

11. Atma Nirbhar Bharat - Opportunities and Challenges

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Abstract:

With the unpredicted times of COVID-19, the Indian economy faces challenges from different sources. India has been facing problems for more than a year due to the shutdown of economic activities. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's address to the country on May 12 2020, when he announced an economic stimulus package of Rs 20-lakh-crore towards building an Atmanirbhar Bharat, or a self-reliant India, to make the nation independent against the tough competition in the worldwide supply chain and to help in empowering people experiencing poverty, labourers, migrants who have been unfavourably affected by COVID -19. The primary objective of this study is to understand Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan, discuss its opportunities and challenges, and discuss the measures to be adopted to overcome those challenges. The data for the study is pulled out from online sources, various research papers, articles, News in reputed newspapers and Government departmental announcements.

Keywords:

Atmanirbhar Bharat, COVID, Opportunities, Challenges, Measures adopted

11.1 Introduction:

COVID has spread across the globe, exposing the limitations of healthcare systems, the inefficiency of social protection frameworks and the lack of economic flexibility. Indian Governments has also taken drastic measures like imposing country-wide lockdowns and closing borders to arrest further spread of the pandemic. These strategies have caused economic activity and trade slowdowns, disrupting global supply chains. Contact-dependent services, including hospitality, tourism, amusement activities, and related businesses, face hard times. The crisis has disturbed the cyclic flow of funds in various economies in India. During this critical time, various monetary measures were announced by RBI the Central Bank of India, and the government of India created financial stimulus packages. The Government of India developed an initiative called Atmanirbhar Bharat and announced a stimulus package with legal and social reforms.

The concept of Atmanirbhar Bharat is brought up during times of economic slowdown to make the Indian economy stronger and to encourage local products in India and other countries. This concept was announced by India's honourable Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, who aims to reduce unemployment, insolvency, and poverty and to increase India's

per capita GDP. Our Prime Minister explained the mission of this Abhiyan as not being self-centric but self-sufficient so that it can bring happiness, cooperation and peace to the world. Through five press conferences, the Finance Minister, Ms. Nirmala Sitharaman, announced the detailed measures under the economic package. This package includes Rs. 1.7 Lakh crore of free food grains to people experiencing poverty, cash to poor women and older people, liquidity measures, and interest rate cuts by the Reserve Bank of India, which entirely amounts to Rs. 8.01 lakh crore. The First Tranche of the Rs. 5,94,550 crore package focuses mainly on the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) sector, Provident Fund relief, Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFC), Tax Deducted at Source /Tax Collected at Source rates, Distribution Companies (DISCOMs), Real estate companies and others. The Second Tranche of the Rs. 3,10,000 crore package caters to farmers and migrant workers. The Third Tranche of the Rs. 1,50,000 crore package focuses on agriculture, dairy and its related sectors. The Fourth and Fifth Tranches of Rs. 48,100 crore cater for reforms for coal, minerals, air space management, defence production, DISCOMs in Union Territories and atomic energy. To make this plan successful, land, labour, liquidity and laws have all been considered under this package. The package will be used for the cottage industry, home industry, small-scale industry, MSME, labourers, farmers, middle-class people and those Indian industries working to boost our economy.

The Five pillars of Atmanirbhar Bharat focus on:

- Economy– an economy that brings Quantum Jump rather than Incremental change.
- Infrastructure– represents modern India. System– Technology-driven systems fulfil the needs of the 21st century.
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- Demography–Vibrant Demography of the largest democracy.
- Demand–Full utilisation of the power of demand and supply.

The 4 Es of Education, Employability, Employment and Entrepreneurship are essential in building an Atmanirbhar Bharat. Talking about the vision, the Prime Minister urged all Indians in his speech to develop detailed studies of every sector and think big. He added that Intent, Inclusion, Investment, Infrastructure and Innovation are very important for India to respond to a high growth trajectory. In his vision, he aims to promote local products and suggests that everyone improve quality, modernise the supply chain and provide the best products. Indian PM also said, "Be Vocal for Local."

Atmanirbhar Bharat's campaign does not mean only reducing imports but developing India's capacity and creativity using skills at an optimum level. It has many opportunities for various Indian communities, but many times, questions are raised about the challenges ahead. But there are millions of measures available for such challenges.

11.2 Opportunities in Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan:

- Atmanirbhar Bharat focuses on making India self-reliant by reducing our dependence on imports from other nations and increasing our capacity to produce most of the items locally. By nourishing local manufacturers' supply chains and diversifying services and products, Atma Nirbhar Bharat can be made a successful mission.

- It is important to note that the Abhiyan does not suggest cutting off relations with global platforms and trading only with local products. The fundamental concept is to become not only self-sufficient but also to promote local businesses and feel proud about what valuable assets we possess. This is going to be one of the most significant reforms worldwide.
- The Concept of Aatmanirbhar Bharat was mainly because the things imported before COVID-19 shall be manufactured in India for consumption and export. Pharmaceutical is an example where India contributes 60% to global vaccine production and from zero production of Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) on or before March 2020. Today, India can produce two lakh PPE kits daily, which is growing steadily when we export PPEs.
- India has demonstrated how it rises to challenges and uncovers opportunities, as manifested in re-purposing various automobile sector industries to collaborate in making life-saving ventilators.
- Atmanirbhar Bharat sows the seeds for the new course of long-term development and serves as the turn-on for India to emerge as a hub for manufacturing and investments. India needs to focus on complete and sustainable development to achieve this vision.
- Atmanirbhar Bharat opens opportunities to rural people who can start their businesses by implementing concepts like Gobar Bank. It will encourage the profession of cattle-rearing. It helps people in rural areas meet their needs and creates new opportunities for employment among the rural youth, both males and females, which is the need for time. Atma Nirbhar Bharat explores income generation opportunities through innovations, including the communities or population in rural India.
- Atma Nirbhar Bharat promotes start-ups by which students will become more inclined towards becoming entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs may create new markets and industries that become engines of future growth processes. Entrepreneurship can help battle youth unemployment in India.
- Atma Nirbhar Bharat would integrate India with the world as the concept envisages an opportunity to paint green the economic sectors that have the maximum impact on sustainable development. Both sustenance and sustainability have to be the cornerstones of economic growth in the future.
- The actions announced for the agricultural and allied sectors are particularly transformative. These reforms are steps towards achieving the goal of a self-sustainable rural economy.
- The MGNREGA combination of Rs. fourty thousand crore may help alleviate the distress of migrants when they return to the villages. Creating jobs in this sector would encourage consumerism and increase demand, which is good for the economy.
- Atma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan has given the importance of MSMEs for the revival of the Indian economy. The campaign has earmarked INR 3.0 lakh crore collateral-free loan facilities for MSMEs under the package. The MSME sector is the second-largest employment-generating sector in India.
- In Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan, special attention is given to developing the renewable energy sector. Through various incentive schemes, it promotes Green Consumerism and promises to incentivise solar photovoltaic manufacturing and advanced battery storage.
- Through the Greener-Digital platform, the e-Vidya program for multi-mode access to remotely connected students to online education provides uniform learning to the whole nation. This program would enable schools and universities to stream courses online.

- Public expenditure on health care services will be increased by investing in grassroots health institutions and ramping up nationwide health and wellness centres.
- One of the core features of the Atmanirbhar Bharat revival package is its focus on increasing the efficacy of coal use. Coal gets INR 500 billion to develop infrastructure. The government of India has pitched coal gasification as an environmentally friendly move.
- The main object of this plan was to give interim relief to poor people in the form of a reduction in liquidity crunch by transferring cash to their accounts. The second one was to provide reforms of a long-term nature in various growth-critical sectors so that they can be globally competitive and attractive when facing competition at the global level.
- Boosting the self-reliance of domestic defense industries, the import of 101 items has been stopped, and the foreign direct investment limit has been increased from 49% to 74%. It will boost production employment and reduce the huge import bill.
- We must focus on setting up manufacturing industries shortly. This may save foreign exchange and generate employment in the nation. In this context, the "Atmanirbhar" concept is an admirable plan. Challenges in Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan
- Technology, industrial automation, robotics, and artificial intelligence (AI) are changing industrial work and making many jobs unnecessary. India's job market is undergoing these changes and needs fresh thinking to address current and emerging challenges.
- The key challenge before the Atmanirbhar Bharat is the high dropouts at various stages of education. There is a need to improve the quality of school education.
- Indian MSMEs and other companies have often confronted unfair competition from foreign companies. MSMEs face problems with marketing and liquidity.
- We need to improve our rankings for the large-scale migration of different companies into India. We have done well, considering India was ranked a paltry 142 in 2014 and upgraded to 63 in 2020, but it is not enough. We need to place within the top 50 to attract investment.
- The rate of property registration charges is high, and our labour laws need to be modernised.
- Atmanirbhar Bharat falls short of substantively addressing India's more significant crises: air pollution and climate change. The conversion of coal into synthesis gas emits substantial amounts of carbon dioxide (CO₂), with the degree varying according to the process. The capture-and-use coal gasification method has decreased greenhouse gas emissions by 45 % compared to the conventional approach. The way India plans to employ has not been announced.
- Sometimes, there is a delay in getting permission from government officials due to the inefficiency of government employees, so many important research projects do not get permission on time and the vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat is not fulfilled.
- The Economic packages, as required for the country during the Lockdown period, enhanced demand throughout the country.
- The prominent challenge companies face supply chains, which increase the delay in the service, affect logistics and imports. The significant challenges of the supply chain are disruptions in imports, delays, affected logistics, reaching customers, and fewer returns on investment. It discourages the economy's production and manufacturing of goods and services.

- In many industries, India depends to an extent on countries like China for production and supply chain. The need of the hour is to be self-reliant in these areas.

11.3 Measures to be Adopted:

- The higher education system in India has a significant role to play in the development of the economy. The emphasis of higher education needs to change from providing employability improvements to preparing learners to think, solve problems, and make decisions. We must integrate professional practice during studies and provide opportunities to enhance professional development further. The working population would need to re-skill themselves for new jobs emerging from technological innovations.
- It is essential to teach young people to be entrepreneurs, equips fresh graduates to start and run their enterprises, and be job creators rather than job seekers. This is an essential step towards Atmanirbhar Bharat.
- In the longest possible run, the vision of 5-pillared growth to self-reliance is incomplete without being sustainable in approach. Sustaining growth is likely only with a balanced ecology.
- Setting up Infectious disease hospital blocks and combined public health labs in all the districts and block levels to manage future pandemics, if any. Encouraging research by the National Institutional Platform for one health by the Indian Council of Medical Research
- Indian MSMEs have often faced biased competition from overseas companies. Therefore, global tenders up to Rs 200 crores will be excluded from government procurement tenders. This will be a move towards Self-Reliant India E-market linkage for MSMEs to be promoted to act as a standby for trade fairs and exhibitions.
- The approach is to be kept flexible so that many scholars, teachers, professors, retired or working professionals and many villages, schools or colleges come up and take up this venture of transforming India to new heights.
- The youth of India should be motivated to come up and participate. It should reach everyone, including illiterate persons who may have innovation capabilities.
- There are barriers and difficulties in translating acquired skills in applications towards income development. As new norms are to be set up in unknown areas, the results cannot be predicted but require constant review and course corrections. In such cases, participatory action research could be useful.
- We must focus on reducing the rate of registration charges of property, which is uncompetitively high and our outdated labour laws need to be modernised, which exercise seems to be finally seeing the light of day with many state governments taking the lead. The Karnataka government is displaying a commendable interest in introducing these reforms by not waiting for the Bill to be passed and planning to issue an ordinance to implement immediately.
- The journey has begun; we need an economic blueprint to reach our destination. This blueprint must address domestic growth and implement measures to make India attractive for foreign investments.
- The development of infrastructure will facilitate the economy and vice versa. Enhancement of infrastructure is essential for reducing education at all levels. Properly framed systems can create appropriate educational interventions that lead to

employment and put employability to the best possible use. The most effective way for this is often to spend on greenfield infrastructure.

- Atmanirbhar's concept is fundamental to reviving the supply chain in COVID-19 times. The most important solution is a better use of automation and technology, the use of optimisation, better transportation, better customer service, sustainability, use of local manufacturing and better use of analytics. If these solutions are systematically implemented, all the problems faced by supply chains of companies across the globe will be solved.

11.4 Conclusion:

Even though various measures have been announced as Atmanirbhar Bharat and implemented, there is much scope to build India Atmanirbhar. This mission is equipped to fight the economy's downfall by contributing to job creation, education to continue skill development, a Digital health mission, and one health program to be self-reliant socially. India, with its young population, has an excellent opportunity to attain status of Atmanirbhar Bharat quickly. This needs focused and sustained effort to reform the education system, which creates employment, employability, and entrepreneurial skills through thinking, problem-solving and decision-making individuals. The Atma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan motivates us to work further. Learning and training are necessary to bring about the transformation of India through the youth. The government should invest in developing the education system so that future employees are technology-driven and ready for the industry. The government should invest in infrastructural development. We must balance being global and being able to provide locally. The Atmanirbhar Bharat campaign is essential to recover the economy from the COVID-19 pandemic. This has some challenges, but by adopting some measures, India will gain significant power status soon.

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