US economy has been hit by high interest rates, with demand for homes and other durable goods such as cars and other household appliances are

impacted. If this inflation escalates, demand may further get hampered.

Fifthly, Donald Trump's decision to withdraw from the Paris Environment Pact; and to stop the production of various types of plants for environmental improvement in the country may adversely affect America more than any other country. Even though Donald Trump feels that his decision to abandon encouragement of electric vehicles will help the automobile industry of America to grow, he forgets that the efforts being made to protect the environment are more in the interest of US, than the world. America could have benefited from the technological development, required for environmental protection, but now it will not be able to. The speed at which the trend of electric cars was increasing in US will now be hit.

Sixthly, Donald Trump needs to understand that world today is not the same as world of 18th and 19th century. Economies have undergone big changes since then; and international specialization determines the world trade. Though, it may be a good idea to promote domestic production by different countries, but that can be a gradual process and cannot be done overnight.

Most economists of the world do not agree with the decisions of the newly elected President and they feel that Donald Trump is talking about 'America First', but his decisions will not only have an adverse effect on the American economy and the American environment, but America will be isolated from the rest of the world, apart from making life difficult for US people. Only the future will tell whether Donald Trump will be proved right; or the economists. □□

## International trade and the Indian Economy: Impact of Declining Rupee

There has been a very close nexus between India's international trade and its economy since very early days. India was a major player with a favourable balance of trade until the invasion of the colonial powers in the 17th-18th century and had been the richest nation in the World with a share of more than 25 percent of the global economy.

### Pre-Colonial period and post-colonial period before independence in 1947

India was a prominent player in international trade before the colonial era. Pre-colonial India had been brimming with potential, establishing itself successfully on the international map. India enjoyed a solid worldwide reputation. India was famed for its handicraft industry in cotton and silk fabrics, metallic and valuable stone production, and other sectors.

During pre-colonial period India's exports included several precious Kashmiri Shawls, carpets, Varanasi silk sarees, jewellery, brass, copper, bell metal wares, marble work, ivory, wood, stone, and artistic glassware. Spices: Cinnamon, pepper, opium, and indigo. Various raw materials like raw cotton, opium, and indigo. Food crops like ( Rice, wheat, sugar, and other items like precious stones, and drugs. India's imports included Pearls, wool, dates, dried fruits, and rosewater from the Persian gulf, Coffee, gold, drugs, and honey from Arabia, Tea, sugar, and silk from China, Gold, musk, woollen cloth, metals like copper, iron, and lead, and paper from several other countries including Persia.

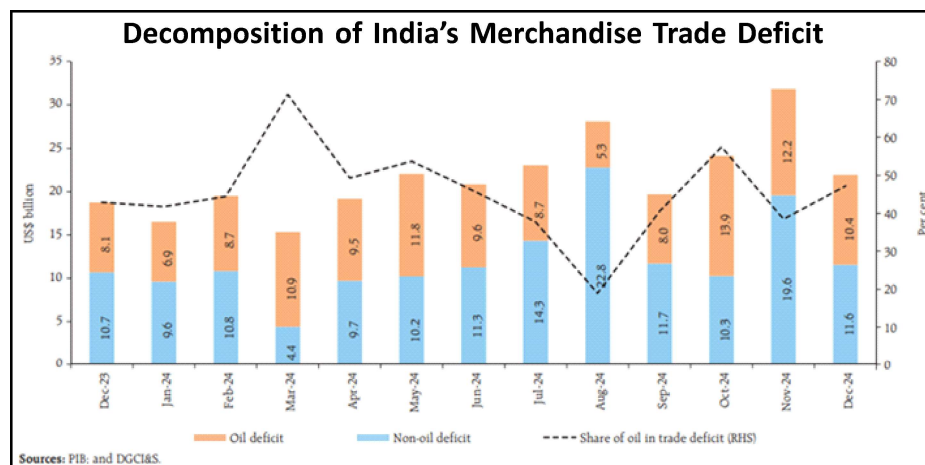
The Silk Road was the major trade route connecting India with China along with other routes through Kandahar to Persia. Goods were transported by caravans of oxen and donkeys in the dry seasons, and by coastal and river shipping.

Vasco da Gama, a Portuguese explorer was the first European who arrived at Calicut in 1498 and thereafter many others from Dutch, France and British started coming and slowly colonised major part of the Indian Territory. However



*We need to strengthen the value of Indian Rupee and to re-establish the brand Swadeshi around the world.*

**Dr. Dhanpat Ram Agarwal**





during the British Rule the surplus generated through exports of commodities were drained out in the name of taxation and other government expenditures. India was relegated to a provider of raw resources such as jute, wool, indigo, cotton, and sugarcane and an importer of completed consumer products such as silk & woollen clothing and small machinery created in British industries during colonial control. Furthermore, the development of the Suez Canal increased British influence over Indian international commerce.

India's share in the global economy was reduced from more than 25% in 1757 to just 2.5% in 1947 with a massive wealth piracy by the British Rulers estimated to be nearly US\$ 45 trillion in the present value as per the research study of Utsa Patnaik, a famous economic historian.

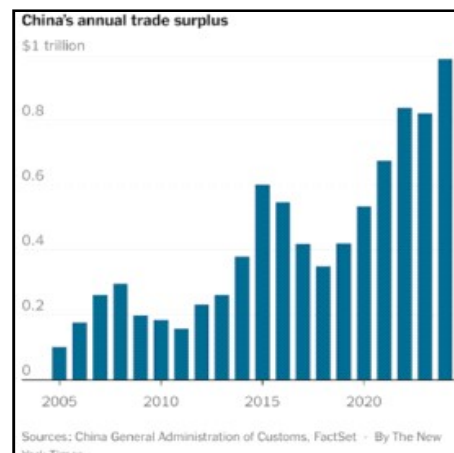
### India's independence and international trade

India followed a very cautious approach of inward looking and import substitution after independence and gradually improved upon our foreign trade policy which is evident from the fact that our volume of international trade moved upwards in a slow motion for a long time from a meagre US\$ 2.5 Billion in 1950 to around US\$ 10 Billion in 1975-76 and US\$43 Billion until 1990-91. It took almost a double jump to US\$ 95 in 2001-02 and thereafter a long jump of US\$ 620 Billion in 2010-11. At present the volume of international trade has reached to US\$ 758 Billion. However if we look at the gap between the import and the export of the merchandise, We find a huge trade deficit of around US\$ 250

Billion which will be clear from the following discussion.

India's trade account deficit has been rising continuously and reached US\$ 241.143 Billion in 2023-24. There are two major components of trade account deficit, one is for crude oil and petroleum products and the other is for different merchandise. The oil deficit was US\$ 94.576 billion and non-oil US\$ 146.567 billion. In the Financial year 2013-14 the trade account deficit was US\$ 135.798 billion of which US\$ 101.591 was on oil account and US\$ 34.207 on non-oil or on account of merchandise. During these corresponding years Exports have increased from US\$ 314.416 billion to US\$ 437.072 billion and the imports have increased from US\$ 450.214 billion to US\$ 678.215 billion. However the increase in oil imports is very marginal i.e., from US\$ 164.770 billion to US\$ 178.773 billion. In other words the increase in imports of non-oil merchandise during this corresponding period has increased substantially by US\$ 228 billion as compared to increase in oil which is only US\$ 14 Billion and therefore the major chunk of increase in trade account deficit during the corresponding period of 10 years is due to substantial increase in the merchandise related to non-oil products.

We import majority of the non-oil merchandise from China and our trade deficit on account of imports from China during the current financial year 2023-24 was US\$ 85.10 billion, our imports being US\$ 101.75 billion and exports being US\$ 16.65 billion. This is despite our all-out efforts to reduce our imports from China. We could



neither increase our exports nor reduce our imports to the desired levels despite introducing production link incentives and with our Make in India initiatives. On the other hand if We look at China We find that it has positioned itself at number one in the international trade and that is mainly because of its cheaper goods which are in demand in each country and from each continent and from the rich as well as poor countries. Its export in the calendar year 2023 was US\$ 3.58 trillion while its import was only US\$ 2.59 trillion and thereby a trade surplus of US\$ 990 billion as compared to the trade surplus of US\$ 838 in the year 2022 as will be evident from the above chart.

### Impact of Foreign Capital

It is evident from the tables below that the current account deficit is met out of capital receipts on three major ways, namely foreign direct investment, foreign portfolio investment and external commercial borrowing or the external debt. The cumulative inward flow of FDI from April 2000 to September 2024 is US\$ 1033.400 billion or a little more than one trillion US\$ as per the latest published data of Government of India and if we exclude the FDI receipts from

Year wise FDI Inflow since 2014 – 15 Capital Flows (US\$ billion)			
Sl. No.	Financial Year	Amount (in USD billion)	Growth
1.	2014-15	45.15	-
2.	2015-16	55.56	(+) 23%
3.	2016-17	60.22	(+) 8%
4.	2017-18	60.97	(+) 1%
5.	2018-19	62.00	(+) 2%
6.	2019-20	74.39	(+) 20%
7.	2020-21	81.97	(+)10%
8.	2021-22	84.84	(+) 3%
9.	2022-23 (P)	71.36	(-)16%
10.	2023-24 (P) up to feb. 24	64.99	-

Component	Financial Year so far		Financial Year	
	Period	2024-25	2023-24	2022-23
FDI (net)	April-October	2.1	7.7	10.1
FPI (net)	April-December	12.7	26.0	44.6
ECB (net)	April-October	9.2	2.8	3.6
Non-resident Deposits (net)	April-October	11.9	6.1	14.7

**Note:** Data on FPI to India for financial year so far (December 12, 2024) and corresponding period previous year have been sourced from NSDL, whereas data for 2023-24 and 2022-23 are based on balance of payments (BoP) statistics. ECB (net) comprises external commercial borrowings to India.  
**Sources:** RBI and NSDL.

**Source:** DPIIT Annual Report 2023-24

NRIs under Remittance scheme the net FDI inflows during this period is US\$ 708.654 billion. This also includes the reinvestment of the retained earnings to the extent of US\$ 239.084 billion. The present market value of the foreign portfolio investments is approximately US\$ one trillion. The net external debt as on 30/09/2024 as per the Department of Economic Affairs is US\$ 711.808 Billion. Thus the total foreign capital which is invested in the country at present is US\$2.7 Trillion. The point to understand is that We have been adding a minimum of about US\$ 150-200 billion every year on account of these three namely FDI, FPI and External Debt on account of trade account deficit and current account deficit and if this situation continues for another couple of years we may have to face the similar BOP crisis as our Forex Reserve which is nearly US\$ 700 billion is only about one fourth of the total foreign capital. Indirectly we are under a vicious cycle whereby dependence on foreign capital has become a compulsion and not a choice.

## Declining Rupee

As a consequence of withdrawal of funds by FII from the Indian Stock Market and slowness of export, the Rupee has declined from Rs 83.8 in September 2024

to Rs 86.58 as on January 17,2025 and is on a continuing downward journey from Rs 63 in December 2014. The basic reason for perennial trade account deficit and as a consequence the continuous decline in the value of Indian rupee is a major area of concern. The cumulative impact is our increasing dependence on foreign capital to meet the trade deficit which is partly met by service exports and partly by foreign remittances from NRIs. The inflows of foreign direct investment although help in meeting our foreign exchange requirements to meet the trade account or the current account deficit but it also entails a liability to service through dividend, royalties and technical fees as FDI generally comes with a burden of foreign technology and also create challenges for domestic industry. The increasing burden of foreign goods, foreign technology and foreign capital in the form of foreign debt, foreign portfolio investments in the stock market and of the FDI has started creating a dent in our economy and on our economic sovereignty and the time has come for a serious introspection and self-analysis.

It has an indirect impact on our MSME sector and on the unemployment. The declining rupee brings with it the impact on imported inflation as our prices for im-

ported oil becomes more costly and our manufacturing with imported components also becomes less competitive although there is a cross argument that our exports become more competitive but empirical evidences so far has shown adverse results. Had it been so in the last more than 30 years the rupee has declined from Rs 16 in 1991 to nearly Rs 87 now but our imports have been rising and at a much faster rate than our exports. Our trade deficit was hardly US\$ 5 billion in 1991 which has increased to nearly US\$250 billion now.

The challenge before the Indian economy is to restore to Swadeshi ideology with utmost focus on research and innovation and to regain the status of the most industrialised country by improving the quality and price competitiveness of the local products.

Today we talk of self-reliance and ‘Atma Nirbhar Bharat’ but it is ridiculed by the fact that our market is flooded by imported goods. Most of the household goods and white goods including refrigerator, washing machine, air conditioner, automobile and mobile phone are imported. This is the reason of our increasing trade account deficit, the increasing unbearable burden of foreign technology and of foreign capital in the country.

The Central Government is trying to develop indigenous technology but the slogan and the mission of “Vocal For Local” is yet to see the light of the day. To make India a developed economy by 2047 our goal is to restore its glory which it enjoyed during the pre-colonial period. We need to strengthen the value of Indian Rupee and to re-establish the brand Swadeshi around the world. □□

## Kashmir: The Cultural Crossroads - 2

### Kashmiri scholars/Monks in Xinjiang China

Kashmir was an eminent centre of Buddhist learning and attracted Buddhist scholars, monks and pilgrims from Xinjiang and adjoining territories. Kashmiri scholars and monks were held in high esteem in Xinjiang and China. Young men from Kashgar, Khotan, Kucha and other places would come to Kashmir for higher learning. A long line of Kashmiri monks and scholars, 'who combined at the same time a high standard of learning, both linguistic and exegetic, with an audacity of explorers (Naudou, Jean, Buddhists of Kashmir, Agam Kala, Pg. 3) played a pivotal role in spreading Buddhism in Xinjiang, Central Asia and China through the translation of Buddhist teachings and texts into Chinese. They introduced and propagated Buddhist art and literature through the translations of Scriptures in China.

The Mahavibhasa (The Great Exegesis) is a 'compilation established by teachers in Kashmir'. Its summary was translated into Chinese in AD 383 by Kashmiri named Sanghabadra, whose name in Chinese transitions is given as Chi- to-Pani. The first Chinese translation of Gathas was made by a Kashmiri scholar Dharmatrata in AD 221-23. Harivarman, a famous Saraswativadi Scholar of Kashmir composed his work Satyasiddhi Shastra in AD 253.

Sanghabhuti is said to be the first Buddhist scholar who went to China in AD 381 and remained there till his death (Kaul, Advaitvadini, Buddhist Servants of Kashmir, Sagar Publications, 1987, p-24). His name in Chinese transcription is given as Seng-kia-pocheng, and in translation it is Chang Hein. His most important work is commentary on Vinaya Pitaka full of Saraswativada School.

Gautama Sanghadeva was a Kashmiri Buddhist scholar specialising in Abhidharma. He reached China in AD 383, when Sang Bhuti was still working there (Kaul, Advaitvadini, Buddhist Servants of Kashmir, Sagar Publications, 1987, p-25). He later went to South China and translated several texts into Chinese, with the assistance of his Chinese and Kashmiri followers.

Punyatrata was a Buddhist scholar from Kashmir, who reached China around AD 399-415. He worked in Kucha with Kumarjiva and translated several important works.

Dharmayasas was another Kashmiri Buddhist, known as Fo-Cheng in Chinese. He was a pupil of Punyatrata. He went to Xinjiang and onwards to China somewhere between ad 397-401. He was in Changan during AD 405-414 and translated several works into Chinese. He is reported to be to have returned to Xinjiang later.

Kumarajiva was the most eminent Buddhist scholar, who broke geographical, cultural, linguistic and political barriers for propagation of Buddhism. He was the son of a Kuchean Princess Jiva and a Kashmiri Brahmin Kumarayana. His father had renounced his ministership in Kashmir to become a monk and had left Kashmir for Kucha. Kumarajiva was named by combining the names of his par-



*There are several dimensions of studies and research on Jammu and Kashmir.*  
**Vinod Johri**



ents. He was taken to Kashmir by his mother at the age of nine to study Buddhist literature and philosophy. He stayed there for three years studying Madhyama Agama and Dirgha Agama under a well-known master named Bandudatta. He then returned to Kucha along with his mother. Many Kashmiri monks and scholars are reported to have accompanied Kumarjiva to Kucha. En route, he reportedly stayed at Kashgar and studied Abhidharma. He went to Kucha and learnt Saraswativada from his Kashmiri master Vimalaksha.

Within a few years, Kumarjiva attained fame as a scholar and attracted other Buddhist scholars from Kashgar, Khotan, Yarkand other parts of China. When Kumarajiva was in Kucha, the Chinese Emperor Fu-kien sent an envoy to the Kuchean ruler, requesting him to send the celebrated monk to China. On the refusal of the Kuchean ruler, the Chinese Emperor sent forces to subdue him. Kumarajiva was taken to the Chinese capital Changan in AD 401. He was warmly received by the Chinese emperor. Kumarajiva organised the Sutra Translation Bureau (Yingyuan in Chinese) at Changan, where Buddhist scriptures were translated into Chinese. Over 800 scholars were attached to this bureau and a mammoth task of translation was undertaken under Kumarajiva's leadership. He had a deep knowledge of Buddhist philosophy and in various schools, besides, having command over Sanskrit and Chinese. He had a large following among the Chinese Buddhists. He died in AD 413. Kumarjiva is a bridge between Kashmir and Xinjiang, and a strong sym-



bol of cultural cooperation between India and China.

Vimalaksha was a famous Kashmiri Sramana, who is known as Wu Ke yen in Chinese. He went to Kucha and studied in a Miracle Monastery, also known as Royal Vihara. Here he became known as Vinaya Master. He taught Vinaya to Kumarjiva. Vimalaksha stayed at Changan from AD 406 – 413, working with Kumarjiva. He translated in number of works. After Kumarajiva's death, Vimalaksha went to South China, where he spent the rest of his life preaching Buddhism.

Buddhayasas was a Kashmiri Scholar who went to Kucha. He is known by his Chinese name Fo-to-She. He first went to Kashgar at the invitation of its ruler, who had invited Buddhist monks on the religious occasion. Buddhayasas stayed at Kashgar for several years. Here he came in contact with Kumarjiva, who was travelling back from Kashmir to Kucha. Later, he joined Kumarjiva at Changan and helped translate several works into Chinese. It is believed that Buddhayasas returned to Kashmir after Kumarajiva's death.

Dharmamitra was another Kashmiri Buddhist monk who first went to Kucha and then travelled to other areas of Xinjiang. His name is mentioned in Chinese transcription as Tan-mo-muts and in Chi-

nese translation as Fa Siu. He went to Dunhuang in AD 424 and founded a monastery there.

### Chinese Pilgrims in Kashmir

Kashmiri monks, missionaries and scholars would visit the Buddhist centres in various towns in southern Xinjiang and mainland China. Similarly, Chinese pilgrims and scholars also traversed long distances through the inhospitable desert and high mountains to reach Kashmir in their quest for knowledge. This vibrant exchange of erudition between Kashmir and Xinjiang continued at least till the tenth century AD, before the Arab and Turk invaders destroyed Buddhism in Xinjiang.

Chinese scholars who felt the death of authentic Indian texts for the propagation of Buddhism in China travelled to India in search of these texts. Prof. Tan Chung has pointed out that Hiuen Tsang (Xuan Zhang's) self-appointed mission is forever remembered in China as Xiti-unqujing, i.e. "obtaining sutras from Western Heaven-India (Chung, Tan, Ageless Brotherhood Between India and China), Indian Horizons, Vol, 43, Nos.1-2, 1994, p. 15). Chinese pilgrims played a key role in exchanges between ancient India and China, and introduced Indian texts and doctrines to the Chinese monks.

Fa-Hien (AD 338-423) was born in Shanxi. He was a Buddhist monk since his early years. He embarked upon a pilgrimage to India, and land of Buddhism, 'to seek the truth of Buddhist moral principles'. Accompanied by 10 other prominent monks, Fa-Hien left Changan in AD 399 for Khotan in Xinjiang, from where they crossed the moun-

tain passes, to reach Kashmir Frontiers in Kia-Chha, near Ladakh and Baltistan. Kia cha mentioned in Fa-Hien's Fe-Ku-Ki (account of Buddhist kingdoms), has been identified with Ladakh by Alexander Cunningham. Some Sinologists like Kalpa-roth equate it with Skardu (Baltistan). Thomas Watters agrees with Kalpa-roth. What is important is that Fa-Hien came along the silk route to Khotan thence to Tashkurgam and must have crossed the Pamirs to reach Gilgit-Baltistan and Ladakh (which already had strong trade and cultural connections with Xinjiang).

Fi-Hien mentioned two relics of Buddha which he found in Kia-Chha. One of the them was bowl made of stone and other was a tooth of Buddha, which were preserved in a stupa. Fi-Hien also recorded the existence of over 1000 monks of Hinayana School attached to this stupa. Fi-Hien later moved on to Swat, Taxila, Gandhara and onwards to Central Asia, where he stayed for three years. He travelled widely, seeking Buddhist texts, studying religious rituals, practises and Sanskrit. In AD 410 Fi-Hien went to Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and then returned to China via sea route. He carried with him the valuable Buddhist scriptures, he had brought from India. Fi-Hien had a Kashmiri Associate named Buddhajiva, who accompanied him on his return to China.

Che-Mong followed a Fi-Hien and started his journey along with fourteen companions from Changan in Ed 404 to Xinjiang and across the Pamirs to Kashmir. Only six of his associates are believed to have survived in this strenuous journey. Che-Mong and his colleagues stayed in Kashmir for a long time, after which they started on a pilgrimage to Buddhist shrines in In-

***According to the Song dynasty sources, in the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries, about 18 Indian monks arrived in China, 38 Chinese monks returned after visiting the Indians continent, a total of 1028 Indian texts were procured, and 564 scrolls of Buddhist sutras were translated into Chinese.***

dia. He returned to China in AD 424 by the same route.

Fa-Yong was another Chinese monk who came in AD 420, accompanied by a group of 25 monks. He travelled via Turfan, Kucha, Kashgar then over the Pamirs to reach Gilgit, from where he went to Kashmir. Fa-Yong and his colleagues spent a year in the valley studying Sanskrit and Buddhist traditions. He then returned to China by sea, also visiting holy places in India on his way back.

Hiuen Tsang (Xuan Zhuang), the eminent Chinese Buddhist scholar came to India in search of further knowledge. He started his journey in AD 631 by the silk route and entered Kashmir via Hazara (Urusa). He stayed in his valley for two years studying Buddhist scriptures and literature. He was received by the full honours by the then ruler of Kashmir, who sent his nephew to escort Hiuen Tsang from Baramulla to his palace in Srinagar. The ruler himself, followed by a number of Buddhist monks and people, led Hiuen Tsang into the capital where he lodged in Jayendra

Vihar. He was provided with 20 assistance to copy the sacred texts. Hiuen Tsang visited various Buddhist monasteries and stupas. He mentioned the existence of 100 monasteries in Kashmir with 5000 monks. He crossed into Poonch over the Tosa maidan route and went to Rajouri, Akhnoor, Sialkot and onwards to Nalanda. Hiuen Tsang returned to Changan, China in AD 645 carrying with him a huge collection of Buddhist scriptures, statues, flower and plant seeds. He recorded his experiences and description of territories visited by him in his book Da Tang Xi Yu Ji (Records of the Western Regions in Tang dynasty).

Ou-Kong came to Kashmir via Kabul and Gandhar in AD 759. He stayed in the valley for four years and learnt Sanskrit and Vinay from Kashmiri scholars. He has mentioned the existence of several viharas namely Mong Te, Amitabh Bhavan, Anand Bhavan, Ki-Tche, Nano-ye-Le, Jo-Jo, Yeli-Li-Te-Lo, Ko-toon etc. He found over 300 shrines and stupas in Kashmir.

Wu-Kong, another Chinese pilgrim, had come to Kashmir in AD 751 during the Tang period. He spent several years in Kashmir studying the Buddhist texts. He returned to China in AD 790. Even after the decline of Tang rule in China, the exchange of monks and pilgrims between India and China continued. According to the Song dynasty sources, in the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries, about 18 Indian monks arrived in China, 38 Chinese monks returned after visiting the Indians continent, a total of 1028 Indian texts were procured, and 564 scrolls of Buddhist sutras were translated into Chinese. □□

Source - The Crossroads - Kashmir - India's Bridge to Xinjiang by Kulbhushan Warikoo - P-ISBN - 978-93-5702-569-0

# Dawn of a Trumpian World

Donald Trump's return to power signals a shift towards nationalism and multipolarity, challenges globalist and "Woke" agendas, sparks geopolitical tensions over Greenland, Canada, and the Panama Canal, and underscores strategic ambitions in the Arctic and beyond.

President Donald Trump's inauguration on January 20, 2025, as the 47th President of the United States, will usher in a non-Globalist, non-Woke world, and legitimise the return of nationalism and traditional cultural values in countries dominated or pressured by the West. A new ideological map of the world will soon emerge – multipolar due to the rise of BRICS and its partner countries – but with the United States, Russian Federation, and China as dominant poles.

The old Globalist regimes will come under strain: Canada's Justin Trudeau has collapsed, Britain's Keir Starmer is under stress for allegedly protecting child rapist gangs as Attorney-General, France's Emmanuel Macron is cornered, Australia will probably flip quietly, while the leadership of the European Union will resist even as its constituent units tear it apart. It remains to be seen if the AfD can come to power in Germany. Austria opposes NATO's war against Russia; New Zealand will change quietly.

The exit of the Biden administration will defang the global Woke agenda with its offensive promotion of "Trans" rights wherein schools in America and Britain groomed minors to switch sexual identities without parental knowledge or consent. George Soros and the World Economic Forum will lose power in the new world order.

The Muslim world is in deep crisis. The West has long exploited the Shia-Sunni sectarian affiliations to subjugate Muslim countries; the decimation of Syria with the blessings of the outgoing Biden administration completes the disarray. This subject is beyond the scope of the current article. Suffice it to say that Muslims will have to grapple with the distortions wrought in their nations and societies by Western colonialism and find their own solutions. Until then, Palestinians will continue to suffer in Gaza and other territory coveted by Israel.

Regarding India, the outgoing Biden administration began a healing exercise with NSA Jake Sullivan making a farewell visit to India and crediting his Indian counterpart, Ajit Doval, for the strength of the relationship. It remains to be seen if the new administration will scrap the absurd allegations of an alleged plot to assassinate Khalistani leader Gurbatwant Singh Pannun on US soil.

Meanwhile, Trump revealed his global ambitions for America when he stunned the world by threatening to subsume Canada as the 51<sup>st</sup> state of the United States, demanding Greenland from Denmark, and full American control over the Panama Canal. He also called for renaming the Gulf of Mexico as the "Gulf of America". Barring the renaming of the gulf, there is a deeper geopolitics at work.

Greenland hosts America's northernmost military facility, the Pituffik Space Base. In 2018, it planned to build three airports with Chinese funds, but Washington worked out alternate financing with Denmark and Greenland. The island has



*Washington relinquished control of the canal to Panama on 31 December 1999, under a treaty signed in 1977 by President Jimmy Carter. President Trump has called the relinquishment a mistake.*  
**Sandhya Jain**



abundant natural resources (rare earths being mined by China's Shenghe Resources and Hua Sheng Mining) and could help America meet Russian dominance in the Arctic.

Moscow is currently spending \$110 billion to build megaports across its Arctic coastline as a prelude to the opening of the northern sea lanes. Control over Greenland would give Washington a presence on the northern routes. The Arctic is also a key route for polar-orbit trajectories, which are often used for ICBMs. Missiles launched over the poles can reach their targets more quickly due to the curvature of the Earth. Senator Ted Cruz observed that Greenland is important for US national security as any ICBMs launched at America would have to fly over Greenland. Hence, securing Greenland is imperative for US national security.

Trump's abrasive speech led Greenland Prime Minister Mute Egede to retort: "We are not for sale and will never be for sale. We must not lose our years-long struggle for freedom." Inuit Maya Sialuk added that the country was "still trying to recover" from three centuries of colonization. Denmark's defense minister mooted \$1.5 billion to upgrade Greenland's security to take a "stronger presence" in the Arctic, not to deter America.

On January 7, 2025, Donald Trump announced that his son, Don Jr. and his representatives were visiting Greenland to negotiate the purchase of the territory. The local residents are reported to be in favour of joining the United States, rather than remain under Denmark. By January 11, Mute Egede announced that he was prepared to negotiate the future of the Arctic territory with Trump. No specific

***According to the EurAsia Daily, Denmark could seek Moscow's help to save Greenland. Asserting the Denmark would not accept the secession of Greenland, Danish MP Karsten Hønge expressed confidence that "Russia would not allow Greenland to become part of the United States."***

terms have been outlined so far.

According to the EurAsia Daily (Jan 11, 2025), Denmark could seek Moscow's help to save Greenland. Asserting the Denmark would not accept the secession of Greenland, Danish MP Karsten Hønge expressed confidence that "Russia would not allow Greenland to become part of the United States. This is as unfavorable for Russia as it is for us." Reports say Danish authorities contacted Trump's team to discuss increasing the US military presence in Greenland to stave off his plans to buy the island. Reports that Denmark could invoke the Lisbon Treaty (paragraph 7 of Article 42) for assistance in the event of armed aggression by the US, are not likely to materialise.

Regarding Canada, Trump threatened to impose a 25 percent tariff on trade and expressed anger at Canada's failure to stop the flow of drugs and people (immigration); he proposed making Canada an American state with Trudeau as governor (Trudeau was since resigned and his Liberal Party is likely to be routed in the next year's election). Trump pointed out that the US sub-

sidizes Canada to the tune of about US\$ 200 billion annually, among other things. Having a very small military, Canada essentially relies on the American military, and Trump wants Canada to pay its dues for this.

Regarding the Panama Canal, its administrator Ricaurte Vásquez said the canal would remain in Panamanian hands and would be open to commerce from all countries. Denying claims that China was controlling the canal's operations, he said that Chinese companies operating in the ports on either end of the canal were part of a Hong Kong consortium that won a bidding process in 1997, while US and Taiwanese companies operate other ports along the canal. Trump dubbed the fees for transiting the canal (as \$450,000 per transit) as "ridiculous" as this raised the price of gas and goods for American families.

Vásquez explained that fees are fixed with due process in the first half of the year to help clients plan their trips. The canal depends on reservoirs to operate its locks and two years of drought compelled it to sharply reduce the number of daily slots for crossing ships. Hence they had to increase the fees charged to shippers for reserving a slot.

The Panama Canal was built by the US in the early 1900s to facilitate the transit of commercial and military vessels between its coasts. The 51-mile-long canal saves ships from the longer and costlier trip around Cape Horn at the tip of South America. Washington relinquished control of the canal to Panama on 31 December 1999, under a treaty signed in 1977 by President Jimmy Carter. President Trump has called the relinquishment a mistake. □□

<https://chintan.indiafoundation.in/articles/dawn-of-a-trumpian-world/>

# H-1B visa: Uncle Don doesn't want you

It is only on January 20 that many an aspiring America-bound Indian worker or student will find out if it's going to be a Happy New Year or not. That is the date when Donald Trump will formally take oath as President of the United States for a second time and reveal the contours of what he promises will be the most radical immigration policy ever. It could shatter, among other things, the dollar dreams of many Indians. Close to one million Indian legal migrants and their families with H-1B or temporary employment visas could be directly impacted. Another 725,000 Indians, who are presumed to have entered America illegally, could face deportation. Trump has vowed that he will carry out the largest ever deportation of illegal immigrants from the USA on Day 1 of his presidency. It is likely to include Indians. Top on that list are 17,940 Indian illegal migrants who have exhausted all legal recourse. They may face immediate deportation, which could prove to be a major political headache for the Narendra Modi government (see The New American Nightmare).

There are also indications that the new Trump administration could make entry to the USA through the H-1B visa route tougher and costlier. Introduced in 1990 by the George H.W. Bush administration, the H-1B visa programme has a current cap of 65,000 foreign professionals annually, along with 20,000 who graduate from American institutions. The visa is valid for three years and can be extended for another three years. Indian techies will be hit the hardest if there is any tightening of rules or a further capping on numbers, since they account for the maximum number of H-1B visa-holders in the USA. In FY2023 (from Oct. 1, 2022, to Sept. 30, 2023, in the US), Indians were granted 206,591, or 78 per cent, of the 265,777 H-1B visas issued. (These included fresh visas, extensions or conversions from another category to H-1B.) More recently, Indian IT firms with affiliates in the USA, including the four majors—Infosys, TCS, HCL and Wipro—got approval for around 25,000 employees to work on H-1B visas, which is 20 per cent of the total 130,000 issued in the second half of FY24. India's IT sector, which exported \$205 billion worth of software services in FY24—the US accounting for 54 per cent of that share—could end



*Indians in America are in for trouble should president Donald Trump enforce his hardline stance on immigration. How real is the threat and what India can do about it.*

**Anilesh S. Mahajan**



up getting hurt should Trump tighten screws on H-1B visas.

A full-scale civil war seems to have erupted among Trump's MAGA (Make America Great Again) support base on the H-1B issue even before he has assumed the presidency. Triggering this, among other things, were the concerns tech circles had been voicing on the need for immigration reform. Like this much-discussed December 14 post on microblogging platform X by Aravind Srinivas, co-founder of perplexity.ai, a new-age start-up unicorn. Thirty-one-year-old Srinivas, an alumnus of IIT Madras and University of California, Berkeley, and an H-1B visa-holder, had worked at OpenAI, the start-up that built ChatGPT, before he ventured his own AI search engine Perplexity. "I think I should get a green card. Wdyt?" went his post on X, using social media slang for 'What do you think'. A green card, known officially as a Permanent Resident Card, allows a person to live and work permanently in the United States, unlike temporary work visas like the H-1B. The answer came soon enough, from the one man who is sure to matter in the new Trump dispensation, the tech billionaire Elon Musk. It was a single word—"Yes."

MAGA men were up in arms against that endorsement from the man who owns Tesla, X and SpaceX, trolling him heavily for backing H-1B holders like Srinivas. Not one to take things lying down, Musk lashed out, "The reason I'm in America along with so many critical people who built SpaceX, Tesla and a hundred other companies that made America strong is because of H-1B...I will go to war on this issue like the like of which you cannot possi-

bly comprehend." MAGA supporters read these words as an inversion of their anti-immigrant stance, by a person whom Trump has already nominated to lead the new Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE). Vivek Ramaswamy, Musk's co-chair of DOGE and a former Republican presidential candidate, weighed in, too, with a critique of American culture and standards of education, which he said had "venerated mediocrity over excellence for way too long".

That set the cat among the MAGA pigeons, with Steve Bannon, a former Trump advisor and a hardliner on immigration, hitting back thus: "H-1B visas? That's not what it's about. It's about taking American jobs and bringing over essentially what have become indentured servants at lower wages. This thing is a scam by oligarchs in Silicon Valley." Laura Looner, a far right-wing provocateur and internet influencer, joined the debate after Trump appointed Sriram Krishnan, an Indian American venture capitalist, as an advisor on artificial intelligence policy. He, like Musk, is known to favour bringing in more skilled immigrants to the US. Looner called Krishnan's stance a "not America First policy".

Support for the MAGA lobby came from unexpected quarters—the far left. Bernie Sanders, the Democrat Senator from Vermont, lashed out at Musk for his H-1B stand, taking to X to say: "The main function of the H-1B program is not to hire the best and the brightest but rather to replace good paying American jobs with low wage indentured servants from abroad. The cheaper the labour they hire, the more money the billionaires make. The widespread corpo-

rate abuse of the H-1B program must be ended." Sanders charged that, in 2022 and 2023 alone, the top 30 American corporations used the programme to lay off at least 85,000 American workers while hiring over 34,000 H-1B guest workers. He also claimed that H-1B workers had filled 33 per cent of all new IT jobs.

With both sides digging in their heels, Musk walked back on his stand and posted on X, "I've been very clear that the program is broken and needs major reform." His solution: "Easily fixed by raising the minimum salary significantly and adding a yearly cost for maintaining the H-1B, making it materially more expensive to hire from overseas than domestically." Meanwhile, Trump is approaching the H-1B visa issue with a velvet glove, reserving the iron fist for illegal immigrants instead. In an interview to an American daily, he said, "I have always been in favour of the visas.... That's why we have them."

Indian experts, however, are cautious about Trump's assertions. He had taken a hardline stance against H-1B visas in his first term and at one stage even campaigned to do away with them. As president, he introduced significant regulations, including tougher scrutiny of applications, which saw denial rates for visas soar to 24 per cent in FY18 from the earlier average of 6 per cent. In April 2017, Trump pushed through the 'Buy American and Hire American' executive order and directed federal agencies to suggest reforms to ensure H-1B visas were awarded only to the most skilled or highest-paid beneficiaries. This included increasing the floor salary of \$60,000 a year for H-1B workers, to hew closer to the aver-



age American salary of \$100,000 for similar jobs. Post 2020, when Trump lost, the Biden administration removed many of the restrictions he had imposed; others were struck down via judicial review.

### **How real is the threat?**

So, how exactly can Trump fiddle with H-1B visas in his second presidency? While he is certain to go all-out on deporting illegal immigrants as he has promised, he is likely to proceed with more circumspection on H-1B visas. He is all too aware that too radical a shift on this front could deliver a body blow to America's effort to maintain its technological and innovative edge, especially with China snapping at its heels. At his New Year's Eve party, he told reporters, "I have always felt we have to have the most competent people in our country. We need a lot of people coming in. We're going to have jobs like we've never had before." Trump may adopt what Project 2025, a conservative blueprint written by many of his former administration officials, advocates as "a gradual and predictable phase-down of the visas". That goes well with the MAGA objective of putting "the interest of American workers first".

Another aspect adding to the anxiety of Indians in the USA is how the Trump administration proposes to clean up the green card backlog. US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) data show that over a million Indians are waiting for green cards. The Congressional Research Service (CRS) estimated that the backlog for Indians in employment-based categories in 2020 was 568,414—which could take 195 years to clear, and that this estimated wait time would more than double by FY2030. This back-

log is due to annual caps and per-country limits on the number of green cards issued.

Indians who have gained citizenship in America believe that Trump will not come down too harshly on H-1B visas. Ankur Vaidya, 46, chairman of the Federation of Indian Associations and living in New York for the past 25 years, says, "Even if he does, he will open newer avenues for legal immigration." A construction management professional and an associate at an engineering firm, Vadodara native Vaidya led the team of 26 expatriates from America who attended the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas in Bhubaneswar on January 9-10. "Just like the Shiv Sena would demand jobs and first right for the Marathis ahead of every Maharashtra poll, Trump played the same trick with Americans and tapped into their votes. American businessmen know that if locals are supposed to work for 40 hours a week, they would not do even 30, whereas highly-skilled Indians would give more than 40 hours at the same remuneration," he says.

### **What Indian IT companies are doing?**

Meanwhile, Indian IT companies are taking no chances and preparing their defence to ensure that the H-1B programme endures. Shivendra Singh, VP and head of Global Trade Development at Nasscom, argues that the notion that H-1B guest workers take away local jobs or are employed at lower wages, which in turn causes local unemployment, runs contrary to actual data. He says that the top eight Indian IT companies accounted for 7,482, or 8.8 per cent, of the 85,000 fresh H-1B visa petitions approved for FY25, the cap for which was

reached in December 2024. American tech firms accounted for a large share. "It's an issue where there is a gap in the USA and it is being bridged by H-1B visas. And even if it is lesser numbers, they still have a critical role to play," Singh says.

IT industry veteran and former Infosys board member T.V. Mohandas Pai argues that the reason for America's digital domination of the world is the availability of high-quality human, physical and financial capital. Indians handle a large part of the technology software of all major American corporations. "The USA is not producing enough software people," says Pai. "India has been the force multiplier for it. Critics say we are underpaying Indians and taking away American jobs. It is totally wrong because you have to pay comparable wages as per American norms in every city. And comparable wages are quite high." The median salary for a person working in an IT company, as per USCIS is \$122,000. However, for a worker on an H-1B visa, various application fees and government filing fees add up to another \$35,000-50,000. That makes it cheaper to hire a local worker, provided one is available.

These are some of the challenges in American regulations on H-1B visas over the years. For example, one of the outstanding issues is that H-1B employees are required to make social security contributions but cannot avail themselves of its benefits because the rule requires a minimum stay of 10 years to be eligible and the H-1B visa does not allow the employee to stay beyond six years. This has figured in Indian-American joint statements for long, says Singh. Both sides have

acknowledged that it is a critical issue that needs to be resolved. “The USA is benefitting big time from H-1B. They pay taxes, they pay social security...and all the H-1B people don’t get the benefit of social security because they don’t stay long enough. It’s borne by the company which sends them,” says Pai.

Tech industry veterans generally feel India’s software services industry is currently better placed to withstand any onslaught on H-1B visas than ever before. Especially given that the technology sector worldwide is going through an evolutionary phase right now, accelerated focus being on digitisation with AI tools. “Digitisation today is in demand by everyone,” says K.S. Viswanathan, a former Nasscom vice president and now an independent technology consultant. “Post Covid, people realised that work can be done from any part of the world. Secondly, it’s not only the Fortune 100 or Fortune 500 companies...millions of small and medium-sized businesses are looking to digitise. And technology is not their core strength, or DNA.” No single country alone can supply the volume of digital tech talent this demands, he adds.

India is among the largest talent pools in the world, with over 2 million youngsters graduating from Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) courses every year. “For decades, the US has been the fountainhead of technology-driven innovation. Given the structural shifts taking place in technology, the political and business leadership in America has realised that it needs to attract the best and brightest talent more than ever before and also retain them with an accelerated path to permanent residency,” says Ramkumar Ra-

mamoorthy, partner at Catalinca, a growth advisory firm, and former chairman and MD, Cognizant India. “It’s also important to note that the changes being discussed—such as increasing minimum salary and annual maintenance costs—are largely to discourage the misuse of the programme by companies for labour arbitrage while sustaining the innovation quotient of the US.”

During Trump’s first term, when H-1B delays and denials rose sharply because of stricter regulations, top Indian IT companies ramped up local hiring in America. TCS in 2020 claimed to have hired around 20,000 locals over five years. Shivendra Singh cites a 2012-22 Nasscom survey to point out that Indian software companies spend about \$1.1 billion on upskilling only in the USA by working with nearly 225,000 employees. They also work with 130 colleges and universities across the USA, impacting 2.9 million students. “The objective behind this whole exercise is to hire locally,” says Singh.

Besides, Indian IT companies have tapped opportunities for ‘near-shoring’ by positioning employees in locations that are in the same time zones as their key markets, or which come under similar regulations. South America, for instance, has emerged as a key ‘near-shoring’ location to serve the USA along with the rest of the Americas. Alongside, India has emerged as a key destination for global capability centres (GCCs), which are captive units global MNCs manage.

### Opportunity in Crisis?

What experts are saying is that while India should fight to retain whatever advantages it gets from H-1B, IT companies should use the phase-out time to open a whole new vista for themselves. There is a

growing realisation that the pie that drove profitability of dozens of Indian IT companies, especially in terms of labour arbitrage, is shrinking rapidly and is likely to disappear soon. As one expert put it, “It is a wake-up call to up our game. Indians have largely migrated to the USA to get employment and join the mass slaving class. Few have become CEOs of top companies. Very few have created multi-billion dollars on their own as, say, a Musk has done. This could be the turning point for Indian companies to turn into giants themselves rather than play a supportive role.”

Back home, the impending crisis for Indians seeking greener pastures in America should push the Modi government to launch initiatives that can turn India into a global hub of innovation and technology, besides generating more manufacturing jobs. Rather than Indian students flocking to American universities for degrees, these universities could be given incentives to set up bases here. Also being cited as an example is how India lured multinational giant Apple with production-linked incentives to set up manufacturing units in India. Not only is it helping us earn revenue, with India projected to manufacture a third of all iPhones by 2027, it has also helped create jobs for over 100,000 Indians. India must also work on policies to become an alternative to China on the global value chain, which will increase American dependence on Indian manufacturing. Trump’s coming may well turn out to be another Covid moment for India—an opportunity to make a quantum leap in reforms and free ourselves from the shackles of dependence. □

<https://www.indiatoday.in/india-today-insight/story/h-1b-visa-uncle-doesnt-want-you-2669046-2025-01-23>

## Pursue Growth With A Paradigm Shift in Economic Thinking; Not By Destroying Natural Resources

Robert Reich, a former Labour Secretary in the Bill Clinton Administration, in an X post the other day mentioned “The 15 largest corporate beneficiaries of Trump’s tax cuts saved \$97.5 billion in taxes from 2018 and 2021. Instead of reinvesting their savings in their workers, these same companies have spent \$83.9 billion on stock buybacks and shareholder dividends.”

This tweet comes at a time when the State of Forest Report (IFSR-2023) released last week by the Forest Survey of India recorded an enhanced green cover in the country, increasing the area under forests by 1,455 sq km between 2021 and 2023. But no sooner was the report released with catchy headlines applauding the effort, a tweet by environment journalist Bahar Dutt made me sit back, and rethink. She mentioned to an excellent analysis by ecologist Madhusudan MD, who had earlier explained how tea gardens, coconut plantations and desert scrubs have been counted as forests to show a flattering growth.

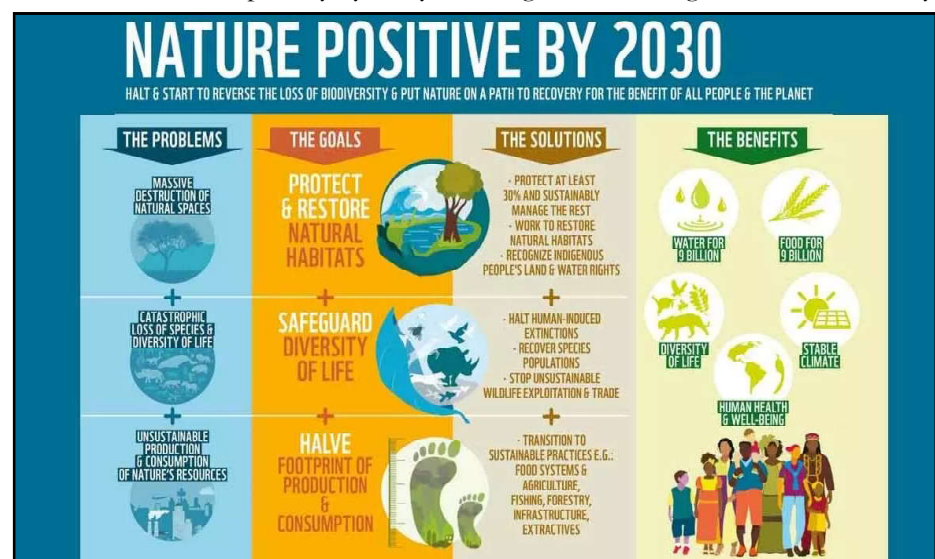
Now, before you ask me as to what is the connection between the two, I mean between the tax cuts that led to massive buy back of stocks in the US and the dwindling forest cover in India, let’s first try to understand more.

As I explored further, and looked into various other sharp analysis in the media, it was intriguing to observe how in two decades (between 2003 and 2023) and estimated 24,000 sq km of forests was lost (as an analysis pointed out), and yet we seem to be rejoicing.

In Chhattisgarh alone, the area under forests has come down by 19.13 per cent in the past two years. The merciless cutting down of trees in the forests of Hasdeo by companies engaged in mining, and the government support to ensure that the tribals are kept away by easily violating the human right norms, is certainly



*10 lakh trees felled for the Great Nicobar infra project is an environmental disaster that remains overlooked.*  
**Devinder Sharma**





painful. The axing of nearly 10 lakh trees for the mega-infra project in Great Nicobar is another environmental disaster that has received scant attention. And so on...

While I am not going into the merit of the arguments flagged, and considering this column is not examining how severe the loss in forest cover is, I leave it the reader to dig out more and draw their own conclusions.

Nevertheless, what caught my eye was a LinkedIn post that has been posted afresh. It talks of how a Swedish millionaire Johan Eliasch had spent \$14 million in 2005 to buy 400,000 acres of Amazon rainforest and that too from a logging company. He purchased the forests to save it from the axe.

As was rightly mentioned, Johan's philanthropic initiative was driven by the intent to protect and preserve forests. He utilised his economic gains to not only save the natural forests but also in the process safeguard vital ecosystems.

At a time when cutting down a tree is known to add to the country's GDP, the more the trees being felled the higher the economic growth, Johan realised that all his outcry and advocacy efforts to stop logging of the forests will not be of much help. He therefore found it prudent to invest in buyback of a part of the Amazon rainforests that was in any case ready to be destroyed. He can now look back to the great humanitarian task he has achieved by putting his money where it matters most.

Researching further, and wanting to know more of such initiatives in India, if any, I came across a 2020 Mongabay news report that talked of how a former civil servant and an avid photogra-

***Growth cannot be allowed to build on further destruction of natural resources. This will require a paradigm shift in economic thinking.***

pher Aditya Singh purchased 35 acres of land in 1998 in Bahadlav, adjacent to the famed Ranthambore Tiger Reserve. He bought the land over a period of time but has allowed growing it as a natural forest.

"I just bought this and did nothing to it except removing the invasive species. We allowed the land to recover and now after 20 years it has become a lush green patch of forest which is frequently visited by all kinds of animals, including tigers, leopards and wild boars, throughout the year," Singh was quoted in the news report. The green patch of jungle he created appears more or less like an oasis in the degraded landscape around.

Aditya Singh has also invested in reality in a buyback arrangement, but not in stock buyback but on a patch of degraded land that he has helped develop as a green forest over the years. This makes me wonder. If as per a report of the Swiss Bank UBS, the wealth of billionaires in India has risen by 42 per cent to reach a staggering combined wealth of \$905 billion in the last financial year alone, there is no dearth of Richie Rich nearer home.

Moreover, with change in taxation laws aimed at boosting shareholder value, Indian stock market

is seeing a notable increase in stock buy backs. A 2023 report shows that 49 companies have demonstrated a collective buyback of shares to the tune of Rs. 58,620 crore. Instead of looking at the fiscal gain accruing from stock buybacks, the policy effort should be to encourage a sizeable amount out of this shifting to forests buy back. After all, we need to save the only planet we have.

If only a handful of them begun to see buy back of forests as their humble contribution to save the planet, the world will begin to create a new class of philanthropists. Such a national (and for that matter a global trend) can only happen when the focus of growth should shift to economics in tune with nature preservation.

Growth cannot be allowed to build on further destruction of natural resources. This will require a paradigm shift in economic thinking.

Preserving ecosystem services of biological resources should then become a priority. An example needs to be drawn from Scotland, which has officially become the world's first 'rewilding' nation by restoring habitats and hoping to recover its nature over 30 per cent of land and oceans in the years to come. A similar movement to recover and restore nature in the biological wealth hotspots in India to begin with is absolutely essential.

Such a movement can only begin when instead of treating GDP as a report card, the governing elite begins to see growth in tandem with preserving and restoring the nature. The matrix of growth can be redesigned. □□

(The author is a noted food policy analyst and an expert on issues related to the agriculture sector. He writes on food, agriculture & hunger)  
<https://www.bhaskar.com/opinion/pursue-growth-with-a-paradigm-shift-in-economic-thinking-not-by-destroying-natural-resources-1346959>

# Can Chhattisgarh Hold The Potential For Natural Farming And Medicine Revolution?

It is no secret that industrial agriculture is killing our soils, water and putting chemicals in our food. Nevertheless, growing hunger and malnutrition is the favourite excuse for corporate lobbyists pushing agri-chemicals, conveniently discarding traditional agrarian wisdom and nature-based solutions to our food and medical problems. But where are these solutions alive? Which regions hold the potential to transform our paradigm?

So I embarked on a journey across Chhattisgarh from Balrampur to Bastar and in the second stretch Rajnandgaon to Jashpur covering many villages and districts like Sarguja, Bilaspur, Dantewada, Kanker, Jagdalpur, etc. All this was done to get a good understanding of agrarian practices from across the state. The Chhattisgarh region has the potential to bolster natural food and medicine systems.

Compared to other parts of the country, the farmers had unique farming practices rooted in traditional agriculture. For example growing tur dal on the boundaries of paddy fields, which boosted legumes and also fertilised the soil. Planting of trees along the boundaries of the farms, which are absent from most parts of the country.

Paddy, which is the main staple of many areas, one could find local varieties of vegetables planted in the fields. Kudrum (Thepa aka Lakhada) is a long thin plant with sour pinkish petals, which are an excellent source of calcium and antioxidants is a good example. The state is also home to a huge variety of saags, which grew seasonally and were super nutritious.

There were also various types of edible mushrooms growing in the state, which have been untapped. The tribal wisdom of the area is also mostly unex-



*The Chhattisgarh region has the potential to bolster natural food and medicine systems.*

**Indra Shekhar Singh**



plored. The elders within these communities possessed great knowledge of trees and plants from the forest, which could revolutionise medicine and bring relief to millions of Indians.

But not all is well in paradise. There are many steps that can be taken by the government to improve the agrarian situation and perhaps take a green leap in agriculture.

The first crisis is the push for paddy through the public procurement system. The government of Chhattisgarh has aggressively pushed for procurement of paddy and wheat. Procurement centres and paddy-filled gunny bags could be seen in even the remotest part of the state. This also provides a steady cash income to the farmers, but it has one major drawback - the farmers in many areas are ditching their traditional crops like millets - kodo, Kutki and native paddy, for industrial varieties of paddy and wheat, is destroying agrarian biodiversity in some parts. Keep in mind that Chhattisgarh is home to numerous varieties of crops and vegetables, which ought to be conserved as part of our national heritage.

Taking a leap into medicine now, elders and traditional healers in various tribal communities have for centuries conserved, practised and taught their knowledge of plants and trees to younger members of their communities. But this tradition is being broken, first because of the disappearance and chopping down of forests and second because the younger generation is not able to carry forward this knowledge due to "modern industrial" conditions.

Even the native medical plants are not growing well due to

the changing climate and loss of nature. Here again, we have to remember that in our ancient wisdom food was our medicine, and with the loss of native diets and habitats, healing plants and their uses are also being lost. The government's push for industrial agriculture through public procurement and subsidies for agri chemicals is encouraging the cutting of more forests and converting them into farms. And, one is not to blame the BJP or the Congress, the state mechanism of the Chhattisgarh over the years has pushed this policy.

### The way out

To think of solutions, our policymakers only need to swerve towards ecology to harness the vast potential of the state. The first step is to convert at least two blocks in each district into organic farming areas which are backed by transitional financial incentives for a three-year period and with guaranteed procurement of native crops like millets, paddy, etc. These can be procured and used in the state food schemes or even sold to other states or in the private markets afterwards.

The governments need to also introduce integrated agrarian systems like fishery with agriculture or introduction of goat, poultry or milk operations where possible. Because the animals will provide the manure for the organic farms in the district. Meat consumption is high in Chhattisgarh, hence local poultry like chicken or turkey and goat farms will have ready buyers.

Even fisheries have a big potential in the state. Clusters should promote a mixture of animals, poultry, fisheries and organic farmers so the cash incomes, soils and water could all improve, with lim-

ited reliance on the industrial markets. The agri-chemical subsidies should be diverted to creating these self-sustaining clusters.

Now on the traditional medicine side, Chhattisgarh has the potential to be the big hub of ayurvedic plants production. The state still has ample forests and a lesser density of population. The government needs to active its medical plants department and create a plan for the state paying special attention to the local agri-climates.

Each district can provide numerous medicinal plants from the farmers' fields and from the forests. Where possible, the government needs to create a special policy for Ayurvedic Vatikas, where the healing plants are seeded in the forest and the local community is empowered to sustainably collect them from the forests. This way conservation of forests will be economically advantageous for the communities, and deforestation will lessen. Barren lands and formerly forested areas can be forested again under this program.

The final step is the creation of special jobs across the state for the collection of tribal medicinal knowledge. Family members of recognised healers should be given ten-year jobs to collect medicinal knowledge and create traditional knowledge libraries for their communities and for the state.

Through this no pharmaceutical companies can patent their plants and healing knowledge will be available to the world also. The Biodiversity Act already has provisions for the creation of biodiversity committees at the village and block levels. The government's task is to implement the Act. □□

<https://www.evrbharat.com/en/opinion/can-chhattisgarh-hold-the-potential-for-natural-farming-and-medicine-revolution-en24122801701>



# Economic Perspective of The Maha Kumbh

The Prayagraj is set to host the Maha Kumbh 2025, a unique event that will commence on 13 January 2025 and culminate on 26 February 2025. The Maha Kumbh defies linguistic, regional, caste, class, and even gender expression. It also transcends the boundaries of a typical mega event, assembly line event, or project management event.

The Maha Kumbh operates on a unique economic model that defies the standard input and output measures. Unlike assembly lines and project management, where goods or services can be standardized and costs and revenues forecasted, the Kumbh transcends these concepts. The twentieth-century methods of measuring work, output, and financial accounts regarding the Kumbh are still in progress. It is not an event that can be forced to follow a standard operating procedure.

The world's manufacturers, financial leaders, and technological leaders wonder why Bharat is successful in Kumbh but not so successful in the assembly line or financial engineering domain. This spiritual asset can't be bought by money, created by technology, or executed anywhere else by someone else. It can't be replicated even if significant data-driven machine learning, artificial intelligence, or megastructures are engaged. Kumbh is within Santan and not without Sanatan.

Even the most advanced tools of machine learning, artificial intelligence, and the Internet of Things cannot capture the essence of the Maha Kumbh. They cannot design a model to replicate this unique event on the banks of the River Thames in London, the River Hudson in New York, or any other river in any other city. The Kumbh, along with Maha Kumbh and the Ardha Kumbh, is a treasure that we hold on the banks of the River Ganga-Yamuna-Saraswati, i.e., Triveni at Prayagraj, on the bank of River Kshipra, at Ujjain, on the bank of River Ganga at Haridwar, and on the bank of river Godavari at Nashik.

It is beyond an economic event, a social gathering event, or a family festival such as Disneyland Park. Mega events, such as sports events, the World Cup, other festivals like food festivals or literature festivals, economic forums, and others, can be organized by a single organizing committee. The composition of Kumbh is eternal. When there was no government, it was still performed. Kumbh is a performance and can't be organized mechanically. The stakeholders, on their own, celebrate it and accomplish it. Many who participated didn't even know the route on the days without Google Maps, without intent, and without the system of advanced bookings. The government is a facilitator, not a key player, in this spiritual performance. It had spiritual, social, and economic value then, and so it is today.

Revenue generation and Goods and Services Tax (GST) collection can be areas of interest for the government's exchequer.

The story of temple economics is well-acknowledged. The revenue generation capability of the Kumbh can be understood by the fact that Mughal and British administrators had imposed taxes on Kumbh pilgrimages. It has been predicted by a few media houses that Ayodhya generated more GST than the Nation-



*The Maha-Kumbh and Sanatan are not because of one or few political parties; it's not because of one or few ideologies; it is not because of this or that government; a variety of foreign aggressors couldn't destroy it spread over multiple years in the last thousand years.*

**Alok Singh**



al Capital Region (NCR) constituent cities of Noida and Ghaziabad in December 2024 for Uttar Pradesh. The GST monthly data is published state-wise in the public domain. City-wise data is usually not available in the public domain. The GST collection at Prayagraj Maha Kumbh of 2025 will surprise all.

The volume of jobs it creates, the value of culture and consumption it preserves, and the multiplier effect on various sectors of the contemporary world like mobility, hospitality, utilities, internet, furnishes, food, music, television, and many more is a problematic assignment to compute. Mobility, including road, rail, water, and air, and the hospitality sector, including hotels, tents, cottages, dormitories, and others, are already seeing a massive surge in passenger and customer volume and prices.

The visitors are pilgrims first and later anything else like passengers and customers. The food and water sector, like restaurants, roadside eateries, langar, and even the business of packaged food industry, keeps an eye on this Kumbh. It is originally a spiritual journey though the contemporary western world and their indigenous supporters might treat it as an opportunity to milk revenue. It reflects that all our religious and spiritual practices have an economic domain.

This Kumbh is witnessing a fullhouse in the first week for the remaining one and a half months. Uttar Pradesh's state gross domestic product (SGDP) might place it in an advantageous position in this financial year itself.

A few years ago, the general perception was that the religious pilgrims were for the middle and lower class. However, there is active participation by the aviation industry, luxury cottages, and curious tents on offer, as well as the involvement of the world's whose and who tells a different story. The high-end offers are fully booked, whether for aviation tickets or luxury, and even comfortable accommodation at Prayagraj. The regular hotels near the Prayagraj Junction have also raised their price more than four to ten times for this Maha Kumbh, and despite that, they are complete with advanced bookings for the whole of the Kumbh days.

The sants, aghoris, advaityas, sadhus, akharas, kalpawasis, individuals, families, extended families, and any other label, or any other group, all are witnessing a divine at Prayagraj this Kumbh.

The facilitator state government has invested 7000 crores to establish a tent city of 4000 hectares for one and a half months. The projection of 45 crore pilgrims visiting Maha Kumbh in 45 days is set to contribute 4 lakh crores to the GDP of Uttar Pradesh. If the number of pilgrims rises to 80 crore, the GDP should also see a matching rise. These forecasts are based on the Ardh-Kumbh that happened in Prayagraj in 2019. The measuring scale of GDP is restricted to the

organized sector, and GST collection is a proxy for this measurement. The UPI transaction is another proxy to realize the transactions happening from Maha Kumbh to Prayagraj and extrapolate the GDP effects to Ayodhya and Kashi.

Many unmeasurable and unorganized, as well as secret donations (secret donations are prioritized in Sanatan; Gupt-Dan is Maha-Dan) contribute directly, indirectly, long-term, medium-term, and short-term to the success of Kumbh and growth story and the state's GDP. Whatever, the Kumbh is always a success.

Measuring the exact monetary output of Maha-Kumbh is beyond the scope of any economic-statistical framework. The social awareness that leads to higher participation of the upper class in Maha-Kumbh is due to the government's efforts to support infrastructure like mobility and hospitality, and its cascading effects benefit the lower class and local class. This arrangement is a win-win situation for all. The upper class, which earlier faced troubles, whatever the reason, is the most satisfied group in this Maha-Kumbh. The struggling class always prioritized their roots irrespective of whether the government did or didn't do their task.

The Maha-Kumbh and Sanatan are not because of one or few political parties; it's not because of one or few ideologies; it is not because of this or that government; a variety of foreign aggressors couldn't destroy it spread over multiple years in the last thousand years.

It reflects our commitment to "Swavalamban," "Swadeshi," and greater "Swa." □

*(Alok Singh has a doctorate in management from the Indian Institute of Management Indore and promoter of Transition Research Consultancy for Policy and Management.)*

(Story of Centurion RSS)

## “Sangh” thy name itself, is enough - 2

[to be continued previous issue ...]

### Expansion to Consolidate and to Serve

Though seems to slow, but steady progress attracted the attention of countrymen. Either during War or during famine, flood etc., swayamsevakas' are always in the forefront. Thus with relentless base work, able to catch the attention the then Prime Minister Shri Nehru. Appreciating the great work done by my swayamsevakas during China war in 1962, Shri Nehru invited my swayamsevakas to participate in the Republic Day parade celebration in 1963. My growth was to serve the people and to reach the last person. Under the guidance of Shri Guruji, my swayamsevakas rose to the challenge and bravely faced all these adversities stoically. Due to his efforts I was able to spread my wings across the country (Servavyapi), to reach all sects (Servasparshi) and growing strength by strength, attracted the attention of one and all including great leaders of Hindu society. Specially, in politics, earlier who were opposing my ideology were joined me. Our swayamsevakas with the spirit of selfless service for the betterment of society, started organizations in all walks of life/ society. They include, ABVP for students, BMS for Labuor and industrial relations, Vanavasi Kalyana Ashrama to serve Tribal's and forest dwellers, Bharatiya jana Sangh (now BJP) in politics, Viswa Hindu Parishad in religious areas and so on. Now a days like a Baniyan tree branches themselves grown so big that many a times, general public forget that they are a part of a huge banyan tree. However, these organizations, in spite of their huge growth and independent status in society, never forgot that that they were a undivided part of Sangh, the big family is live example of my uniqueness.

Shri Balasaheb Degras (5<sup>th</sup> June 1973 to March 1994) was the successor to Shri Guruji as the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sarasanghachalk. He was from Nagpur and also long asso-



*Join me. I warmly welcome and invite you all nationalist men and women to join me either directly to Sangh or to any of the associated organizations to serve the country in any manner which suits your taste. Let us grow together by serving the nation.*

**Mahadevayya  
Karadalli**





ciate of Dr. Hedgewar. He gave a lot of emphasis on spreading the message that Na Hindu Patito Bhavet, “No Hindu would be considered as fallen, downtrodden and untouchable”. He took Sangha to the poorest, deprived sections of Hindu society. Once again I became the victim of dictatorial action of Mrs. Gandhi, who declared Emergency just to save her position. But my Swayamsevak took the lead to fought back very strongly and sustained all suffering, oppressions in a brave manner and ensured that this Dictatorial force was defeated democratically.

### Revival of Hindu awareness

The decade of 80s was the glorious decade of Hindu awareness. Mass movements conducted throughout country to liberate Ramajanma bhoomi. It was also a process of Hindutva consciousness and consolidation within Hindu society. This successfully culminated in the inauguration of great, glorious new Rama Mandir/Rastra Mandir in Jan 2024 i.e just a few months before entering into Centenary year. The successors to Shri Deoras i.e., Prof Rajendra Sinha Ji (March 1994 – March 2000), Shri K.S. Sudarshan (March 2000 to March 2009) and the Present Saranghachalak Shri Mohan Bhagavat (March 2009) continued the predecessors tradition with yuganukul Karya paddati. Success, Recognition, acceptance are order of the day. People from all walks of life attracted by me. The Unity message moved ahead in a big way to every nook and corner of the country and also to all sections of Hindu society.

### Vichar Parivar

Swayamsevak are active in many areas covering all aspects of

***Swayamsevak are active in many areas covering all aspects of society. Sangh, accepted each and every Bharatiya for inclusive development including the groups, sects, language, religioj, region and political affiliation.***

society. Sangh, accepted each and every Bharatiya for inclusive development including the groups, sects, language, religioj, region and political affiliation. Even my opponents and worst critics, who are envious of my grand successes have grudgingly begun to accept me. Thus Sangh after passing the stages of negligence, opposition and now the stage of acceptance by majority. I am also proud of the fact that various independent organizations which are also interdependent and who are all part of my ideological family, such as ABVP, VHP, BMS, Vidya Bharati, Bharatiya Kisana Sangha, Vanavasi Kalyan Ashrama, Swadeshi Jagaran Manch etc., have become No. 1 leaders in their respective areas varied social areas of work place.

There are innumerable NGOs managed by Swayamsevakas' working in the areas of Social Harmony, spread of knowledge and science, Cow protection, Save Environment, Swadeshi (Atma Nirbara), up keeping family culture, (Kutumba Prabodhan), various Seva activities etc., Swayamsevak have serving the society in all aspects in all times. Sangh Swayamsevakas' with Nation First thought is in always in forefront at difficult

times such as wars, floods, famine etc., with a view “Serving a human being is equal to serving the god”. Hence, I have earned the apt nickname RSS “Ready for selfless service”. Sangh, want to make it clear that my progress and expansion, is only and only for the sake of our great beloved Hindu Unity and for Strong Nation and not to oppose any body. Sangh is to protect our nation's territorial integrity, to ensure self-reliance and Swatantra, Swalambi and Swabhimani life for its citizen through democratic means and to annihilate those anti-India forces which would like to break and destroy India. Therefore, Sangha will not take rest until my beloved Motherland Bharat regain its past glory and becomes Viswa Guru once again. Why are you Late? Why still be an onlooker from outside? Join me. I warmly welcome and invite you all nationalist men and women to join me either directly to Sangh or to any of the associated organizations to serve the country in any manner which suits your taste. Let us grow together by serving the nation.

Now do you still want to know my official name! My name is Rastreeya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). You with your friends are also welcome to join RSS website. And also either your area's nearest Shakha or any of our associate organizations which suits to your thoughts to work in their respective areas. Ultimately to contribute for Samagra Vikas (value added development and overall development) of our country, beloved Bharatmata and Hindu society.

***Loka Samasta Sukhino Bhavanti.*** Bharat Mata ki Jai. (Victory to Bharat Mata) □□

(Writer: Thinker on Rashtriya, Swadeshi and Sanskriti subjects)

# Trump's tariff talk will target the farm sector

During the two months since Donald Trump's decisive victory at the hustings, the incoming administration has repeatedly hinted at the disruptions the global economy will have to face due to recalibration of the United States (US)'s policies vis-à-vis its major partners. Within weeks of being assured of a second term as the US president, Trump announced his decision to increase tariffs on imports from Canada, China, and Mexico immediately after his inauguration. India escaped being among the targeted countries even though the President-elect had consistently railed against India's relatively higher tariffs, labelling India as the "tariff king". However, not too long after this, Trump announced that his administration would impose "reciprocal tariffs" on India arguing, "[I]f they tax us, we tax them the same amount. They tax us. We tax them. And they tax us. Almost in all cases, they're taxing us, and we haven't been taxing them". He elaborated in typical Trump fashion, "If they want to charge us, that's fine, but we're going to charge them the same thing". Trump's commerce secretary pick, Howard Lutnick, emphasised that "reciprocity" is something that is going to be a key topic for the Trump administration. This intent of the incoming administration was hardly surprising as the President-elect had underlined on his campaign trail that "the most important element of [his] plan to make America extraordinarily wealthy again is reciprocity".

How will the Trump administration's pen- chant for "reciprocity", a policy that was practised by the mercantilists in the Middle Ages, affect the future of India-US trade relations? The imposition of higher tariffs could significantly impact India's



*Washington is likely to ask Delhi to reduce tariffs on US farm products. India needs to protect its farm sector to ensure food security and protect livelihoods.*  
**Biswajit Dhar**



exports to its largest trading partner, which, for the first time, is accounting for - 19% of India's total exports in the current fiscal.

Facing the highest risk of being targeted by the new American administration's policy of "reciprocity" is India's agriculture. There are two reasons for this. One, the US is the world's largest exporter of agricultural commodities, valued at \$179 billion in 2023. And two, the share of agricultural products in India's imports from the US has been just 3-4% in recent years. Successive administrations have repeatedly highlighted India's low share in the US's agricultural exports and have urged the Indian government to improve market-access opportunities through a slew of measures, including the reduction of tariffs.

The US department of agriculture (USDA) has identified cotton, dairy products, ethanol, fresh fruit, forest products, processed food and beverages, pulses, and tree nuts as the top agricultural products having substantial prospects for US exporters in India. The department argues that India impedes agricultural trade with high tariffs and non-tariff barriers. India applies tariffs ranging between 30-40% on most agricultural and consumer-ready food products and retains the flexibility of raising agricultural tariffs to as high as 150% without violating its commitments to the World Trade Organization (WTO). The USDA also contends that the Indian government regularly enacts sanitary and phytosanitary measures and other non-tariff barriers, particularly in the biotechnology space, that are not based on science - or risk-based approaches.

India has routinely defended its relatively high tariffs in agricul-

ture stating that it needs to provide adequate levels of protection to its farming communities from the highly subsidised products dumped by producers in advanced countries, including the US. In this context, it must be pointed out that most agricultural producers in the US do not need tariff protection as high doses of subsidies allow them to sell their products below international prices. Thus, the US can always boast of not imposing tariffs on agricultural products while it facilitates the dumping of agricultural products by its producers in the global market.

Moreover, India has argued that its agriculture is largely aimed at meeting the food security needs of the country's population, which was diametrically opposite to the objectives of a market-oriented US agriculture. Lowering tariffs and exposing India's small and marginal farmer-dominated agriculture to US farm products would put at risk not only the hard-earned domestic food security but also a significant share of livelihoods dependent on agriculture.

Trump's first term in office was marked by the beginning of sustained pressure on India's agricultural subsidies. Along with several agricultural exporting countries, the US has been arguing since 2018 that the level of subsidies India provides to its major staples, rice, and wheat, far exceed the level it is permitted to under WTO rules. Questioning India's agricultural subsidies continued during the Biden presidency as Congressmen joined the fray. Early last year, Senator on Finance, insisted that India's wheat subsidies Ron Wyden, chairman of the Senate Committee were distorting prices and directly hurting Amer-

ican farmers who were unable to compete in the Asian market. Under these testing circumstances, the Indian government would have to maintain its resolve to protect the interests of the country's farmers, especially after the second Trump administration takes charge in Washington.

Much like his antipathy for tariffs, Trump has been deeply resentful of foreign workers entering the US with H-1B visas. In 2017, as president, he signed an executive order, the Buy American and Hire American Executive Order seeking to create higher wages and employment rates for US workers, ostensibly to protect their economic interests by rigorously enforcing and administering the immigration laws. This resulted in increased scrutiny of H-1B visa applications with rejection rates reaching an all-time high of 24% in 2018. As a presidential candidate last year, Trump sounded equally hawkish on the immigration issue, receiving considerable support from his conservative base.

However, after Trump chose tech entrepreneurs Elon Musk and Vivek Ramaswamy to join his cabinet, the President-elect's views on the presence of foreign workers in the US seem to have changed significantly. "We need smart people in our country", he opined, "we need a lot of people coming in". Though Trump's change of heart has split the Republicans, this augury will please India as around 72% of H-1B visas were issued to its nationals during 2022-23. Such a change of heart or even a slight relaxing of his tariff-reciprocity stance, however, looks doubtful. □□

*Biswajit Dhar is distinguished professor, Council for Social Development.*

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/opinion/trumps-tariff-talk-will-target-the-farm-sector-101737126188231.html>

# Story of Narendra Modi Gifting 7.5 Carat Green Diamond to Mrs Biden

Recently, a controversy started, when, evaluating the annual audit published by the US State Department on January 2, 2025, the Associated Press reported that the most valuable item received by First Lady Jill Biden was a beautiful 7.5-carat (green) diamond, from Prime Minister Narendra Modi, worth US \$ 20,000. Some people on social media are raising concerns about what was the need to give such an expensive gift by the Prime Minister a developing country like India. Although the President and his wife had received many gifts, but, these were far less valuable than the luxurious and precious gift of \$20,000 diamond given by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. It is worth noting that the 7.5 carat lab grown (green) diamond was presented as a symbol of 75 years of India's independence.

PM Modi presented this diamond in a box made of paper pulp and carved by skilled Kashmiri artisans. It is worth noting that the diamond presented by PM Modi has been kept for official use in the East Wing of the White House, while other gifts received by Joe and Jill Biden have been sent to the archives. 'Das Dinam' were also presented to 81-year-old Joe Biden, who has seen 80 full moons in his life, including 10 items as a token of felicitation. Apart from many other gifts, a copper plate (Tamra Patra) bearing a shloka from Uttar Pradesh was also presented to him.

We need to know that India has been a major exporter of finished diamonds and a major importer of rough diamonds. We have a large diamond cutting industry which has been employing about 1.3 million people. Most of the diamond industry is in Gujarat, and that too around Surat. In 2015, the total export of finished diamonds was about \$23.2 billion. Due to some reasons, it has decreased in the last few years. By 2023, it has shrunk to only \$18.5 billion. Everyone wants to wear diamonds, but the increasing price of diamonds comes in way of people's aspirations. India imports rough diamonds and Russia, Botswana, Canada, Angola and .....are some of the leading countries exporting natural raw diamonds. In recent times, laboratories/factories have also started producing diamonds that look similar to natural diamonds, which is popularly called lab grown diamonds. These lab grown diamonds are so similar to the natural diamonds that not only a common man, even a knowledgeable and experienced person cannot differentiate between natural and lab grown diamonds.

We need to know that India has been a major exporter of finished diamonds, but we do only the value addition, after importing raw natural diamonds, from Russia and other countries. We have a large diamond cutting industry which has been employing about 1.3 million people. Most of the diamond industries are in Gujarat, and that too around Surat. In 2015, the total export of finished diamonds was about \$23.2 billion. Due to some reasons, it has decreased in the last few years. In 2023, it has remained only \$18.5 billion. Everyone wants to wear diamonds, but the increasing price of diamonds is hindering people's demand. In

*All the leaders of the country should never let go the opportunity of their foreign trips and the opportunity of welcoming foreign guests to showcase our rich heritage and the excellence of the items made in our country. This in essence would be an expression of their patriotism and their duty towards the country.*

**Swadeshi Samvad**

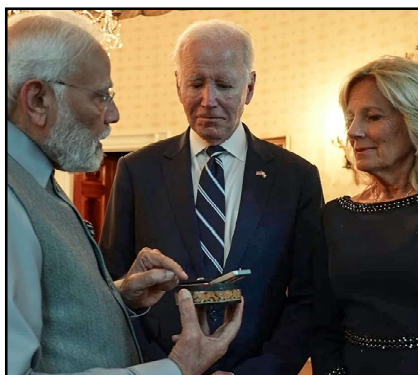


recent times, laboratories/factories have started producing diamonds that look similar to natural diamonds, which is popularly called 'lab grown diamonds'. These lab grown diamonds are so similar to natural diamonds that not only a common man but even a knowledgeable person cannot differentiate between natural and lab grown diamonds.

Due to the increasing popularity of lab grown diamonds, the demand for natural diamonds is getting affected globally. The supply of raw natural diamonds has also been disrupted due to the Russia-Ukraine war. Due to many other reasons also, the diamond industry has been facing a huge crisis, and a large number of companies are closing down or are on the verge of closing down.

It is important that the market for lab grown diamonds expands. Although lab grown diamonds are much cheaper (usually 80 percent cheaper) than natural diamonds, given their characteristics, there is a lot of potential in expanding its market. India's lab grown diamond industry is growing rapidly and its small and big production centers are developing in Gujarat, Rajasthan and other parts of the country.

It has to be understood that ever since Narendra Modi gifted a 7.5 carat lab-grown diamond to Mrs. Biden, awareness about lab-grown diamonds has increased significantly. Already, its export from India has been growing at the rate of 55 percent per year. Today India is able to supply 15 percent of the demand for lab-grown diamonds, today when India supplies 29 percent of the world's jewellery, there is immense potential for the demand for lab-grown diamonds to increase.



### What is the price of a 7.5 carat green diamond in India?

A 7.5 carat green diamond may cost \$20,000 in the US, but in India its price ranges between Rs 2 lakh i.e. \$2,500 and Rs 5 lakh i.e. \$6,000. Today, 15 lakh carats of green diamonds are being produced in India. Although there was a slight decrease in the export of green diamonds in the year 2023-24, it still remained more than \$1.4 billion. A huge increase in the export of green diamonds was recorded in the previous years. It is believed that in the next 5 years, the export of green diamonds can increase up to Rs 40,000 crore.

While the market for natural diamonds has been shrinking in the last few years, and the popularity of lab-grown green diamonds is increasing in leaps and bounds, the gift of 7.5 carat green diamond to Mrs. Biden by the Prime Minister has helped creating awareness about lab grown diamonds. First when the Prime Minister tweeted about it and the news broadcasted in the media, more people came to know about lab-grown diamonds. Now when controversy arose on this topic in the media, it may be considered as a blessing in disguise. Perhaps very few people knew that lab-grown diamonds look similar to natural diamonds and have the same four qualities as natural diamonds - col-

or, clarity, cut and carat (weight). It is possible that after this controversy, the popularity of green diamonds export from India may increase even more.

Other gifts given by Prime Minister Modi are also no less interesting. In the year 2015, Prime Minister Modi gifted a hand-woven Banarasi silk saree to the First Lady Michael Obama, in which gold and silver threads were used and took three months for the artisans to make. It can be understood that this increased the awareness about Indian sarees, especially Banarasi sarees, at the global level. Similarly, in 2017, the Prime Minister presented hand-woven shawls from Jammu-Kashmir and Himachal to first lady Mrs. Melania Trump, which are considered the best in India. Earlier in 2015, the famous Darjeeling tea was presented to Queen Elizabeth II of England. Every time, when the gifts is given by the Prime Minister to the global leaders it either has a hidden message or it highlights the importance of India's precious heritage, or India's economic interest. Prime Minister Modi has tried to present the best items made by our artisans, which has been popular in the world for centuries, in a new style to the world. It is worth noting that the President of Cuba, Fidel Castro, has been known as a salesman of cigars made in his country.

It can be said that all the leaders of the country should never let go the opportunity of their foreign trips and the opportunity of welcoming foreign guests to showcase our rich heritage and the excellence of the items made in our country. This in essence would be an expression of their patriotism and their duty towards the country. □□

# Turbulence awaits India in Trump zone

During the US presidential election campaign, the commentariat in India was generally of the opinion that a second Trump presidency would be beneficial for India. Much hope was invested in the so-called personal chemistry and bonhomie between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Donald Trump. As events have unfolded over the past few weeks, it would appear that New Delhi now awaits Trump a bit nervously.

Much has been made of Trump's early invitation to Chinese President Xi Jinping to attend his inauguration. It took some diplomatic effort on External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar's part to ensure that at least he received an invitation. More worrying, however, are Trump's remarks about trade, tariffs and immigration. Along with the rest of the world, India is getting prepared for a period of turbulence in the bilateral relationship as well as in global geopolitics.

Evan Feigenbaum, vice-president of Washington DC-based think tank Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and a former member of the George W Bush administration, warns that Asian governments and markets should be prepared for Trump-induced turbulence. "Geopolitically, Asian governments, firms and especially markets should prepare to face a whirlwind of strategic turbulence," says Feigenbaum.

Jaishankar's last air dash to Washington helped get the outgoing national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, to New Delhi. That visit sought to inject new energy into a sagging affair. During his proposed visit to Washington DC this weekend, the foreign minister will seek to inject even more energy into the relationship. Such activism draws attention to the concern with anticipated turbulence.



*There is uncertainty over whether his MAGA push will help Make India Great Again.*  
**Sanjaya Baru**



In recent weeks, many within the ruling establishment in India have complained about the anti-India stratagems of the so-called American 'deep state', including influential individuals like George Soros. This kind of talk emanating from within the Sangh Parivar betrays nervousness in New Delhi despite the confidence exuded by diplomats and officials. At least one reason for this would be the uncertainty about the answer to a simple question — will MAGA help MIGA?

Trump's promise for his second presidency is primarily to Make America Great Again (MAGA). Modi's promise to India has been MIGA — Make India Great Again. In the past, especially in the early years of the US-India strategic partnership during the tenures of President George W Bush and Prime Ministers Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh, the template was that it would be in US interest to help India's rise. It is this view, especially on the part of President Bush and his advisers that facilitated the US-India civil nuclear agreement. This view had to contend with doubts within the American establishment as to where India stood on matters of interest to the US. Doubts regarding the latter were renewed after India played footsie with Vladimir Putin following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

In the United States, three schools of thought contend with each other on the US-India relationship. These can be classified as ideological, realist and transactional. The ideological school, never a decisive voice, has always placed great emphasis on the fact that India is a democracy and that its rise as a plural democracy is in the interests of the US. The West fought Soviet com-

***Trump's promise for his second presidency is primarily to Make America Great Again (MAGA). Modi's promise to India has been MIGA — Make India Great Again.***

munism during the Cold War and now responds to Chinese authoritarianism. In both battles, the empowerment of a democratic India was viewed as a global public good.

The realist view situates US-India relations within a global balance of power perspective that sees a stronger India as a helpful balancer against an aggressive and assertive China, at least within Asia. The fact is that US-India ties have improved over the past two decades against the backdrop of China's rise.

Hence, both the ideological and the realist views have contributed to an improvement in US-India relations, with the American establishment viewing India's rise as being in its own interest and a positive development in itself. Making India Great Again suited US interests as long as India was viewed as an emerging counterforce to China.

By contrast, the purely transactional view that Trump opted for during his first tenure has insistently asked the question, 'what's in it for me?' Entering his second term Trump now asks that question with renewed vigour and force and the question is asked of the world as a whole, India included.

The rise of transactionalism over realism means India has to show what it can do to MAGA for the US to do something to MIGA. Even though such transactionalism is associated with the first Trump presidency, it found new takers within the Biden administration after India went along with Russia in the wake of the Ukraine war. A growing number of officials within the Biden administration also became transactional and kept ticking off points as to what India was doing for or against US interests. Expect more of that going forward.

Faced with such transactionalism, it would seem, India has hedged its bets by stabilising relations with both Russia and China. Some analysts have expressed the hope that Trump may improve relations with Russia and that would in turn enable India to retain that relationship while continuing to deal with China. Whatever the facts, the point is that it will take time before some stability returns to the US-India relationship. Indeed, this would be true even for US relations with key allies and neighbours. Everyone is waiting and watching to see how much of Trumpism is bluff and bluster and how much he means business.

Even as India hopes to stabilise and improve its relationship with the US, it has to be prepared for the anticipated turbulence. After all, Trump's basic and fundamental policy objective will remain America First. The US is determined to retain its dominant global position, secure control over the trans-Atlantic alliance and ensure that allies spend more on their defence so that it can focus its resources on making its own economy more globally competitive and dominant. □□

<https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/comment/turbulence-awaits-india-in-trump-zone/>

## Matallurgy in Ancient India (Part-4)



*Statues of Nataraja and Vishnu were cast during the reign of the imperial Chola dynasty (200–1279) in the 9th century.*

**Prof. Nandini Sinha Kapur**

The Rasaratna Samuccaya (16th century CE) explains the existence of two types of ores for zinc metal, one of which is ideal for metal extraction while the other is used for medicinal purpose. Indian metallurgy under the Mughal emperor Akbar (reign: 1556–1605) produced excellent small firearms. Gommans (2002) holds that Mughal handguns were probably stronger and more accurate than their European counterparts. Srivastava and Alam (2008) comment on Indian coinage of the Mughal Empire (established: April 21, 1526 - ended: September 21, 1857) during Akbar's regime.

Akbar reformed Mughal currency to make it one of the best known of its time. The new regime possessed a fully functioning trimetallic (silver, copper, and gold) currency, with an open minting system in which anyone willing to pay the minting charges could bring metal or old or foreign coin to the mint and have it struck. All monetary exchanges were, however, expressed in copper coins in Akbar's time. In the 17th century, following the silver influx from the New World, silver rupee with new fractional denominations replaced the copper coin as a common medium of circulation. Akbar's aim was to establish a uniform coinage throughout his empire; some coins of the old regime and regional kingdoms also continued.

Statues of Nataraja and Vishnu were cast during the reign of the imperial Chola dynasty (200–1279) in the 9th century. The casting could involve a mixture of five metals: copper, zinc, tin, gold, and silver. Considered great feat in metallurgy, the hollow, Seamless, celestial globe was invented in Kashmir by Ali Kashmiri ibn Luqman in 998 AH (1589-90 CE), and twenty other such globes were later produced in Lahore and Kashmir during the Mughal Empire. These Indian metallurgists pioneered the method of lost-wax casting, and disguised plugs, in order to produce these globes.

### Native arms production

The first iron-cased and metal-cylinder rockets (Mysorean rockets) were developed by the Mysorean army of the South Indian Kingdom of Mysore in the 1780s. The Mysoreans successfully used these iron-cased rockets against the Presidency armies of the East India Company during the Anglo-Mysore Wars.

6 Periods of Chemistry in Ancient And Medieval India History		
Period	Developments and Contributions	Key Figures
Indus Valley Civilization (2600–1900 BCE)	Early metallurgical knowledge; use of metal alloys like bronze.	Not recorded
Vedic period (1500–600 BCE)	Discovery of atomic theory; conceptualisation of five basic elements– earth, air, fire, water, and ether.	Maharishi Kanada
Later Vedic era & the age of the Buddha (600–200 BCE)	Further exploration of atomic theory; concept of the connection between life and the universe (cosmology).	Pakudha Kaccâyana
Classical Hinduism (200 BCE–1100 CE)	Development of alchemy; early research of medicinal plants and healing substances; creation of “rasashastra” – a branch of Ayurveda about minerals and metals.	Nagarjuna
Medieval India (1100–1700 CE)	Advancements in medicinal chemistry and metallurgy; creation of standardized procedures for medicinal chemistry.	Raseshwar
Mughal and British Era (1700–1947 CE)	Evolution and influence of Indian chemistry on western world; introduction of European chemical knowledge into India.	Acharya Prafulla Chandra Ray



## History of Chemistry in Ancient And Medieval India: Overview

The history of chemistry in ancient and medieval India is a significant part of the world's scientific legacy. Indian chemists made significant contributions, including the development of metallurgy, medicines, and the concept of zero and the decimal system. Advancements in Indian chemistry also had significant economic implications, like the production of dyes, spices, and steel. Chemistry in ancient and medieval India was deeply intertwined with other branches of science like alchemy, medicine, and botany. The Vedic period marked the beginning of chemistry in India, with the Rigveda mentioning the use of metals and minerals.

The Ayurvedic system of medicine also relied heavily on botanical and mineral compounds, highlighting the mastery of Indian chemists in extracting, purifying, and using these substances.

Indian chemists during the Vedic period discovered various metals like gold, silver, tin, and lead and understood their properties.

The Ayurvedic system of medicine used complex chemical procedures to prepare drugs from plant and mineral resources. Indian chemists also developed the process of fermentation and distillation. The technique of purifying and hardening steel, known as 'wootz' steel, was also a significant contribution from Indian chemists.

The knowledge of Indian chemists was disseminated throughout the ancient world via the trade routes. For instance, India's steel-making technology was exported to the Middle East and Europe, influencing the global steel industry, while the Ayurvedic system of

medicine continues to be revered worldwide for its holistic approach to health. Indian chemistry's rich history has not only contributed to modern science but also showcases the scientific temper of ancient and medieval India.

## History of Chemistry in Ancient India

Ancient India has a rich history when it comes to the field of chemistry. In this section, we will explore the origins of chemistry in ancient India, the influence of Vedic texts on chemical knowledge, and the role of alchemy during this period.

### Origins of Chemistry in Ancient India

The knowledge and practice of chemistry in ancient India can be traced back to the Indus Valley civilization, which flourished around 2500 BCE. Here are some key points about the origins of chemistry in ancient India:

- Ancient Indians were well-versed in the extraction and purification of metals such as gold, silver, copper, and iron.
- The development of metallurgy in ancient India played a crucial role in the advancement of chemical knowledge.
- The ancient Indians had a deep understanding of chemical properties and processes, which they applied in various industries such as medicine, textiles & agriculture.

### Influence of Vedic Texts on Chemical Knowledge

The Vedic texts, composed between 1500 BCE and 500 BCE, hold significant importance in the development of chemical knowledge in ancient India.

Here are a few ways in which Vedic texts influenced this field:

- The Rigveda, one of the oldest

Vedic texts, contains references to the utilization of metals and their properties.

- The Atharvaveda, another important Vedic text, includes verses on the preparation and application of medicinal substances.
- The Upanishads, philosophical texts associated with the Vedas, explore the concept of the five basic elements (fire, water, earth, air, and ether) and their relationship with chemistry.

### Role of Alchemy in Ancient India

Alchemy, known as *rasashastra* in ancient India, played a crucial role in the development of chemistry. Here are some key points about the role of alchemy during this period:

- Alchemists in ancient India aimed to transform base metals into noble ones and sought the elixir of life through various chemical processes.
- Ancient Indian alchemists developed elaborate laboratory techniques, apparatus, and procedures for chemical experiments.
- They focused on the purification of minerals, distillation, preparation of metallic alloys, and the synthesis of medicines using natural substances.

The history of chemistry in ancient India is a testament to the rich scientific knowledge and advancements achieved during that period. The origins of chemistry can be traced back to the Indus Valley civilization, while the influence of Vedic texts and the role of alchemy further propelled its growth.

The contributions made by ancient Indian chemists laid the foundation for future scientific discoveries and continue to inspire the field till this day.

(To be continued ....)

## National Turmeric Board in Nizamabad becomes a reality

The long-cherished dream of Telangana turmeric farmers is set to become a reality with the formal inauguration of the National Turmeric Board in Nizamabad. The official ceremony will take place at a city hotel, with Union Minister for Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal and Nizamabad BJP MP Dharmapuri Arvind participating virtually from New Delhi.

BJP state secretary and turmeric farmer Palle Gangareddy has been appointed the national chairman of the turmeric board for a three-year term. The Centre issued orders to this effect. Gangareddy, a native of Ankapur village in Armoor mandal of Nizamabad, hails from a region known for its agricultural advancements. The establishment of a turmeric board has been a longstanding demand of Telangana farmers, particularly those in Nizamabad. With the efforts of Arvind, the Centre is now delivering on this promise, coinciding with Sankranti.

In October 2023, following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's announcement, the Union government officially notified the establishment of the National Turmeric Board.

"The turmeric board will provide leadership on turmeric-related matters, enhance efforts, and facilitate coordination with the Spices Board and other government agencies to support the development and growth of the turmeric sector," the Centre stated at the time. The demand for a turmeric board dates back to 2006 when the Swadeshi Jagran Manch (SJM) launched a movement advocating for it. This demand was later highlighted during the Telangana statehood movement. After the formation of Telangana, BRS MP K Kavitha also raised the issue at the national level. Arvind, who joined the BJP in 2017, had pledged to bring the turmeric board to Nizamabad. Initially, a unit dedicated to turmeric farmers was established at the Spices Board and Arvind continued to advocate for a full-fledged board.

During the 2023 Assembly elections, Modi announced plans to establish the turmeric board. While he did not specify its location, Arvind assured farmers it would be set up in Nizamabad.

Delays in the decision were attributed to factors such as the Maharashtra Assembly elections. The situation became more complex when both Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu sought the establishment of the tur-

meric board in their states. In response to this competition, Arvind camped in New Delhi, meeting with Union ministers to advocate for Nizamabad as the board's location. These efforts culminated in the Centre's notification in October 2023. Speaking to TNIE on Monday, Gangareddy credited Arvind for the board's establishment in Nizamabad.

"It is primarily due to MP Arvind's efforts that the Union government decided to establish the board in Nizamabad. Thanks to his work, our turmeric farmers' dream has become a reality," he said. Meanwhile, officials of the Spices Board are making elaborate arrangements for the inauguration ceremony.

<https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/te/2025/jan/14/national-turmeric-board-in-nizamabad-becomes-a-reality>

## India marks significant milestone in journey towards achieving climate goals with launch of Bharat Climate Forum

India marked a significant milestone in its journey toward achieving climate goals and economic self-reliance with the launch of the Bharat Climate Forum on Friday. A national platform dedicated to unifying stakeholders from policy, industry, finance, and research to accelerate cleantech manufacturing in India, the Bharat Climate Forum aims to drive sustainable economic growth and innovation. Hosted by the Centre for Indigenous Economic Understanding (CIEU) and Dalberg Advisors, the Bharat Climate Forum is supported by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE), NITI Aayog, and International Solar Alliance (ISA).

Addressing the launch, Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said Atmanirbhar Bharat embodies India's drive for economic sovereignty and technological leadership through innovation and collaboration. "Our 4G-5G telecom stack showcases this spirit which the cleantech sector can imbibe, with public-private partnerships enabling world-class, competitive solutions. I thank the Bharat Climate Forum organizers for highlighting India's commitment to cleantech innovation for a sustainable future," he said in a statement.

The forum comes at a time when India is pursuing ambitious climate targets, including achieving net-zero emissions by 2070 and scaling up non-fossil fuel capacity to 500 GW by 2030. Despite progress in renewables, challenges such as reliance on imports for solar and wind infrastructure persist.

Ashwani Mahajan, National Co-Convener of

Swadeshi Jagran Manch and Member-Secretary of the Bharat Climate Forum, emphasized the need for a comprehensive manufacturing policy to address these challenges. The forum also spotlighted the economic opportunities in cleantech. By 2030, Dalberg estimates suggest that cleantech manufacturing could create a domestic market worth \$120-150 billion annually and generate export opportunities of \$40-45 billion while generating 50 million new jobs by 2070.

Jagjeet Singh Sareen, Partner, Global Climate Practice at Dalberg Advisors and Member-Secretary of the Bharat Climate kForum mentioned, achieving the 1.5-degree target requires urgent acceleration in our efforts.

The inaugural event witnessed the launch of Bharat Cleantech Manufacturing Platform by Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal an initiative to strengthen India's clean tech value chains-spanning solar, wind, hydrogen, and battery storage. The Forum launch was also addressed by several distinguished attendees including Amitabh Kant, India's G20 Sherpa who provided insights into delivering cost-competitive clean tech solutions. Bharat Climate Forum 2025 is an influential platform that brings together key stakeholders from the government, industry, and global community to accelerate India's clean energy transition. CIEU is committed to fostering comprehensive research, facilitating dialogues, and curating innovative ideas that address the needs of diverse communities. Dalberg Advisors is a strategic advisory firm that combines the best private sector strategy skills and rigorous analytical capabilities with deep knowledge and networks across emerging and frontier markets.

<https://www.msn.com/en-in/autos/news/india-marks-significant-milestone-in-journey-towards-achieving-climate-goals-with-launch-of-bharat-climate-forum/>

## 10-Day Swadeshi Fair Inaugurated with Grandeur

The 10-day Swadeshi Fair, organized by Swadeshi Jagran Manch at Mazdoor Maidan in Sector 4, was inaugurated with great enthusiasm. Chief speaker Arun Ojha highlighted the importance of Swadeshi products in making the nation self-reliant and great. He said, "The use of Swadeshi products instills a sense of patriotism and self-dependence among people."

Ojha pointed out that while the World Trade Organization aims to bring capital to India, it does not intend to employ Indian workers. He emphasized self-reliance as the key to India's progress.

Chief guest (ED - BSL) Rajshree Banerjee described the fair as a symbol of self-reliance and em-

powerment. Distinguished guest and former MLA Biranchi Narayan called it a symbol of Swadeshi revolution and warned, "If this revolution diminishes, the nation will regress." The program began with a floral tribute to the statue of Bharat Mata. The event was conducted by Ajay Chaudhary, with a vote of thanks delivered by Pramod Kumar Sinha.

<https://www.msn.com/en-in/money/markets/10-day-swadeshi-fair-inaugurated-with-grandeur/ar-AA1s3GdE?ocid=BingNewsVrp>

## SJM demands formation of Entrepreneurship Commission

Swadeshi Jagran Manch (SJM) has demanded the formation of Entrepreneurship Commission in every State to develop entrepreneurial skills among youths at the national level. Talking to newsmen here, Rashtriya Sah-Sangthak Sh. Satish Kumar said the Commission can provide technical knowledge and guidelines to young men and women to start new enterprises at young age, especially at the age of 15-16, to create rich and inclusive social environment. Speaking on activities of SJM in Kerala, he said the main objective of the "Kerala Youth Focus" programme is to develop entrepreneurial skills among youths and make every citizen self-sufficient, enabling young minds to become job providers rather than job seekers.

<https://www.uniindia.com/news/south/development-kerala-entrepreneurship/3366282.html>

## National Youth Day celebrated at Swadeshi Mela

The Ispatanchal Swadeshi Mela at Sector 4 Mazdoor Maidan marked National Youth Day with a grand Kavi Sammelan on Sunday evening, organized by Rashmipunj Sahityanuragi Sansthan in collaboration with Swadeshi Jagran Manch. Former Bokaro MLA, Biranchi Narayan, graced the event as the chief guest and inaugurated the session with lamp lighting and tributes to Swami Vivekananda and Bharat Mata.

Biranchi Narayan honored the participating poets, including Arun Pathak, Dr. Govind Gajab, Pritam Kumar Jha, Saroj Jha, and Reena Yadav, among others, with mementos and praised their contributions. Addressing the audience, he emphasized the importance of youth in shaping the nation and preserving cultural values. The poets delivered compelling verses on patriotism, Swami Vivekananda, Indian culture, and societal themes, leaving the audience mesmerized. The event concluded with a heartfelt "Vande Mataram" and a vote of thanks by Karuna Kalika.

<https://www.dailypioneer.com/2025/state-editions/national-youth-day-celebrated-with-kavi-sammelan-at-swadeshi-mela.html>

## Bharat Climate Forum Starts To Boost India's Cleantech Manufacturing

India took a significant step towards achieving its climate and economic goals today with the start of the Bharat Climate Forum. The forum, a national platform aimed at unifying stakeholders from policy, industry, finance, and research, is designed to accelerate cleantech manufacturing in India. Its core objective is to propel sustainable economic growth, foster innovation, and strengthen India's position in the global clean energy transition. The Bharat Climate Forum is hosted by the Centre for Indigenous Economic Understanding (CIEU) and Dalberg Advisors and has garnered support from key governmental bodies such as the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE), NITI Aayog, and the International Solar Alliance (ISA).

In his address, Ashwini Vaishnav, Minister for Railways, Communications, and Electronics & Information Technology, highlighted the importance of India's self-reliance and technological leadership, stating, "Atmanirbhar Bharat embodies India's drive for economic sovereignty and technological leadership through innovation and collaboration. The cleantech sector can embrace this spirit, utilizing public-private partnerships to develop world-class solutions."

The forum's launch aligns with India's ambitious climate targets, which include achieving net-zero emissions by 2070 and scaling up non-fossil fuel capacity to 500 GW by 2030. However, despite progress in renewable energy, challenges like import dependence for solar and wind infrastructure persist.

Ashwani Mahajan, National Co-convenor of Swadeshi Jagran Manch emphasised the need for a comprehensive manufacturing policy to reduce import dependencies, stabilise energy transitions, and create jobs. "India's cleantech manufacturing sector holds immense potential to create millions of jobs and reduce import dependencies," he said. "A robust policy framework is crucial to align economic growth with sustainability goals." The forum also highlighted the vast economic opportunities within cleantech. Dalberg estimates suggest that by 2030, cleantech manufacturing could create a domestic market worth USD 120-150 billion annually and generate export opportunities of USD 40-45 billion while providing 50 million new

jobs by 2070. The introduction event also featured the inauguration of the Bharat Cleantech Manufacturing Platform by Piyush Goyal, Minister of Commerce, an initiative aimed at strengthening India's cleantech value chains across solar, wind, hydrogen, and battery storage sectors. The event saw contributions from other distinguished leaders, including Amitabh Kant, India's G20 Sherpa, and Meenakshi Lekhi, Former Minister of State for External Affairs and Culture. The Bharat Climate Forum concluded with a call for greater collaboration between the public and private sectors to drive research, reduce production costs, and accelerate the commercialisation of new cleantech solutions.

<https://www.businessworld.in/article/bharat-climate-forum-starts-to-boost-india's-cleantech-manufacturing-544513>

## RSS Wants Govt To Remove Income Tax For Rs 10 Lakh Annual Income

This holds a great significance as the middle class is looking at the Narendra Modi government to provide income tax relief like every year. It appears that the RSS-affiliated organisations have presented various proposals during pre-budget discussions with Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. This proposal includes raising tax-free/tax exempt income threshold to Rs 10 lakh, implementing an agriculture-specific package, extending MGNREGA work days to 200, quickening GST refunds, and establishing a thorough manufacturing strategy to address Chinese imports.

Bhartiya Mazdoor Sangh's (BMS) representatives, Pawan Kumar, presented their recommendations to FM Sitharaman. BMS seems to have advocated for extending MGNREGA to ensure 200 workdays per family annually, as per the media report.

In addition to this they have requested a dedicated package for sectors requiring substantial labour such as agriculture, plantation, beedi and fisheries. Their organisation is looking for the implementation of the 8th Pay Commission, tax exemption up to Rs 10 lakh, and preferred OPS over NPS and UPS. Besides this the proposals talks about doubling the gratuity calculation period to 30 days per year from the existing 15 days and also removing tax obligations for pensioners.

SJM highlighted concerns about trade imbalance with China and advocated for comprehensive manufacturing policies, including tariffs and trade measures to support domestic production. □□

<https://trak.in/stories/rss-wants-govt-to-remove-income-tax-for-rs-10-lakh-annual-income/>



# Swadeshi Activities Prant Sammelans

## Pictorial Glimpses



Alwar, Jaipur



Himachal Pradesh



Swadeshi Mela, Jharkhand





Swadeshi Activities  
**Signature Campaign**  
(12 January – 12 February 2025)

Pictorial Glimpses



**Jamshedpur**



**Sikkim**



**Tripura**



**North Bihar**



**Kerala**



**Ramgarh, Jhar.**



**Jhunjhunu, Raj.**



**Damoh, M.P.**



**Moradabad, UP**



**Ballia, UP**



**Shahjahanpur, UP**



**Brij**



**Ludhiana, Punjab**



**Sangaria, Raj.**



**Azamgarh**