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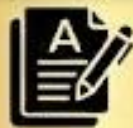
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Should the abortion law be amended for minor rape victims?



Dipika Jain
Executive dean & professor of law, director, Centre for Justice, Law and Society, Jindal Global Law School

PARLEY

Why are so many pregnant persons approaching the courts for terminations? Do we need to remove time limits on abortions? Do abortion laws need to be delinked from criminal laws? How can access to safe abortions for all be improved? Dipika Jain and Alka Barua discuss in a conversation moderated by Zubeda Hamid. Edited excerpts.

Can we start with an overview of abortion laws in India?

Dipika Jain: There are two sets of laws that regulate abortion in India. Sections 88 to 94 of the BNS and the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act, 1971. Abortion is criminalised under Section 88 of the BNS, which means that a woman who terminates her pregnancy with her consent and the doctor who terminates her pregnancy with her consent and his consent can be criminalised. In 1979, there was an exception created via the MTP Act, which created a framework for conditional rights. Abortion is legal in India based on certain circumstances and conditions. The 2022 Supreme Court judgement also elaborates on abortion rights as fundamental rights. There are three components: unmarried women are entitled to seek termination; transgender persons are also included within the legal framework; and the right to terminate a pregnancy in India is part of [the] decisional autonomy of a woman or a pregnant person.

Alka Barua: The law looks fairly liberal, but there isn't broad and progressive interpretation at the ground level. And there are reasons for it. One, the law places decision-making authority primarily with the doctors. So this gives scope for refusal based on personal beliefs or misunderstanding or unawareness of law. The law's implementation doesn't take into account the fact that we have a shortage of certified providers and adequately equipped facilities. And this is particularly more so now when the gestational limit has been increased and later gestational terminations are more complex and require greater skills, better facilities. As long as abortion remains linked to a criminal law, it is socially stigmatised. And many women delay care or seek unsafe pathways in such situations.

Is there a case to be made for the Supreme Court's asking for the removal of time limit



On paper: The Supreme Court, in 2022, has said that it recognises reproductive decisional autonomy as a fundamental right. *GETTY IMAGES*

on terminations of unwanted pregnancies in the case of minor rape victims?

DJ: The MTP Act sets out general outer limits of 24 weeks, with only two exceptions. One is substantial foetal anomalies, which has to be certified by a medical board, and the other is to save the life of the pregnant woman. In the past, the Supreme Court has, on multiple occasions, allowed termination up to 33 weeks of pregnancy in cases of foetal anomalies. [This] exposes a gap between legal categories that are rigid and real life, medical and social situations. So if it is safe, and it is with the consent of the pregnant person, and the termination is allowed in cases of foetal anomalies, why can't terminations be allowed in other cases where late-term termination becomes important? For example, sexual assault, rape, drastic life challenges, mental health crises. In my opinion, anyone whose pregnancy is safe to terminate should be allowed to terminate it.

AB: The law has not taken into account ground-level reality. There is no need for such rigid gestational limits for terminations, particularly in cases of sexual assault survivors, minors, or adolescents, etc. One reason is, they tend to come late: because of the trauma, the stigma, the lack of awareness about their entitlements under the MTP Act; in case of minors and adolescents, they often do not even know that they have conceived till late pregnancy. Then, most do not have access to resources; they have restricted mobility. Delayed access is not out of choice but because institutions, family structures, violence prevent them from timely access. We believe that risk should be assessed clinically. If it can be safely provided based on clinical judgment, then why this inflexible statutory cut-off? The intent of the

law has to be interpreted more broadly rather than using it as a barrier to provide services.

Do healthcare providers feel they may be at risk of criminal proceedings if they proceed with abortions?

DJ: Abortion is criminalised under law. But there is also an exception, which if followed, on the basis of certain conditions, termination can be offered. However, because it is conditional and the burden of proof is on the doctor, complications arise. This is not a rights-based framework. It is a conditional, qualified framework and sets out very strict conditions. If you fail in any of these conditions, there can be chances of prosecution. We know that in 2021, a doctor in Meghalaya was put behind bars for a month on a termination he didn't even do. There are also other laws that complicate the criminal framework and liability, for example, the PCPNDT [and] POCSO. Why can't we move from a criminal framework to a rights-based reproductive justice healthcare framework?

AB: The reason for this is not only lack of awareness about what their obligations are, what the service seekers' entitlements are, but also lack of awareness among those who are enforcing the law at the ground level. Most service providers are worried about police involvement in cases of rape and minors. They are confused about documentation requirements. Then there are concerns about the uncertainty around pregnancies near the stipulated gestational limits. There are no clear protocols in place. All this, in addition to the fact that there is a social pressure, let's not forget that doctors belong to the same society as [that of] service-seekers. All this leads to a chilling effect. They don't want to provide services in such cases, particularly the later gestation cases.

Are there other countries that allow for abortion on a demand basis rather than on a conditional basis? Is that what a reproductive health rights framework looks like?

DJ: The Supreme Court in 2022 has said that it recognises reproductive decisional autonomy as a fundamental right. It means that the decision to terminate a pregnancy ultimately belongs to the pregnant person, not the doctor or the State. That's what the law is saying. Now, should that not also be the practice? If a pregnant person decides to terminate, why should the State impose so many conditions? Why can't it be

based on decisional autonomy and on demand? There are many countries that have at least early-term abortion on demand or on request, and that's exactly how our law should be.

AB: Irrespective of what the law is, our experience is [that] when a woman decides to terminate a pregnancy, she does get it terminated. If restrictions are there, you are literally pushing her towards unsafe service providers. The MTP Act came into existence to prevent unsafe abortions and maternal deaths because of that. And if that very law, because of the conditions it has included in it, is leading service seekers towards unsafe practices, then the point is lost. I [also] just wanted to distinguish between refusal on any grounds, be it ethical or professional, skill level, and denial of access. An individual service provider may decline to perform a procedure to which they have objections personally. The law says nothing against it right now. But then they should be made to refer the case, or ask someone else in the facility to provide the services.

Would a law that lifts all conditions and allows for abortion on request be in conflict with the POCSO law where the State has to look into sexual assault?

DJ: When the POCSO law was drafted, the focus was on child sexual abuse. Section 19 of the POCSO Act allows for mandatory reporting. What happens when it interacts with the MTP Act? In the MTP Act, when an adolescent or minor gets pregnant, they can seek termination. But when the adolescent walks into the hospital, the doctor has to report her mandatorily to the police. Now, what happens is, in case of a 16-year-old in a relationship with a 17-year-old boy, this 16-year-old girl will not go ahead and seek termination because she knows that the mandatory reporting will mean that the boy will be held for statutory rape. This is the problem. In 2022, the Supreme Court harmonised POCSO with the MTP Act. The court ruled that minors can access abortion services without their identities being disclosed. So to some extent, this has been addressed. However, it's not something that is working on the ground.



To listen to the full interview
Scan the code or go to the link
www.thehindu.com

- **Key Terms and Explanations**
- **Abortion / Medical Termination of Pregnancy** means ending a pregnancy through medical or surgical methods before childbirth. In India, abortion is not available purely as an unrestricted choice; it is permitted under the Medical Termination of Pregnancy framework subject to conditions such as gestational period, medical opinion, rape, contraceptive failure, foetal abnormality, or danger to the pregnant person.
- **MTP Act, 1971** is the principal law that regulates legal abortion in India. It was enacted mainly to reduce unsafe abortions and maternal deaths. The law allows abortion under specific conditions and generally places decision-making power in the hands of registered medical practitioners.
- **Gestational limit** refers to the maximum period of pregnancy up to which abortion may be legally permitted. India allows termination up to 20 weeks in many cases and up to 24 weeks for certain categories, including survivors of rape and minors. Beyond this, abortion is generally allowed only in cases of substantial foetal abnormalities or to save the life of the pregnant person.
- **Minor rape victim** refers to a person below 18 years who becomes pregnant due to sexual assault. Under POCSO, any sexual act with a minor is treated as an offence because minors cannot legally consent to sexual activity.
- **POCSO Act, 2012** protects children from sexual offences. It mandates reporting of sexual offences against minors. This creates a conflict when a pregnant minor seeks confidential abortion care, because doctors may be legally required to inform the police.
- **Reproductive autonomy** means the right of a person to make decisions about pregnancy, contraception, childbirth, and abortion. It flows from dignity, privacy, bodily integrity, liberty, and equality.
- **Reproductive justice** is broader than reproductive rights. It includes not only legal permission to terminate pregnancy but also actual access to safe, affordable, stigma-free, and timely abortion services.
- **Medical Board** is a panel of doctors that examines cases, especially late-term pregnancies or foetal abnormalities, and advises whether termination may be allowed. While intended as a safeguard, it may delay urgent care.



- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- The core thesis advanced in the discussion is that India's abortion law, despite progressive amendments, fails those who need it most—particularly minor rape survivors—because it remains embedded in a criminal framework and imposes rigid, unresponsive gestational limits.

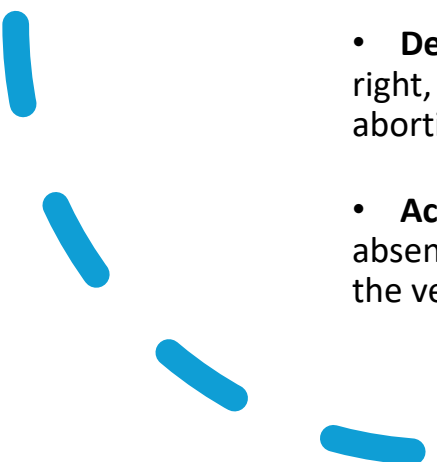
- **Rigid gestational limits harm vulnerable groups:** Minors and rape survivors often realise pregnancy very late due to trauma, stigma, lack of awareness, restricted mobility, and missing periods interpreted as stress. By the time they access care, they may have crossed the 24-week limit, making legal abortion inaccessible. Courts are then forced to make ad-hoc exceptions, which is neither sustainable nor dignified.

- **Criminalisation creates a chilling effect:** Abortion's continued presence in the BNS (criminal law) makes it socially stigmatised and legally risky for doctors. Providers fear police harassment, especially when minors and sexual assault cases are involved. The confusion with POCSO's mandatory reporting requirements only deepens the fear.

- **Law does not reflect ground reality:** Permission for late-term termination in foetal anomaly cases exists. Yet, similarly compelling grounds—rape, incest, mental health crisis, sudden life upheavals—do not get statutory recognition for terminations beyond 24 weeks. This arbitrary distinction defies logic when clinical safety can be assessed case by case.

- **Decisional autonomy remains on paper:** While the Supreme Court has declared reproductive autonomy a fundamental right, the law does not operationalise it. The burden of proof still lies on the woman and the doctor; a mere request for abortion is not sufficient. Unless the law moves to a demand-based model, autonomy remains a mere slogan.

- **Access barriers are systemic:** Shortage of trained providers, poorly equipped facilities for second-trimester abortions, absence of clear protocols, and widespread social stigma collectively push women toward unsafe, illegal abortions—defeating the very purpose of the MTP Act, which was framed to reduce maternal deaths from unsafe terminations.



- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**

- **Pre-Independence Era:** The Indian Penal Code of 1860, drafted by the British, criminalised abortion under Sections 312–316. Rooted in Victorian morality, the law treated the foetus as a distinct life and made no exceptions even to save the pregnant woman's life.
- **1960s – Public Health Awakening:** High maternal mortality due to illegal, unsafe abortions led to the appointment of the Shantilal Shah Committee in 1964. The committee recommended liberalising abortion to reduce deaths and morbidity. Its report became the philosophical foundation for the MTP Act.
- **1971 – The MTP Act:** India became one of the early developing nations to legalise abortion conditionally. The Act permitted termination up to 20 weeks on grounds such as risk to the woman's life or physical/mental health, rape, foetal impairment, and contraceptive failure (for married women). The approval of one registered medical practitioner (up to 12 weeks) or two (12–20 weeks) was required.
- **2002 Amendment:** Allowed medical abortion (using mifepristone and misoprostol) up to 7 weeks, to be prescribed by a registered medical practitioner, expanding early, safer access. Also devolved regulation to district-level committees.
- **2021 Amendment:** Raised the upper limit to 24 weeks for survivors of rape, minors, women with foetal anomalies, and cases of contraceptive failure regardless of marital status. Spousal consent was removed. Privacy of the woman seeking abortion was protected.
- **2022 Supreme Court Judgement:** In a landmark ruling, the Court held that the distinction between married and unmarried women was unconstitutional, extended the 24-week window to all women in cases of change in material circumstances, and explicitly recognised reproductive decisional autonomy as a fundamental right under Article 21. The Court also clarified that registered medical practitioners include those qualified in modern or Indian systems of medicine, and that confidentiality applies even when POCSO is invoked.
- **Recent Court Interventions:** In multiple cases post-2022, the Supreme Court has allowed termination up to 33 weeks for foetal anomalies and for minor rape survivors, exposing the gap between legislative rigidity and lived realities. This judicial bypass, however, cannot substitute for clear, compassionate law.

COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS: AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS



REPRODUCTIVE AUTONOMY (FOR MINOR SURVIVORS)

1. KEY TERMS & FRAMEWORK



Decisional Autonomy

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MTP Act, 1971 & BNS Sections 88-94

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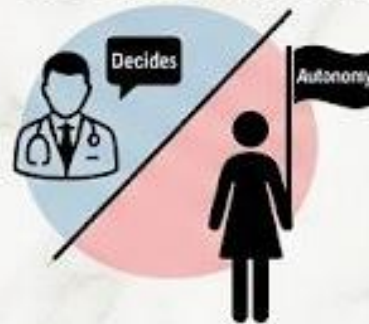


POCSO Act, 2012

Child protection anmshps of protection in protection hand-on-shoulder

2. CORE DEBATES

Paternalistic Doctor Control vs. Decisional Autonomy



Criminalization Dilemma



Conditional Exception

3. ISSUES FOR MINOR RAPE VICTIMS

Arbitrary 24-week Limit



Barriers

- Trauma
- Stigma
- Lack of Resources

POCSO-MTP Conflict



2. SAALIHARICTICS

Family pressure: Option



SOCIAL

- Family pressure
- Family family
- Pidennial pressury



POLITICAL

- Legislation debate
- Government court crases



LEGAL

- Maternal health vs. fetal life
- Summary on health presses

4. UPSC MULTIDIMENSIONAL ANALYSIS



LEGAL

- Legislation debate
- Court cases
- Legal cours
- Converment



ETHICAL

- Maternal health vs. fetal life
- Matinnal images



INTERNATIONAL

- Global comparisons
- Global ranksm
- Meta invement



ECONOMIC

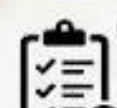
- Public health costs
- Maslisary of gloal economic

5. WAY FORWARD

Decriminalization



- BNS shield falling



Clarify Protocols

- Step-by-step checklist
- checklist



Medical Boards to include Social Workers



Tele-Medicine Access



- **Logical and Philosophical Base**

- **Bodily Autonomy and Dignity:** The argument rests on the woman's right to control her own body. Forcing a minor rape survivor to carry an unwanted pregnancy to term violates her dignity, bodily integrity, and mental health—amounting to cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment. Autonomy here is not mere choice; it is a condition for equal citizenship.

- **Public Health vs. Criminal Law:** The original justification for the MTP Act was utilitarian—prevent unsafe abortions and maternal deaths. If a restrictive law itself becomes the reason women resort to unsafe providers, then the law fails its own objective. The underlying logic shifts from “the state must punish” to “the state must enable safe care.”

- **Rights-based vs. Conditional Model:** A conditional model assumes that the state and doctors know better than the woman; a rights-based model trusts the woman as a moral agent. Philosophically, this reflects the debate between legal paternalism and liberal individualism. The Supreme Court's articulation of “decisional autonomy” leans decisively towards the latter.

- **Harm Reduction Principle:** Even if one does not agree with abortion morally, the practical reality is that women will seek terminations. A robust legal and health infrastructure for safe abortion minimises harm—post-abortion complications, death, prosecution—which is ethically preferable to a punitive approach.

- **Equality and Non-discrimination:** The law's failure to accommodate late discovery of pregnancy in minors and rape survivors imposes a disproportionate burden on the most vulnerable. This contravenes the equal protection guarantee and substantive equality, because the state fails to adjust its laws to the differential real-life constraints of disadvantaged groups.



- **Multidimensional Analysis**
- **Social Dimension**
 - The issue reflects deep gender inequality. Minor rape victims often face silence, fear, blame, and family pressure. Many do not know they are pregnant until late. Social stigma forces them away from hospitals and towards unsafe options.
- **Political Dimension**
 - Abortion reform is politically sensitive because it involves morality, religion, child protection, gender rights, and State control. Governments often prefer cautious incremental reform rather than bold rights-based restructuring.
- **Legal Dimension**
 - The main legal tension is between reproductive autonomy and criminal regulation. The MTP Act permits abortion conditionally, while criminal law still treats abortion as an offence unless statutory conditions are met. POCSO adds further complexity through mandatory reporting.
- **Ethical Dimension**
 - The ethical question is whether the State can force a minor rape survivor to continue pregnancy. A humane ethical framework must prioritise dignity, bodily integrity, mental health, informed consent, and trauma-sensitive care.
- **International Dimension**
 - Globally, many jurisdictions are moving towards early abortion on request, while others are becoming restrictive. India occupies a middle space: progressive compared to many countries, but still conditional and provider-controlled.
- **Economic Dimension**
 - Unsafe abortion increases healthcare costs, emergency care burden, loss of education, loss of livelihood, and long-term poverty. For a minor, forced childbirth may permanently disrupt education, mobility, marriage prospects, and social rehabilitation.



- **Linkages with NCERTs**
- **Class 12 Sociology – Indian Society (Ch. 5: Patterns of Social Inequality and Exclusion):** This chapter discusses how gender intersects with patriarchy and social stigma, explaining why a minor girl’s pregnancy becomes a matter of family honour and why she may be denied care. The concept of “gendered access to resources” directly links to her inability to reach abortion facilities independently.
- **Class 12 Political Science – Politics in India Since Independence (Ch. 9: Recent Developments in Indian Politics):** The rise of rights-based movements and judicial activism is examined here. The abortion rights discourse, especially post-2022 SC judgement, is a textbook example of how courts expand fundamental rights to address contemporary social justice issues.
- **Class 11 Political Science – Constitution at Work (Ch. 2: Rights in the Indian Constitution):** Article 21’s interpretation to include reproductive autonomy is a live illustration of how ‘procedure established by law’ has evolved into ‘substantive due process’ protecting life with dignity.
- **Class 10 Civics – Democratic Politics-II (Ch. 4: Gender, Religion and Caste):** The theme of women’s objectification and lack of autonomy over their own bodies can be tied to the denial of abortion rights, showing how gender discrimination operates at the institutional level.

- **Linkages with UPSC CSE Syllabus**
- **GS Paper I – Society:** Women’s issues, patriarchy, social stigma, sexual violence, family structure, vulnerable sections, adolescent rights, and social reform.
- **GS Paper II – Polity and Governance:** Fundamental rights, role of judiciary, government policies, health laws, child protection laws, rights-based governance, and implementation gaps.
- **GS Paper II – Social Justice:** Health, women and children, welfare schemes, vulnerable sections, institutional mechanisms, and access to justice.
- **GS Paper III – Internal Security and Technology Interface:** Limited linkage through cyber exploitation, child sexual abuse material, and digital reporting mechanisms, though not the central area.
- **GS Paper IV – Ethics:** Autonomy, dignity, compassion, justice, medical ethics, confidentiality, conflict of duties, and ethical governance.
- **Essay Paper:** Themes such as “Freedom and responsibility”, “The body as a site of rights”, “Justice for the vulnerable”, “Law and morality”, and “Development with dignity”.
- **Optional – Sociology:** Gender, patriarchy, family, social control, deviance, law and society, and medicalisation of women’s bodies.
- **Optional – Philosophy:** Liberty, personhood, ethics of care, utilitarianism, rights theory, bodily autonomy, and moral status of the foetus.
- **Optional – Public Administration:** Policy implementation, street-level bureaucracy, administrative ethics, coordination between agencies, and citizen-centric governance.

- **Way Forward**

- **Legal Reforms:** Amend the MTP Act to remove gestational limits for survivors of rape and incest, subject to medical board certification of safety and informed consent. Delink abortion from the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita entirely, making it a healthcare issue rather than a criminal one.
- **Harmonising POCSO and MTP:** Issue statutory guidelines that exempt a registered medical practitioner from mandatory reporting under POCSO when a minor seeks an abortion voluntarily, provided the doctor records the minor's consent and ensures safety. This will stop driving minors away from legal services.
- **Strengthening Health Systems:** Invest in training mid-level providers and obstetricians in safe second-trimester abortion techniques. Accredite a network of public and private facilities with clear standards, and ensure availability of WHO-approved drugs at all primary health centres.
- **Clear Protocols and Safeguards for Providers:** Develop and disseminate uniform clinical protocols across states. Create a statutory shield that prevents criminal prosecution of healthcare workers acting in good faith under the MTP Act. This will alleviate the fear that today chills service delivery.
- **Awareness and Destigmatisation:** Launch sustained, culturally sensitive campaigns targeting adolescents, parents, and community leaders to normalise abortion as a healthcare right. Integrate age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality education in schools to equip minors with knowledge about their bodies and rights.
- **Fast-Track Judicial Mechanisms:** For the rare cases that still require court approval, establish dedicated time-bound benches or tribunals to avoid trauma-inducing delays and repeated medical examinations.
- **Monitoring and Accountability:** Set up an independent reproductive health ombudsman at the state level to investigate denials of care, breach of confidentiality, or unethical conduct, ensuring accountability without deterring providers.

- **UPSC Mains**

- **2023 – GS Paper II:** Questions on constitutional morality, rights, and governance can be linked with reproductive autonomy and dignity.
- **2022 – GS Paper II:** Questions on women's issues, social justice, and implementation of welfare laws are relevant for abortion access and child protection.
- **2021 – GS Paper II:** Questions on pressure groups, vulnerable sections, and policy implementation can be connected with reproductive rights advocacy.
- **2020 – GS Paper II:** Questions on fundamental rights and the role of judiciary are relevant to privacy, dignity, and bodily autonomy.
- **2019 – GS Paper II:** Questions on women's empowerment and legal safeguards can be connected with abortion law, POCSO, and sexual violence.
- **2018 – GS Paper II:** Questions on protection of vulnerable sections and mechanisms for their welfare are relevant to minor rape victims.
- **2017 – GS Paper II:** Questions on privacy and rights after the privacy judgment can be linked with reproductive choice.
- **2016 – GS Paper I/II:** Women's issues, patriarchy, and social empowerment questions are thematically relevant.
- **2015 – GS Paper II:** Questions on governance, laws, and implementation gaps can be linked with MTP Act implementation.

Somnath and Bharat's unconquerable spirit



NARENDRA MODI

At the start of 2024, I visited Somnath for the Somnath 1000th Birth Anniversary Fair, marking 1,000 years since the first attack on the Somnath Temple. Now, I will be back in Somnath on May 11 to mark 25 years since the inauguration of the restored temple by the then President of India, Dr Rajendra Prasad. In less than half a year, it is a privilege to be attending two important milestones related to Somnath and its journey from ruin to renewal or what we describe as "From Vidhvansan to Uday".

Somnath given as a civilisational message. The west has before it evokes timelessness. The waves tell us that no matter how fierce the storms or how turbulent the tides, one can always rise again with dignity and strength. The waves return to the shore, as though reminding every generation that the spirit of the people can never be subdued for long.

Our ancient scriptures emphasise that *prithivimam vidhvanshva, it means a proclivation of the divine Prithvina (Somnath) is equal to a proclivation of the whole earth. And!* While people have come here to pray, they have also experienced the remarkable continuity of a civilisation whose flame could never be extinguished. Empires rose and fell, tides changed, history moved through conquest and upheaval, yet Somnath continued to endure in our consciousness.

It is time to remember the countless greats who stood firm in the face of tyranny. There were Lakshmana and Soona Sarwan, who transformed Prithvina into a great centre of philosophy. Chakravarti Mahasaja Dharmasa N' of Vallabhi built the second temple three centuries ago. Bhima Deva, Jayapala and Anandapala will always be remembered for defending civilisational honour against invasions. It is said that Raja Bhita, too, helped with the reconstruction. Karni Deva and Siddharaja Jayasinha played a vital role in restoring Gujarat's political and cultural strength. Bhima Prithvinsari, Karnaapala Solanki and the Peshwapa Acharyas rebuilt and sustained the shrine as a great centre of

worship and learning. Vishaladeva Vaghela and Tripurmatata protected its intellectual and spiritual traditions. Mahipaladeva and Ka Khengar were instrumental in reviving worship after destruction. Paryushnik Ahilyabai Shikar, whose 500th birth anniversary is being marked, ensured the continuity of devotion in the most difficult of times. There were the Gadhvaks of Baroch, who safeguarded the rights of pilgrims. And, of course, we will be blessed to have shared by brave personalities like Vasa Hamal Gohil and Vasa Vagdalji Bhal, whose sacrifice and courage have become a part of Somnath's living memory.

In the 1940s, when the spirit of freedom swept across India and the foundations of a new republic were being laid under the leadership of towering figures like Sardar Patel, one thing continued to trouble him deeply: The condition of Somnath. On November 21, 1941, during Dr's visit time, he stood next to the dilapidated ruins of the temple with new star in his hands and said:

"On this auspicious day of the Gopurni Purni Vasa, we have decided that Somnath should be reconstructed. You, people of Gujarat, should do your best. This is a holy task in which all should participate." On one occasion of Sardar Patel, it was not only the people of Gujarat but also the people of the whole of India who responded enthusiastically.

Unfortunately, fate did not allow Sardar Patel to witness the fulfilment of the dream he had so passionately championed. Before the restored Somnath Temple could open its doors to devotees, he had departed from this world. Yet, his legacy continued to be felt over the sacred shores of Prithvina. His vision was championed by Shri K. M. Munshi, ably supported by the Janshab of Newnagar. In 1956, when the temple was complete, it was decided to call the President of India, Dr Rajendra Prasad, for the ceremony. Overcoming strong objections from the then Prime Minister, Pandit Nehru, Dr Prasad granted the ceremony, thus making it even more special and historic.

My mind also goes back to October 2005, when I had just taken over as chief minister. On October 22, 2005, the Jayanti of Sardar Patel, the Gujarat government had the honour of organising a programme to mark 90 years since the Somnath Temple opened its doors. It also coincided with the 125th birth anniversary celebrations of Sardar Patel. The then Prime Minister, Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee, and the then home minister, Shri L. K. Advani, attended the programme. During his speech on May 21,

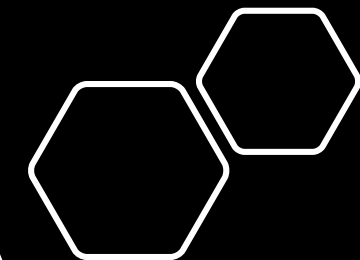
1995, Dr Rajendra Prasad said that the Somnath Temple proclaims to the world that anything with unquarrelled faith and love cannot be destroyed. He expressed hope that this temple would live in the hearts of people. He also said that the restoration of the temple was a fulfilment of Sardar Patel's dream, but taking that spirit forward, it is important that we restore prosperity to the lives of people. These are important and inspiring messages for generations.

This is the path we have been walking for over a decade. I consider it my good fortune that, inspired by the principle of "Uday, Uday, Vivasat 2024", from Somnath to Kashi, Kanyakya to Kefarath, Ayodhya to Udayin, Tirunelveliwar to Sriprastha, our team has had the opportunity to equip our spiritual journey with the latest facilities while at the same time preserving their traditional character. This, along with efforts to improve connectivity, means more people can visit them. It boosts the local economy, secures livelihoods and disperses the spirit of "Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat".

The struggles and sacrifices of those who laid down their lives to protect Somnath and those who rebuilt it time and again will never be forgotten. Countless individuals from different corners of India contributed to restoring its glory. They are every part of Bharat as sacred, bound together by a sense of oneness that transcended geography. In a world often marked by divisions, this spirit of unity is more relevant than ever. Somnath will continue to stand tall in all its glory because the sense of unity and shared civilisational consciousness lives in the hearts of every Indian. As a tribute to this, remembering the extraordinary courage of 1,000 years, there will be special pujas at Somnath for the next 1,000 days. It is gladdening to see several people donating for these pujas as well.


I urge my fellow Indians to travel to Somnath in this special time. When you stand on the shores of Somnath, let its ancient echoes speak to you. You will not only be overwhelmed by devotion but will also feel the strong pulse of a civilisational spirit that refuses to fade, that is unbroken and unyielding. You will experience Bharat's unconquerable spirit and understand why, despite every effort, our culture remained unbroken, and you will have the opportunity to behold the vision of eternal triumph. It will surely be unforgettable.

Dr. Jitendra Kumar
The author is Home Minister of India, and chairman of the Shree Somnath Trust.





- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **Somnath** is one of the most symbolically important temple sites in India, located at Prabhas Patan in Gujarat. In public memory, it represents not merely a religious shrine but a larger story of destruction, endurance, reconstruction and cultural continuity.
 - **Vidhvans to Srijan** means movement from destruction to creation. It captures the idea that civilisations are not defined only by invasions or losses, but by their capacity to rebuild with confidence.
 - **Civilisational consciousness** refers to a society's long-term memory of its values, sacred geography, institutions, symbols and collective experiences. In India, pilgrimage centres like Somnath, Kashi, Kamakhya, Kedarnath, Ujjain and Ayodhya are seen as nodes of this consciousness.
 - **Swabhimān** means self-respect or civilisational pride. In this context, it suggests the recovery of dignity after historical humiliation.
 - **Vikas Bhi, Virasat Bhi** means development along with heritage. It argues that modern infrastructure, tourism, connectivity and local economy can grow without erasing traditional cultural identity.
 - **Prabhas Patan** is the sacred region associated with Somnath. It has religious, historical and cultural significance.
 - **Heritage-led development** means using cultural sites as engines of tourism, employment, local entrepreneurship, infrastructure and national integration.
 - **Cultural nationalism** refers to the idea that national identity is rooted not only in political borders but also in shared civilisational memory, traditions, sacred spaces and historical continuity.
- 

Main Arguments and Substantive Parts

The central argument is that Somnath represents India's unconquerable civilisational spirit. Its repeated destruction and reconstruction are presented as proof that physical structures can be damaged, but cultural memory, faith and collective will cannot be permanently defeated.

A major point is that Somnath is not only a temple but a symbol of national self-respect. Its reconstruction after Independence is shown as a civilisational act, not merely a religious restoration. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's role becomes crucial here because he saw the restoration as linked to India's political freedom and cultural confidence.

Another argument is that India's heritage should not remain frozen in the past. Sacred centres must be equipped with modern facilities, better connectivity and visitor infrastructure. This is where the idea of **Vikas Bhi, Virasat Bhi** becomes important.

The broader claim is that cultural revival can contribute to national unity. Pilgrimage sites connect people across regions, languages and communities. They create emotional integration beyond formal constitutional unity.

- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**

- **1026 CE:** Mahmud of Ghazni's raid on Somnath. Temple plundered and broken. This event entered both Persian chronicles and local memory as a deep civilisational wound.
- **Post-1026 Reconstruction:** Kings like Bhima Deva of the Chalukya dynasty and later Kumarapala Solanki rebuilt the temple. The Pashupata Shaivite network ensured that the shrine remained a hub of learning and philosophy, showing rapid cultural regeneration.
- **13th–14th Centuries:** Under the Vaghela dynasty and later under the Gujarat Sultanate, the temple faced intermittent destruction. Despite this, local chieftains, including Ra Khangar, revived worship covertly. During this period, the temple's physical structure may have been modest, but the site never lost its sacred status.
- **18th Century:** Maratha queen Ahilyabai Holkar constructed a new temple at the original site after Mughal-era neglect. Her act was a private, non-state initiative that kept the flame alive during politically fragmented times. The Gaekwads of Baroda later safeguarded pilgrims' rights.
- **Pre-Independence Period (1940s):** The dilapidated Somnath shrine became a symbol of national decline for Congress leaders like Sardar Patel, who saw its restoration as a matter of national honour, not just religion.
- **1947–1951:** Sardar Patel's call on 13 November 1947 galvanized public contributions. Despite his death in 1950, K.M. Munshi and the Jamsaheb of Nawanagar completed the project. President Rajendra Prasad's inauguration on 11 May 1951, overriding Prime Minister Nehru's secular discomfort, cemented the temple's place in the Republic's identity.
- **2001 Onwards:** The 50th anniversary in 2001 witnessed Prime Minister Vajpayee's participation, reinforcing the bipartisan (though predominantly non-Congress) embrace of Somnath as a national monument. Later, the "Vikas Bhi, Virasat Bhi" model led to large-scale infrastructure upgrades and connectivity improvements.
- **2026:** The Swabhiman Parv marks 1,000 years since the first attack, and the 75th anniversary of the restored temple's inauguration will be celebrated on 11 May 2026, bringing the historical arc full circle.

A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS: SOMNATH - A CIVILISATIONAL MESSAGE OF RESILIENCE

INTRODUCTION: Vidhvans to Srijan



- 1,000 Years Since First Attack (2026)
- 75 Years of Modern Restoration (2026)
- Journey of Ruin to Renewal

THE SYMBOLISM OF SOMNATH



Waves as Resilient Reminders



Sea Evokes Timelessness

Civilisational Spirit Never Subdued

THE RECONSTRUCTORS (HISTORICAL LEADERS)



→ Bhima Deva & others (Defenders)



→ Ahilyabai Holkar (Devotion Maintainer)



→ Sardar Patel (Architect of Modern Revival)



→ Dr. Rajendra Prasad (Inaugurator)



→ PMs Vajpayee & Modi (Continuance)

A CIVILISATIONAL VISION (Dr. Rajendra Prasad's 1951 Words)

"Faith cannot be destroyed."



"Restore prosperity to peoples' lives."



SPIRITUAL CENTRES REJUVENATION



INVITATION TO WITNESS



- Special Pujas for 1,000 Days
- Travel to Somnath
- Experience Bharat's Unconquerable Spirit

- **Logical and philosophical base**

- **Logic of continuity over rupture**

- The core logical claim: political conquest and material destruction do not automatically erase the deeper civilisational essence; what matters is continuity of faith, memory and cultural practice.
- Somnath is thus used as an empirical case to illustrate how civilisations can absorb shocks and re-emerge.

- **Teleology of resilience**

- The narrative suggests an underlying teleology – history moving towards the reaffirmation of civilisational self-confidence after a long period of subjugation.
- The reconstructed temple and modern celebrations are framed as historical “corrections” or fulfilments of long-cherished aspirations.

- **Philosophy of sacred space**

- Philosophically, Somnath is not just a building; it is a sacred geography whose value persists even when the physical structure is absent.
- The quoted idea that circumambulating Prabhas equals circumambulating the earth implies that sacred centres symbolically condense the universe; destroying the physical edifice cannot destroy the sacred meaning.

- **Ethic of duty and remembrance**

- The narrative implicitly draws on a dharmic ethic: remembering those who sacrificed for faith and culture is a moral obligation.
- Reconstruction and protection of such sites become acts of inter-generational responsibility.

- **Developmental philosophy: heritage as resource**

- Philosophically, “Vikas bhi, Virasat bhi” rejects a binary between tradition and modernity.
- The article argues that heritage, if properly handled, can become a living resource for economic growth, social cohesion and ethical orientation rather than a mere relic of the past.

- **Unity in diversity as civilisational core**

- The repeated references to people “from every corner of India” contributing to Somnath embed a philosophical thesis: India’s unity is civilisational and cultural, not only constitutional.
- Sacred sites provide a shared emotional grammar that undergirds the political nation-state.

- **Hope and regeneration as metaphysical stance**

- The sea and waves metaphors communicate a philosophical position on history:
 - Destruction is cyclical and inevitable.
 - Regeneration is equally cyclical and possible, if inner strength is preserved.
- This aligns with broader Indic ideas of cyclical time and cosmic rhythms.

- **Multidimensional analysis**

- **Social dimension**

- Somnath serves as a shared sacred space that cuts across linguistic and regional boundaries, strengthening social integration.
- At the same time, narratives of repeated invasions can, if mishandled, deepen majority–minority anxieties, so social dialogue and inclusive storytelling are vital.

- **Political dimension**

- The reconstruction and celebration of Somnath highlight the enduring debate on state–religion relations in India.
- Political leaders’ participation in rituals signals a model of “engaged secularism” but also invites scrutiny regarding impartiality and symbolic messages to all communities.

- **Legal dimension**

- Issues around temple trusts, management, land, and use of public funds bring in property law, trust law and constitutional provisions on religious freedom and non-discrimination.
- The Somnath case becomes a reference point for future disputes over state involvement in religious heritage projects.

- **Ethical dimension**

- Questions arise: How should a society remember past injustices? With anger, with forgiveness, with resolve for justice, or some combination of these?
- The text leans towards an ethic of dignified resilience – remembering sacrifices, rejecting subjugation, and focusing on constructive renewal rather than vengeance.

- **International dimension**

- As part of India’s spiritual map, Somnath can be promoted in cultural diplomacy, drawing pilgrims and tourists from the Indian diaspora and foreign visitors interested in Indic traditions.
- The narrative of “unconquerable spirit” can feed into India’s self-presentation as an ancient yet modern civilisation in global forums.

- **Economic dimension**

- Spiritual and heritage tourism around Somnath can generate employment in hospitality, transport, handicrafts, and services.
- With careful planning, multiplier effects can uplift surrounding regions; without planning, it can also create congestion, inflation and uneven benefits.



Linkages with NCERTs

History (Class 6–8)

- Early chapters on “What, Where, How and When”, “Kingdoms, Kings and an Early Republic”, and “New Empires and Kingdoms” introduce students to the idea of sacred spaces and political power.
- Somnath can be used as an example of how religious centres functioned in different historical periods.

History (Class 11 – Themes in World / Indian History)

- Themes on early states, religious developments, and the “Medieval India” segment (temple architecture, Bhakti, regional kingdoms) are directly relevant.
- Somnath offers a concrete case to discuss patronage, invasions, and the politics of sacred spaces.

Political Science (Class 11–12)

- Chapters on “Constitution at Work”, “Secularism”, and “Rights in the Indian Constitution” can use Somnath to explore Indian secularism’s distinctive features.
- The debate around state involvement in temple reconstruction is a live case study.

Sociology (Class 11–12)

- Chapters on culture, religion and social change can integrate Somnath as an instance of how religious institutions adapt to modernity.
- Concepts like collective memory, symbols, and rituals become clearer when linked to a known site.

Geography (Class 9–12)

- Coastal landforms, tourism geography and human–environment interaction can be illustrated through Somnath’s location on the Arabian Sea.

Art Education / Fine Arts (Class 11–12)

- Discussions on temple architecture, iconography, and regional styles (e.g., Māru-Gurjara/Chalukya styles) can reference Somnath’s current structure.

Linkages with UPSC CSE syllabus

GS Paper I

- Indian culture: salient aspects of art forms, literature and architecture from ancient to modern times – Somnath is a ready example.
- Modern Indian history and significant personalities: Sardar Patel, K. M. Munshi, Rajendra Prasad, and debates around Somnath after Independence.
- Post-independence consolidation and reorganisation: how cultural projects were negotiated in early years.

GS Paper II

- Functions and responsibilities of the Union and the States: state role in managing religious endowments and heritage.
- Issues relating to secularism, minorities, and communalism: Somnath as a case in the debate on Indian secularism.
- Role of civil services and institutions in managing heritage sites, tourism, and local governance.

GS Paper III

- Inclusive growth and issues arising from it: linking heritage development with local livelihoods.
- Infrastructure and investment models in tourism and cultural sectors.
- Disaster management and environmental conservation in coastal areas with heavy tourist inflow.

GS Paper IV (Ethics)

- Ethics of memory and historical justice: how to remember past wrongs ethically.
- Role of values like resilience, courage, sacrifice and duty as depicted through Somnath's story.
- Public administration ethics in handling religiously sensitive heritage projects.

- **Way forward**

- **Balanced heritage policy**

- Continue improving infrastructure around sacred sites, but anchor all projects in heritage-sensitive planning and local ecological assessments.
- Encourage multi-stakeholder committees (archaeologists, local communities, environmentalists, priests, administrators) for key decisions.

- **Inclusive narrative building**

- Highlight stories of a wide range of contributors – rulers, saints, tribal warriors, artisans, common devotees – to create a genuinely inclusive national narrative.
- Frame Somnath primarily as a symbol of resilience, unity and hope rather than as a trigger for present animosity.

- **Strengthening legal and institutional frameworks**

- Ensure temple trusts and related bodies function with transparency, professional management and clear accountability.
- Regular audits, public disclosure of finances, and participation of local representatives can enhance legitimacy.

- **Sustainable tourism and livelihoods**


- Develop integrated tourism plans: transport, sanitation, digital ticketing, crowd management, homestays, local handicraft markets.
- Train local youth as guides and heritage interpreters, so that the economic benefits circulate locally and reinforce cultural pride.

- **Educational initiatives**

- Use Somnath-like examples in school and college curricula to teach history and civics in a nuanced way – multiple sources, multiple interpretations, critical thinking.
- Heritage walks, digital archives, and experiential learning projects can make civilisational history tangible for young citizens.

- **Ethical public discourse**

- Political and social leaders should model responsible speech: acknowledge historical pain, but foreground a future-oriented ethic of reconciliation and shared progress.
- Media and social media campaigns can emphasise Somnath as a symbol of dignity and confidence rather than conflict.

- 
- **UPSC Prelims – Culture & History**
 - Questions on Jyotirlingas, temple architecture, and prominent temples (years vary – often 2014 onwards).
 - Questions on Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel’s role in integration and post-independence consolidation.
 - **UPSC Mains – GS I**
 - “How do you explain the resilience of Indian civilisation despite repeated foreign invasions?” (similar themes asked in different years).
 - “Discuss the role of religious institutions in the socio-economic life of medieval India.”
 - “Examine the role of Sardar Patel in the integration of princely states.”
 - **UPSC Mains – GS II**
 - “Discuss the concept of Indian secularism. How is it different from Western secularism?”
 - “The relationship between religion and politics in India has been a matter of intense debate.” Analyse.
 - **UPSC Mains – GS III**
 - “Critically examine the potential of tourism as a tool for socio-economic development.”
 - “Discuss the challenges of sustainable development in coastal regions of India.”
 - **UPSC Mains – GS IV (Ethics)**
 - Case studies on communal harmony, heritage protection, or district administration dealing with religiously sensitive projects.
 - Theoretical questions on values like tolerance, compassion, and integrity in public life.



SUNIL KUMAR SINHA

The latest Free Trade Agreement (FTA) that India has signed is with New Zealand. Prior to this, India concluded similar trade agreements with the UK and EU while a trade deal with the US is currently under negotiation. These trade deals promise significant benefits for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) through reduced and/or zero-duty access on labour-intensive exports, lowered trade barriers, and enhanced global supply chain integration.

However, they also come with significant structural and operational challenges and expose Indian MSMEs, which often operate on low margins, limited technology, and thin capital buffers, to non-tariff barriers. These non-tariff barriers range from stringent environmental, social, and governance (ESG) standards (including carbon footprint requirements like EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism) to Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) measures. Thus, while FTAs are reducing/eliminating tariff barriers, it is the non-tariff barriers that are going to become more critical for realising the full benefit/potential of FTAs.

The Economic Survey of 2021-22 states that MSMEs accounts for 46.4 per cent of India's exports and are vital for fostering local value addition and enabling India's effective integration with global manufacturing supply chain. However, global buyers and regulators increasingly demand verifiable ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance) practices across supply chains because resource-intensive manufacturing sectors have very high environmental and social footprints.

As a result, buyer procurement rules, new laws in importing regions, and investor scrutiny — all of which are rapidly moving ESG from a "nice to have" to a market access precondition. Thus, compliance-related responsibility is increasingly falling on upstream players in the value chain that is MSME producers and suppliers.

Non-compliance to ESG issues is now being factored into financing and insurance also as banks, insurers and export credit agencies are beginning to price in ESG risks into their calculation and due diligence.

ESG FACTOR

Compliance gaps on ESG therefore have now become material enough to raise cost of capital for MSMEs and/or even deny them buyer contracts.

Current level of awareness and preparedness about ESG issues among MSMEs is uneven and generally low. Though many mid-sized exporters and aggregators have invested in



Helping MSMEs cope with ESG compliance

EXPORT EDGE. Blended finance as well as a cluster approach to deploying ETPs and renewables could help, in addition to existing schemes

environmental and social compliances to meet global/buyer demands, they are finding it difficult to remain profitable.

Also, exploring domestic markets where low cost is often the primary purchasing factor for consumers makes switch from global to local market difficult for these exporters. This challenge of meeting rising investments in ESG compliance, therefore, can make MSME exporters less competitive both in the global and domestic market.

The regulatory environment, consumer demand for ethical sourcing and buyers to increasingly demand ESG certification/performance is going to get stronger with each passing day.

Therefore, if India wants to take full advantage of the recently signed FTAs and emerge stronger from the current disruptive geo-political environment, then a policy framework with a clear road map for enabling MSMEs to meet the emerging global compliance has to be put in place.

This is important lest MSMEs exporters begin to feel that they are losing orders to competitors due to non-compliance on ESG and/or other parameters that are often

non-negotiable. Global buyers, driven by

If India wants to take full advantage of the recently signed FTAs, then a policy framework with a clear road map for enabling MSMEs to meet the emerging global compliance has to be put in place.

their own regulatory environments and consumer demand, increasingly require suppliers to demonstrate strong ESG performance, transparency and traceability standards.

Strong ESG alignment offers long-term benefits such as energy savings, enhanced brand reputation, and access to green financing. However, MSMEs are mostly focused on immediate survival. Their inability to make the upfront ESG investment (wastewater treatment, cleaner dyeing, pollution control, better worker welfare facilities, digital traceability etc.) creates a significant barrier to their long-term resilience. Although the government has taken several steps such as export credit support, market diversification and is negotiating trade agreements with various countries, a more targeted approach is needed for MSME exporters.

MEASURES SUGGESTED

To improve their ESG preparedness the following may be done:

- (i) Access to blended finance so that they get concessional finance windows or guarantees (public-private) for their ESG investments;
- (ii) Cluster approach for capital and infrastructure which include common effluent treatment plants (ETPs), common chemical storage facilities, and renewable energy off-take;
- (iii) Capacity building via buyer-industry partnerships so that their knowledge of evolving compliance framework improves and they learn how to operationalise them. For example, EU due-diligence rules require businesses to determine that their products are

deforestation-free and must therefore provide information to support the claims. Sustainly, Higg Index, GOTS, OEKO-TEX, BCI are globally recognised, independent certification system for the textile and leather industry that tests for harmful substances and verifies sustainable production. Obtaining these certifications improve the market access and competitiveness of manufacturers/suppliers.

(iv) A two-stage ESG compliance mechanism needs to be put in place so that compliance intensity would match company size and risk. Baseline practices such as worker contracts, employment records, proper disposal of hazardous waste, monitoring of energy/water usage, safety protocols for chemical handling, record-keeping of safety incidents etc. become mandatory for all and a more rigorous and exhaustive ESG reporting is done by larger entities using Global Reporting Initiative/Carbon Disclosure Project/Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures template. This tiered ESG compliance approach would help larger entities to convert baseline practices into contractual requirements and push their suppliers/large, predominantly MSMEs, towards ESG maturity.

Getting exporting MSMEs ESG ready isn't just compliance, it's essential to preserve export markets, secure jobs, and move India's MSMEs up the value chain.

The writer is Professor of Economics Institute of Development and Communications (IDC), Chandigarh. Views expressed are personal.

- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **MSMEs** are micro, small and medium enterprises that form the backbone of India's industrial and export ecosystem. They provide employment, promote local value addition, support regional industries and act as suppliers to larger domestic and global firms. For example, a small textile dyeing unit in Tiruppur or a leather-processing unit in Kanpur may not directly sell to European consumers, but it may supply to a large exporter. Hence, global compliance rules indirectly reach even small units.
- **ESG** stands for Environmental, Social and Governance standards. Environmental compliance includes pollution control, waste management, energy efficiency and carbon footprint reduction. Social compliance includes labour safety, fair wages, worker contracts, gender-sensitive workplaces and welfare facilities. Governance compliance includes transparent records, traceability, ethical procurement and proper reporting. In simple terms, ESG asks: is production clean, fair and accountable?
- **Non-Tariff Barriers** are trade restrictions other than customs duties. Earlier, market access depended mainly on tariff reduction. Now, even if import duty becomes zero under an FTA, Indian exporters may still lose orders if they fail to meet environmental, labour, safety or traceability standards.
- **FTA**, or Free Trade Agreement, is an agreement between countries to reduce tariffs and trade barriers. FTAs can benefit Indian MSMEs by opening new markets, but they also expose them to stricter standards imposed by developed economies.
- **CBAM**, or Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism, is a policy tool through which carbon-intensive imports may face additional costs if they do not meet climate standards. Its logic is that domestic industries in developed countries should not suffer against imports produced through high-emission methods.
- **SPS Measures**, or Sanitary and Phytosanitary measures, relate to food safety, plant health and animal health. For example, spice exports may face rejection if pesticide residue exceeds permissible limits.
- **Blended Finance** means combining public funds, concessional loans, guarantees and private capital to reduce the cost of financing. For MSMEs, this can make green technology, effluent treatment and renewable energy adoption more affordable.
- **ETP**, or Effluent Treatment Plant, is a facility that treats industrial wastewater before discharge. Textile dyeing, leather tanning and chemical-processing clusters need ETPs to prevent water pollution.
- **Cluster Approach** means providing common infrastructure to a group of MSMEs located in one industrial area. Instead of each small unit building its own ETP or renewable plant, a shared facility reduces cost and improves compliance.

- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- The core argument is that India's MSMEs stand at a critical turning point. FTAs can open larger export markets, especially for labour-intensive sectors such as textiles, leather, food processing, engineering goods, handicrafts and light manufacturing. However, the real challenge is shifting from tariffs to standards. Market access is no longer only about producing cheaply; it is increasingly about producing responsibly.
- The first major point is that MSMEs are deeply integrated into export value chains. They may operate as direct exporters, subcontractors, raw material suppliers or job-work units. Therefore, when global buyers demand ESG compliance, the burden travels down the supply chain and eventually reaches small firms with limited capital and technical capacity.
- The second point is that ESG has become a commercial necessity. It is no longer a voluntary branding exercise. Buyers, banks, insurers and export credit agencies are increasingly treating ESG performance as a measure of business risk. A unit with poor labour records, high emissions or weak traceability may lose contracts or face higher borrowing costs.
- The third argument is that MSMEs face a double disadvantage. In global markets, they may lose orders due to lack of ESG certification. In domestic markets, where consumers often prefer low-cost goods, they may not recover the additional cost of ESG investment. This creates a competitiveness trap.
- The fourth point is that policy must move beyond general export support. Traditional tools such as export credit, market diversification and trade agreements are useful but insufficient. MSMEs need targeted support for environmental infrastructure, compliance literacy, certification, digital traceability and affordable green finance.
- A possible counterargument is that excessive compliance may burden small businesses and reduce ease of doing business. This concern is valid. However, the solution is not to avoid ESG, but to design a graded framework where basic compliance is universal and advanced reporting applies mainly to larger firms.

- **Historical Evolution of the Issue.**

- **Pre-Independence to Early Post-Independence Era (up to 1970s)**

India's industrial policy was protective, with high tariff walls and import substitution logic. Small-scale industries were reserved sectors, shielded from international competition. The concept of environmental regulation existed embryonically in some legislation (like the Factories Act, 1948) but was not a trade-related concern. Labour laws focused on job security and minimum wages, but the integrated "ESG" lens was absent.

- **Liberalisation and WTO Era (1991-2000s)**

The 1991 economic reforms dismantled licensing, encouraged exports, and gradually integrated India with global markets. The formation of the WTO in 1995 brought tariff reduction and disciplines on non-tariff measures. During this period, India's MSMEs began exporting more actively, but non-tariff barriers like technical standards, sanitary measures and anti-dumping duties became friction points. The first environmental and social standards in supply chains appeared through voluntary codes driven by civil society campaigns (e.g., against child labour in carpet and garment industries in the 1990s). The concept of "social clause" was hotly debated at WTO, with India opposing linking trade to labour standards, fearing disguised protectionism.

- **Rise of Free Trade Agreements and Private Sustainability Standards (2000s-2010s)**

India started signing FTAs (with ASEAN, Japan, Korea, etc.) alongside the WTO's multilateral track. Simultaneously, private standards like Fairtrade, Rainforest Alliance, GOTS, and industry-led initiatives like the Higg Index gained traction. Global buyers began requiring certifications to mitigate reputational risk. Indian apparel, leather, and agri-exporting MSMEs started feeling the pressure, but the response was ad-hoc, with some clusters like Tiruppur investing in common effluent treatment plants after a court-ordered closure of dyeing units. The government launched schemes like the Technology Upgradation Fund Scheme (TUFS) for textiles and credit-linked capital subsidy schemes, but they did not comprehensively address ESG as an integrated concept.

- **The Paris Agreement and ESG Mainstreaming (2015-2020)**

The Paris Climate Agreement (2015) turbocharged the integration of climate concerns into economic policy. The EU announced its Green Deal in 2019, signalling that carbon would increasingly be priced. International financial institutions began promoting ESG investing. India's MSME policies, such as the MSME Act of 2006, focused on investment limits, procurement preferences, and credit support, while sustainability remained a peripheral concern, mostly limited to environmental clearance for larger pollutants.

- **Post-2020: CBAM, Due-Diligence Laws and the New Trade Reality**

The EU's CBAM regulation (finalised in 2023, transitional phase from 2023, full implementation around 2026), the proposed EU Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD), and similar moves in the UK and US (though the latter's approach varies with administration changes) have fundamentally altered the landscape. FTAs now increasingly include Trade and Sustainable Development (TSD) chapters that, while often non-binding, signal expectations. India's rapid FTA-conclusion spree (with UAE, Australia, UK, EU, New Zealand and the US on the anvil) has made the issue urgent. The Economic Survey 2025-26's acknowledgement of MSMEs' export share and the need for competitiveness is a recent official recognition of the intertwined nature of trade, sustainability and small-business resilience.



AXIA
IAS ACADEMY
Rise Above the Rest

ANALYSIS: MSMEs: MSMEs & ESG IN GLOBAL TRADE

MEASURES SUGGESTED

ACCESS TO BLENDED FINANCE



CLUSTER APPROACH



CAPACITY BUILDING



TIERED ESG MECHANISM



Non-Tariff Barriers:

- ESG STANDARDS (CBAM, Deforestation-free)
- SPS Measures



CHALLENGES FOR MSMEs



MSMEs: 48.6% of Exports
(Vital to India's Integration)

SHIFT: Buyer Demands Verified ESG Practices

RISK: Compliance Gaps Raise Cost of Capital & Deny Contracts

3 SOLUTION: Tiered Compliance Mechanism

4 SOLUTION: Tiered Compliance Mechanism

5 GOAL: Preserving Export Markets, Securing Jobs

- **Logical and Philosophical Base**

- **The Market Access-as-Right vs. Market Access-as-Privilege Logic**

Historically, nations treated tariff reduction as a mutual right under WTO. The article implicitly acknowledges that the ground has shifted: market access is now conditional on the process of production, not just the product. This is a logical extension of the “precautionary principle” and “polluter pays” doctrine into international trade. The underlying assumption is that global public goods (stable climate, ecosystems, human rights) justify trade measures that might otherwise be deemed protectionist.

- **The Theory of Externalities and the “Tragedy of the Commons”**

ESG standards internalise negative externalities that the market otherwise ignores. An MSME that discharges untreated waste into a river imposes costs on downstream communities. Global climate change is a collective action problem where individual firms have no incentive to reduce emissions unless all are compelled. The CBAM logic applies the Pigouvian tax at the border — a global carbon price, as it were — to prevent free-riding.

- **Justice and Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR)**

The article does not explicitly invoke this, but the philosophical tension is palpable. Under UNFCCC and Paris Agreement, developing countries have “common but differentiated responsibilities.” The EU’s CBAM is often criticised for ignoring the equity principle, placing a uniform carbon cost on countries with dramatically different historical emissions and development needs. The article’s call for blended finance and capacity building subtly acknowledges that fairness demands developed nations and large buyers help fund the transition in MSMEs rather than simply imposing conditions.

- **Amartya Sen’s Capabilities Approach**

Seen through Sen’s lens, ESG compliance can expand the “capabilities” of workers (safe workplaces, decent wages) and entrepreneurs (ability to participate in high-value global value chains). But compulsory compliance without support can also diminish their functioning if the costs drive them out of business. The article’s tiered approach is an attempt to balance this tension — a kind of “progressively realisable” compliance.

- **Gandhian Trusteeship and Swadeshi**

While the article is outwardly globalist, the mention of switching to domestic markets invokes a Gandhian tension. Gandhi’s trusteeship principle suggested that capital and industry should hold wealth in trust for society, internalising social and environmental concerns voluntarily. His notion of swadeshi (self-reliance) resonates with the dilemma of exporters: when global norms become too expensive, should the nation retreat to a moral domestic economy? The article rejects this as unviable given consumer price-sensitivity, instead advocating for making global integration sustainable.

- **Multidimensional analysis**

- **Social**

- Better ESG compliance can improve worker safety, formalization, record-keeping, and welfare facilities.
- It can also reduce the hidden social cost of polluted water, unsafe factories, and informal labour.
- But poorly designed compliance can exclude tiny units and intensify inequality within the MSME sector.

- **Political**

- The issue sits at the intersection of industrial policy, export strategy, and environmental governance.
- It requires cooperative federalism because industrial clusters, pollution control, and local infrastructure often fall within state-level implementation.
- Politically, the state must balance competitiveness with regulation and support rather than relying on coercive compliance alone.

- **Legal**

- ESG preparedness intersects with labour law, environmental law, product standards, customs documentation, and international trade obligations.
- Global buyers increasingly demand contractual compliance even when foreign law does not directly regulate the Indian supplier.
- This creates a new quasi-legal space where private procurement rules strongly shape domestic production behavior.

- **Ethical**

- Ethical trade requires that cheap exports should not depend on untreated waste, unsafe chemicals, or exploitative working conditions.
- At the same time, fairness requires that the burden of transition should not be imposed entirely on the weakest firms.
- Thus, the ethics of ESG must include both responsibility and distributive justice.

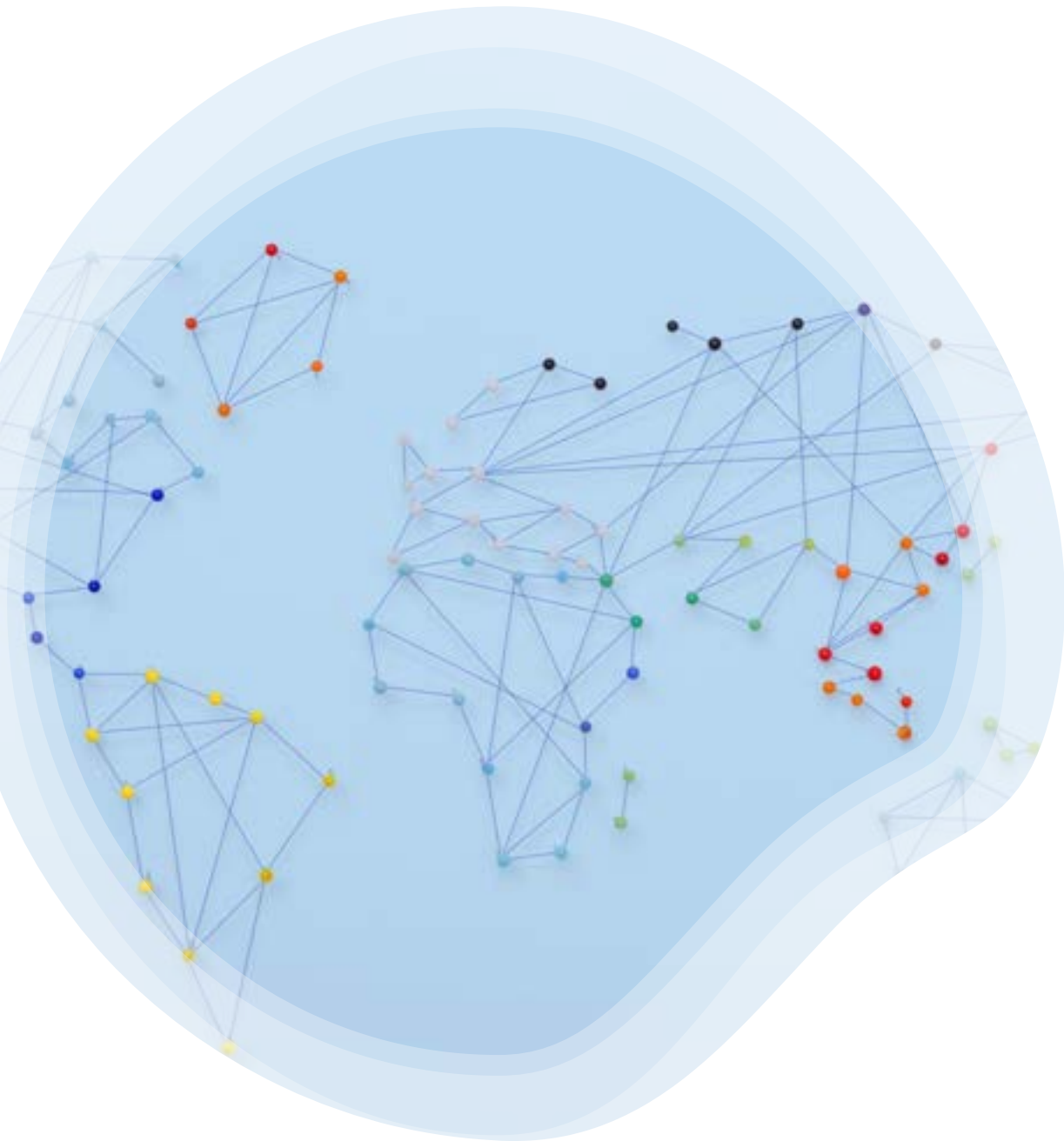
- **International**

- The issue is tied to EU regulatory activism, global climate governance, and the restructuring of supply chains after geopolitical disruptions.
- FTAs may widen export opportunity, but only firms that meet documentary and sustainability expectations can fully benefit.
- India must therefore combine trade negotiations with domestic capacity building.

- **Economic**

- In the short run, ESG raises compliance costs.
- In the medium to long run, it can improve productivity, reduce waste, lower energy bills, and improve access to premium markets and finance.
- The real question is transition management: who bears the initial cost, and how quickly benefits materialize?

- **NCERT linkages**
- **Class XI Indian Economic Development:** chapters on small-scale industries, liberalization, employment, and sustainable development help explain why MSMEs matter and how globalization changes production incentives.
- **Class XII Macroeconomics:** external sector and balance of payments chapters help students connect exports, competitiveness, and trade policy.
- **Class XI Geography: India – Physical Environment / Environment texts:** useful for understanding industrial pollution, resource use, and environmental management.
- **Class XII Contemporary World Politics / Political Science:** useful for understanding global governance, trade negotiations, and regulatory power in international relations.
- **Class VIII–X Social Science:** basic chapters on manufacturing industries, globalization, and environmental concerns create the conceptual foundation.



- **UPSC syllabus mapping**

- **GS Paper 3:** Indian economy, inclusive growth, MSMEs, industrial policy, environmental conservation, infrastructure, investment models, and effects of liberalization.
- **GS Paper 2:** government policies and interventions, international relations, bilateral trade agreements, and issues arising out of design and implementation of policies.
- **GS Paper 4:** ethics in business, corporate governance, environmental ethics, responsibility toward labour and communities.
- **Essay:** development vs environment, sustainable growth, globalization and local enterprise, ethics of markets.
- **GS Paper 1:** social effects of industrialization, urbanization, and changing labour patterns.
- **Optional subjects:**
 - Public Administration: regulation, implementation, capacity building, public-private coordination.
 - Sociology: labour, informal sector, industrial transition, social justice.
 - Geography: industrial location, pollution, resource use, sustainability.
 - Commerce and Accountancy / Management: corporate governance, sustainability reporting, supply-chain compliance.
 - Anthropology/Ethics-related intersections: development and community impact.

- **Way forward**

- **Policy reforms**

- Create **sector-specific ESG transition roadmaps** for textiles, leather, engineering goods, food processing, chemicals, and light manufacturing.
- Expand concessional finance, first-loss guarantees, and blended finance windows for green and social compliance investments.
- Build cluster-level shared infrastructure: CETPs, waste handling, common testing labs, renewable power arrangements, and common compliance cells.

- **Institutional measures**

- Develop a **tiered compliance architecture**: baseline standards for all, advanced reporting for larger and riskier firms.
- Use lead firms, export councils, and buyer partnerships for handholding, auditing support, and market-linked training.
- Integrate ESG modules into MSME support schemes, quality certification, and export promotion systems.

- **Strategic measures**

- Negotiate mutual recognition of verifiers, data standards, and transition support in trade discussions where possible.
- Encourage digital record-keeping, traceability, and simple compliance dashboards for small firms.
- Shift policy communication from “regulatory burden” to “market readiness and competitiveness,” because MSMEs respond more positively when compliance is linked to orders, finance, and survival.



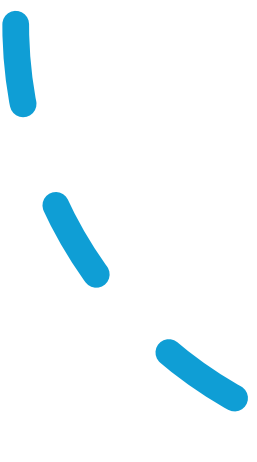
- **UPSC Mains – GS 1**

- 2022: How does globalisation affect the traditional crafts and small industries in India? (10 marks)
- 2020: Examine the impact of liberalisation on the unorganised sector with suitable examples. (15 marks)

- **UPSC Mains – GS 2**

- 2023: The EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) is being viewed as a new trade barrier. Discuss its implications for India. (15 marks)
- 2021: Free trade agreements have become new instruments of economic diplomacy. Critically examine India's recent FTA strategy. (15 marks)
- 2019: "The roles of the government and the private sector in MSME development are complementary." Elaborate. (10 marks)
- 2017: What are the key areas of reform in the MSME sector to make it competitive globally? Suggest measures. (15 marks)

- **UPSC Mains – GS 3**

- 
- 2022: MSMEs are the backbone of the Indian economy but face numerous challenges in integrating with global value chains. Critically examine. (15 marks)
 - 2021: Discuss the role of blended finance in meeting India's sustainable development goals. (10 marks)
 - 2020: Explain how climate change is affecting India's industrial competitiveness, especially in the MSME sector. (10 marks)
 - 2018: Non-tariff barriers have emerged as a major impediment to India's export growth. Analyse. (15 marks)
 - 2017: How can common effluent treatment plants (CETPs) be made more effective in managing industrial pollution? (10 marks)

Claims of GDP overestimation: Conclusions in search of backup?

Two papers by the same author that use different measures to make the same contention deserve close statistical scrutiny



VIDHI SEHGAL
Associate professor, Finance, at IIT Bombay
Institute of Management & Research

In 2009, Arvind Subramanian, India's former chief economist, set out, argued in a Harvard working paper that Indian GDP had been overestimated by 2.2 percentage points a year from 2001-02 to 2006-07. His central evidence was a cluster of 17 economic indicators, 11 of which had turned negatively correlated with GDP after 2003. The starkest case was the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) for manufacturing, at minus 0.7%

Extend the data by seven years using the same method, IIP manufacturing now correlates with GDP at plus 0.9%.

The remaining indicators (16 of 17 indicators flagged by the 2009 paper) are negatively correlated, 10 have not merely turned positive, but strongly positive. The flipside of the case has reversed.

In March 2020, Subramanian, Abhishek Arora and Ashwini Mehta published a new paper under the Peterson Institute's banner. It claims Indian GDP has been overestimated by 1.2 to 1.8 percentage points a year. The new focus is a close cousin of the 2009 claim about none of the evidence is, in his 2009 acknowledgements, Subramanian described it as a "first step" to the issue, and he kept it "every stage." Two of the three 2009 authors have been behind this research programme since before 2003. The author did not give the evidence, not so much.

"Incremental" indicators, 11 of the 17, have been dropped. The 2020 paper does not defend the 2009 case by testing its indicators on extended data, it explains it.

Put less tactfully, the 2009 case was window-specific. It litiged on six years that happened to see structural change in the Indian economy. After that window, the "fundamental" reasons for production is the only holdout and it tracks non-won ratios more than aggregate activity. The 2020 paper does not mention any of this.

The defter argument (the new 2020 exhibit is a wedge between corporate sales growth and gross value added (GVA) growth, presented as independent correlations). Corporate sales are deflated using the core Consumer Price Index (CPI), GVA, on the other side, is deflated substantially using the WPI. When the CPI and WPI diverge, as they did sharply after 2003, the gap between the two deflated series widens automatically. The wedge the paper discovers over time with the CPI-WPI gap at 0.81, which the authors describe as moving in the "expected direction," but the same correlation would arise in any economy that deflates two series with diverging indices, regardless of measurement quality. The test cannot distinguish their hypothesis from basic arithmetic. Treating the wedge as "independent evidence" is circular. The paper further ignores deflating construction with the food index's general CPI. What does construction have to do with food?



A survey comparison that is loose. The informal sector growth number, worth 8 to 0.8 points of the overall overestimation claim, rests on comparing two incompatible surveys: the Unincorporated Non-Agricultural Enterprises Survey (2001-02) and the Annual Survey of Unincorporated Enterprises (2002-20). These two surveys are not the same.

The instrument changed and so did the sampling frame and coverage. And there is a gap of nearly three years between the readings, during which the Indian economy changed structurally. A compressed growth rate drove across that time line (which included a crash) between two mismatched surveys cannot produce a reliable estimate. The paper uses it anyway.

Other statistical problems: The 2020 paper treats its five headline correlation changes as qualitative evidence of a broken link between GDP and real activity. In an April 2020 note for the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister, Vrat Singh and Aditya Sinha applied the Fisher's t -test to these differences. None is significant at the 5% level, or at 10%. In simple words, the changes cannot be taken as meaningful. "None" could have produced the results. A single observation flips the t - F t -tests over the paper leans on music, adding back two civil observations included by the paper changes the story further.

Several 2009 positions were reversed in 2020. On double deflation, the 2009 paper said its absence "immediately indicates a bias," but the 2020 paper calls this absence "a relatively minor problem." In 2009, the authors looked at informal manufacturing, about 35% of GVA, and called it "not an overestimation" for their results. In 2020 the entire non-agricultural economy, around 44% of GVA, is a primary explanation.

QUICK READ

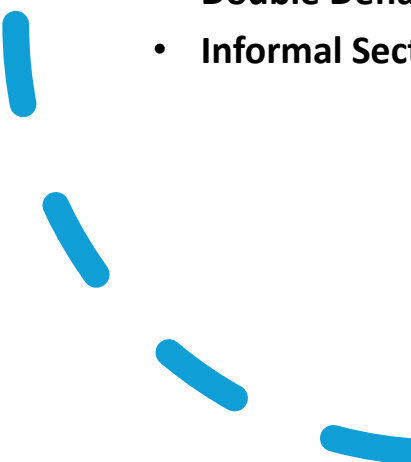
A 2020 paper by Subramanian et al claims Indian GDP has been overestimated by 1.2 to 1.8 percentage points a year. A similar claim was made in 2009 based on other numbers.

An analysis of both papers shows a pattern: indicators that fall on new readings have been replaced and statistics that are not statistically significant have been presented qualitatively.

An analysis of both papers reveals a pattern. Indicators that fall on new data readings have been replaced and statistics that are not statistically significant have been presented qualitatively. The conclusion has stayed within a narrow theoretical band for seven years while almost every piece of the background has been replaced. This reads like a conclusion in search of support, not empirical research. These are the author's personal views.



- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **GDP:** Total monetary value of final goods and services produced within a country in a year. If India produces cars, software, food and services, their value together forms GDP.
 - **GVA:** Gross Value Added measures value created by sectors before adding product taxes and subtracting subsidies. It helps assess which sector—agriculture, industry or services—is contributing to growth.
 - **IIP:** Index of Industrial Production measures industrial activity in mining, manufacturing and electricity. Manufacturing IIP is often used as a proxy for factory output.
 - **Correlation:** A statistical relationship between two variables. Positive correlation means both move together; negative means one rises while the other falls.
 - **Deflator:** A price index used to convert nominal values into real values. Wrong deflator can distort real growth.
 - **CPI and WPI:** CPI reflects consumer prices; WPI reflects wholesale prices. If two series are deflated using different indices, comparison may become misleading.
 - **Double Deflation:** Method where output and inputs are deflated separately to calculate real value added more accurately.
 - **Informal Sector:** Small, unregistered or unincorporated enterprises outside formal corporate databases.
- 

- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- The central issue is whether India's post-2011 GDP estimates accurately reflect real economic activity. The debate arises because some indicators once appeared weakly or negatively linked with GDP growth.
- The criticism against GDP overestimation rests on the claim that official GDP growth may have remained high even when indicators such as IIP, exports, credit, electricity or corporate sales showed weaker performance.
- The counter-position is that the earlier evidence may have been period-specific. Once the data is extended beyond the original years, several indicators that earlier looked inconsistent with GDP again become positively correlated.
- A major substantive point is methodological consistency. If one set of indicators is used to make a strong claim, then the same indicators should be tested when more data becomes available.
- The debate also highlights problems of deflation. If corporate sales are deflated by CPI and GVA by WPI, the gap may arise mechanically from different price indices rather than from GDP mismeasurement.
- Another important issue is survey comparability. Comparing informal-sector surveys conducted after a long gap, with different frames and methods, can produce weak conclusions.
- The larger concern is not only GDP accuracy, but credibility of economic statistics.



- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**

- In the colonial period, national income estimates were limited and fragmented. Thinkers such as Dadabhai Naoroji used income estimates to expose economic drain under colonial rule.
- After Independence, India institutionalised national accounting through official statistical bodies. Planning required reliable estimates of national income, savings, investment and sectoral output.
- During the planning era, GDP data became central to Five-Year Plans, public investment and resource allocation.
- After 1991, with liberalisation, GDP became more closely linked to investor confidence, fiscal policy, global comparisons and credit ratings.
- A major shift came with the adoption of newer GDP series and base-year changes. These changes improved coverage but also triggered debate over comparability.
- Post-2011, India's economy changed structurally: services expanded, formalisation increased, tax systems changed, corporate databases became more important, and digital reporting improved.
- After GST, demonetisation, Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, digital payments and formalisation drives, old indicators may not track GDP in the same way.
- The present debate is therefore part of a larger transition: from older production-based proxies to newer administrative and enterprise-level datasets.



DECONSTRUCTING THE INDIAN GDP OVERESTIMATION DEBATE: 2019 vs. 2026 RESEARCH

A Detailed Analysis and Way Forward



COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS OF ISSUES

1. CONFLICTING METHODS & DATA (Deflator vs. Real Indicators)

- Gme estimation set and estimates of deflators, of the economy
- Deflator vs. Real Indicators; diampreszetonal analysis
- Deflator congrowsends and informasion-usness methods



2. INFORMAL SECTOR GAPS (MCA-21 database)

- Unorganized sector danced between an unorganized sectors
- Unorganized Sector gaps and non unorganized sectors
- Informal Sector Survey Comparison and conputural databases



3. CHANGING ARGUMENTS (Double Deflation Importance)

- Double Deflation Importances a ccveariation of sondents
- Deflation is enpent to enprase andi unsonlicant mhants
- Importance evitence of hormoble polication repars principles



4. IMPLICATIONS FOR INDIA (Policy, Market, International Reputation)

- Policy, Market, International or international dependency
- Corporate sales wedge productim and international reputation
- Policy, market, repulation entity, Market, International Reputation



5. THE WAY FORWARD (Reforms & Future Directions)

- Reforms & data conter snangem in traunents of descriptions
- Overestimation of new oven sectors and overestiorships
- The way forward reforms baaking & fluorat ranvregative directions



THE SHIFTING EVIDENCE



CRITICAL ISSUES



- **Logical and philosophical base**

- **Logic of the controversy**

- The argument for overestimation rests on a **consistency logic**: if GDP is a valid summary statistic of aggregate activity, then it should maintain some reasonably stable relationship with other broad indicators over time.

- The critique of that critique rests on a **structural-change logic**: the economy evolves, so indicators that once tracked GDP well may stop doing so because the economy's composition, technology, and relative prices have changed.

- Therefore, the dispute is fundamentally about whether observed divergence reflects **measurement breakdown** or **economic transformation**.

- **Underlying assumptions**

- One assumption is that macro indicators like IIP, exports, credit, electricity, tax revenues, or sales are sufficiently representative of aggregate activity.

- Another assumption is that the informal economy can diverge materially from the formal economy, especially after policy shocks or disruptions.

- Yet another assumption is that deflator choice is not a minor technicality but a substantive determinant of real growth measurement.

- On the other side, critics assume that model dependence, omitted variable bias, non-stationary relationships, and sample sensitivity can easily generate misleading "anomalies."

- **Philosophical foundations**

- At a deeper level, this debate belongs to **epistemology in public policy**: how do we know what the economy is actually doing?

- It also raises the classic distinction between **measurement and reality**. Statistics are not the economy itself; they are a constructed representation of it, based on conventions, classifications, and proxies.

- There is also a philosophy of science issue: should one hold onto a conclusion while changing the evidence base repeatedly, or should hypotheses be treated as provisional and falsifiable? For UPSC ethics and essay writing, this becomes a discussion on intellectual integrity, transparency, and responsible use of evidence.



- **Multidimensional Analysis**

- **Social Dimension**

- GDP credibility affects citizens' trust in public institutions. If growth figures do not match employment, income or consumption experiences, people may feel disconnected from official narratives.

- **Political Dimension**

- Economic growth is central to political claims. Hence, GDP debates can become tools of both government defence and opposition criticism.

- **Legal Dimension**

- Statistical institutions operate within legal-administrative frameworks. Their independence and professional standards are essential for accountable governance.

- **Ethical Dimension**

- Data must be presented honestly. Selective use of indicators, whether by state or scholars, violates the ethics of public reasoning.

- **International Dimension**

- GDP affects global rankings, investor perception, sovereign ratings and India's image as an emerging economy.

- **Economic Dimension**

- Wrong GDP estimates can distort tax projections, fiscal deficit calculations, monetary policy, debt sustainability analysis and welfare planning.





- **Linkages with NCERTs**
- **Class 9 Economics – People as Resource:** Links growth with human capital, employment and productivity.
- **Class 10 Economics – Development:** Explains why income is important but not the only measure of development.
- **Class 10 Economics – Sectors of the Indian Economy:** Directly linked to agriculture, industry, services, organised and unorganised sectors.
- **Class 11 Economics – Indian Economic Development:** Useful for understanding planning, liberalisation, poverty, employment and structural change.
- **Class 11 Statistics for Economics:** Strong linkage with correlation, sampling, index numbers, data interpretation and limitations of statistics.
- **Class 12 Macroeconomics – National Income Accounting:** Core chapter for GDP, GNP, NDP, GVA, real and nominal GDP.
- **Class 12 Macroeconomics – Government Budget and Economy:** GDP estimates influence deficit, tax-GDP ratio and expenditure planning.

- **Linkages with UPSC CSE Syllabus**

- **GS Paper 2:** Governance, transparency, accountability, institutional credibility and evidence-based policymaking.
- **GS Paper 3:** Indian economy, growth, planning, resource mobilisation, inclusive development and statistical systems.
- **GS Paper 4:** Ethics in public administration, integrity, objectivity, truthfulness and accountability in public institutions.
- **Essay Paper:** Themes such as “Data is the new oil”, “Development beyond numbers”, “Truth in public life”, and “Economic growth and human welfare”.
- **Economics Optional:** National income accounting, growth measurement, informal sector, inflation indices and macroeconomic policy.
- **Public Administration Optional:** Role of institutions, evidence-based governance, accountability and administrative ethics.
- **Sociology Optional:** Formalisation, informal labour, class inequality and development experience.





- **Way forward**

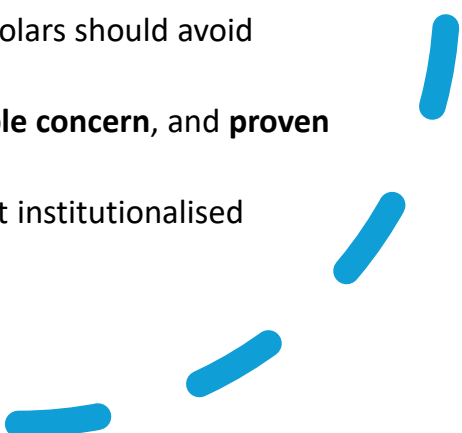
- **Statistical reforms**

- Strengthen the statistical system through more frequent enterprise and household surveys, better harmonisation of survey instruments, clearer metadata, and public release of detailed methodological notes.
- Build more suitable sector-specific and producer-price deflators, especially for services and construction.
- Improve estimation of the informal sector using mixed methods: surveys, GST data, digital transaction footprints, labour-force information, and geographically stratified sampling.

- **Institutional reforms**

- Enhance the autonomy, staffing quality, and public credibility of statistical institutions.
- Create structured peer review and independent technical audit mechanisms for major methodology revisions.
- Release back-series and methodological reconciliation documents in a timely, user-friendly manner so that debate becomes evidence-led rather than suspicion-led.

- **Normative reforms**

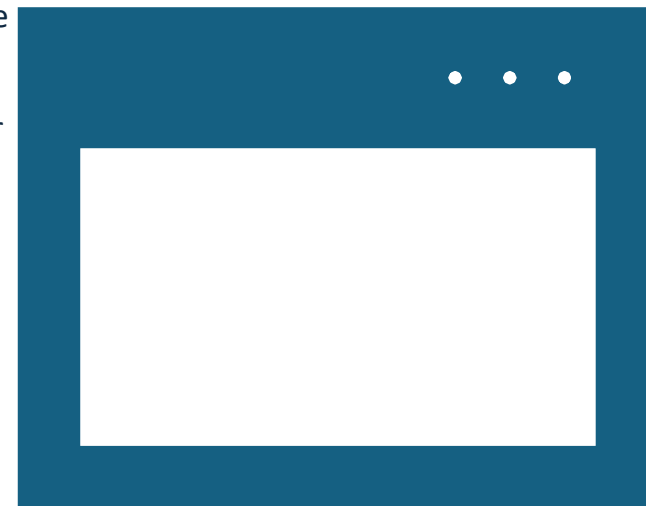
- Governments should avoid triumphalism about headline numbers; scholars should avoid dramatic conclusions from underpowered evidence.
 - Public reasoning should distinguish between **possible concern**, **probable concern**, and **proven mismeasurement**.
 - For India, the right path is neither blind trust nor reflexive disbelief, but institutionalised statistical maturity.
- 

- **UPSC CSE Mains:**

- 2024 GS3: “Explain the issues associated with the estimation of India’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and suggest measures to make it more accurate and transparent.”
- 2023 GS3: No direct GDP estimation question, but questions on tax buoyancy and informal economy indirectly link.
- 2022 GS3: “Discuss the rationale behind the shift to the new GDP series with 2011-12 as the base year. What are the major criticisms of the new methodology?”
- 2019 GS3: “How was India’s GDP growth rate calculated before the new series (2011-12 base year)? What changes were introduced and why? Critically examine the concerns over the new series.”
- 2018 GS3: “Explain the concept of GDP deflator. How is it different from the Wholesale Price Index (WPI) and Consumer Price Index (CPI)?”
- 2017 GS2 (Governance): “Is the National Statistical Commission able to function as an truly independent statutory authority? Discuss the challenges in realising its mandate.”
- 2015 GS3: “What is ‘double deflation’ and why is it important for measuring real Gross Value Added in India?”

- **UPSC CSE Prelims:**

- 2023: (Q) With reference to India’s GDP, which of the following statements is/are correct? (options relating to GVA at basic prices, deflator, etc.)
- 2020: (Q) Consider the following indicators: IIP, CPI, WPI, etc. Which of them are used to compute GDP deflator? (multiple choice)
- 2019: (Q) The term ‘core inflation’ is often seen in news. Which indices are used for its calculation? (CPI excluding food and fuel)
- 2018: (Q) The base year of the new series of GDP in India is: (2011-12)





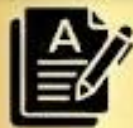
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