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Amrit Kaal: A Road Map for Achieving Viksit Bharat @2047

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"**பாருக்குள்ளே நல்ல நாடு - எங்கள்பாரத நாடு**" –Subramaniya Bharathiyar, The Tamil Poet and Freedom Fighter. According to Subramaniya Bharathiyar, a Well known Tamil Poet as well as Freedom Fighter from Tamil Nadu, who had written that "Our Bharat is the Better Country in the World" (www.tamilvu.org). Another Well Known Tamil Poet Kavijhar Kannadasan, who had written that, "**என்ன வளம் இல்லை இந்தத் திருநாட்டில், ஏன் கையை ஏந்த வேண்டும் வெளிநாட்டில்?**" Centuries of historical records point to a singular economic paradox regarding the Indian subcontinent. How did a region once characterized by unparalleled agricultural, mineral, and intellectual wealth ultimately suffer a devastating collapse in its global economic standing? British macroeconomic historian Angus Maddison spent much of his career quantifying this decline. By compiling historical datasets that track global GDP and population over centuries, Maddison demonstrated that India and China anchored the world economy long before the Industrial Revolution. From roughly 1 CE to 1700 CE, India controlled between 25 and 33 percent of global GDP, operating as a dominant manufacturing and trade hub. Under British colonial rule, this share plummeted. By 1950, India accounted for a mere 3 percent of global income. The data paints a stark picture of a highly productive civilization transforming into a distressed, stagnant economy.

Economic historians traditionally focus on the British Raj when discussing the systematic exploitation of Indian wealth. Widespread resource extraction, however, began much earlier. Starting around 1000 AD, repeated invasions severely depleted the subcontinent's capital. Mahmud of Ghazni led seventeen brutal raids between 1000 and 1027 AD. Rather than seeking territorial expansion, he specifically targeted affluent Northern Indian temple towns like Mathura and Somnath to finance the construction of his capital in Ghazni. Muhammad Ghori's subsequent campaigns in the late twelfth century went beyond mere plunder. Following his victory at the Second Battle of Tarain in 1192, Ghori established enduring foreign political control over northern India. This initiated centuries of foreign dominance, continuing through the Delhi Sultanate (1206–1526) and the Mughal Empire (1526–1857).

Even during periods of relative domestic stability, wealth was frequently extracted or violently concentrated. Persian ruler Nadir Shah looted an estimated 700 million rupees from the Mughal Empire in 1739—a sum so massive he suspended taxation in Persia for three years. Meanwhile, severe taxation under emperors like Akbar and Aurangzeb created extreme wealth inequality. A tiny ruling class hoarded capital while the broader populace was left in desperate poverty, a reality heavily documented by seventeenth-century French traveler François Bernier.

This long history of extraction accelerated and became deeply institutionalized under European colonization. The British East India Company arrived in 1608, gradually transitioning from a trading entity to a sovereign power after the 1757 Battle of Plassey. Dadabhai Naoroji formally conceptualized the devastating economic impact of this period in his 1867 work, Poverty and Un-British Rule in India. He argued that Britain's exorbitant administrative costs, military expenditures, and unreciprocated export models continuously drained Indian capital. Colonial taxes actively funded the purchase of Indian goods for British export. Indian taxpayers subsidized imperial wars and high-interest loans for railway projects designed entirely to facilitate resource extraction. Naoroji estimated this drain at roughly £30 million annually by the late nineteenth century. He was uncompromising in his assessment. The railways did not modernize India; they accelerated its impoverishment by ensuring locals labored while foreign interests consumed the profits.

Modern economic historians have attempted to quantify this colonial extraction more precisely. Utsa Patnaik calculates that Britain drained roughly $45 trillion from India between 1765 and 1938. By manipulating tax revenues to finance colonial trade, Britain effectively acquired Indian goods for free. This capital fueled British industrialization while forcing Indian deindustrialization. More recently, a 2025 Oxfam International report suggested this figure might be closer to $64.82 trillion for the period between 1765 and 1900 alone. The numbers remain fiercely debated. Yet the underlying mechanism is undeniable. By the time the British departed in 1947, a massive wealth transfer had permanently altered the trajectory of global economic power.

Professor Irma Adelman previously forecasted that the twenty-first century would belong entirely to China and India. Understanding India's current economic strategies requires comparing its post-colonial trajectory with China's aggressive expansion. China suffered its own severe imperial exploitation, formalized by the 1842 Treaty of Nanking following the First Opium War, which ceded Hong Kong to the British. Following World War II and the subsequent establishment of Bretton Woods institutions like the World Bank and IMF, global economic structures shifted dramatically. While Hong Kong developed into a massive hub for Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) under British control, mainland China underwent its own radical transformations.

Following Mao Zedong's death and the end of the devastating Great Chinese Famine, Deng Xiaoping introduced sweeping economic reforms in 1978. Emulating the success of Hong Kong and Taiwan, China established Special Economic Zones (SEZs) to attract massive FDI. The results were unprecedented. Over forty-five years, rapid industrialization lifted nearly 800 million people out of poverty. China leveraged massive trade surpluses into foreign exchange reserves currently exceeding $4.17 trillion. These reserves now fund major domestic infrastructure, like the Three Gorges Dam, and expansive geopolitical strategies, including the $679 billion Belt and Road Initiative and the China-Africa Development Fund. Today, China stands as the world's largest economy by purchasing power parity ($41.24 trillion) and a dominant developed nation.

In stark contrast, India opened its economy to global markets much later, in 1991. Despite decades of liberalization, profound structural economic challenges persist. The International Monetary Fund's recent World Economic Outlook projects India's nominal GDP at approximately $4.15 trillion for 2026, ranking it the sixth largest global economy. Yet per capita income remains low, hovering around 149th globally. To address this, the current Indian administration under Prime Minister Narendra Modi has introduced extensive policy frameworks aimed at mirroring the scale of

China's late-twentieth-century economic miracle, targeting advanced nation status by 2047.

This research investigates the scope, viability, and implementation of these contemporary developmental policies. By situating India's modern economic strategy within its broader historical context of systemic wealth drain and contrasting it with China's rapid industrialization, this study evaluates the structural reforms necessary to sustain long-term economic sovereignty.

Table1: According to the International Monetary Fund's April 2026 outlook, India is now the 6th largest economy.

Global Rank	Country	Nominal GDP
1st	United States	$32.38 trillion
2nd	China	$20.85 trillion
3rd	Germany	$5.45 trillion
4th	Japan	$4.38 trillion
5th	United Kingdom	$4.26 trillion
6th	**India**	**$4.15 trillion**
7th	France	$3.6 trillion
8th	Italy	$2.74 trillion
9th	Russia	$2.66 trillion
10th	Brazil	$2.64 trillion

Source: IMF World Economic Outlook, April 2026

Since gaining independence, India has experienced profound structural and social transformations. The demographic and developmental metrics tell a compelling story of upward mobility. In 1947, the average Indian citizen was expected to live just 32 years. Today, projections for the middle of this decade push that figure past 70 years, steadily closing the gap with global averages. Literacy has followed a similar trajectory, expanding from a mere 16 percent at independence to over 80 percent recently, driven by significant gains in both male and female educational access.

Beyond basic human development indicators, the country has achieved substantial scientific and agricultural milestones. Breakthroughs in space exploration, such as the Chandrayaan-3 mission, and critical contributions to global health through the rapid manufacturing of COVID-19 vaccines highlight a maturing scientific infrastructure. At the same time, earlier initiatives like the Green, White, and Blue Revolutions fundamentally altered the nation's food security landscape. Food grain production surged from a fragile 50.5 million tonnes in 1950 to an estimated 357 million tonnes in recent years, cementing India's position as a leading global producer of milk, fish, and horticulture.

Digital expansion tells a similar story. With internet penetration crossing the 70 percent mark and a user base exceeding one billion, the country has positioned itself as a primary digital economy. Adoption of digital payments, e-governance infrastructure, and broadband integration places India just behind the United States and China in terms of sheer digital scale.

Yet, this macroeconomic success masks persistent structural deficits. Decades of growth have not entirely resolved systemic vulnerabilities. Severe regional imbalances, income inequality, and a heavily burdened agricultural sector complicate the national narrative. Over half the workforce remains tied to agriculture and allied activities—a sector struggling with diminishing profitability, fragmented markets, and chronic farmer debt. Manufacturing continues to lag, contributing under 20 percent to the GDP, which restricts the absorption of excess rural labor. Large-scale migration to urban centers in search of livelihood often results in heavily strained city infrastructure. While poverty and infant mortality have declined sharply, issues surrounding malnutrition, healthcare access, and wealth disparities demand aggressive policy intervention.

Addressing these deep-rooted issues requires a long-term strategic pivot. This is the premise behind 'Amrit Kaal'—a developmental blueprint spanning the next 25 years, aimed at achieving 'Viksit Bharat' (Developed India) status by 2047, the centenary of independence. Rooted in Vedic astrology, the term translates to an auspicious era of prosperity. As articulated by the current administration, the core objective of this period is to aggressively reduce economic disparities, integrate rural populations into the mainstream economy, and minimize dependency on state welfare through technological empowerment.

To bridge the gap between a developing status and the conventional benchmarks of an advanced economy—which generally necessitate a per capita GDP exceeding $22,000, compared to India's current fraction of that amount—the government has laid down an extensive matrix of policy pillars. The foundational 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' (Self-Reliant India) framework prioritizes five areas: Economy, Infrastructure, Technology-Driven Systems, Demography, and Demand. This was later expanded by successive budgets to include inclusive growth, human capital innovation, and maximum governance with minimum government interference.

Realizing that high-level economic targets are unattainable without world-class logistics, the administration introduced the PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan. This initiative serves as a coordinated approach to infrastructure development, focusing on seven engines of growth: railways, roads, ports, waterways, airports, mass transport, and logistics infrastructure. By breaking down departmental silos, the framework attempts to bring logistics costs down from 14 percent of the GDP to a far more competitive 8 percent by 2030.

Interestingly, the political and economic narrative has recently shifted from 'Amrit Kaal' to 'Kartavya Kaal'—the Era of Duty. This linguistic pivot carries significant philosophical weight. While Amrit Kaal suggests a period of abundant pleasure and rights, Kartavya Kaal demands responsibility from the citizenry. The strategy echoes Amartya Sen's capability approach, which argues that poverty alleviation should focus on empowering individuals rather than merely distributing welfare. By linking public emotion and duty to national policy, the government is attempting to foster a self-sustaining environment where citizens view themselves as accountable partners in nation-building.

Over the past decade, this philosophy has materialized through massive, targeted interventions across various sectors:

Financial Inclusion and Entrepreneurship: The Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana has revolutionized financial access, bringing nearly 58 crore unbanked citizens into the formal financial system, with a majority being women and rural residents. These accounts enabled the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) system, effectively eliminating middlemen and plugging leakages in state subsidies. Complementing this, the MUDRA Yojana has aimed to 'fund the unfunded.' By extending over 57 crore collateral-free loans to micro and small enterprises, the scheme has democratized credit access, particularly for marginalized communities.

Infrastructure and Connectivity: The national highway network has seen aggressive expansion, growing by roughly 60 percent since 2014 to become the second largest globally. Massive investments in corridors, expressways, and rural roads under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana have improved market access for farmers and integrated remote areas with urban economic hubs. Concurrently, efforts to achieve 100 percent rural electrification have addressed decades-old power deficits, replacing chronic shortages with renewable energy targets.

Social Welfare and Health: Recognizing that out-of-pocket healthcare costs are a primary driver of poverty, the Ayushman Bharat scheme was launched to provide universal health coverage to vulnerable demographics. Sanitation has also seen historic shifts through the Swachh Bharat Mission, which dramatically increased toilet coverage and pushed the country toward open-defecation-free status. Housing deficits are being addressed through the PM Awas Yojana, sanctioning tens of millions of homes for lower-income families.

Agricultural Restructuring: The approach to agriculture has transitioned from viewing farmers merely as welfare recipients to treating them as economic stakeholders. Central expenditure on agriculture has multiplied, backing initiatives like the PM-KISAN direct income support scheme and the PM Fasal Bima Yojana for crop insurance. The integration of digital markets (e-NAM) and the aggressive push for agricultural exports—which recently crossed the $50 billion threshold—indicate a structural shift toward value addition and global supply chain integration.

Food Security: The Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY), initially a pandemic-era relief measure, has been extended to provide free, fortified food grains to over 80 crore citizens. The transition to supplying fortified rice across all public distribution networks specifically targets the country's historic battles with anemia and micro-nutrient deficiencies.

Global Integration: On the foreign policy front, India has actively expanded its geopolitical and economic footprint. The government has aggressively pursued Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with regions including the UAE, Australia, and European nations, moving away from historic protectionism. Leadership roles in forums like the G20 have allowed the country to position itself as the voice of the Global South, advocating for climate justice and equitable trade.

The roadmap to 2047 requires India to sustain unprecedented growth rates, heavily scale its manufacturing capabilities in frontier sectors, and ensure its demographic dividend is equipped with relevant, future-proof skills. Projections indicate that if these infrastructural and economic engines maintain their momentum, India is poised to become a $40 trillion economy by mid-century.

The transition from a developing nation to a global economic powerhouse is rarely linear. It requires navigating complex domestic inequalities while adapting to volatile global dynamics. However, the foundational strategies established over the last decade—anchored in technological integration, infrastructural expansion, and a renewed emphasis on civic duty—provide a highly credible blueprint. If executed with precision, the vision of a fully developed, self-reliant India by its hundredth year of independence is not just a political aspiration, but a tangible economic inevitability.

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