

SAMRIDHI

Journal of Dr. MCR HRD IT

July, 2026

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Pavies



Dr. Marri Channa Reddy
Human Resource Development
Institute of Telangana

NABET Accredited Excellent (उत्कृष्ट) Institute



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Smt. Santhi Kumari, IAS(Retd.)
Vice Chairperson & Director General
Dr. MCR HRD Institute of Telangana

From the VC & Director General's Desk

It gives me great pleasure to present the July 2026 issue of *Samriddhi*, the seventh issue of the journal, marking the completion of three years of its publication journey. This issue is particularly significant as it is being brought out during the Golden Jubilee year of the Institute, commemorating fifty years of service and excellence from 1976 to 2026.

The present issue brings together a diverse range of perspectives on governance, development, ethics, society and contemporary challenges, reflecting the multidisciplinary character of the journal. It features insightful contributions on women-led development, governance innovation, the Sustainable Development Goals, sociocultural influences on appearance-related behaviours, and globalization and its implications for India. The articles offer valuable perspectives on public administration, social development and emerging societal concerns.

I congratulate all the contributors for their thoughtful and valuable contributions and appreciate the editorial team for its dedicated efforts in bringing out this issue of *Samriddhi*. I hope readers will find this volume informative, engaging and thought-provoking, and I look forward to *Samriddhi* continuing its journey of intellectual engagement in the years ahead.

Smt. Santhi Kumari, IAS(Retd.)

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From Development of Women to Development Led by Women

Santhi Kumari IAS (Rtd)
Vice Chairperson & Director General
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Introduction

Few institutional innovations in independent India have reshaped rural life as quietly and comprehensively as the Self-Help Group (SHG). What began four decades ago as a modest experiment to get poor women to save a rupee a day has grown into the world's largest network of community-based institutions, touching the lives of millions of households. The story of the SHG movement is, at its heart, a story of a shift in framing: from women being treated as passive beneficiaries of development schemes to women becoming the agents who lead development themselves. This essay traces that journey — the concept and internal workings of SHGs, their evolution in India and in neighbouring countries, their rich history in Southern States, with a particular focus on Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, the achievements that mark the movement today and the challenges.

The Concept and Operational Framework of Self-Help Groups

A Self-Help Group is a small, voluntary association of women from similar socio-economic backgrounds who come together to save regularly, lend to one another, and support each other through collective discussion. Thus, they are thrift and credit groups, and typically each group has ten to twenty members who meet on a fixed schedule to contribute savings to a common bank account. What began in the 1980s as a contribution of one rupee per member per day has, over the decades, grown to about a hundred rupees, reflecting members' rising economic capacity. From this pooled corpus, members can borrow small amounts at interest rates of around twelve percent — a fraction of what informal moneylenders typically charge — to meet personal or family needs.

The functioning of an SHG rests on five guiding principles, often called the *Panchasutras*: regular meetings, consistent savings, internal lending, timely repayment, and accurate bookkeeping. As the groups mature, their financial base grows beyond member savings to include government grants such as Revolving Funds and Community Investment

Funds, bank loans issued in the group's name, interest income, fines, and returns from small enterprise activities etc. The guiding philosophy is often summarised in a simple phrase: savings first, credit later — a principle that embodies self-help and stands in deliberate contrast to conventional lending models.

Beyond finance, SHGs function as forums for mutual support. Members jointly decide on loan approvals and repayment schedules, collectively manage cases of default, and use their regular meetings as a safe space to discuss personal and family difficulties, from health emergencies to domestic conflict, and social issues, working together toward solutions.

The Evolution of the SHG Movement in India

The roots of the movement trace back to 1972, when Ela Bhatt founded the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in Ahmedabad to organise women in the informal economy. SEWA Bank later pioneered microcredit for small enterprises. Throughout the 1980s, the SHG idea took shape informally in rural India, with non-governmental organisations such as MYRADA and PRADHAN playing a pioneering role, sometimes with support from international agencies like IFAD. A turning point came in 1987, when NABARD, the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development, launched pilot projects to test informal, group-based savings and lending models, which proved highly successful. The 1990s saw explosive growth, propelled by government, NABARD, and NGOs, with the southern states of Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Karnataka emerging as early leaders.

Alongside this organisational growth came a parallel evolution in financial products. The most revolutionary being: SHG Savings Bank Account which allowed an unregistered group to open a zero-balance account, and the SHG Bank Linkage Programme (SBLP), that allowed collateral-free, purpose-neutral loans to unregistered groups. By the late 1990s, the inclusion of SBLP within rural priority-sector lending had given the model- national reach.

Government policy to tackle poverty also witnessed a significant shift from an individual approach to a group-based approach and recognised the potential of the evolving women's SHG ecosystem. From the Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas scheme (DWACRA) in the 1980s to the *Swarn Jayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana* (SGSY) in 1999, there were efforts to use these institutions for poverty alleviation. The Government of India declared 2006 the Year of Microfinance, and in 2011, the National Rural Livelihood Mission, also called *Aajeevika*, replaced SGSY's target-based approach with a universal-

mobilisation approach aimed at bringing every poor rural woman into an SHG. From 2015 onward, the mission — renamed the *Deen Dayal Antyodaya Yojana-NRLM* (DAY NRLM) — has woven together complementary programmes such as the *Jan Dhan Yojana* and digital financial literacy drives, deepening convergence across schemes.

An International Perspective: Bangladesh and Pakistan

India's experience did not develop in isolation, and a brief comparison with its neighbours is instructive. In Bangladesh, following independence in 1971, group-based microcredit initiatives, and in 1976 Professor Muhammad Yunus began lending to poor women in Jobra village, an experiment that matured into the Grameen Bank in 1983. The Grameen model is built on joint-liability lending within small groups of five to seven members. Organisations such as BRAC, ASA, and PROSHIKA etc later broadened the approach and a range of additional initiatives such as livelihoods, education, and health, were converged. The model's global recognition culminated in the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize, shared by Yunus and Grameen Bank. While the Indian approach can be summarised as savings first, credit later, the Bangladeshi model is often described in the reverse: credit first, savings later.

Pakistan's journey has been comparatively modest. The Aga Khan Rural Support Programme, launched in Gilgit-Baltistan in the 1980s and 1990s, introduced women's SHGs and village organisations built around savings and credit. Rural Support Programmes subsequently expanded with backing from international donors. The Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund, formed in 2000, implemented similar community institutions. From 2010, SHGs were linked to the Benazir Income Support Programme for cash transfers. Even so, the movement in Pakistan remains largely NGO- and donor-driven, with limited government ownership and a much smaller footprint than in India or Bangladesh.

Set side by side, the three countries illustrate three distinct paths: India's savings-first, government-anchored, nationwide model; Bangladesh's credit-first model driven by Grameen Bank and large microfinance institutions; and Pakistan's donor-dependent, geographically limited model.

The Telugu States: A Living Laboratory for SHGs

In the early 1990s, the UNDP-backed South Asia Poverty Alleviation Programme tested a simple but powerful hypothesis: that people living in poverty could lift themselves out of it

through collective effort. Its operating cycle — savings, internal lending, capitalisation through government and bank funds, on-lending for income-generating and emergency needs, and disciplined repayment — ran for a decade across twenty mandals spanning one district of Telangana and two districts of Andhra Pradesh.

The pilot proved several things at once: that SHGs could be promoted to saturation rather than remaining in scattered pockets, that poor rural women, when organised, saved and repaid loans reliably on time; and that a village-level federation was an administratively workable way to manage thousands of groups.

Building on this foundation, the period from 2000 to 2009 saw the birth of a statewide SHG programme through the Andhra Pradesh's District Poverty Initiatives Project (DPIP) and the Andhra Pradesh Rural Poverty Reduction Project (APRPRP), both funded by the World Bank. These initiatives made SHG promotion the central rural development strategy, pursued the saturation of thrift-and-credit groups, and created a dedicated institutional vehicle, the Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty (SERP), to build capacity among members, elected leaders, and paid functionaries. Capitalisation accelerated through grants such as Revolving Funds and Capital Investment Funds. The most important catalyst was the cadre of Bank Mitras, who demystified bank linkage. Bank Mitras were mostly semiliterate members of SHGs or their children, acting as a bridge between the lonee (SHG) and the loner (Bank). They facilitated accurate filing of loan applications on behalf of SHGs and ensured timely repayment, which pleased banks. This created a "Win-Win", and the gates to the effective flow of institutional credit towards groups were wide open.

A three-tier federation structure at the village, mandal, and district levels was institutionalised, alongside special attention to the most vulnerable — to include poorest of the poor (POP), differently abled — and social action campaigns against child labour and domestic violence, supported by a corps of Community Resource Persons. This three-tier federation model, refined in the Telugu states, served as the blueprint for the national DAY-NRLM programme, in later years.

State Success Stories

Kudumbashree in Kerala, the Corporation for the Development of Women in Tamil Nadu, *Jeevika* in Bihar, *Stree Shakti* in Karnataka, Mission Shakti in Odisha, and *Umeed* in Jammu and Kashmir are the most successful SHG lend models in India.

The Role of NABARD, the Reserve Bank, and the Banking System

None of this growth would have been possible without a supportive financial architecture. NABARD and the Reserve Bank of India shaped pro-poor financial products — the SHG savings account, the Bank Linkage Programme, and the inclusion of SHG credit within priority-sector lending — while also funding early NGO pioneers such as MYRADA. Over time, dedicated vehicles such as the Micro Finance Equity Development Fund, the Micro-Enterprises Development Fund, NABFINS, and the Joint Liability Group scheme were established, alongside the Business Correspondent model introduced in 2006 to extend branchless banking into rural areas. A Centre for Microfinance Research was set up for continuous learning, and NABARD's annual "Status of Microfinance in India" report has become something of a gold standard for tracking the sector's health.

Benefits and the Scale of Impact

The benefits attributed to the SHG movement span the economic and the social. Members report gains in asset ownership, financial inclusion, and diversified livelihoods, alongside economic and political empowerment, greater resilience during crises, wider access to awareness and education, and stronger social networks.

The scale of what has been built is striking. From roughly thirty lakh SHGs reaching seven crore households in 2008, the movement grew to sixty lakh groups by 2019, and to about 1.44 crore SHGs reaching 17.8 crore households by 2024 — a trajectory that has accelerated sharply over the past decade.¹ The financial numbers tell a similar story: total savings deposits of roughly Rs 65,089 crore, cumulative credit linkage of Rs 2.09 lakh crore, and outstanding loans of about Rs 2.59 lakh crore, with an average loan disbursement of Rs 3.8 lakh. Loan repayment rates exceeding 98 percent testify to the credit discipline of the groups. Between FY13 and FY22, the number of credit-linked SHGs grew at a compound annual rate of 10.8 percent, credit disbursement per SHG grew at 5.7 percent, and savings grew by around 11 percent between 2022–23 and 2023–24, according to NABARD's reporting.

Beyond the numbers, the movement's deeper significance lies in having demonstrated that low-income women are creditworthy, in building substantial social capital, in advancing women's economic and political standing, and in giving development programmes a ready-

¹ This article draws on the statistical data published by the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) in its report, *Status of Microfinance in India 2023–24* (Mumbai: NABARD, 2024).

made grassroots platform to build upon. It is this rare convergence of factors that has made Indian SHGs, the world's largest network of community institutions, the largest poverty alleviation programme, and the largest microfinance programme anywhere.

Challenges

- Despite bank linkage programs, many SHGs still struggle with delayed loan disbursement, collateral requirements- often disguised as savings held in banks as Fixed deposits
- Members often take loans from multiple sources (SHG + moneylenders + microfinance institutions), leading to debt stress.
- **Low literacy and numeracy:** Makes bookkeeping, loan tracking, and financial management difficult without external support.
- **Weak entrepreneurial and managerial skills:** Many SHGs struggle to move from savings-credit groups into viable income-generating enterprises.
- **Limited market linkages:** Products made by SHGs (handicrafts, food processing, textiles) often lack access to larger markets, branding, and quality standardization, so they get stuck in low-value local sales.
- Limited digital literacy: Restricts access to e-commerce platforms, digital payments, and government e-governance schemes meant to support them.
- Seasonal and low-value livelihoods: Many SHGs are engaged in traditional, low-margin activities rather than diversified, high-growth enterprises.
- **Elite capture:** In some SHGs, more educated or influential women dominate decision-making, sidelining weaker or marginalized members (especially Dalit, tribal, or minority women).
- **Group cohesion -the urban challenge:** frequent migration, Conflicts among members, unequal participation, and trust deficits can cause groups to become dysfunctional or collapse. Urban / Semi Urban area are particularly susceptible.
- **Dependency on NGOs/government:** Many SHGs remain dependent on external facilitators rather than becoming self-sustaining, raising sustainability concerns once support is withdrawn.

Conclusion:

Looking across this history, a handful of design choices stand out as the true game changers of the SHG movement: organising women into small, cohesive, homogenous groups of ten to twenty; anchoring them to a savings account and, later, to formal bank linkage and priority-sector credit; building administratively feasible multi-tier federations; providing dedicated institutional support and a cadre of Community Resource Persons; and fostering synergy among women, financial institutions, NGOs, and government at every level, with successful models cross-learned and replicated across states.

What began as an effort to develop women has, over five decades, matured into development led by women. Millions of rural households that today count on their own institutions rather than outside charity.

Given India's demographic scale, enterprise-focused SHGs can become a genuine engine of rural GDP growth and women's economic empowerment, not just a poverty-alleviation safety net. Without a strong push toward enterprise, India risks having millions of SHGs that are financially included but economically stagnant — a missed opportunity given the scale of investment already made.

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

APRPRP: Andhra Pradesh Rural Poverty Reduction Project

ASA: Association for Social Advancement

BRAC: Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee

DAY-NRLM: *Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana* – National Rural Livelihoods Mission

DPIP: District Poverty Initiatives Project

DWCRA: Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas

FY: Financial Year

GDP: Gross Domestic Product

IFAD: International Fund for Agricultural Development

MYRADA: Mysore Resettlement and Development Agency

NABARD: National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development

NABFINS: NABFINS Limited (Formerly NABARD Financial Services Limited)

NGO: Non-Governmental Organisation

POP: Poorest of the Poor

PRADAN: Professional Assistance for Development Action

PROSHIKA: *Proshika Manobik Unnayan Kendra*

SBLP: SHG Bank Linkage Programme

SEWA: Self-Employed Women's Association

SERP: Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty

SGSY: *Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana*

SHG: Self-Help Group

UNDP: United Nations Development Programme

A Governance Innovation Case Study of 2010: Video Counselling: A Governance Innovation in Degree College Lecturers' Placement

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In 2010, the Commissionerate of Collegiate Education, Andhra Pradesh, Hyderabad, introduced a state-wide video counselling system for the placement of newly promoted lecturers. The initiative replaced the traditional regional counselling process, which required candidates to travel long distances to four regional centres, a tedious process often marked by delays, discretion, and procedural complexity. Through simultaneous connectivity of 23 district centres, 353 newly promoted candidates were able to participate in a transparent and efficient counselling process from their home districts. The initiative showcased how information technology could enhance transparency, reduce transaction costs, and improve citizens' convenience while preserving administrative fairness and utmost transparency.

This paper describes the conception, implementation, challenges, outcomes, and lessons from this innovation... and even more importantly, the way forward for today's public administrators.

Case Snapshot

- *Year: 2010*
- *Department: Commissionerate of Collegiate Education, Andhra Pradesh*
- *Beneficiaries: 353 newly promoted lecturers of degree colleges*
- *Coverage: 23 district centres*
- *Technology Used: State-wide video conferencing*
- *Outcome: Same-day transparent counselling and issue of posting orders*

Keywords: *e-governance; placement; personnel management; transparency; administrative innovation; video counselling*

1. Introduction: The governance challenge:

Public administration officials often face the challenge of balancing procedural fairness with citizens' convenience. Personnel management processes are particularly vulnerable to delays, discretion, and logistical difficulties, especially since the personal interests of candidates override all other considerations.

In 2010, the Department of Collegiate Education, Andhra Pradesh, Hyderabad, sought to address these challenges through an innovative video counselling system for the placement of 353 newly promoted lecturers across 23 districts of undivided Andhra Pradesh, replacing the manual system of physical attendance of candidates at four regional centres.

2. The Existing System

- Four regional counselling centres – Warangal, Cuddapah, Guntur, Rajahmundry
- Physical travel from remote areas to the regional centres
- Long queues of candidates at the counselling centres, averaging nearly hundred at each centre
- Multiple registers and rosters.
- Sequential processing of candidates as per seniority
- Delays and uncertainty.

<i>Earlier System</i>	<i>Video Counselling System 2010</i>
Four regional centres	23 district centres
Physical presence at regional HQ	Participation from home district HQ
Manual records	Digitised records
Sequential processing	State-wide synchronised processing
Significant travel cost	Minimal travel cost
Scope for discretion	Greater transparency

There were 353 Junior Lecturers from Government Junior Colleges newly promoted as Lecturers of Government Degree Colleges. Having crossed the first hurdle, they were now anxiously awaiting to be posted to the college of their choice.

However, there was a twist. Getting promoted was not complicated. It was based on seniority and percentage of marks in qualifying examinations, coupled with reservation quotas for SC, ST, and Disabled categories. A three-member officials' committee scrutinised records and ticked the eligible candidates, recommending them for promotion. Based on that, they would go to the next round, depending on vacancies in their subject in their zone. There were six zones into which 23 districts were divided, and the 23rd one, Hyderabad, was called the City Cadre, like a sub-zone.

The earlier practice had been to go to the four regional offices, where the process would be conducted manually by a group of officials headed by an official called the Regional Joint Director. He had before him a lengthy list of names, another subject-wise list of vacant places and yet another one showing the 100-point roster cycle. His job, like a dice-thrower, was to see that all three got correlated for each of the candidates, averaging about 90–100 at each centre. This process had to be repeated for each subject. If at any point this got held up due to any reason, such as an absent candidate or a candidate being unwilling to choose 'x' place over 'y' place, the whole queue got stuck. There was no other way but to go through this linear movement like ants moving in single file.

The Association of Lecturers was feeling marginalised. Their central and regional leaders used to be present at all the counselling centres on the given date and time. In the earlier system, regions held their counselling on different dates. There was neither uniformity in place or time nor method—a region devised its best procedure keeping in view local factors. All this gave room for a lot of discretion to the officials, which was an opportunity to wield their power in the way they wanted. The Associations played a key role in negotiating with the officials what they thought was in the best interest of their members.

3. Genesis of the Reform

As the Commissioner of Collegiate Education, the challenges of organising this counselling programme at regional centres were highlighted during meetings by various interest groups, including representative teachers' unions. The attendant problems of pressure from various quarters, political as well as others, were also brought to notice. In some cases, influential candidates using the legal route to approach courts to challenge the entire process were also flagged. Media stories on 'behind the scenes' management added yet another layer of complexity to the entire process. Overall, the situation was getting ripe for some surgical

intervention to strike at all the targets at one go, not only to silence all critics but, even more importantly, to conduct the counselling process smoothly.

It was in this context that change was considered not only necessary but inevitable.

Why Video Conferencing:

The idea of using video conferencing came up in one of the numerous rounds of meetings conducted to discuss possible alternatives. The availability of district video-conference facilities at all 23 district headquarters, with a dedicated communication channel maintained by the Government IT Department, was a strong advantage since it was being used extensively by the Chief Minister, Ministers and senior officials to interact with field-level officials regularly. In short, it was a tried-and-tested, robust and reliable system working within the government domain and hence not subject to any doubts about its functioning or transparency. Both trust and transparency were key elements in designing an appropriate solution.

The reform sought to achieve four objectives simultaneously: transparency, uniformity, speed, and participants' convenience.

Video conferencing emerged as the preferred solution because it allowed central oversight while enabling candidates to participate from their home districts. At the same time, various stakeholders could continue to play their role in a proactive manner, without fear or favour.

Once all the dynamics had been worked out with the core team of officials, all the officials and participants were informed to attend a district-wise decentralised system of participation by video counselling with a system of centralised monitoring by the Commissioner's office.

Thus originated the system of video counselling for lecturers' placement across undivided Andhra Pradesh in 2010.

4. Stakeholders' Concerns

Officials' concerns

- Fear of technical failure- connectivity issues mainly.
 - Departure from established procedures – 'comfort zone'
 - Doubting Thomases in head office and even more so in districts
- Associations' concerns
- Loss of familiar oversight mechanisms.

- Simultaneous conduct across districts diluting their presence
- Feeling marginalised

Candidates' concerns

- Unfamiliar process.
- Fear of errors.

Resistance was in the air because reform is rarely a smooth process.

5. Design and Implementation

Key Innovative Features:

- ✓ Simultaneous state-wide counselling.
- ✓ Centralised monitoring with decentralised participation.
- ✓ Real-time vacancy display.
- ✓ Same day issue of posting orders.
- ✓ Uniform procedure across all districts.
- 23 district centres connected online seamlessly through video conferencing
- Regional centres as hub and 5-6 districts as their spoke functioning online from 4 regional centres
- 353 candidates spread across 23 centres @ average 15-20 per district
- Data preparation done by Head office and shared with all regions and district offices.
- Vacancy mapping done from districts to head office
- Video conference arrangements through IT department
- Role of district officials to ensure presence of all candidates and coordinate the process.
- Display of vacancy lists online on the video screen to enable candidates to make their informed choice.
- Real-time allocation by the RJD after each candidate's turn got completed.

On the D-day, 3rd November 2010, the Commissioner initiated the process from the state video conference centre by announcing that first language subjects would be taken up in serial order, that is, first and second languages and that too from first zone onwards up to sixth zone. Unknown to many, the whole data of names and vacant places had been loaded in the laptop and in the net. All centres were asked to download and keep print-outs ready.

An assistant at the state video conference centre opened the laptop and put its screen in front of the video camera.

Presto! The lists were visible across the State not only in first zone's six centres but all 23 districts. Thus, with one click of the mouse, the first objective of utmost transparency was achieved!

Every candidate in every district was viewing the same vacancy position in real time. The possibility of differential information, selective disclosure, or local interpretation was successfully eliminated. Transparency became embedded in the process itself rather than depending solely on supervision.

The first subject, first zone, first candidate's name was called out—not by the Commissioner but by the RJD of that region, who had been instructed separately on the modalities. The candidate replied from another centre where he was present. His choice was asked, noted and allotted the college of his choice in his zone; the full process for the first candidate was over in a jiffy. Before others could grasp the sequence, the second candidate had come online, given his choice and gone.

It was going on with clockwork precision from the first zone to the second, third and so forth, to the sixth and finally the city cadre for the first subject. There was a sign of relief and a smile on the Commissioner's face. Everything was going as per plan.

Before others could realise, as the completed candidates started leaving, the halls started becoming less crowded. Lunch break was announced and everyone was back much earlier than the hour announced. It seemed everyone was now enjoying the whole sequence. Each candidate's name seemed to send a wave of positive vibrations down the halls.

There were some comic moments when names were mispronounced, gender was confused, candidates fumbled while replying, and such small things occurred. All the initial tension, worries and doubts had vanished into thin air. It was as if a magician had waved their wand and everything had disappeared. Relief was raining all around and there seemed to be a calm after the storm.

The best part was yet to come. All the names and selected places were printed at each centre and were given to the candidates in the form of an order to report to their new place of posting. This used to be another big queue in the earlier manual system.

The whole process was completed by the end of the day. The halls in each centre looked vacant, like marriage halls after the feast was over.

6. Outcomes

The best comment was overheard from a candidate who said that he had to spend only ₹10 for this lifetime opportunity. Queried how, he said it was the auto charge for coming to the centre, unlike earlier times when thousands had to be spent on travel, board and lodging by each candidate. Women candidates with children used to find it tougher, coming with spouse or mother to attend the counselling. For disabled candidates it was even more challenging.

The commenter forgot in his happiness to calculate the return fare. That was like a gift to the auto driver, not a charge, perhaps!

Transparency: Everyone saw the same process.

Efficiency: Completed within a day throughout the state.

Reduced Costs: Candidates avoided long distance travel and lodging expenses. Family members did not have to accompany the candidates.

Inclusiveness: Women candidates and persons with disabilities benefited substantially.

Administrative Confidence: Initial fears proved unfounded.

Some data on outcomes:

- Number of candidates: 353
- Number of districts: 23
- Duration of process: 1 day
- Approximate travel savings for candidates was substantial considering that long distance travels involve expenditure on fares, stay, meals and sundry expenses, sometimes for not only the candidate but at least one family member.

7. Lessons for Public Administration

Lesson 1: Technology should simplify procedures, not merely digitise complexity.

Lesson 2: Transparency reduces suspicion, resistance and generates Trust.

Lesson 3: Administrative innovation often encounters initial skepticism; however, post-truth the success of implementation can transform resistance into acceptance, including among the most skeptical stakeholders.

Lesson 4: Citizen convenience should be a core design principle, not only within organisational functioning but also in external situations of intersections with public.

Lesson 5: Leadership is critical in driving change but carrying the team and hundreds of employees along the path is even more important.

Replicability: A similar exercise was undertaken in 2014 by the author, while serving as Commissioner of Intermediate Education, to conduct counselling for the transfers of Junior College Lecturers. In fact, this time the whole process was welcomed by all stakeholders including the Association.

Thus, the model showed that existing government communication infrastructure could be repurposed for personnel management processes.

Similar approaches could be applied to transfers, admissions, recruitment counselling, training programmes, and other large-scale administrative exercises requiring transparency and simultaneous participation on a large scale across wide geographical distances.

8. Conclusion

The experience demonstrated that regulation and reform are not opposing concepts. A regulator can be an agent of innovation when technology is used to improve transparency, efficiency, and public convenience. The video counselling initiative showed how a relatively simple technological intervention could transform an administrative process and create value for all stakeholders.

Most of present-day debate posits any regulator in the stereotypical image of an inspector, more as an antonym of a reformer.

The author's experience in governance from village to secretariat level has been contrary to this popular perception and submits for consideration that the regulator is indeed a reformer, not its anti-thesis.

In fact, Governments today are playing the role of not only a regulator but more of a reformer- we may call it a reformist regulator.

Some 'out of the box' thinking coupled with the power of IT can really do wonders in producing remarkable administrative outcomes! That was the mantra learnt that day by the officials and lecturers of Collegiate Education department in Andhra Pradesh in 2010.

9. Post-script:

Reading this in mid-2026 may look quite commonplace but think of 2010 when many readers today would have been toddlers then while senior citizens today would have been in their youth.

Also think that NOKIA keypad phones were ruling the roost and iPhone 4 was about to be launched. WiFi was meant for labs or big enterprises while ‘apps’ was not found in common language. 3G, 4G, 5G were all in the future and staying connected meant a phone call or email. In short, 2010 now feels like another technological era!

Therefore, this initiative anticipated many principles that later became commonplace in digital governance—remote participation, transparency by design, decentralised access, and citizen convenience.

Today’s readers can appreciate how forward-looking the intervention was at that time. If as the saying goes, it was the right thing at the right time at the right place, can today’s leaders in public administration think of video counselling from mobile phones with authenticated login credentials to avoid physical displacement from place of work and reduce transaction costs? Or perhaps something even more innovative?

Perhaps the next generation of governance innovations is already waiting to be imagined and implemented in citizen-centric solutions in public administration! The search for better governance solutions is after all an ongoing journey... till it reaches the last man in the line!

Redefining the Ethical perspective of and for achieving Sustainable Development Goals

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Sustainable development is defined as ‘the development that meets the needs of the present generation, without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs’. Hardly five years away from the target year, the latest updates suggest that many of the SDGs cannot be achieved. Thus, it is important to understand the underlying causes for the slow progress of the SDGs and also set a path for the future course of action. This research paper looks into the ethical perspective of and for achieving the SDGs. The research paper refers to the ethical perspective through the core human values like human rights, equality, justice, along with development and sustainability as the foundations of SDGs.

The existing literature on SDGs highlight is the Triple ‘C’ crises, i.e., Covid-19, conflict and climate, for the slow and regressing pace of SDGs. The research paper highlights crony capitalism and corruption as the main drivers for the setback of SDGs. Finally, the paper suggests tangible measures to set the path to put the SDGs back on the track. The paper offers a comprehensive analysis and is the outcome of collective experiences across the world, especially in the developing world.

Keywords: Sustainable Development, ethics, politics, poverty, corruption and crony capitalism

Sustainable development is defined as ‘the development that meets the needs of the present generation, without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs’. This concept provides an ideal framework for all forms of human progress, linking environmental protection, economic development, human health and well-being. From the 1987 report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (Brundtland Report), through Agenda 21, published at the Rio Summit, to the Millennium Development Goals

(MDGs: 2000 – 2015) to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs: 2016 – 2030) set by the UN, sustainable development has been on the forefront of policy making, across the world.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, sets out 17 SDGs. These SDGs are comprehensive, interconnected objectives adopted by the UN for 2030, categorized by the ‘5 Ps’ framework: People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, and Partnership. (Rahm, L. et al 2025). These goals address global challenges including poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, and peace. Hardly five years away from the target year, the latest updates suggest that many of the SDGs cannot be achieved. Thus, it is important to understand the underlying causes for the slow progress of the SDGs and also set a path for the future course of action. This research paper looks into the ethical perspective of and for achieving the SDGs.

Objectives

- To bring out the ethical perspective of SDGs.
- To invoke ethical considerations for achieving SDGs.
- To identify the challenges and address them.

Research Design

The research design is qualitative, and employs, theoretical and conceptual analysis. The method used is explorative research method based on secondary data. It explores the theoretical framework of SDGs, to understand the ethical basis of these goals. Further, UN Reports on progress on SDGs, World Bank Reports on SDGs, UNDP reports have been studied to achieve the objectives of the research paper.

Review of Literature

The theory of SDGs revolves around inter generational justice, intra generational equity and eco centric development, social justice, environmental stewardship, transparency and accountability. The paper refers to the ethical perspective through the core human values like human rights, equality, justice, along with development and sustainability as the foundations of SDGs.

The existing literature on SDGs highlight is the Triple ‘C’ crises, i.e., Covid-19, conflict and climate, for the slow and regressing pace of SDGs. However, there is not much research

on the political drawbacks existing in the countries causing regression in achieving SDGs. This paper tries to appeal ethical implications to the politics, not only at the national level, but also, at the international levels.

Thus, the research paper explores reasons beyond the existing literature and offers tangible solutions to achieve the SDGs. The paper offers a comprehensive analysis and is the outcome of collective experiences across the world, especially in the developing world.

Ethical Values imbedded in the SDGs

Sustainable development and the stated 17 SDGs are embedded with several ethical values cherished by the humanity. These include human rights, human development, sustainability, equality and justice. Achieving these rights will make human rights a universal reality. SDGs aim at giving each and every individual a dignified and respectful life. They endure a human development approach, which gives importance to facts rather than figures; and does not rely on economic development alone. Humanity has progressed to a greater extent in terms of well being. However, not everyone is able to achieve the bare minimum level of development, which ensures a decent and dignified life. It includes food, shelter, clothing, education and health. Thus, MDGs and later SDGs have been framed to achieving these basic development criteria.

Sustainability has a deeper meaning that makes human rights not only universal but also perpetual. It ensures that the bare minimum rights of the future citizens of the world are not compromised in the process of achieving the same for the present generations. It includes protection of natural resources from unauthorised and unethical exploitation. The practice of sustainability is rooted in the transformation of the human beings, from nomadic hunter gatherer life to a settled farming life. It is then that the humans first learnt about coexisting with nature, without harming it. In the modern times, origins of the word sustainability can be traced to Hans Carl von Carlowitz, a German mining administrator. He coined the term *Nachhaltigkeit*, meaning sustainability. His book *Sylvicultura Oeconomica* deals with management of forestry in order to have a continuous supply of timber for the mining industry. Though the concept has a long history, it won international recognition only in 1987, through the Brundtland Report.

With the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, UN Member States pledged to ensure “no one will be left behind” and to “endeavour to reach the furthest behind first”. Five factors are proposed as key to understanding ‘who is being left behind and why’: discrimination; place of

residence; socio-economic status; governance; and vulnerability to shocks. Thus, equality forms the basis of SDGs. Without equality, it is impossible to sustain a peaceful human life on the earth. SDGs take into account each and every individual of the world, and seek to provide the equal rights and opportunities to sustain and develop.

Another important ethical value dealt under SDGs is justice. Justice is the most cherished goal of the humanity and human history had been a perpetual struggle for achieving justice. However, it is pertinent to note that life of the human race is impossible without the environment. Giving the environment its due importance is essential for sustaining human life on the earth. Thus, justice here encompasses a just life not only for the human beings, but also the plants and animals that live around, because, human existence is impossible without a just ecosystem composed of flora and fauna.

UN emphasis that sustainable development and climate action are linked – and both are vital to the present and future well-being of humanity and called for meeting the SDGs along with the targets for reducing emissions set in the Paris Climate Agreement of 2015. Overall, the sustainable development is a just balance between human development, economic development and the environment, not only in the present, but also in the future.

The progress of SDGs

Sustainable development has been the most spoken phrase in the academic circles for the past quarter a century. However, the world did not see such equitably practical considerations across the world. The SDGs are reaching their deadline in 2030, which is hardly 5 years away and the world is seriously not on par with achieving these goals. According to the World Economic Forum, only 18% of the SDGs are on track, with nearly half progressing too slowly and close to a fifth even regressing. (World Economic Forum. 2025).

Triple C crises

The main reason for the regression in achieving SDGs is attributed to COVID-19, followed by regional conflicts, wars and environmental disasters. These are together called as ‘Triple C crises’ (COVID-19, Conflict and Climate). The progression that unfolded, nearly approximating the marks of SDGs, faded away inadvertently under the dark cloud of job loss, lockdown, and closure of offices, institutions, shops, and markets, affecting millions especially so, in the context of poverty elimination and health upliftment of the marginalized societies.

(Mukhopadhyay, J. 2024). The world has witnessed new conflicts in the recent times: The Russia – Ukraine war, the conflicts in the Middle East and among the African scattered tribal communities are near to perpetual. Further, the climatic disasters like earth quakes, floods and droughts have left their impact on the advancement of SDGs.

Why the poor bear the brunt?

Whether it is COVID, or conflicts or climatic disasters; they affect the poor and the marginalised sections, the most, across the world. The poorest have been further pushed back into deeper levels of poverty. The Middle East, North Africa, Afghanistan and Pakistan (MENAP) region and the Sub Saharan African (SSA) regions are the most affected regions that are facing extreme poverty, and have been marred by political and ethnic conflicts. The percentage of population living in extreme poverty has increased from 13.4 to 14.5 in MENAP region and slightly reduced from 46.2 to 43.3 in SSA region, during the period 2021 to 2026. (World Bank Group. 2026). Without a significant acceleration in efforts, 8.9 per cent of the global population will still be living in extreme poverty by 2030 under the revised international poverty line. (United Nations, 2025). The triple ‘C’ crises have affected the lower income groups within the nations and across the world thwarting the progress of SDGs.

1. Degrading politics

Apart from the triple ‘C’s, two more ‘C’s operate in the present world: crony capitalism and corruption. These two factors have aggravated the damage caused by the triple ‘C’ crises. In any case of adversity, the capitalists, will never forgo their profits and resort to increasing the prices to recover the losses. According to Trading Economics, the global benchmark Brent crude oil jumped from roughly \$73 per barrel prior to the outbreak of the Iran conflict to peak at over \$114 per barrel. The capitalists all over the world have nexus with the political regimes and influence the policy decisions in their favour, which invariably go against the poor.

Under the cover of ‘Public Private Partnership’ (PPP) or Special Economic Zone or partial privatization, the crony capitalists manage to get excessively higher price for their output and services, profiting from exemption of taxes (at the cost of immature, inexperienced tax-payers), manipulated figures of capital investment, royalty, project longevity, uncertain costs etc (Jakhotia, 2019).

Capitalists borrow huge money from banks and often fail to repay in the due time. Recently, in March 2026, Minister of State for Finance, of India, Mr. Pankaj Chaudhary stated in the Parliament that banks have written off loans worth Rs 9.75 lakh crore over the last 11 financial years. (The Economic Times. 2026). Such writing off loans is practised in several African and South East European countries. This huge sum is definitely blocked and cannot be used for development activities. Further, any loss incurred by the government is again recovered from the people through taxes.

2. Engulfing Economics

The global south is further marred by intra-state and inter-state financial compulsions. Most of these countries are falling in the debt trap. Brahma Chellaney, Professor of Strategic Studies at the Centre for Policy Research writes: “Through its \$1 trillion ‘one belt, one road’ initiative, China is supporting infrastructure projects in strategically located developing countries, often by extending huge loans to their governments. The projects that China is supporting are often intended not to support the local economy, but to facilitate Chinese access to natural resources, or to open the market for low-cost and shoddy Chinese goods”. The UNCTAD reports a severe global debt crisis where 3.3 billion people—nearly half of humanity—live in 48 developing nations that spend more on debt interest payments than on essential public services like education and healthcare (UNCTAD).

Another, example comes from Sri Lanka. The country's Human Development Index (HDI) rose from 0.702 in the year 2000 to a peak of 0.782 in 2021. However, it lost access to concessional, low-interest loans from global institutions and received a setback due to Covid 19. From \$11.3 billion in 2005 to \$56.3 billion in 2020, Sri Lanka's foreign debt skyrocketed, accounting for 119 percent of its GDP by 2021 (Dubey, 2024), causes severe financial crisis in that island nation.

3. Corruption

François Valérian, Chair of Transparency International, notes, “Corruption is an evolving global threat that does far more than undermine development – it is a key cause of declining democracy, instability and human rights violations”. (Corruption Perceptions Index. 2024). According to the Global Financial Integrity (GFI) reports of 2026, South Sudan, Somalia, Venezuela, Yemen and Libya are the top five most corrupt countries in the world. These

countries are facing regression in achieving SDGs. GFI focuses on illicit financial flows, corruption, illicit trade and money laundering in order to address the harms inflicted by trade misinvoicing, transnational crime, tax evasion and kleptocracy. (Celik, M. 2025).

Welfare programmes are facing massive corruption, in the form of elite capture, document falsification, clientelism and fund embezzlement. Direct transfer of funds into the accounts of the beneficiaries is also not coming to the respite of the poor in the Global South. They are threatened with removal of their name from the beneficiary lists, if they don't offer bribe. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in India, Social Relief of Distress (SRD) Grants in South Africa and the Local Committees for Supply and Production (CLAP) Programme in Venezuela are major examples of welfare schemes marred by corruption. However, it is often noticed that corruption is more structured and organised compared to the mechanisms involved in removing it. Several acts of corruption are two pronged, where both the parties benefit mutually, perpetuating corruption and harming the genuine beneficiaries of welfare schemes.

Further, the insufficient budget allocations and corruption add to the root of the problem. Guaranteeing basic social security floors in low and middle-income countries requires an additional \$1.4 trillion annually or 3.3 per cent of their aggregate GDP in 2024. (United Nations. SDGs). It is estimated that the developing countries are facing budget deficiency of up to \$4 trillion per year.

Thus, the most important cause, which is hindering the pace of SDGs comes from political environment. It is often seen that political benefits are given more consideration over development goals. Thus, several long term development goals are compromised for short term political gains. The politicians in the developing world are often lured by electoral gains and lack futuristic vision.

What is Politics?

It is pertinent to understand the original meaning of politics. According to Aristotle, "*Politics is a noble activity in which men decide the rules they will live by and the goals they will collectively pursue.*" This correlates with his definition of the State: "*State comes into existence originating in the bare needs of life and continues to exist for the sake of good life.*" This meaning of politics is long forgotten thanks to what politics has become. If political

leaders had stick to this meaning of politics, we would have better governments and better lives.

David Easton called Politics as “*Authoritative allocation of values*”. Here values mean democracy, equality, liberty, justice and such other cherished goals of humanity. As long as these values are provided to the citizens by its government through politicians, there will be peace and prosperity. But since the politicians themselves have lost values at their personal level, higher political values like democracy, liberty, equality, justice and others, do not reach the people at all.

However, politics today are to be equated with all the actions – good and bad – of the political parties and leaders aimed at achieving or retaining power. Ethics are no longer valued in today’s politics and unethical means are used to achieve selfish and mean objectives.

Ethics and Value based Politics: Need of the Hour

Mahatma Gandhi is often quoted to have said “*Politics without ethics is a sin.*” The erosion of these values has contributed to widespread corruption and weakened governance. Though SDGs cannot be achieved by 2030, steps should be taken to ensure that they are achieved at the earliest. Thus, two fold strategy is important to make politics a better of resolving problems of humanity.

- Firstly, measures must be taken for delinking development from degrading politics.
- Secondly, steps should be taken to invoke ethics into politics and restore the sanctity of politics as a noble activity.

Measures to be taken:

1. Greater amounts of transparency in governance

Greater transparency in policy making and policy execution is fundamental to control corruption. Further, people’s participation must be encouraged in policy making and policy implementation, especially at the grass-root level. Social auditing must be encouraged at all levels of government spending, especially, on the welfare programmes and public works. Villagers must be encouraged to learn the mechanism of social auditing. Further, all the public representatives must submit reports on spending of funds to the legislative bodies. Thus, social auditing will make public expenditure more transparent and efficient.

2. Safe, secure and speedy redressal of grievances and administration of justice

Corruption can be controlled, if there is an easy and effective grievance redressal mechanism. Anonymity of the complainant must be protected to ensure that common people can bring to the notice of the higher officials about any discrepancies at any point of policy making and policy execution. Better framework for punishing corrupt officials is necessary. Justice delayed, is justice denied. Thus, time bound justice should be the order of the day. Goal 16 of the SDGs calls for “promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, providing access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.” Countries across the world are indeed maintaining online and offline mechanisms for tackling corruption. Kenya’s Ethics and Anti-Corruption portal is open to public for reporting corruption (even anonymously) and keep a track of the complaint. Further, all the reports are available online.

3. Continuation of good policies, irrespective of governments

It is usually observed that certain programmes are terminated, when governments change after elections. Sometimes, the nomenclature is changed, and sometimes, the programme is modified. The better option should be that the programmes related to achieving SDGs should be named without giving importance to political leaders. They should be continued, even after the governments change after elections. For example, the Pulse Polio programme launched in 1995, has continued in India, irrespective of changes in the governments, election after election. Though India has been declared polio free in 2014, the programme is still in progress. Such programmes have to be taken up for the sake of development, and not for political agenda. Sandra Naranjo Bautista writes on ‘Better Govs’ “A long-term view is an intangible asset for a country. It establishes the vision of the nation, regardless of the government in power. It summarizes the goal towards which the country is heading. State policies go beyond a government”.

4. Replacing Freebie culture with Conditional Cash Transfer Programmes (CCTPs)

Poverty alleviation has always been used by the politicians as a votes generating mechanism. Though it is absolutely necessary to provide certain basic amenities, free of cost, it must be target oriented. In the recent years, India witnessed political parties lofting more and more unconditional money transfer schemes. India stands under 0.7 on HDI score in 2025.

The Bosla Familia Programme (BFP) is a conditional cash transfer program, started in October 2003, in Brazil. The beneficiary family members of BFP must meet the program's health and education conditions like attendance to school, vaccination and health checkups. The success of this programme is seen through the reduction in under-five child mortality rate, improved nutrition levels and reduction on school dropouts. UN report reveals the country's cash-transfer scheme has played a key role in raising its Human Development Index score from 0.744 in 2012 to 0.805 in 2024, on a scale from 0 to 1 (Wong, J. et al).

Keluarga Harapan (PKH) is another such conditional cash transfer scheme introduced in 2007 in Indonesia, to achieve the MDGs and continues to make SDGs a reality. Between 2007 and 2025, Indonesia's HDI value changed from 0.649 to 0.728. Several more examples are the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) program of Ghana and the Cash Transfer for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (CT-OVC) of Kenya.

5. *Training in ethics and politics*

Each politician, from grass root level to national level must undergo a training session in ethics. The politicians must realise the need for ethics in politics. The training can take the help of religion, philosophy or facts to make the politicians accept ethics in politics as a means of achieving human excellence. They must also realise that being a politician is a greatest way of doing service to humanity and not an income generating means. Even common people should understand the necessity of adhering to ethics in day to day lives. Both politicians and the common people must be aware of the seriousness of the global issues and the need to achieve SDGs. Moral stories along with SDGs must be included in school curriculum and students must be trained to practice honesty and play their role in achieving SDGs.

6. *Good people must be encouraged to join politics*

Good people usually avoid politics, as they find the practices employed in politics unacceptable. Many such individuals, who want to do community service, take the route of NGOs. However, it reduces the scope of work and also the target groups. If the same people enter the political arena, they can make greater differences to the people at large. Thus, more and more good people must be encouraged to join politics and contribute towards achieving SDGs. Greek political philosopher, Plato, in *The Republic, Book I*, said, "The price good men pay for indifference to public affairs is to be ruled by evil men".

7. *People from NGOs and other social services should be engaged*

There are a number of people, forming NGOs and societies for social service. The governments should take their services into consideration for achieving SDGs. Recognition and funding such people and agencies with time bound targets will bring more progress, in the world. ‘Deep Jyoti Kalyan Sansthan’ (DJKS), ‘Pratichi Trust’ and ‘AMREF Health Africa’ are a few examples of NGOs operating in developing countries to improve the living conditions of the people.

8. *CSR and ESG*

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has been an important driver to integrate the private sector into social development. The private sector is making good profits all over the world and cannot remain aloof to the responsibilities towards the SDGs. Being stakeholders in the overall development of the respective countries and the globe in general; the private agencies are encouraged to contribute in terms of CSR. Further, such philanthropic activities are given certain tax exemptions.

ESG - ‘Environmental, Social and Governance’, is a novel mechanism to measure the impact on the society and the environment. Both the public and the private sectors are now expected to commit to the environmental standards, social responsibilities and democratic norms in the governance. Thus, CSR and ESG make organisations more accountable and responsible.

9. *International Political and Economic Actors*

There is an urgent need for the International political and economic actors to introspect if their policies are in consistence with SDGs. Developing countries are unable to repay the large amounts of debt. The external debt of developing economies reached \$11.7 trillion in 2024 draining vital public resources needed for development (UNCTAD. 2025). Further, the repayment of the debts has led to enormous burden of the environment. Matthew Soener, a professor of Sociology at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, says that IMF’s Structural loans conditions impose coercive market constraints, reforms that pressure borrowers to increase their exports, indirectly raising countries’ greenhouse gas emissions through greater agricultural or manufacturing activities (Forrest, S. 2024). SDGs are interconnected, and if fulfilling one objective is hindering another, the implementation must be

rectified. Greater responsibility lies on these international actors as, their policies and programmes effects great number of lives and usually, the impact is global.

Conclusion

Human rights, sustainability, equality, development and justice are basic virtues of life. SDGs aim at achieving these very virtues for each and every individual, not only in the present, but also, in the future. Training of politicians in ethics and politics is important to make politics a medium of achieving the SDGs, rather than a hindrance. Finally, both national and international politics must be ethically corrected. SDGs may not be achieved by 2030, but a certain path shall be laid to ensure their achievement at the earliest.

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Sociocultural Influences on Appearance Avoidance Behaviours among Urban Indian Adults

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Urban Indian adults face pressure on a day-to-day basis to meet "muscular" or "thin" body type norms across social media, family expectations, and peer groups. This leads to a significant impact on how they view themselves and their behaviour in social settings. The current study analyses the relationship between body image and appearance-avoidance behaviour. It also explores the influence of socio-cultural factors (family, media, and peers) on avoidance behaviours among urban Indian adults. A sample of 290 participants (N = 292; males = 135, females = 157) aged 18–50 years were included in the study through random sampling and were assessed using standardised measures. Statistical analysis, including Pearson's correlation, linear regression, one-way ANOVA, and individual sample t-test, was used.

The correlation results revealed a significant positive relationship between body image and appearance avoidance behaviours ($r = 0.88$, $p < 0.001$). Multiple linear regression analysis revealed thin-ideal internalisation as a sole predictor of body image concerns as compared to muscular ideal internalisation. The t-test showed no significant gender differences in body image concerns. A one-way ANOVA revealed a significant difference in body image concern across age groups, with the youngest group reporting the highest average scores. This study helps mental health professionals, such as social psychologists, school psychologists, clinical psychologists, health psychologists and sports psychologists, recognise and understand risk factors and psychological needs of their clients, leading to more effective interventions.

Keywords: Appearance avoidance, socio-cultural influences, internalization, media influence, body image concerns

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INTRODUCTION

Body image does not refer only to the aesthetic physical appearance of an individual but is a multidimensional and subjective concept including the individual's perceptions, thoughts and feelings regarding their own body (Neagu, 2015). However, these perceptions are not formed randomly and arise from various socio-cultural standards set by families, peers and media. Body image is a psychological concept including the individual's perceptions and feelings about their own body as well as their feelings towards other individuals' bodies (Thompson et al., 1999). Paul Schilder defined body image as the "picture of our own body which we form in our mind, that is to say, the way in which the body appears to ourselves".

These feelings and perceptions can either be negative or positive. Positive perceptions lead to positive rational acceptance, including self-care behaviours and mental activities fostering rational self-talk and acceptance of one's own body (Cash et al., 2012). On the other hand, negative perceptions might lead to appearance fixing or avoidance behaviours such as making changes to one's external appearance in order to get camouflaged or hide perceived physical flaws, constantly weighing oneself, avoiding social gatherings, restraining eating behaviours and changing clothing behaviours (Mukta N et al. 2023). Both appearance fixing and avoidance pose as maladaptive coping strategies by individuals who face dissatisfaction regarding their own body or have low self-esteem (Cash et al., 2005).

Body satisfaction can be defined as the degree of discontent one experiences regarding one's own body. When an individual experiences low levels of body satisfaction, they indulge in appearance avoidance behaviours, as mentioned. The Tripartite Influence Model proposed by Thompson (1999) categorised variables that influence body image dissatisfaction into three: cultural influences, parental influences and peer influences. The theory posed parents as significant predictors of body dissatisfaction through direct and indirect ways. Direct influence includes behaviours such as teasing, criticising about weight or encouraging to diet (Badola et al., 2025). Indirect parental influence includes modeling for instance, the parent's preoccupation with weight or dietary habits (Badola et al., 2025).

Peer influence arises from appearance-based teasing or bullying. In certain environments, such as competitive sports, the impact of these pressures is amplified. Lastly, due to the importance and time given to media platforms such as Instagram, Snapchat or even movies, the influence of media has become an unavoidable source of appearance pressure. More use of visual platforms such as Snapchat and Instagram was correlated with

higher levels of body dissatisfaction due to app features such as filtered photos, Photoshop, editing, etc. (G Sushmitha et al., 2025). Several studies have shown the impact and significant role of such socio-cultural influences on the manifestation of appearance avoidance behaviours in Indian adults.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Mirrors are not merely objects of reflection; they quietly echo society's expectations, cultural norms, and deeply ingrained ideals of beauty. For many individuals, especially women, these reflections become sites of conflict, where personal identity clashes with social standards. Across recent Indian scholarship, body image concerns emerge not as isolated insecurities but as deeply social, cultural, and psychological experiences that are shaped by media, gender expectations, and shifting ideals of attractiveness. While early discourse in India focused heavily on women's bodies, more recent work brings attention to men, revealing that body dissatisfaction is a shared, though differently expressed, phenomenon. Male body dissatisfaction is centred around the idea of muscularity and low body fat, which often leads to extreme exercising, severe substance use, eating-related issues, and muscle dysmorphia (Olivardia et al, 2005) discovered that male college students perceived the ideal body to be approximately 25 pounds (equivalent to 11.34 kg) more muscular than their current muscle mass. Their investigation also delved into the potential connections between lower levels of perceived muscularity and fatness with feelings of depression and dissatisfaction with one's body.

The outcomes revealed that solely perceptions of inadequate muscularity were linked to these adverse attitudes and emotional states. In contrast, perceptions of fatness or weight did not emerge as significant predictors of such negative impacts, suggesting a potentially heightened importance of muscularity for certain male individuals. Similarly, women's body dissatisfaction is widely spread across issues driven by societal, media and peer pressures to meet the idealised beauty standards. Literature shows that two-thirds of school-going girls are dissatisfied with their body image and perceived themselves as overweight despite having a normal BMI (Body Mass Index). Also, the cultural norms in India contributed to the body image concerns; society prefers fair skin and a slender physique, which are considered attractive for females and are often reinforced through marital roles, social narratives and family expectations (Dheeraj Prakash et al, 2025).

Many studies have explored the impact of body image concerns among young individuals and adolescents, but there is limited intensive research done among adults across the lifespan of 18 to 50 years, and how socio-cultural influences lead to appearance avoidance behaviours. Additionally, most studies tend to focus on gender separately or focus mainly on women. Though there have been gender inclusive studies, there is a limited gender inclusive study focusing on urban Indian backgrounds.

Moreover, family, peers and media are widely considered as significant predictors of body-related pressures, but there has been no significant research focusing on the comparison of their impact. Additionally, in India, family and peers play a significant role in shaping an individual's body image, but existing literature has focused on media influence without involving the pressure faced from other socio-cultural influences. There have been multiple studies conducted on women from rural areas, but limited research on women from urban areas, especially on a gender-inclusive sample belonging to all socio-economic statuses.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

Research Questions:

1. Is there a relationship between body image and appearance avoidance behaviours?
2. What is the impact of socio-cultural influences on body image among urban Indian adults?
3. Are there any gender differences in body image concerns?
4. Do appearance avoidance behaviours vary across different age groups among urban Indian adults?

Research Objectives:

- To examine the relationship between body image and appearance avoidance behaviours
- To assess the impact of socio-cultural influences on body image among urban Indian adults
- To examine gender differences in body image concerns
- To examine whether avoidance behaviour differs among age groups

Research Hypotheses:

- There will be a positive relationship between body image and appearance avoidance behaviour.
- There will be a significant impact of socio-cultural influences on body image.
- There will be greater body image concerns among women than men.
- There will be significantly higher avoidance behaviour in younger adults compared to older adults.

Research Design:

This study follows a quantitative research design. It relies on numerical data to examine the relationship between body image and Avoidance Behaviours. Here, the primary aim of the study is to examine the influence of sociocultural body image ideals (thinness and muscularity) on avoidance behaviours defined as actions designed to avoid situations that provoke scrutiny of one's physical appearance, such as avoidance of mirrors, photographs, social gatherings and form-fitting clothing among urban Indian adults, and to understand how family, peer, and media pressures contribute to these behaviours.

Sample/ Sampling Method:

The research involved urban Indian adults between 18 to 50 years old from various genders, socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. This age group was selected to understand appearance avoidance behaviours across different stages of adulthood due to body-image standards. A snowball sampling method was used for selecting participants. The questionnaire was shared online, and participants asked to forward it to others who meet the criteria. This method was used as it allows a wider reach and easier data collection.

Variables:

- Independent Variable - Sociocultural Influences and Body Image
- Dependent Variable - Appearance avoidance behaviours: such as avoiding social situations, hiding one's body, or experiencing discomfort in public settings

Tools of Data Collection:

Data will be collected using structured questionnaires. The Socio-cultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Questionnaire-4 (SATAQ-4) was used to understand and calculate the influence of Sociocultural Influences related to appearance and satisfaction. The Body Image Concern Inventory (BICI) will be used to evaluate the tendency of appearance avoidance behaviours.

Procedure:

The questionnaire will be administered online using Google Forms to ensure easy access and wider reach. Participants will be informed about the purpose of the study before filling out the questionnaire. Participation will be voluntary and confidentiality will be maintained. Responses collected through Google Forms will be transferred to Excel for statistical analysis

Data Analysis:

The collected data will be entered into SPSS for analysis. Pearson's correlation coefficient, T-TEST and ANOVA will be utilised to assess the strength and direction of the connection between Sociocultural Influences, body image standards and appearance avoidance behaviours. This analysis will assist in figuring out if a stronger internalisation of body image ideals is significantly linked to a higher tendency towards appearance avoidance behaviours.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research study was conducted to elucidate the impact of socio-cultural influences such as family, peers and media on body image and appearance avoidance behaviours.

Participant data were gathered from a sample of 292 individuals (137 males and 154 females) within the age range between 18 to 50 years. The data consisted of scores from two scales - Socio-cultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Questionnaire-4 (SATAQ-4) and Body Image Concern Inventory (BICI).

After scoring the data, we performed inferential statistical analysis through IBM SPSS Statistics 29.0.2.0. The findings have been presented according to the four hypotheses proposed in this study.

4.1 Pearson Correlation: Correlation Analysis:

Table 4.1: Correlation Matrix between Negative Evaluation and Appearance Avoidance Behaviour (N=292)

	NE	AA
NE	-	.889***
AA	-	-

Note- *** $p < 0.001$, NE = Negative evaluation, AA = Appearance Avoidance, N = 292

As presented in Table 4.1, Negative evaluation and avoidance behaviour: Pearson's correlation was conducted to examine the relationship between the scores of negative evaluation of one's body image and appearance avoidance behaviour. The analysis revealed that the relation between body image and appearance avoidance posits that there is a significant positive relationship ($r = .889$, $p < .001$), indicating that the more an individual's concerns are related to negative evaluation, the higher they tend to experience appearance-related anxiety. The high significance score indicates that the results do not occur due to chance. There is a slight positive correlation between body image and appearance avoidance behaviours.

4.2 Regression Analysis: Impact of Socio-cultural Influences on Body Image

Table 4.2: Multiple Regression Analysis: Predicting Body Image from Socio-cultural Influences (N= 292)

Predictor	β				
(Constant)	4	30		51	5
Thin/low body fat	3	5	5	99	01
Muscular body	9	2	5	09	2
Family Pressure	4	9	2	98	7
Peers Pressure	7	3	3	21	3
Media Pressure	3	7	5	97	01

Note: N = 292; B = unstandardized coefficient, SE = Standard Error; β - standardized coefficient; $F(5, 286) = 41.824$, $p < .001$

As presented in Table 2, the impact of socio-cultural factors on body image: A multiple linear regression was utilised to determine whether different socio-cultural factors, including family, peers, media, and internalisation of muscular/thin body ideals (SATAQ 4; Thompson et al. 2015), could predict the impact of body image scores of individuals (BICI; Thomas F. Cash 2002). The regression model was statistically significant ($F(5286) = 41.824$, $p < .001$). It indicates that sociocultural factors affect body image concerns in adults. Among the variables, media influence was seen to have the strongest impact on adults ($\beta = .346$, $p < .001$), the next strong influence was of internalisation of thin body ideals with a score of ($\beta = .196$, $p < .001$), and then followed by family influence with a score of ($\beta = .142$, $p = < .017$). Internalisation of muscular body type ($\beta = .085$, $p = > .132$) and peer influence ($\beta = .068$, $p = > .263$) does not have a significant impact on urban Indian adults. Thus, it can be concluded that the greater an individual has internalisation of thin body ideals, the higher the chance of the person experiencing body image dissatisfaction.

4.3 T-test for Group Comparisons: Gender and Body Image Concerns

Table 4.3: T-test Results for Body Image Concerns by Gender (N=292)

Variable	Group	<i>n</i>	Mean	Std. Deviation	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Body image concerns	Male	137	37.61	18.09	289	0.25	.796
	Female	154	37.09	15.85			

Note. N = 292; M = 37.67 ; SD = 18.09 ; *df* = 289 ; *t* = 0.25; *p* = .796

Table 4.3 comparison of gender and body image concerns: There is an Independent sample t-test was conducted to see the gender difference in body image concerns. The mean and standard deviation scores for gender difference in body image concerns are slightly higher in males (M=37.61, SD=18.09) in comparison to females (M=37.09, SD=15.85). The difference between the 2 genders is very small, which shows very little difference in body image concerns between the genders. The t-value ($t=0.259$) with p-value ($p=.796$) proves that there is no significant difference between the two genders. We can conclude that gender does not influence body image concerns, and both genders experience similar levels of body

image concerns. Therefore, gender does not play a major role in experiencing body-related dissatisfaction, and it is a universal issue.

4.4 Inferential Analysis: One-Way ANOVA

Table 4.4: Comparison of Avoidance Behaviours across Age Groups (N=292)

Age group	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
18-24 (1)	112	44.16	19.23
25-34(2)	79	33.12	13.89
35-50(3)	101	32.89	13.64
Total	292	37.27	16.92

Note. N = 292; *M* = 37.27; *SD* = 16.92, $F(2,289) = 16.64$, $p = <.001$.

As indicated in Table 4.4, comparison of avoidance behaviour across age groups: One-way ANOVA was used to evaluate various age groups experiencing more body image concerns, leading to appearance avoidance behaviour. The findings revealed that appearance avoidance behaviours had significant differences across age groups, which indicates that age has an effect on these behaviours. The assumption of homogeneity of variance was examined through the Games-Howell test, and it revealed that age group 1 ($M=44.16$, $SD=19.23$) has significantly higher scores than age group 2 ($M=33.12$, $SD=13.89$) and age group 3 ($M=32.89$, $SD=13.64$), meaning the younger population experiences more avoidance behaviours due to body image concerns. Although there was no significant difference found between age groups 2 and 3.

DISCUSSION

The current study aimed to examine the role of sociocultural factors in body image concerns and to explore gender and age differences in body image concerns. Put simply, the results tell a very clear and important story: body image concerns are a product of the social world people are immersed in - particularly media. First, the correlations revealed that all the sociocultural influences considered - internalization of thinness and muscular ideals, and perceived pressure from family, peers and media - were positively related to body image concerns. Put simply, the more people were affected by these appearance-related messages,

the more likely they were to be dissatisfied with their body image. Of these factors, media was the strongest predictor, supporting the work of sociocultural theorists that media are a key source of defining and promoting unrealistic ideals of beauty (Thompson J. Kevin et al., 1999; Tiggemann Marika, 2011). This finding is particularly relevant today as a result of the nature of the media. People are no longer simply consuming media content but interacting with highly manipulated images on social media. This can result in the acceptance of these "ideal" images, which can lead to body image comparisons and dissatisfaction. This may explain the finding of increased media influence being related to more body dissatisfaction in the current study. The regression analysis went further by gauging which factors actually predict body image concerns, taking all factors into account. This analysis showed media is the strongest predictor, even when considering other factors, followed by internalization of thin/low body fat ideals and family. Surprisingly, peer influence and muscular internalization were not significant. This does not mean that they are not important, just that their impact may be captured by more pervasive influences such as the media. That is, media may not only influence an individual's perceptions but also those communicated through peers and family. This is consistent with findings that media messages often "spill over" into social interactions (Harrison Kristen, 2000). The second key finding from the results is the importance of internalization. Both thinness and muscular ideals were positively associated with body image concerns, but thinness internalization had a stronger relationship. This may reflect the ongoing dominance of the lean body type as the ideal body type. However, the significant correlations with muscular ideals suggest that people are also increasingly exposed to conflicting ideals (to be thin and muscular, simultaneously) which may compound their feelings of dissatisfaction. The analysis of body image avoidance behaviors adds another layer to this understanding. The high inter-relationship between the various components of avoidance suggests that body image dissatisfaction is not isolated but manifests in a number of ways. People who are unhappy with their bodies may avoid mirrors, social events, or certain clothing, forming a pattern of avoidance. This finding adds to cognitive-behavioral views that such avoidance helps to maintain body dissatisfaction over time (Cash, 2012). Another stand-out result of the study was a lack of gender differences in body image concerns. In the past, body dissatisfaction has been considered to be higher for women. Yet, the present findings show that men and women are equally concerned, and this may reflect a cultural change. Greater exposure of men to idealized body images - such as

lean and muscular bodies - may have played a role in this shift (Frederick David A. et al., 2007). This underscores the need to move beyond gender stereotyping and see body image as a societal issue. In contrast, age differences were clearly evident. There were greater concerns with body image among younger participants. This aligns with the theories of development, which highlight that adolescence and young adulthood are stages of life that involve identity development and increased social comparison (Erik Erikson, 1968). The younger age groups are also more engaged with social media, where they are exposed to more appearance-relevant comparisons. These circumstances may render them especially susceptible to body dissatisfaction. Overall, the study underscores the prominent role of media in body image concerns, which is also related to self-imposed standards and family factors. However, the absence of gender differences and the heightened concerns among younger individuals suggest the need for more gender-inclusive and age-sensitive interventions to address body image concerns.

CONCLUSION

These findings contribute to a nuanced understanding of the impact socio-cultural influences such as family, peers and media can have on body image concerns and how this might lead to the manifestation of appearance avoidance behaviours. Research into socio-cultural influences on body image produced multiple findings that confirm the influence of media, peers and family on body image. The analysis indicated that the more an individual indulges in negative evaluation of their own body, the higher they tend to experience appearance-related anxiety, thus leading to appearance avoidance behaviours. The expected gender difference for body image concerns turned out to be less significant than anticipated. Thus, gender does not play a significant role in experiencing body-related concerns and demonstrates it as a universal phenomenon. Additionally, results revealed that individuals belonging to the age group of 18 to 24 years had a higher tendency to practice avoidance behaviours than the age group of 25 to 50 years.

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Opportunities and Challenges of Globalization for India: A Comprehensive Analysis

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This comprehensive analysis examines the multifaceted impact of globalization on India's economic, social, and political transformation since the 1991 economic liberalization reforms. The study traces India's evolution from a protectionist, inward-looking economy characterized by the License Raj system to its emergence as one of the world's fastest-growing major economies and a significant player in the global order. The analysis demonstrates how globalization has created substantial economic opportunities through expanded trade relationships, massive foreign direct investment inflows, technological advancement, and sectoral transformation, particularly in information technology and services sectors that have positioned India as a global hub for offshore services and digital solutions. The research explores how initiatives like "Make in India" and Production Linked Incentive schemes have modernized manufacturing capabilities while integrating India into global value chains, alongside examining the social and cultural dimensions including human capital development, knowledge flows, cultural exchange, and India's growing soft power influence globally.

However, the study also critically analyzes the significant challenges accompanying globalization, including economic vulnerabilities to external shocks, widening inequalities between urban and rural populations, environmental degradation from rapid industrialization, and concerns about cultural homogenization and social disruption. The analysis reveals how globalization's benefits have been unevenly distributed, creating tensions between economic growth aspirations and environmental sustainability, while exposing domestic industries to intense international competition and making the economy more susceptible to global financial volatility.

The research concludes by examining India's strategic policy responses, particularly the concept of "open strategic autonomy" exemplified by the Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative, which seeks to balance self-reliance with global integration through calibrated engagement that maximizes international opportunities while safeguarding national interests and reducing critical dependencies. This approach involves selective participation in global trade

agreements, diversified international partnerships, and strengthening domestic innovation ecosystems while maintaining strategic autonomy in critical sectors. The study emphasizes that India's future success in globalization requires sophisticated policy frameworks that ensure inclusive and sustainable development, robust social safety nets, environmental protection, and the strengthening of domestic foundations in education, infrastructure, and governance to enable broader participation in the global economy while preserving cultural identity and national sovereignty.

Introduction

Globalization has reshaped India's economic, social, and political landscape by opening new avenues for growth while simultaneously presenting complex challenges that demand thoughtful navigation. On one hand, increased foreign investment, expanded global markets, and rapid technological advances have propelled India into a more competitive and interconnected world, fostering innovation, job creation, and stronger global partnerships. Access to international ideas and cultural exchange has enriched Indian society, empowering its youth with global exposure and unprecedented opportunities. On the other hand, globalization has intensified economic inequality, exposed domestic industries to tough international competition, and made India more vulnerable to global crises and market fluctuations. It has also raised concerns about cultural dilution, environmental degradation, and ethical issues in global business practices. Therefore, India's journey through globalization requires a balanced, strategic approach that maximizes economic and developmental gains while safeguarding national interests, cultural identity, and social equity, ensuring sustainable and inclusive progress for all.

Chapter 1: Understanding Globalization and India's Integration

Understanding globalization and India's integration requires examining a deliberate, multi-decade evolution from a protected, inward-looking economy to an active participant in the global system. India's formal integration began with the economic liberalization of 1991, a watershed moment that dismantled the License Raj and opened its markets to foreign investment, trade, and technology. This shift was not merely economic; it initiated deep socio-cultural exchanges, transformed domestic consumption patterns, and repositioned India within global geopolitical and supply-chain networks. Over time, integration has manifested

through its formidable IT and services sector, a growing role in global value chains, and the influential diaspora acting as a bridge to the world. However, this process has been neither linear nor uniformly beneficial, creating a complex tapestry of advancement and disruption across economic, social, and institutional spheres. Thus, understanding India's globalization story is to analyze a conscious, ongoing negotiation between embracing external opportunities and managing internal vulnerabilities, all while striving to carve out a distinct and influential space in an interconnected world.

Section 1.1: Concept and Evolution of Globalization

1.1.1 Meaning and dimensions of globalization (economic, political, socio-cultural)

Globalization refers to the process through which countries become increasingly interconnected and interdependent, leading to the integration of their economies, polities, and societies beyond national borders. In economic terms, it involves the freer movement of goods, services, capital, technology, and labour across countries, creating global production networks, transnational corporations, and integrated markets that shape growth and employment patterns in India. Politically, globalization manifests in the growing influence of international institutions, treaties, and regimes on domestic policy choices, as well as India's active engagement in multilateral forums and strategic partnerships that both constrain and expand its policy autonomy. Socio-culturally, it promotes the rapid circulation of ideas, values, lifestyles, and cultural products through media, migration, and communication technologies, simultaneously enabling exposure to diverse cultures and raising concerns about cultural homogenization and the erosion or reassertion of local identities in Indian society.

1.1.2 Historical evolution: from colonial trade to post-Cold War integration

India's relationship with globalization has evolved through distinct historical phases, beginning with the forced integration during the colonial period when the British Empire transformed India into a supplier of raw materials and agricultural products while simultaneously creating captive markets for British manufactured goods, establishing trade patterns that were extractive and asymmetrical rather than mutually beneficial. The colonial trade system, characterized by the export of cotton, indigo, tea, and jute to Britain and the import of textiles and industrial products, created structural dependencies that persisted well into the independence era, leaving India with an economy oriented toward primary commodity production and limited industrial

capabilities. Following independence in 1947, India's leaders, influenced by socialist ideologies and the desire for economic sovereignty, adopted an inward-looking development strategy known as the "License Raj," which emphasized import substitution, state-led industrialization, and strict controls on foreign trade and investment, effectively insulating the economy from global market forces while pursuing self-reliance through domestic production capabilities. This protectionist phase lasted until the early 1990s when a severe balance of payments crisis forced India to abandon its closed-door policies and embrace economic liberalization, marking the beginning of its gradual integration into the post-Cold War global economy. The end of the Cold War created new opportunities for developing countries like India to engage with the global economy on more favorable terms, as the bipolar world order gave way to a multipolar system where economic considerations began to supersede ideological alignments, enabling India to pursue pragmatic engagement with both Western and emerging economies while leveraging its democratic credentials and growing market size to attract foreign investment and technology partnerships that would transform its economic trajectory from a predominantly agricultural society to a major player in the global services economy.

1.1.3 Key drivers: technology, trade liberalization, finance, and institutions

The forces shaping India's globalization journey are anchored in four powerful drivers—technology, trade liberalization, finance, and institutional frameworks. Rapid technological advancement, especially in digital connectivity, automation, and communication systems, has enabled India to integrate more efficiently with global markets while fostering innovation and expanding service-based industries like IT and fintech. Trade liberalization, marked by reduced tariffs, deregulation, and export-oriented policies, has opened new avenues for Indian businesses to compete internationally and attract global partners. Parallely, increased financial flows—through foreign direct investment, remittances, and capital markets—have strengthened India's economic foundation, fueling industrial growth and infrastructure development. Strong institutions, including regulatory bodies, legal frameworks, and international alliances, provide the structure and credibility necessary for navigating global economic systems and ensuring stability. Together, these drivers form the backbone of India's global engagement, accelerating growth while positioning the country as a dynamic participant in the world economy.

Section 1.2: India's Experience with Globalization

1.2.1 Pre-1991 economic model and limited global integration

In the pre-1991 period, India followed a mixed economy model with a strong emphasis on state-led planning, self-reliance, and protection from external economic pressures. The strategy relied on import-substitution industrialization, high tariffs, quantitative restrictions, and a complex licensing system (often called the “license-permit-quota raj”) that tightly regulated private enterprise and foreign investment. This framework aimed to correct colonial-era distortions, promote domestic industrialization, and preserve policy autonomy, but it also resulted in limited participation in world trade, a small share of global capital flows, and relatively weak integration into global production networks. External borrowing and aid existed, yet the overall orientation remained cautious and inward-looking, with international economic engagement subordinated to the goals of planned development, social justice, and economic sovereignty.

1.2.2 1991 Liberalization–Privatization–Globalization (LPG) reforms

The Liberalization–Privatization–Globalization (LPG) reforms initiated in 1991 under Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao and Finance Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh represented a watershed moment in India's economic history, fundamentally dismantling the License Raj system and integrating the country into the global economy through a comprehensive package of structural adjustment measures necessitated by an acute balance of payments crisis. The liberalization component involved the systematic removal of industrial licensing requirements, reduction of import tariffs from an average of over 125 percent to approximately 25 percent by the end of the decade, elimination of quantitative restrictions on imports, and the decontrol of prices in most sectors, thereby unleashing market forces and promoting competition within the domestic economy. Privatization policies focused on reducing the state's role in economic production by opening previously reserved sectors to private participation, selling government stakes in public sector enterprises, and encouraging private investment in telecommunications, airlines, banking, and insurance sectors that had been monopolized by state-owned companies, while also establishing regulatory frameworks to ensure fair competition and consumer protection in newly liberalized markets. The globalization dimension encompassed the progressive opening of India's economy to foreign investment and trade through measures such as raising foreign direct investment limits from 40 percent to 100 percent in most sectors,

introducing the concept of automatic approval for FDI below certain thresholds, making the rupee convertible on the current account, and actively encouraging foreign technology partnerships and joint ventures to modernize Indian industry. These reforms transformed India from an inward-looking, state-dominated economy characterized by shortages, inefficiency, and slow growth into a market-oriented system that achieved sustained GDP growth rates of 6-8 percent annually while integrating with global production networks, attracting significant foreign investment, and establishing itself as a major destination for offshore services, particularly in information technology and business process outsourcing, thereby positioning India as one of the world's fastest-growing major economies and an increasingly important player in the global economic system.

1.2.3 Gradual deepening of global linkages: trade, capital flows, and migration

From the 1980s onwards, and especially after the 1991 reforms, India witnessed a gradual but significant deepening of its global linkages through trade, capital flows, and migration. Merchandise and services trade expanded as tariffs were reduced, quantitative restrictions were dismantled, and Indian firms increasingly participated in regional and global value chains, particularly in sectors such as IT, pharmaceuticals, and automobiles. Capital flows intensified with the liberalization of the capital account in a calibrated manner, leading to larger inflows of foreign direct investment, portfolio investment, and external commercial borrowings that linked Indian markets more closely with global financial cycles. At the same time, migration patterns evolved from traditional labour migration to the Gulf and other regions to a more diversified diaspora that includes highly skilled professionals, students, and entrepreneurs, whose remittances, knowledge transfers, and transnational networks further tied India into the economic and social fabric of globalization.

Section 1.3: India in the Contemporary Global Order

India today ranks among the world's largest economies in terms of GDP, reflecting its growing weight in the global economic system. It is generally placed within the top five economies by nominal GDP, with a relatively modest per-capita income but high and sustained growth rates that make it one of the fastest-growing major economies. In global trade, India's share in total merchandise exports remains smaller than its share in world GDP, but its presence in services trade—especially IT, IT-enabled services, business process outsourcing, and professional

services—is disproportionately high, positioning it as a key services hub integrated into global value chains.

India in the contemporary global order is positioned as a major emerging power that combines rapid economic growth, demographic weight, and increasing strategic influence. Its role has expanded beyond being a passive rule-taker to an active shaper of global norms on trade, climate change, technology, and development, often articulating the concerns of the Global South and seeking a more equitable and multipolar world system. At the same time, India maintains a careful balance between great powers through diversified partnerships—such as engagement with the United States, Russia, the European Union, and key Asian and African states—while participating in multiple forums like the G20, BRICS, and regional groupings. This evolving profile reflects an attempt to leverage globalization for national development, protect strategic autonomy, and project India as a responsible stakeholder and agenda-setter in the international system.

Chapter 2: Economic Opportunities of Globalization for India

Globalization has unlocked significant economic opportunities for India, transforming it into one of the world's fastest-growing emerging economies. The opening of markets and integration with the global economy have expanded export potential, attracted large inflows of foreign direct investment, and stimulated the growth of competitive industries such as IT, pharmaceuticals, manufacturing, and services. Enhanced access to global technology and advanced management practices has improved productivity, innovation, and overall efficiency across sectors. Global supply chain integration has enabled Indian businesses, including small and medium enterprises, to reach international customers and participate in global value networks. Additionally, globalization has generated millions of jobs, increased consumer choices, and raised living standards by making goods and services more affordable. By leveraging global partnerships, India has strengthened its economic resilience and positioned itself as a key player in the international market, creating a strong foundation for long-term economic expansion.

Section 2.1: Growth, Trade, and Investment

India's economic transformation through globalization is perhaps most dramatically illustrated by its sustained high growth trajectory, expanded trade relationships, and massive inflows of

foreign investment that have collectively repositioned the country from a marginal player to one of the world's fastest-growing major economies. Since the 1991 liberalization, India's GDP growth has averaged approximately 6-7 percent annually, with the economy expanding from around \$270 billion in 1991 to over \$3.7 trillion in 2023, making it the world's fifth-largest economy and demonstrating remarkable resilience through various global financial crises while maintaining its upward trajectory even during challenging periods such as the 2008 financial crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic. The country's trade profile has undergone dramatic diversification and expansion, with total merchandise and services trade growing from less than \$50 billion in 1990-91 to over \$770 billion in 2022-23, while the composition has shifted from traditional exports like textiles and agricultural products to high-value sectors including pharmaceuticals, automotive components, engineering goods, and particularly services exports that have made India a global leader in information technology, business process outsourcing, and digital services worth over \$250 billion annually. Foreign direct investment has emerged as a crucial driver of this transformation, with annual FDI inflows increasing from negligible amounts in the pre-reform era to record levels exceeding \$80 billion in recent years, attracted by India's large domestic market, skilled workforce, competitive costs, and improving business environment, while the cumulative FDI stock has reached over \$650 billion across diverse sectors including telecommunications, automotive, pharmaceuticals, retail, and renewable energy. This growth-trade-investment nexus has created positive feedback loops where economic expansion has enhanced India's attractiveness to foreign investors and trading partners, while increased integration with global markets has provided access to capital, technology, and knowledge that have further accelerated growth, establishing India as an indispensable component of global supply chains and a key destination for multinational corporations seeking to diversify their operations and tap into one of the world's largest consumer markets.

Section 2.2: Sectoral Transformation and Employment

Globalization has driven a profound sectoral transformation in India, shifting the growth engine from agriculture towards industry and, even more prominently, services. Export-oriented manufacturing in areas like automobiles, textiles, and pharmaceuticals has modernized production processes and created new clusters of jobs, though often concentrated in specific regions and requiring higher skill levels. At the same time, the IT and IT-enabled services boom

has generated substantial employment for educated youth, fostered an urban middle class, and integrated Indian firms into global value chains, while also encouraging the rise of start-ups and the gig economy. However, this transformation has been uneven: large numbers of workers remain trapped in low-productivity agriculture or informal urban work, and the pace of formal, secure job creation has lagged behind the aspirations of a young and rapidly growing labour force, raising concerns about jobless or job-poor growth in a globalized setting.

2.3 Modernization of manufacturing and “Make in India” type initiatives

The modernization of India's manufacturing sector through strategic government initiatives like "Make in India," launched in 2014, represents a comprehensive effort to transform the country into a global manufacturing hub by leveraging globalization's opportunities while addressing historical weaknesses in industrial competitiveness and technological capabilities. The "Make in India" campaign, with its focus on 25 key sectors including automobiles, textiles, pharmaceuticals, electronics, and renewable energy, has sought to attract foreign direct investment, encourage technology transfer, and promote domestic manufacturing through a combination of policy reforms, infrastructure development, and ease of doing business improvements that have simplified regulatory procedures, reduced approval timelines, and created sector-specific incentives for both domestic and international investors. This initiative has been complemented by related programs such as the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme, which offers financial incentives to manufacturers in strategic sectors like electronics, pharmaceuticals, and automotive components, and the Atmanirbhar Bharat (Self-Reliant India) program that emphasizes import substitution and domestic value addition while maintaining openness to global partnerships and technology collaboration. The results have been significant, with India's manufacturing sector attracting substantial foreign investment from global giants like Apple, Samsung, Foxconn, and Tesla, leading to the establishment of sophisticated production facilities that serve both domestic and export markets, particularly in electronics assembly where India has emerged as an alternative manufacturing destination to China for companies seeking supply chain diversification. These initiatives have modernized traditional manufacturing through the adoption of Industry 4.0 technologies including automation, artificial intelligence, and Internet of Things applications, while also developing new manufacturing ecosystems in emerging sectors like electric vehicles, semiconductors, and renewable energy equipment that position India to compete in future industries. The success of

these programs is evident in India's rising share of global manufacturing exports, the creation of millions of formal sector jobs, and the development of industrial clusters and special economic zones that have integrated Indian manufacturing into global value chains while building domestic capabilities that reduce import dependence and enhance the country's strategic autonomy in critical sectors.

Section 2.4: Technology, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship

Technology, innovation, and entrepreneurship form one of the most dynamic channels through which globalization has reshaped India's development trajectory. Exposure to global markets, ideas, and competition has pushed Indian firms and start-ups to upgrade technologies, adopt digital platforms, and experiment with new business models, particularly in sectors such as fintech, e-commerce, health-tech, ed-tech, and clean energy. The diffusion of information and communication technologies, coupled with supportive policies and access to global venture capital, has helped create a vibrant start-up ecosystem in cities like Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Delhi-NCR, and Mumbai, turning India into one of the leading start-up hubs in the world. At the same time, collaboration with multinational corporations, participation in global value chains, and the return of skilled diaspora professionals have strengthened domestic capabilities in research, design, and innovation, even as challenges remain in spreading these gains beyond urban centers and ensuring that technological change generates inclusive and sustainable growth.

Chapter 3: Social, Cultural, and Political Opportunities

Globalization has generated significant social, cultural, and political opportunities for India, fundamentally reshaping its position and internal dynamics on the world stage. Socially, it has fostered greater mobility, empowered a new generation of professionals, and enhanced access to global knowledge, healthcare trends, and educational resources, contributing to a more aspirational and connected citizenry. Culturally, it has propelled Indian cinema, cuisine, yoga, and spiritual traditions onto the global mainstream, boosting national soft power and fostering a renewed sense of pride and creative fusion at home. Politically, India's economic integration has amplified its geopolitical influence, allowing it to transition from a non-aligned bystander to a strategic partner in forums like the G20 and the Quad, while simultaneously using its democratic model and digital public infrastructure as tools for global leadership. These

converging opportunities have enabled India to project its civilizational identity with newfound confidence while actively shaping international norms and dialogues.

Section 3.1: Human Development and Knowledge Flows

Globalization has profoundly transformed India's human development landscape through unprecedented knowledge flows, educational exchanges, and skill development opportunities that have enhanced the country's human capital while creating new challenges related to brain drain, inequality, and cultural adaptation. The liberalization of India's economy has facilitated massive investments in education and training infrastructure, with multinational corporations establishing research and development centers, global capability centers, and training facilities that have exposed millions of Indian professionals to international best practices, cutting-edge technologies, and global quality standards, thereby upgrading the overall skill base and creating a workforce capable of competing in knowledge-intensive industries. This process has been accelerated by the growth of India's information technology sector, which has not only generated direct employment for over 5 million professionals but has also created spillover effects across the economy by establishing English proficiency, technical skills, and service orientation as valuable assets, while simultaneously enabling Indian educational institutions to align their curricula with global industry requirements and international accreditation standards. The brain circulation phenomenon has emerged as a significant benefit, with the Indian diaspora of over 32 million people worldwide, including substantial populations in Silicon Valley, contributing to knowledge transfer through return migration, investment flows, and professional networks that connect Indian startups and companies with global markets, venture capital, and technological innovations. However, this integration has also highlighted persistent challenges in human development, including the digital divide between urban and rural populations, unequal access to quality education and healthcare, and the risk of brain drain in critical sectors like medicine and research, where skilled professionals migrate to developed countries seeking better opportunities and working conditions. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated digital transformation in education and healthcare, demonstrating both the potential for technology-enabled human development and the vulnerabilities of populations lacking digital access, while initiatives like Digital India, Skill India, and the New Education Policy 2020 represent government efforts to harness globalization's knowledge flows for inclusive

human development that bridges traditional divides and prepares India's youth for participation in the global knowledge economy.

Section 3.2: Cultural Exchange and Soft Power

Cultural exchange and soft power have become central to how India engages with globalization, allowing it to influence the world not through coercion but through attraction, values, and ideas. Indian films, music, cuisine, yoga, Ayurveda, and spiritual traditions have reached global audiences, shaping perceptions of India as a diverse, creative, and civilizational rich society. The Indian diaspora, spread across continents, acts as a bridge between India and host countries, promoting cultural festivals, language, and business networks that deepen people-to-people ties. At the same time, India's democratic institutions, constitutional values, and development partnerships with other countries contribute to its image as a responsible global actor, reinforcing its soft power and enhancing its ability to shape global conversations on culture, development, and identity in an interconnected world.

Section 3.3: Diplomacy, Governance, and Global Leadership

Diplomacy, governance, and global leadership capture how India uses globalization not only to pursue national interests but also to shape international norms and institutions. Through active participation in forums such as the United Nations, G20, BRICS, and various regional groupings, India projects itself as a voice for the Global South, advocating fairer trade rules, climate justice, and inclusive development. Its development partnerships, lines of credit, and capacity-building programmes in Asia, Africa, and the Indian Ocean region illustrate a governance model that blends solidarity with strategic interests, reinforcing India's role as a "development partner" rather than a traditional great power. At the same time, India's diplomatic emphasis on strategic autonomy, multi-alignment, and rule-based international order reflects an effort to navigate intensifying great-power rivalries while presenting itself as a responsible, reform-minded leader in the evolving global governance architecture.

Chapter 4: Economic, Social, and Environmental Challenges

While globalization has brought significant gains for India, it has also introduced a range of economic, social, and environmental challenges that require careful management. Economically, increased global competition places pressure on domestic industries—

especially small and traditional sectors—that struggle to match international standards, sometimes resulting in job losses and widening income inequality. Socially, globalization accelerates cultural shifts, creating tension between traditional values and global influences, while also contributing to urban migration, lifestyle changes, and disparities in access to opportunities. Environmental challenges have intensified as rapid industrialization, expanding infrastructure, and large-scale resource consumption driven by global demand have contributed to pollution, ecological degradation, and unsustainable practices. These interconnected challenges highlight the need for balanced policies that promote inclusive development, protect vulnerable communities, and ensure that growth driven by globalization remains environmentally sustainable and socially equitable.

Section 4.1: Economic Vulnerabilities and Inequalities

Globalization has exposed India to new economic vulnerabilities and sharpened existing inequalities, even as it has created opportunities for growth. Greater integration with global markets makes the economy more sensitive to external shocks such as financial crises, commodity price swings, supply-chain disruptions, and sudden reversals of capital flows, which can affect growth, employment, and macroeconomic stability disproportionately for poorer households and smaller firms. Benefits from trade, technology, and investment tend to concentrate in certain regions, sectors, and skill groups, leading to widening gaps between urban and rural areas, between high-skill and low-skill workers, and between the formal and informal economy. This unequal distribution of gains can manifest in persistent income and wealth disparities, uneven access to quality education, health, and social protection, and a sense of exclusion among those who feel left behind by a globalized, technology-driven growth model.

Section 4.2: Social and Cultural Concerns

Globalization has generated a range of social and cultural concerns in India, even as it has expanded opportunities for exchange and enrichment. The rapid spread of global media, consumer brands, and lifestyle aspirations can encourage materialism, individualism, and a “culture of comparison” that puts pressure on families, youth, and traditional support systems. Many worry that local languages, folk arts, and community practices may be marginalized as global popular culture becomes dominant, leading to a sense of cultural homogenization and

loss of rootedness. At the same time, patterns of migration, urbanization, and exposure to diverse values can create intergenerational tensions, debates over identity and morality, and new forms of social fragmentation—raising important questions about how to preserve cultural diversity, strengthen social cohesion, and adapt India's rich traditions to a fast-changing, globally connected society.

Section 4.3: Environmental and Sustainability Issues

India's integration into the global economy through industrialization, urbanization, and increased consumption has created significant environmental challenges that reflect the complex tensions between economic development aspirations and ecological sustainability in a country that houses nearly 18 percent of the world's population on just 2.4 percent of its land area. The rapid expansion of manufacturing, mining, and infrastructure development to support globalization has led to severe air and water pollution, with Indian cities consistently ranking among the world's most polluted, while industrial growth has contributed to deforestation, soil degradation, and biodiversity loss that threatens both local ecosystems and global climate stability. India's energy-intensive growth model, heavily dependent on coal for electricity generation and transportation needs, has made it the world's third-largest carbon emitter, creating pressure from the international community to balance its development needs with global climate commitments, as evidenced by its pledge to achieve net-zero emissions by 2070 and generate 50 percent of its electricity from renewable sources by 2030. The globalization of consumption patterns has exacerbated environmental pressures through increased demand for automobiles, electronic goods, and processed foods that generate substantial waste streams, while the adoption of Western lifestyle preferences has led to higher per capita resource consumption among India's growing middle class, creating what experts term the "environmental Kuznets curve" challenge where pollution initially increases with economic growth before potentially declining at higher income levels. However, globalization has also provided India with access to clean technologies, green financing mechanisms, and international cooperation frameworks that offer pathways for sustainable development, including renewable energy investments exceeding \$70 billion, participation in global climate initiatives, and technology transfer agreements that enable leapfrogging to cleaner production methods. The environmental sustainability challenge requires India to navigate the tension between its legitimate development aspirations and global environmental responsibilities,

leading to innovative approaches such as the International Solar Alliance, massive renewable energy expansion programs, and the promotion of electric vehicles and green hydrogen that position the country as both a responsible global citizen and a leader in sustainable development solutions that can serve as models for other developing nations facing similar growth-environment trade-offs.

Chapter 5: Policy Responses and the Way Forward for India

India's future trajectory in globalization requires a sophisticated policy framework that maximizes the benefits of international integration while safeguarding national interests and addressing the multifaceted challenges that have emerged from three decades of economic liberalization. The government's strategic response has evolved toward what can be termed "calibrated globalization," exemplified by initiatives like Atmanirbhar Bharat (Self-Reliant India) that seek to build domestic capabilities and reduce critical dependencies while remaining open to beneficial foreign partnerships, technology transfer, and investment flows that enhance competitiveness rather than create vulnerabilities. This approach involves selective engagement with global trade agreements, as demonstrated by India's decision to withdraw from RCEP while pursuing bilateral trade partnerships with countries like Australia, UAE, and the European Union that offer more favorable terms and greater policy space for protecting sensitive sectors like agriculture and small-scale manufacturing. The way forward demands strengthening domestic innovation ecosystems through increased R&D spending, enhanced university-industry collaboration, and support for startups and technology entrepreneurship that can compete globally while creating intellectual property and high-value employment within India. Environmental sustainability must be integrated into all economic policies through aggressive renewable energy expansion, circular economy principles, and green technology adoption that positions India as a global leader in sustainable development rather than a laggard struggling to meet climate commitments. Social policy responses must address globalization's uneven impacts through enhanced skill development programs, strengthened social safety nets, and targeted interventions for regions and communities that have been bypassed by global integration, while labor market reforms need to balance flexibility for businesses with security for workers in an increasingly dynamic economy. The digital transformation accelerated by the pandemic offers opportunities to leapfrog traditional development constraints through initiatives like Digital India, JAM (Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-

Mobile) trinity, and the India Stack that can deliver public services efficiently while enabling financial inclusion and creating new economic opportunities for previously marginalized populations, ultimately ensuring that India's continued engagement with globalization serves the goal of inclusive and sustainable development that benefits all sections of society.

Section 5.1: Strengthening Domestic Foundations

Strengthening domestic foundations is essential for India to engage with globalization on its own terms and convert external opportunities into broad-based development. This begins with investing in human capital through accessible, high-quality education, healthcare, and skill development so that a larger share of the population can participate productively in a competitive global economy. It also requires robust physical and digital infrastructure—reliable power, transport, logistics, and broadband connectivity—that lowers transaction costs and boosts the competitiveness of firms across regions, not just in a few metropolitan hubs. Equally important are strong institutions and governance: predictable regulation, efficient courts, transparent public administration, and sound financial systems provide the stability and trust needed for both domestic and foreign investment. By consolidating these internal strengths, India can better withstand global shocks, reduce dependence on external actors, and ensure that integration with the world economy supports inclusive and sustainable growth rather than deepening existing disparities.

Section 5.2: Managing Risks and Ensuring Inclusivity

Managing risks and ensuring inclusivity are central to making globalization work for all sections of Indian society rather than just a privileged minority. This involves designing robust social protection systems—such as employment guarantees, food security schemes, health insurance, and pension coverage—to cushion vulnerable groups from external shocks like global recessions, commodity price spikes, or sudden job losses linked to trade and technology change. It also requires active labour market policies, including reskilling, upskilling, and support for small enterprises, so that workers and regions adversely affected by global competition can transition into new opportunities instead of being permanently marginalized. At a broader level, inclusive globalization demands targeted efforts to reduce regional imbalances, bridge digital and educational divides, and ensure that women, marginalized communities, and informal workers have fair access to credit, infrastructure, and markets. By

anticipating risks and embedding equity into economic policy, India can build a model of globalization that is not only growth-oriented but also socially just and politically sustainable.

Section 5.3: Strategic Engagement with Globalization

Strategic engagement with globalization means that India does not passively accept global forces but actively shapes how, where, and to what extent it integrates with the world economy. Instead of pursuing blanket openness or blanket protectionism, India increasingly adopts a calibrated approach: deepening integration in areas that strengthen its comparative advantages—such as services, digital technologies, and selected manufacturing sectors—while using safeguards, standards, and industrial policy to protect critical sectors and nurture domestic capabilities. This strategy is reflected in efforts to diversify trade partnerships, negotiate more balanced trade and investment agreements, and move up global value chains rather than remaining a mere supplier of raw materials or low-value labour. At the same time, India seeks to align its external economic policies with broader goals of strategic autonomy, national security, and sustainable development, so that engagement with globalization reinforces, rather than undermines, its long-term developmental and geopolitical interests.

5.4: Vision for India: self-reliant yet globally integrated (“open strategic autonomy”)

India's evolving vision of "open strategic autonomy" represents a nuanced approach to globalization that seeks to harness international opportunities while maintaining sovereignty over critical decisions and reducing vulnerabilities in strategic sectors, reflecting lessons learned from three decades of economic liberalization and changing global geopolitical dynamics. This paradigm, articulated through policies like Atmanirbhar Bharat and Vocal for Local, emphasizes building robust domestic capabilities in critical areas such as defense manufacturing, semiconductor production, pharmaceuticals, and renewable energy while remaining selectively open to foreign investment, technology partnerships, and trade relationships that complement rather than compromise national interests. The concept of open strategic autonomy manifests in India's diversified engagement with multiple global partners, as evidenced by its simultaneous participation in Western initiatives like the Quad and IPEF alongside membership in BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, demonstrating its refusal to be constrained by Cold War-era binary choices and its determination to extract maximum benefit from all available partnerships. This vision recognizes that true self-reliance

in the 21st century cannot mean autarky or isolation, but rather the development of sufficient domestic strength and diverse international partnerships that prevent overdependence on any single country or region, as illustrated by India's efforts to reduce critical imports from China while strengthening supply chain relationships with Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and other partners in semiconductors and electronics. The strategy involves building "trust networks" with like-minded democracies for sensitive technologies while maintaining pragmatic economic relationships with all major powers, supported by domestic policies that incentivize innovation, manufacturing excellence, and technological self-sufficiency without closing doors to beneficial foreign collaboration. Looking ahead, this vision positions India as a leading voice for a multipolar world order that respects sovereignty while promoting interdependence based on mutual benefit rather than dependence, ultimately aiming to transform the country into a developed nation by 2047 that serves as a bridge between the Global North and South while maintaining the flexibility to shape rather than merely respond to global economic and political trends.

Final Reflections

India's journey through globalization since 1991 stands as a monumental narrative of transformation, marked not by simple triumph or failure, but by a complex and ongoing negotiation between unprecedented opportunity and profound challenge. This analysis has demonstrated that globalization has been a powerful catalyst, propelling India onto the world stage as an economic powerhouse, a hub of innovation, and an influential geopolitical actor. The gains—spectacular growth, technological leaps, a globally competitive services sector, and enhanced soft power—are undeniable and have fundamentally reshaped the nation's destiny. Yet, these achievements are shadowed by equally significant costs: deepening inequalities, environmental strain, cultural tensions, and new vulnerabilities to global volatility. The central revelation is that the benefits of integration have been geographically, sectorally, and socially uneven, creating a dual economy where globalized islands of prosperity coexist with vast hinterlands of informality and insecurity.

Moving forward, India's path cannot be a retreat into protectionism nor an uncritical embrace of hyper-globalization. The emerging paradigm of "open strategic autonomy"—epitomized by the Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative—represents a sophisticated, mature response. It acknowledges that true strength in the 21st century lies not in isolation, but in building

resilient domestic foundations (in manufacturing, technology, and human capital) that allow for confident and selective global engagement. The ultimate test for India will be its ability to calibrate this engagement with policies that ensure growth is both inclusive and sustainable. This demands robust social safety nets, skilling initiatives for those disrupted by change, and an unwavering commitment to environmental stewardship. If India can leverage its democratic institutions, demographic dividend, and entrepreneurial spirit to meet this test, it will not only secure its own prosperous future but also offer the world a compelling model: that of a civilizational state navigating global integration on its own terms, turning the challenges of interdependence into pillars of inclusive and sovereign progress.

Negotiating Identity Hindu Diaspora: Sectarian Practices of Hindu Community in Seychelles

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The Hindu diaspora in Seychelles, particularly the Indo-Seychellois of Tamil lineage, has grown significantly from 2.4% of the total population in 2010 to 5.4% in 2022. They have become the second largest religious group after Roman Catholicism. The community is deeply rooted in Tamil Shaivite heritage and worship of Muruga and Vinayagar. On the one hand, they have maintained their culture tightly, and on the other hand, they have merged their Creole culture through important cultural institutions like the Hindu Kovil Sangam and major festivals like Thaipoosam Kavadi. Here are the events of the community's life from their original migration as indentured laborers to their present-day significant economic status. Further, through a focus on census data, temples, festivals, and literature, the paper deals with how religious centers of worship enhance the ethnic loyalty of the Hindu Diaspora and how they preserve their cultural roots, linking homeland to holy land.

Keywords: Hindu Diaspora, Sects, Cultural identities, Migration, Traditional rituals etc.

Introduction

The term “diaspora” is derived from the Greek word which means “dispersion”. From time to time, the term evolved and now it commonly implies any individual who belongs to a particular country with a common origin or culture but residing outside their homeland for various reasons. Diaspora is a heterogeneous process as immigration involves human mobility over multiple time periods surrounding a whole spectrum and types of movements (Singh, 2019). The Indian example of migration began in large numbers during the British rule as indentured labourers to former colonies like Fiji, Kenya and Malaysia (Singh, 2019). It continued in the post-independence period with Indians from different social strata moving to countries like the United Kingdom, the United States and Gulf countries. Today as there are numerous, heterogeneous diaspora, they have different demands of the Indian Government. The Indian communities in countries such as Fiji and Mauritius meanwhile desire to reconnect with the

country on cultural grounds. Generally speaking for the Indian government, the diaspora includes a group of people who can either trace their origin to India or who are Indian citizens living abroad, either temporarily or permanently (Vertovec, 2000).

“The high-level committee on the Indian diaspora, used 'diaspora' to refer to Indians who migrated to different parts of the world and have generally maintained their Indian identity” (Singh, 2019). Lata Varadarajan explained the “Understanding of diaspora as capturing the essence of a link between mobile populations perceived by themselves and others as living outside the territories of their homeland” (Varadarajan, 2010). After independence, the trend of overseas migration of Indians did not stop, but the pattern and composition have changed. A large portion of migrant workers abroad were unskilled labourers who were brought mainly as indentured labour. After independence particularly in the last few decades a number of high-skilled professionals have joined semi-skilled and unskilled workers overseas (Sinha, 2019).

Seychelles is an island republic in the western Indian Ocean, comprising about 115 islands, with lush tropical vegetation, beautiful beaches, and a wide variety of marine life. The country has a population of approximately 98,500 and is known for its cultural diversity, with a large diaspora living in different parts of the world. The Indian diaspora in Seychelles has made significant contributions to the country's cultural landscape, with about 6% of the local population consisting of Indo-Seychellois inhabitants (Sinha, 2019). India's relationship with Seychelles has grown from our long-standing historical interactions and our ongoing help for Seychelles' security, although our bilateral trade is still small. Currently, India, Seychelles relations reflect a close friendship, understanding and cooperation between the two countries.

Diplomatic relations were set up between Seychelles and India after the former gained independence in 1976. A reunion of five people among the Indians who were sent to the plantation in Seychelles, after they were the first to settle in the Islands, was recorded in 1770. Under British rule Seychelles was administered from the Bombay presidency, with regular shipping links and flow of good and essential commodities from India (Vertovec, 2000). With a very sizable Indian diaspora in Seychelles, the cultural interactions between the two countries have been mainly at the community level with assistance from the two governments. Almost a hundred years later after 1770 the next batch of Indians reached Seychelles soil. There was a steady influx of Indians mainly from Tamil Nadu/Puducherry and later from Gujarat. Who

came in as traders, labourers, construction workers and more recently as professionals (Maharana, 2018).

Sect is a subgroup within a religion that is set apart by its different beliefs, rituals, or focus on a deity, while they still share the core doctrines. There exist in Hinduism four major sects, namely: Shaivism which is the devotion of Shiva, Vaishnavism which is worship of Vishnu, Shaktism that mainly focuses on Goddess/Shakti and Smartism which emphasizes the five, deity panentheism, all of them are sources of Vedas/Agamas but they highlight various supreme gods however they are all united in the concept of karma, dharma.

The Indian diaspora in Seychelles has contributed significantly to the country's cultural diversity. The Indian diaspora has introduced Indian cuisine, spices, and cooking techniques, which have become an integral part of Seychellois cuisine, reflecting the influence of Indian cuisine on the local food. The Indian diaspora has contributed to the introduction of dishes such as curry, rice-based preparations, and other flavorful creations that have become integral parts of the Seychellois culinary landscape. The Indian diaspora has also organized various cultural events to celebrate their heritage and share their culture with the local population, such as Indian Diaspora Day, which recognizes the significant contributions made by the Indian diaspora to cultural engagement and historic people-to-people engagement in the country. Several Indian cultural troupes regularly visit Seychelles for performances, showcasing the rich cultural heritage of India. The Indian diaspora's contributions to Seychelles' cultural diversity have enriched the country's cultural landscape, fostering stronger ties between India and Seychelles. Among the Hindu diaspora of Seychelles, Tamil Shaivism is the predominant religious practice of the Indo, Seychellois community. The core of their faith is the worship of Muruga, Vinayagar, and there are no rival sects to disrupt the unity. The Hindu Kovil Sangam plays a vital role in nurturing this sectarian harmony and ethnic loyalty through various temple festivals which act as living bridges connecting the Tamil homeland to Creole, hybrid lives.

The Diaspora can provide a requisite strategic implication, which makes it all the more important to unlock their potential. The present government is right in their focus on the diaspora as they are a strategic asset to India (Singh, 2019). The diaspora linkages between India and Seychelles are among the strongest and the presence of the Indian Ocean has actually connected them (Sinha, 2019). The two nations are characterized by historical ties, cultural linkages, friendship and understanding with a view to moving forward together, Seychelles enjoys the unbound love, affection and unconditional support of India (Sinha, 2019).

Hindu Diaspora Seychelles: Historical Evolution

Early Colonial Arrivals (1770–1900) An Indian presence in the Seychelles began with a few individuals, one being a Tamil, around 1770, when French colonists from Île de France (now Mauritius) brought over five Indians from Puducherry along with a mixture of Malagasy slaves and African laborers. It signifies the planting of the first Indian/Hindu seeds in Seychelles, which later on grew with the plantation and spice culture of the island. After the 1870s the indenture system brought workers from Tamil Nadu to the Seychelles to fill the plantation worker shortage in Mauritius. Records reveal that 135 workers arrived in the year 1905 alone.

They labored under contracts for five years and worked in plantations of cinnamon, coconuts, and patchouli, and their hard work was the colony's source of wealth during that time. 237 families were counted in 1901; there were 332 Hindu households, mostly speaking Tamil, with the use of Creole dialects emerging alongside. Almost all of them went back to India after their labor term, but a few stayed and, through marriages, blended in with the society, which had become more Anglicized under British rule since 1810 (Dominique, 2018).

They were a determined community; *Tamil-Shaivites*, for instance, had to use a room in a house to conduct their Vinayagar pujas when they did not have their own temple. Without having a white partner to gain racial privileges, they managed to establish themselves economically, first through small trading and later through fishing as well. Creoles and the lowest ethnic groups saw this winning of the locals by the whites even before the independence.

This act of survival gradually saw Indians and Creoles joining forces, which came out later as one of the main political powers; simple ritual acts such as oil lamps and Thevaram hymn singing nurtured their happiness and faith in times of segregation, and this also enabled the building of the infrastructure for the future temples. The harshness of the colonial rulers and the hard work that the tenants had to undergo gave them a business mindset. At the same time, the first few Gujarati Kutchis were already on their way, coming from Bombay ports (Dominique, 2018).

Post-Independence Period (1976–Present)

The independence of Seychelles in 1976 under the socialist banner of France, Albert Ren, the country started to diversify; Indian traders from Kutch and Tamil professionals filled the gaps in retail and services, thus the number of Hindus rose from 506 in 1987 to more than 5,500 by 2022 through family reunifications and entrepreneur visas (*Indian Diaspora- Largest in the*

World at 17.5 Million UN Reports 2019, n.d.). Most of the growth was absorbed by Mahe with Praslin and La Digue being the outposts; Victoria's markets are alive with their spice shops and fabric stores, which are the symbol of their adaptive trade. The census showed impressive changes in 2010 it was 2.4% but by 2010 it had increased to 5.4% due to natural growth, inflows, and Hindu Kovil Sangam's cultural reclamation since 1984, which brought back the youth through Tamil classes and festivals. New Delhi estimates that 82% of the Seychellois are of Indian descent, this is made difficult to distinguish because of the numerous Creole intermarriages that produce mixed, race children. The institutional landmarks of this period include the instalment of the 1992 Navasakti Vinayagar Temple, the Sangam's Tamil primers and calendars opposing anglicization, and the signing of state treaties that provide crematoria for the land. Economic liberalization of the post 1990s era attracted professionals and thus the continuation of business chains from Chennai to Mahe were fortified, meanwhile, remittances from emigrants in Australia are funding the expansions. This upsurge firmly establishes Hindus as a visible minority, their ceremonies attracting both tourists and local officials, it's changing the image of near poverty workers to the "pillars of the society" (*India-Seychelles Bilateral Relations*, 2019).

Religious Sects and Theological Practices

Dominant Shaivite Traditions

Tamil Shaivism rules the domain, praising Muruga as the protective deity and Vinayagar as the remover of obstacles, quite indifferent to Vaishnava Rama cults or the widespread Advaita philosophizing in metropolitan India. The Hindu Kovil Sangam, which came into existence in 1984, is the main instrument of unity: Sunday gatherings are marked by *Abhishekam*, milk anointings, aradhana, flame circumambulations, and Natarajar, cosmic dances, all happening to chanting by Tamil priests of the Thevaram hymns. Sacred figures carved in India occupy the altars, and the primacy of orthopraxy over theology means no splits arise from Tamils and Kutchis, as the Sangam rules ensure that the collective rites are maintained. Gujarati contributions have brought a little bit of Swaminarayan, like trade piety, but the processional fervor is primarily Tamil, with vel (lance) processions calling on the courage of Muruga, and there is no doctrinal strife. Pujas every day, application of sacred ash tilaks, and vegetarian feasts bind the members; their praxis is a living archive of South Indian piety brought over to the granite isles.

Syncretic Elements

Creole undercurrents permeate Shaivism: *bonoms di bwa* tree shamans offer charms for a pre-kovil visit, thus merging animist pragmatic with Dravidian devotionism in a seamless vernacular theology. Formal sects resist fraying; Tamil almanacs and booklets of Sangam keep secular erosion, prioritizing ritual over creed. There are numerous hybrid scenes where kavadi performers call on *bwa* spirits for their strength, vegetarianism makes way for fish curries yet the main orthopraxis is preserved: yellow threads, turmeric baths, chanting of mantras are the means to keep the tradition alive. This syncretism, instead of being a dilution, is a source of strength, as the priests allow the folk mixture to continue so that they can keep the flock of mainly Creole couples (80%), thus reflecting the same fusion of Hindu, African in the Caribbean where practice is more important than purity (*Seychelles Population and Housing Census 2022*, 2024).

Institutional Frameworks and Temples

Victoria's Arulmigu Navasakti Vinayagar Temple is an outstanding example of a 1992 building with a 100, foot rainbow gopuram where Vinayagar is enshrined together with Muruga and Amman in the temple. Its pillared mandapam is full of the sound of weddings, bhajans, and youth Tamil dances. Before that, the prayer lofts at home became places for Sangam to invite Mauritian and UK performers to rejuvenate the spirits of the people. The Sangam manages five kovils across the island, provides Shaivite lore primers, lobbies for crematoria, and prints calendars that mark Thai Poosam according to the Gregorian dates (Amla, 2015). Governmental secularism provides support in the form of: tax exemption, Deepavali being a gazetted holiday since the 1990s, land donations for expansions. The Indo-Seychelles Friendship Association which highlights 1770 pioneers and via their biennial galas blending Bharatanatyam with sega is another one of the supporting pillars. These pivots are against intermarriages and 80% unions yielding Creole progeny by way of endogamy drives and cultural bootcamps, their walls resounding with arati bells as the only light in a sea of Catholics (Amla, 2015).

Festivals, Rituals, and Cultural Expressions

Thaipooosam Kavadi

Thaipooosam Kavadi gets the liturgical year off to the most spectacular start every January/February. It generally mobilizes over 500 devotees to Victoria Market and onward in a Navasakti procession: hooks pierce cheeks, milk pots wobble on shoulders, all these are symbols of the sacrifices that Muruga made in slaying the demons, the "kavadi" means "a burden gradually and arduously borne step by step". Presently a 40 year tradition has the authority to claim public holidays, with foreign tourists very much entranced by the pierced ascetics anointed with honey, their trance, chants mixing Tamil with applause in Creole. Women carry water pots without any piercings, the youth are in charge of the logistics, which is a ritual that links generations in the midst of the national gaze (Amla, 2015).

Deepavali, Navratri and other festivals

Deepavali ignites October night with chariot parades carrying floral deities along Victoria, while the state media broadcasts *Diya-lit* celebrations. During Navaratri, grapples twirl saris in temple courtyards, Pongal sunrises commemorate rice sheafs with idli feasts intermixed with Creole rougaille; the dress dazzleszari silks amongst sega skirtsmusic combines carnatic veenas with *Moutya drums* (traditional dance). The culinary crossroads are bright: samosas go with laddu, processions sell incense and kolam powders, these spectacles projecting Tamilia while inviting Creoles, their hybrid vigor etching Hindu imprints on the national calendars. (*Thaipooosam Kavadi Celebrated With Fervour by Hindus of Seychelles*, 2017).

Cultural Identity Preservation

Seychellois Creole, Tamil bilingualism has a deep impact on people's lives: the bazaars are mainly the places where the people's language is kreyol, homes are the Tamil lullabies that children go to sleep with; and the youth at the Sangam academies are trained to resist the anglicized drift in their language. Religious festivals reflect the community's pride, both Thaipooosam virility and Deepavali luminosity. At the same time, Satya Naidu's membership in the National Assembly demonstrates the great level of racial integration (Dominique, 2018). Gender roles are changing: the lively old patriarchy with its repressive chauvinistic values is being replaced by new scenes which draw on the female power and creativity of fashion mavens and shop owners. The matrilocal character of these scenes nourishes the growing

hybrid children. Hybridity is alive. Creoles refer to the ensemble of bwa, pre-puja, and kizi, a culinary conjugation that marries dosa to the local fare. However, religious orthodoxy remains firmly rooted through the continuing practice of endogamous marriages (Rayaprol, 1997). and the commemorations of the 248th arrival anniversary combining fireworks with bhajans. Community associations play a crucial role in binding the community fabric and thus they help to keep the community strong. Youth are attracted to secular music through Spotify and thus they are losing the practice of singing religious songs in Tamil. The compromise of their youth is a good example of diasporic elasticity with Tamil hearts beating under Creole styles (Dominique, 2018).

Integration and Challenges

Hindus in Seychelles live in an environment of the greatest freedom of the constitution, with the scenes of temples and mosques on the landscape of Mah being the most vivid symbols of religious tolerance in the pluralistic island archipelago. Their dominance in the economic niches of trade, construction, and retail gives them a lot of societal influence, so the historical labourers have been turned into quite influential entrepreneurs. However, being a 5.4% minority, this position of theirs inevitably leads to a unity against sectarian divisions, so there is a giving up of dividing into mainly Vaishnava and Shakta groups, and the promotion of collective Shaivite orthopraxy takes place instead. The population exceeding 2022 by a significant number shows up more visibly through the larger festivals, but the witchcraft syncretic practices, the combination of *bonoms di bwa*, *charms and temple pujas*, bring the worries of the purist clergy who are afraid of your Tamil Shaivism being watered down. Hindus through their participation in the bureaucracy and in community life become "one of the locals", and the local people easily accept this through the Creole intermarriages. Threats of disappearance due to globalization, the youth decision to emigrate to Australia, and cultural assimilation call for very strong youth activities to be run through the Hindu Kovil Sangam, divisions within the sects serve as a unifying factor rather than a dividing one, resulting in the fact that the Hindu identity is very much a part and parcel of the duplex culture of Seychelles, it is a question of both keeping and reshaping (*Seychelles Culture, Customs, and Traditions | GPI Translation Blog*, 2024).

Conclusion

Seychelles' Hindu diaspora, largely Indo, Seychellois of Tamil heritage, practices Shaivism tradition through the institutional strength of Hindu Kovil Sangam and the devotional fire of Thaipoosam Kavadi. Built around Muruga and Vinayagar worship, this brings sectarian harmony while identity hybrids within the Creole fold, keeping high cultural fidelity along the path of national integration. Theirs is a story from indentured laborers to economic leaders, which has enriched Seychelles' pluralism, with temples serving as a link between the Tamil homeland and the island's sacred land. The next ethnographies have to bring out the unheard voices, young people, women, those following a mix of traditions, from this Indian Ocean melting pot, thus assuring the continuity of Shaivism in the face of globalization.

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Does the Price Signal Work? Minimum Support Prices, Area Reallocation and the Sources of Production Growth in Indian Agriculture, 1969-70 to 2025-26

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India supports pulses and oilseeds with the same instrument, the minimum support price, and imports both. Using the Reserve Bank of India Handbook of Statistics covering fifty-seven years, this article decomposes production growth into area and yield components and tests whether relative support prices reallocate area. Yield accounts for 89 per cent of foodgrains production growth over the full period, but the land frontier has not closed: area growth in the second half of the sample exceeds the first. The central finding is an asymmetry. The elasticity of the pulses area share to its relative support price is +0.368 ($p < .001$), while for oilseeds it is +0.061 and statistically indistinguishable from zero. Support prices reallocate area only where the border is closed, and India closed it for pulses but not for edible oils. A parallel reversal appears in yields: rice, wheat and cotton decelerate while coarse cereals and pulses accelerate.

Keywords: minimum support price, supply response, cropping pattern, oilseeds, pulses, Indian agriculture

JEL classification: Q11, Q18, Q17, O13

1. Introduction

India is the world's largest importer of edible oil and, until recently, was a large importer of pulses. Both crop groups receive a minimum support price (MSP), announced annually by

the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices for the same crop year, and both compete for the same cultivated land. If the support price is an effective instrument of cropping-pattern policy, it should move area towards whichever crop it favours. This article asks whether it does, and finds that the answer differs sharply between two crop groups that the instrument treats identically.

The question matters because the policy debate on Indian agriculture is largely conducted in terms of the level of support prices. Committees recommend raising them, farm movements demand statutory guarantees for them, and fiscal analysts count their cost. Comparatively little attention is paid to whether the instrument actually reallocates land, and almost none to why its effect might vary across crops that are equally import-dependent. Yet the policy objective in both cases is the same, namely to reduce import dependence by raising domestic output.

A second question concerns where production growth comes from. The standard account of Indian agriculture holds that the land frontier closed decades ago and that all future growth must come from yield. That claim is repeated widely but rarely tested against the full published record. Because the Reserve Bank of India publishes area, production and yield as three separate tables for both foodgrains and commercial crops, the decomposition can be performed directly rather than inferred.

This article uses the Reserve Bank of India Handbook of Statistics on the Indian Economy 2025-26, covering index numbers of area, production and yield, the levels of production, area and yield for foodgrains and for major commercial crops, and minimum support prices for foodgrains and non-foodgrains. The combined record runs from 1969-70 to 2025-26 for the quantity series and from 1993-94 for support prices.

Three findings follow. First, yield accounts for 89.3 per cent of foodgrains production growth across the full period, confirming the conventional emphasis, but the land frontier has not closed: mean annual area growth in the second half of the sample, at 0.53 per cent, exceeds the 0.06 per cent of the first half, and foodgrains area has risen by 284 lakh hectares from its 2002-03 trough. Second, and centrally, the elasticity of the pulses area share to its relative support price is +0.368 and highly significant, while the corresponding oilseeds elasticity is +0.061 and insignificant. Third, the crop hierarchy of yield growth has reversed: rice, wheat and cotton, the crops of the Green Revolution, have decelerated, while coarse cereals and pulses have accelerated.

The explanation offered for the central asymmetry is a trade-policy one, and it is testable against the existing literature rather than merely asserted. A support price can only bind if the domestic price would otherwise fall below it, and that depends on the border. India liberalised edible oil imports early and deeply, cutting the crude oil duty from 65 per cent in 1994 to 15 per cent in 1999, after which self-sufficiency fell from 97 per cent to 55 per cent (Sportel and Véron, 2016). Bandyopadhyay and Ramaswami (2025) show that the resulting import competition reduced both oilseed prices and oilseed area in the districts most exposed to it. For pulses, by contrast, India moved in the opposite direction, imposing quantitative restrictions from 2017. The contribution here is to show that the same instrument, applied to two crops with the same objective, produces a measurable effect in one case and none in the other, and that the difference tracks the trade regime rather than the price.

Section 2 reviews the literature, Section 3 sets out the framework and hypotheses, Section 4 the data and method, Section 5 the results, and Sections 6 and 7 discuss and conclude.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The sources of agricultural growth

The decomposition of output growth into area and yield components is among the oldest exercises in agricultural economics, and for India it is bound up with the assessment of the Green Revolution. The standard account holds that output growth from the late 1960s was driven by yield gains on a broadly fixed land base, as high-yielding varieties, fertiliser and irrigation were adopted in the wheat belt and later in rice. Janaiah et al. (2006) document the productivity impact of modern rice varieties, and Hossain (2007) sets the Indian experience within the wider question of whether technological progress can sustain the food-population balance. Later work has questioned how far those gains extended beyond the initial crops and regions. Singh (1993) showed early that the Green Revolution raised the instability of foodgrain production as well as its level, and Stone (2019) reviews the revisionist histories that have complicated the standard account. Rada (2016) asks directly what is driving India's post-Green-Revolution agricultural performance, and Khan et al. (2020) examine the state-wise record of the post-reform period. Revadekar and Preethi (2011) remind us that a substantial part of year-to-year variation in foodgrain yield is monsoon-driven rather than policy-driven, which is why the analysis below works with era averages rather than annual movements. What

is less often examined is whether the area margin has genuinely closed, a proposition usually assumed rather than demonstrated.

2.2 Supply response and administered prices

The supply-response literature asks how farmers reallocate land in response to relative prices. The Nerlovian tradition estimates partial-adjustment models of acreage on lagged prices, and the general finding for developing agriculture is that acreage responds to relative prices with an elasticity well below unity, constrained by irrigation, rotation requirements and credit. Kanwar and Sadoulet (2008) revisit dynamic output response for Indian cash crops and find responses that are real but modest. The same reduced-form question has been asked of policy-driven price changes elsewhere: Gardebroek et al. (2017) estimate the effect of biofuel policies on crop acreages in Germany and France, and Koutchadé et al. (2018) model heterogeneous farm-level responses to European Union biofuel support, both finding that administered price incentives move area but by less than the incentive itself would imply. Mittal and Reimer (2008) ask the counterfactual question for India, whether farmers would benefit from liberalisation of world cotton and sugar markets, which is the mirror image of the question asked here. For India the administered price adds a particular feature: the MSP is announced before sowing, so it is observable at the moment the planting decision is made, which removes the expectation-formation problem that complicates market-price studies. That makes the MSP an unusually clean right-hand-side variable, a property this article exploits.

An announced price is not necessarily an effective price, however. The MSP binds only where procurement is operative or where the market price would otherwise fall below it. Procurement in India has historically been concentrated in rice and wheat and in particular states, and the coverage of pulses and oilseeds under the Price Support Scheme has been intermittent. Aditya et al. (2017) provide the sharpest evidence on this point from the 70th round of the National Sample Survey: only 23.7 per cent of rural agricultural households were aware of the support price for the crops they themselves grew in the kharif season and 20.0 per cent in the rabi season, and they conclude that the instrument needs to be backed by effective procurement and extension if it is to influence cropping decisions. Jacoby (2015) shows in a related setting that the welfare consequences of Indian food prices depend on how far price changes are transmitted to rural wages and households, which is another reason an announced

price and a received price may diverge. The distinction between an announced and an effective price is central to the interpretation offered below.

2.3 Trade liberalisation and the oilseeds sector

India's edible oil sector moved from near-autarky to heavy import dependence within a decade. Quantitative restrictions were removed from 1994, the crude oil duty fell from 65 per cent in 1994 to 15 per cent in 1999, and self-sufficiency fell from 97 per cent in 1993 to 55 per cent by 2001 (Sportel and Véron, 2016). Bandyopadhyay and Ramaswami (2025) examine the spatial consequences within a panel framework, constructing district-level exposure to the trade shock from the share of cultivated area planted with oilseeds. They find significantly greater price impacts in the high oilseed-growing regions, consistent with a model of spatial price competition, and significantly greater cropping-pattern and production responses in those same regions, although the effects do not extend to wages or to labour reallocation outside agriculture. They also record the earlier judgement that pre-liberalisation growth in oilseed output had come from pressing more area into cultivation, at the expense of pulses and millets, rather than from higher yields, and that oilseeds occupy about 14 per cent of India's cultivated land, second in importance only to rice and wheat.

Two features of that literature matter here. It establishes that the domestic oilseed price is disciplined by the border rather than by the support price, and it works at the district level within a panel. The national time-series question of whether the support price nevertheless retains any power over aggregate area allocation, and how that compares with a crop group facing the opposite trade regime, has not been addressed.

2.4 The gap

The comparison crop group has its own literature. Joshi and Rao (2016) survey the global pulses scenario and note that India is simultaneously the largest producer and the largest importer, with a persistent gap between domestic supply and demand that policy has repeatedly tried to close. What that literature does not do is set the pulses experience beside the oilseeds experience as a controlled comparison of the same instrument.

The literature therefore contains a well-established decomposition method, a body of supply-response estimates, survey evidence that the announced support price is imperfectly known and imperfectly effective, and strong district-level evidence that trade liberalisation

reduced oilseed area. It does not contain a comparative test of the same policy instrument across two import-competing crop groups that differ in their trade regime, nor a re-examination of the closed-frontier assumption against the full published series. This article addresses both.

3. Framework and Hypotheses

3.1 Decomposition

Production is the product of area and yield, $P = A \times Y$, so in growth rates

$$gP \approx gA + gY \quad (1)$$

and the share of production growth attributable to area is gA/gP , with the yield share the remainder. The approximation neglects an interaction term that is second-order at observed growth rates. Computing the two shares by era answers the first question directly.

3.2 Area allocation and the relative support price

Let s_j be the share of cultivated area under crop group j and r_j the ratio of that group's mean support price to the mean support price of the competing cereals. The estimating equation is

$$\ln s_j(t) = \alpha + \beta \ln r_j(t) + \varepsilon(t) \quad (2)$$

where β is the elasticity of the area share to the relative support price. Because the MSP is announced before sowing, the contemporaneous specification is defensible; a lagged version is also reported. A positive and significant β indicates that the instrument reallocates land; a coefficient indistinguishable from zero indicates that it does not, whatever its announced level.

3.3 Hypotheses

H1: Yield accounts for the dominant share of foodgrains production growth over the full period.

H2: The contribution of area expansion to production growth has declined towards zero as the land frontier closed.

H3: The area share of pulses responds positively and significantly to the relative support price.

H4: The area share of oilseeds responds positively and significantly to the relative support price.

4. Data and Method

4.1 Data

All data are from the Reserve Bank of India Handbook of Statistics on the Indian Economy 2025-26, which compiles the estimates of the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare together with the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices, the Tea Board and the Coffee Board. RBI data are used and their coverage is given in Table 1. Production and yield of foodgrains are available from 1968-69 and 1969-70 respectively, area from 1969-70, and support prices from 1993-94. Figures for 2025-26 are Third Advance Estimates.

Definitions follow the source. Foodgrains comprise cereals, which are rice, wheat and coarse cereals, together with pulses. Oilseeds comprise groundnut, castorseed, sesamum, nigerseed, rapeseed and mustard, linseed, safflower, sunflower and soyabean. Cotton and raw jute are measured in bales, sugarcane in terms of cane, and area for tea and coffee is provisional. The relative support price for pulses is the mean of the gram, arhar, moong and urad prices divided by the mean of the paddy and wheat prices; the oilseeds equivalent uses groundnut, soyabean yellow, sunflower seed, rapeseed and mustard, and safflower. Area shares are computed on the sum of foodgrains, oilseeds, cotton and sugarcane area, the four groups for which the Handbook reports a continuous series.

4.2 Method

Growth rates are compound annual rates computed between terminal years of each era, with eras defined on the policy chronology: the consolidation of the Green Revolution to 1979-80, the pre-reform period to 1990-91, the post-reform period to 2004-05, the National Food Security Mission and commodity price boom to 2013-14, and the recent period. Equation (2) is estimated by ordinary least squares with Newey-West standard errors using two lags, in levels and with the regressor lagged one year. The closed-frontier hypothesis is examined through a ten-year rolling decomposition and a Welch two-sample test on annual area growth between sample halves. Computations used Python 3 with pandas, statsmodels and SciPy.

5. Results

5.1 *The sources of production growth*

Table 2 reports the decomposition. Over the full period from 1969-70 to 2025-26 foodgrains production grew at 2.41 per cent a year, area at 0.25 per cent and yield at 2.15 per cent, so yield accounts for 89.3 per cent of production growth and area for 10.5 per cent. H1 is supported, and the magnitude confirms the conventional emphasis on yield. Figure 1 shows the three series indexed to 1969-70: production and yield rise together while area is almost flat for three decades.

The era detail is more interesting than the average. The pre-reform decade from 1979-80 to 1990-91 was the strongest in the sample, with production growing at 4.41 per cent almost entirely on yield, whose share was 95.6 per cent. The post-reform period from 1990-91 to 2004-05 was the weakest, with production growth of only 0.84 per cent and an area contribution that was actually negative at minus 0.44 per cent a year, so that yield had to more than offset a contracting land base. Foodgrains area fell to a trough of 1,139 lakh hectares in 2002-03, its lowest reading since the early 1970s.

5.2 *The land frontier has not closed*

H2 is rejected, and the rejection is the article's first substantive departure from the received account. Foodgrains area has risen from its 2002-03 trough of 1,139 lakh hectares to 1,423 lakh hectares in 2025-26, an increase of 284 lakh hectares or 24.9 per cent. Mean annual area growth was 0.06 per cent between 1969-70 and 1997-98 and 0.53 per cent between 1997-98 and 2025-26, and although the difference is not statistically significant on a Welch test ($t = -0.560$, $p = .578$) its sign is the opposite of what the closed-frontier account predicts. A ten-year rolling estimate of the area share of production growth stands at 13.8 per cent in the window ending 1979-80 and 36.5 per cent in the window ending 2025-26, and the linear trend through it is statistically indistinguishable from zero ($+0.516$ percentage points per year, $p = .843$).

In the most recent era, from 2013-14 to 2025-26, area contributed 34.3 per cent of production growth, more than three times its full-period share. The land frontier in Indian foodgrains is therefore better described as elastic than as closed, and the elasticity operates through the reclaiming of area from other uses and through increased cropping intensity rather

than through new land. Any projection that assumes zero area growth will understate attainable output.

5.3 The price signal: pulses and oilseeds

Table 4 reports the central result and Figure 2 displays it. For pulses the elasticity of the area share to the relative support price is +0.368 with a standard error of 0.068 ($p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.646$), so H3 is supported. For oilseeds the elasticity is +0.061 with a standard error of 0.080 ($p = .444$, $R^2 = 0.025$), so H4 is rejected. Lagging the regressor one year leaves both conclusions intact, at +0.362 ($p < .001$) and +0.089 ($p = .311$) respectively.

The contrast is not a matter of the instrument being withheld from oilseeds. Between 1993-94 and 2025-26 the relative oilseeds support price rose from 2.30 to 2.67, an increase of 16 per cent, and yet the oilseeds share of cultivated area was 16.8 per cent at the start and 16.2 per cent at the end. Over the same period the relative pulses support price rose from 2.08 to 3.07, an increase of 48 per cent, and the pulses share of foodgrains area rose from 18.2 per cent to 20.1 per cent, having peaked at 23.6 per cent in 2021-22. The scatter in Figure 2 shows a clear positive relation in the left panel and an essentially flat cloud in the right.

The interpretation is a trade-policy one. A support price can only alter planting decisions if it is the price the farmer expects to receive, and that requires either operative procurement or a border that prevents the market price falling below the announced level. For pulses, India tightened import policy from 2017 and expanded procurement, so the announced price became closer to the effective price. For oilseeds the reverse holds: the evidence in Bandyopadhyay and Ramaswami (2025) is that the domestic price is set at the border, with pass-through strongest precisely in the districts that grow the most oilseeds. A support price announced above a border-determined price is not a price at which output is actually sold, and the estimated elasticity reflects that. The instrument is not weak in general; it is weak where the border is open.

5.4 The reversal in yield growth

Table 5 and Figure 3 report yield growth by crop for the early and recent periods. The pattern is a reversal of the Green Revolution hierarchy. Wheat yield growth fell from 3.07 per cent a year between 1969-70 and 1990-91 to 1.30 per cent between 2013-14 and 2025-26, and rice from 2.33 to 1.55 per cent. Cotton yield growth, at 2.96 per cent in the early period, is

negative at -1.45 per cent in the recent one, the yield having fallen from 510 kilograms per hectare in 2013-14, and a sample peak of 512 in 2016-17, to 428 in 2025-26. Coarse cereals, by contrast, accelerated from 2.13 to 4.15 per cent, and pulses from 0.40 to 1.89 per cent.

In levels the ranking is unchanged and the gap remains wide. Between 1969-70 and 2025-26 coarse cereal yields rose 4.73 times and wheat 2.97 times, while pulses rose only 1.80 times, from 531 to 957 kilograms per hectare. Pulses remain the least productive major crop group in India despite the recent acceleration, and the acceleration begins from a very low base.

5.5 Robustness

Three checks are relevant. The support-price series begins in 1993-94, so the elasticity estimates rest on thirty-three observations; the pulses result is significant at the 0.1 per cent level and is therefore not fragile to the sample length, while the oilseeds null cannot by construction be distinguished from a low-power failure to reject, a limitation stated rather than resolved. Second, the terminal year is a Third Advance Estimate; excluding it changes the pulses elasticity to $+0.375$ ($p < .001$) and the oilseeds coefficient to $+0.057$ ($p = .494$), so neither conclusion depends on it. Third, the area-share denominator excludes crops for which the Handbook does not publish a continuous series, principally horticulture, whose expansion is real and would if included reduce all shares proportionately without altering the relative comparison on which the finding rests.

6. Discussion

The results speak to two debates. On the sources of growth, the finding that yield accounts for 89 per cent of production growth over the full period supports the conventional emphasis, but the finding that the area contribution has risen rather than fallen qualifies it in a way that matters for projection. Policy documents routinely assume that output growth must henceforth come entirely from yield because no land remains. The record does not support that assumption for the last two decades. Whether the recovery in area is durable is a separate question, and it may reflect the reclaiming of land from lower-value uses under favourable relative prices rather than a permanent enlargement of the cultivated base.

On the price instrument, the asymmetry between pulses and oilseeds is the article's principal contribution and it has a direct policy reading. Raising the oilseeds support price further, in the absence of a change in the trade regime or in procurement, should not be expected

to move area. The elasticity is not merely small; it is statistically indistinguishable from zero across three decades during which the relative price was raised substantially. This is consistent with, and complements, the district-level evidence of Bandyopadhyay and Ramaswami (2025) that the domestic oilseed price is disciplined at the border. Their result explains why the announced price does not bind; the result here shows the consequence for the aggregate cropping pattern. The survey evidence of Aditya et al. (2017) supplies a second, complementary reason: an instrument that only a fifth of farmers know about cannot move much land, and their prescription of procurement and extension support is exactly what distinguishes the pulses case from the oilseeds case in the record examined here.

The comparison with pulses is instructive because it holds the instrument constant. The same agency announces both prices on the same schedule under the same statutory framework. What differs is the trade regime and the procurement effort behind them. India's achievement of near self-sufficiency in pulses after 2016 is usually attributed to higher support prices; the evidence here suggests that the price mattered because it was made effective by import restriction and procurement, not in spite of the trade regime. The corresponding implication for edible oils is that a price-only strategy is unlikely to succeed.

The yield reversal adds a third element. The crops whose yields are decelerating are precisely those in which India is already close to self-sufficiency and which absorb the bulk of procurement and input subsidy, while those accelerating are the neglected ones. Cotton is the sharpest case, with yields falling in absolute terms since 2013-14, a pattern consistent with the widely reported erosion of the effectiveness of the transgenic technology adopted in the previous decade. The composition of research and extension effort implied by these figures deserves attention in its own right.

7. Conclusion

Using the Reserve Bank of India Handbook of Statistics covering fifty-seven years, this article reaches three conclusions. Yield accounts for 89.3 per cent of foodgrains production growth over the full period, confirming the conventional account. But the land frontier has not closed: foodgrains area has risen by 284 lakh hectares from its 2002-03 trough, area growth in the second half of the sample exceeds that in the first, and area contributed 34.3 per cent of production growth in the most recent era. And the minimum support price reallocates area for

pulses, with an elasticity of +0.368, but not for oilseeds, where the elasticity of +0.061 is indistinguishable from zero despite a substantial increase in the relative price.

Three policy implications follow. Projections of Indian foodgrain output should not assume a fixed land base, since the recent record contradicts it. Support-price policy for oilseeds should be evaluated jointly with trade policy, because the announced price cannot bind while the domestic price is set at the border; a price increase unaccompanied by border or procurement measures is unlikely to change the cropping pattern. And the deceleration of yield growth in rice, wheat and cotton, alongside acceleration in coarse cereals and pulses, suggests that the marginal return to research and extension may now be higher in the crops that received least attention during the Green Revolution.

The study has limitations. It is national and annual, so it cannot identify the state-level or farm-level mechanisms through which area responds, and the district-level approach of Bandyopadhyay and Ramaswami (2025) is better suited to that question. The support-price series begins in 1993-94, giving thirty-three observations, and the oilseeds null result cannot be distinguished from low power. The specification relates area shares to relative announced prices without controlling for irrigation, rainfall or input costs, which would be necessary for a structural supply-response estimate rather than the reduced-form comparison offered here. And the terminal observations are advance estimates.

Three extensions follow directly. A state-level panel would allow the trade-regime explanation to be tested against procurement intensity, which varies widely across states and would separate the two channels that this national series cannot. Extending the comparison to a period after any future change in edible oil tariffs would provide a natural experiment on the same instrument. And repeating the exercise for horticulture, once a continuous published series exists, would establish whether the area recovery documented here is a reallocation within field crops or a genuine expansion of the cultivated base.

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Tables

Table 1. Source tables and their coverage.

Content	Unit	Span
Index numbers of area, production and yield, all crops	index	1969-70 to 2025-26
Index numbers of agricultural production, major crops	index	1969-70 to 2025-26
Production, foodgrains	lakh tonnes	1968-69 to 2025-26
Production, major commercial crops	lakh tonnes	1968-69 to 2025-26
Area under cultivation, foodgrains	lakh hectares	1969-70 to 2025-26
Area under cultivation, major commercial crops	lakh hectares	1969-70 to 2025-26
Yield per hectare, foodgrains	kg per hectare	1969-70 to 2025-26
Yield per hectare, major commercial crops	kg per hectare	1969-70 to 2025-26
Minimum support price, foodgrains	Rs per quintal	1993-94 to 2025-26
Minimum support price, non-foodgrains	Rs per quintal	1993-94 to 2025-26

Source: Reserve Bank of India, Handbook of Statistics on the Indian Economy 2025-26. Table numbers are those of the source.

Table 2. Foodgrains: growth of production, area and yield, and the sources of production growth (per cent per annum).

Period	Production	Area	Yield	Area share	Yield share
Green Revolution consolidation, 1969-70 to 1979-80	0.98	0.13	0.85	13.1	86.6
Pre-reform, 1979-80 to 1990-91	4.41	0.19	4.22	4.2	95.6
Post-reform, 1990-91 to 2004-05	0.84	-0.44	1.29	-52.5	153.4
NFSM and price boom, 2004-05 to 2013-14	3.27	0.53	2.71	16.3	82.8
Recent, 2013-14 to 2025-26	2.97	1.02	1.94	34.3	65.3
Full period, 1969-70 to 2025-26	2.41	0.25	2.15	10.5	89.3

Notes: Compound annual growth rates between terminal years. The area share is the ratio of area growth to production growth expressed as a percentage, and the yield share the ratio of yield growth to production growth; the two sum to approximately 100 because the interaction term is neglected. In the post-reform period area contracted, so its share is negative and the yield share exceeds 100. Source: computed from Reserve Bank of India, Handbook of Statistics on the Indian Economy 2025-26,

Table 3. The composition of cultivated area, selected years (per cent of the four-group total).

Year	Foodgrains	Oilseeds	Cotton	Sugarcane	Total (lakh ha)
1969-70	83.0	9.9	5.2	1.8	1,489
1990-91	78.4	14.8	4.6	2.3	1,631
2004-05	75.0	17.2	5.5	2.3	1,601
2013-14	73.7	16.4	7.0	2.9	1,710
2025-26	74.7	16.2	6.0	3.1	1,906

Notes: The denominator is the sum of foodgrains, oilseeds, cotton and sugarcane area. Source: computed from Reserve Bank of India, Handbook of Statistics on the Indian Economy 2025-26,

Table 4. Elasticity of the area share to the relative minimum support price, 1993-94 to 2025-26.

Specification	Crop group	n	Elasticity	SE	p	R-squared
Contemporaneous	Pulses	33	+0.368	0.068	<.001	.646
Contemporaneous	Oilseeds	33	+0.061	0.080	.444	.025
Regressor lagged one year	Pulses	32	+0.362	0.070	<.001	.620
Regressor lagged one year	Oilseeds	32	+0.089	0.088	.311	.052
Excluding 2025-26 estimate	Pulses	32	+0.375	0.069	<.001	.654
Excluding 2025-26 estimate	Oilseeds	32	+0.057	0.084	.494	.021

Notes: Ordinary least squares estimates of equation (2), the log of the area share on the log of the relative minimum support price, with Newey-West standard errors using two lags. The relative price for pulses is the mean of the gram, arhar, moong and urad support prices divided by the mean of the paddy and wheat prices; for oilseeds it is the mean of the groundnut, soyabean (yellow), sunflower seed, rapeseed and mustard, and safflower prices over the same denominator. Source: computed from Reserve Bank of India, Handbook of Statistics on the Indian Economy 2025-26,

Table 5. Yield growth by crop (per cent per annum) and yield levels (kg per hectare).

Crop	1969-70 to 1990-91	2013-14 to 2025-26	Full period	Yield 1969-70	Yield 2025-26
Rice	2.33	1.55	1.80	1,073	2,915
Wheat	3.07	1.30	1.96	1,208	3,591
Coarse cereals	2.13	4.15	2.81	578	2,733
Pulses	0.40	1.89	1.06	531	957
Oilseeds	1.87	1.48	1.77	522	1,394
Cotton	2.96	-1.45	2.27	122	428
Sugarcane	1.37	1.57	0.98	49,121	84,987

Notes: Compound annual growth rates between terminal years. The full period is 1969-70 to 2025-26. Cotton yield is in kilograms of lint per hectare and sugarcane in terms of cane. Source: computed from Reserve Bank of India, Handbook of Statistics on the Indian Economy 2025-26,

Table 6. Summary of hypotheses and outcomes.

Hypothesis	Statement	Evidence	Outcome
H1	Yield dominates foodgrains production growth	Yield share 89.3 per cent over 1969-70 to 2025-26 (Table 2)	Supported
H2	The area contribution has declined towards zero	Rolling area share trends +0.516 pp per year, $p = .843$; area growth 0.06 per cent in the first half against 0.53 per cent in the second	Rejected
H3	The pulses area share responds to relative MSP	Elasticity +0.368, $p < .001$, R-squared .646 (Table 4)	Supported
H4	The oilseeds area share responds to relative MSP	Elasticity +0.061, $p = .444$, R-squared .025 (Table 4)	Rejected

Source: computed as described in Sections 4 and 5.

Figures

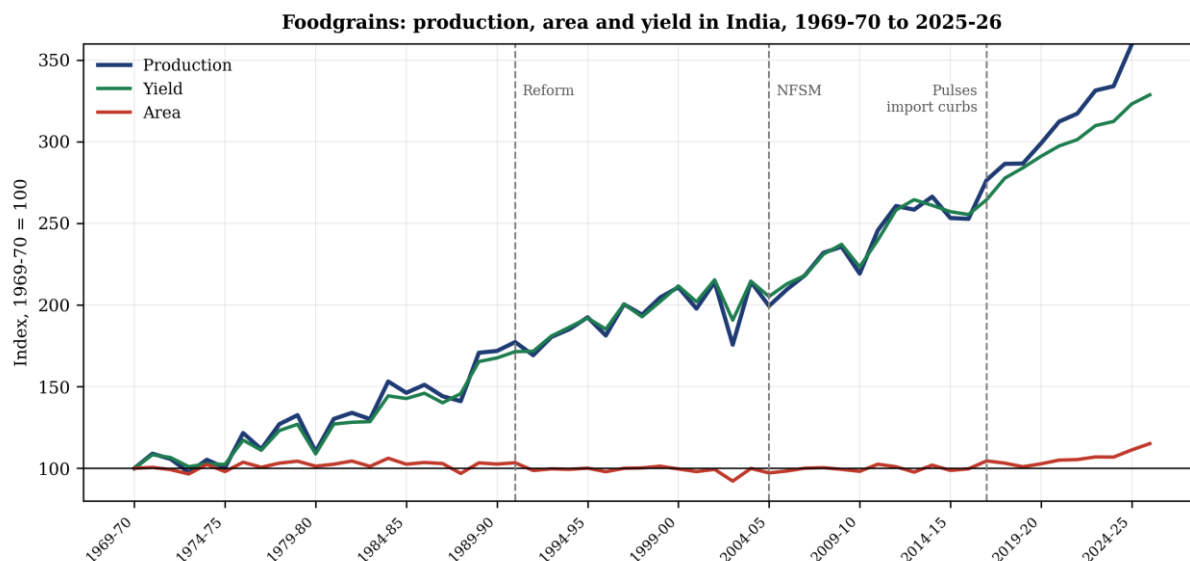


Figure 1. Foodgrains production, area and yield in India, 1969-70 to 2025-26 (index, 1969-70 = 100).

Source: computed from Reserve Bank of India, Handbook of Statistics on the Indian Economy 2025-26, Tables 16, 18 and 20.

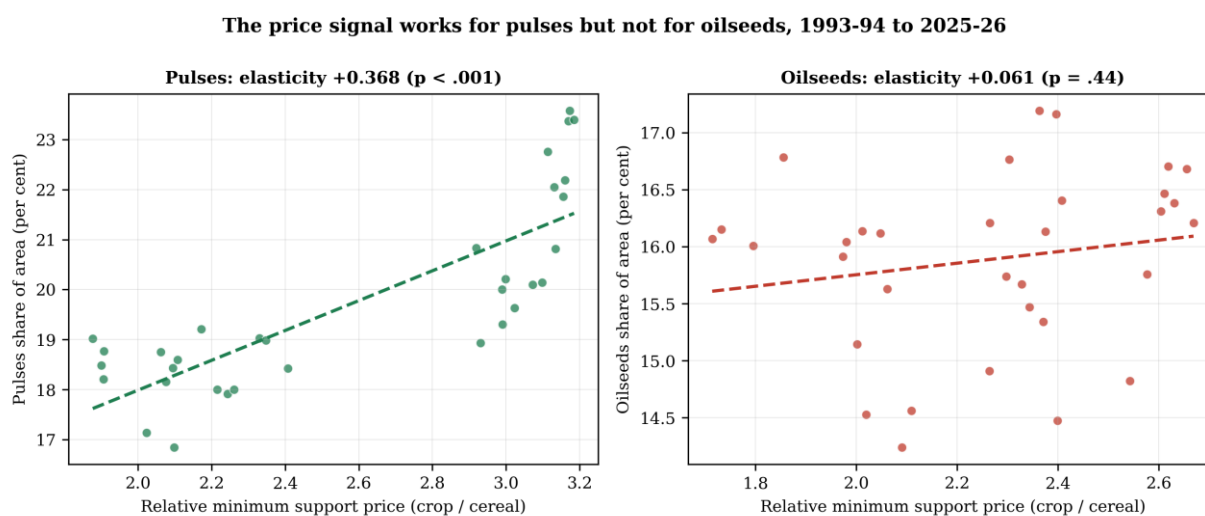


Figure 2. The relative minimum support price and the area share, pulses and oilseeds, 1993-94 to 2025-26.

Source: computed from Reserve Bank of India, Handbook of Statistics on the Indian Economy 2025-26, Tables 18, 19, 23 and 24.

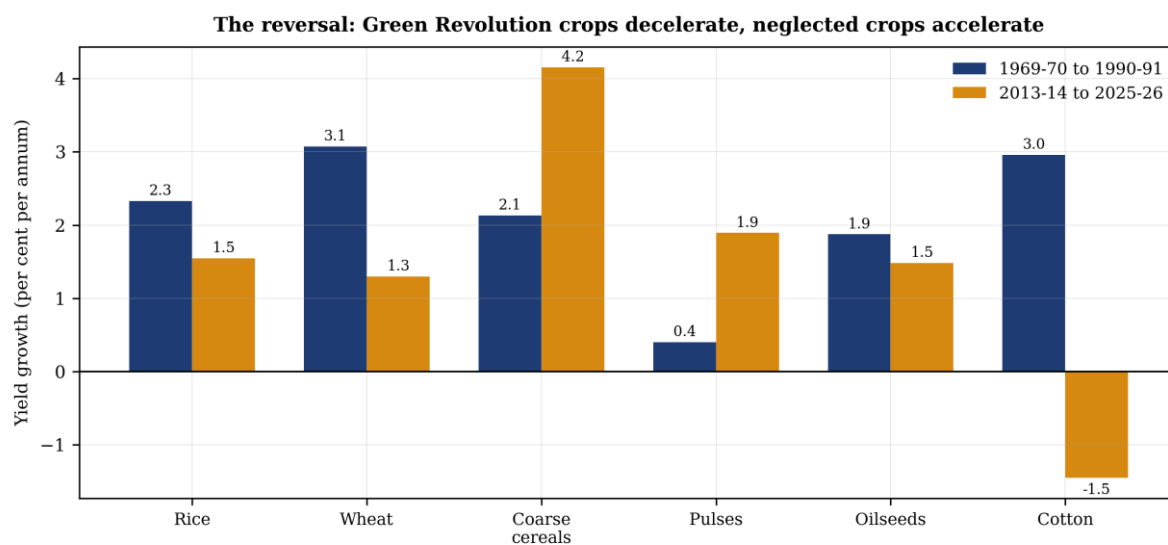


Figure 3. Yield growth by crop, 1969-70 to 1990-91 against 2013-14 to 2025-26 (per cent per annum).

Source: computed from Reserve Bank of India, Handbook of Statistics on the Indian Economy 2025-26, Tables 20 and 21.



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