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## Travelogues Reverberating Nascent Indian Economy

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### Abstract:

Travelling requires great deal of zeal, vigour and hard work. Travelling and visiting new places holds a charm of enthralling the lives of wanderers. The writers have touched various vital issues highlighting the persona of India. The explorations of the travel writers have endowed world with an imperative genre of the literature. It has made the world a confined place to know about the hidden aspects of their culture, economy, spirituality etc. The contemporary travel writing deals with one's perception about a particular place. The current paper will throw light on the pre and post independence economic aspects of India in the view of a few travelogue writers who worked dedicatedly to divulge the economic vision and version of India.

**Keywords: Indian Economy, Democracy, Development, Governance, Social Predicaments.**

Apart from its cultural heritage India has developed credit in front of the whole world through economic development. Independence has brought a bouquet of happiness and prosperity to the nation. The Battle of Plassey, 1757 changed country's destiny and brought the imperialist government into rule who severely exploited the countrymen by enslaving them. The economic policies introduced by the colonial government were of more concerned to their native country's economic interest rather than developing the Indian economy.

### ➤ Post Independence Nascent Indian Economy

British colonial system severely damaged Indian economy affecting social, political, cultural and educational ethnicity. During British colonial rule Indian economy was majorly stagnant agricultural economy. Even the industrial sector did not develop due to de-industrialization, the Indian handicraft industry suffered double exploitation and got collapsed badly. Britishers never strengthened on modernization of industries as well as setting heavy industries in India. *“Systematic de-industrialization” is the term that describes the status of industrial sector during the British colonial rule in India.*

During the era of independence, India was considered as a poor and underdeveloped country. The backbone of Indian economy, agriculture was in devastating condition, there was weak productive accretion; sub division of landholdings; unemployment and underemployment, and even people did not utilize the mineral resources aptly. Various industries got ruined during the British rule. The problem of unemployment worsened the condition; the common mass could not afford the basic necessities of life. The demographic conditions like mass illiteracy, high birth rate and death rate, low standard of living etc. acted as a menace against the development of the economy.

The economic condition did not better even after the India's independence. The models of development that heart-warmed the lives of the ordinary were on the verge of death. Bureaucrats were held responsible for the corruption and exploitative governing body. People had lost their morals and enduring outlook for success. 'Short-termism' prevailed in the society.

In order to increase in production of the crops, government fired and fuelled Green Revolution that did a lot for the farmers to improve their state. Although the revolution had certain failures as well, as it was meant for some restricted crops in particular area it did battle the poverty partially. Not everyone gained from the revolution and non-uniform distribution made the farmers restive. An abundance of unskilled workers slowed the process of growth leading to the unemployment and poverty.

After independence Indian government had also decided to adopt objectives for planning in India. Advanced technology, new methods of production and a positive outlook for the social changes were the key features of the plan. Self-reliance was another factor that was laid an emphasis on in order to lessen the dependence on import goods that can be produced within the country. It brought about self-sufficiency in grains, more reliability on domestic production, and increase in GDP and led to enhancement in the export sector. Economic growth was the main motto of the government which advanced growth in goods and services. But the most important thing was to maintain the equality concerning income and power, and to uplift the status of weaker sections in the society. Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India also held thriving wishes and plans for Independent India,

I wish to say that, in spite of everything, I have a firm faith in India's future.....Although many of my old dreams have been shattered by recent events, yet the basic objective still holds and I see no reason to change it. That objective is to build a free India of high ideals and noble endeavours where there is equality of opportunity for all. (Jawaharlal Nehru 206)

#### ➤ **1980- A Jumpstart to Indian Economy**

India's economic growth started in late 1980s with a pattern that followed the policy of Liberalization. It did improve the status of per capital income, but it was not uniform. Though a good beginning was made to raise literacy percentage and urbanization in the country yet it had not removed the problem of agriculture evenly.

Throughout the pre-liberalization period, the main motto of Indian government was on the economic development, eradication of poverty and raising the standard of living. It was divided into four stages: regaining of land reforms, improving the status of public sectors, distribution of essential commodities and health care services to the needy and implementation of reservation policy for the down trodden and deprived for better education and employment.

During 2000, acceleration was seen in the GDP of every sub-sector of Indian economy. Rural and urban both got a raise and the literacy rate increased. The intervention of government due to the MNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act) brought many positive changes for the rural people. However the growth in service sectors got declined due to the manufacturing unemployment.

#### ➤ **Mark Tully on the Economic Mood of India Since 1980**

In India's Unending Journey, Tully's economic vision predicted the economic mood of India. His work was influenced by Amartya Sen's developmental economy. "Development economics involves the creation of theories and methods that aid in the determination of policies and practices and can be implemented at either the domestic or international level". (Arndt 457–66)

He had brought to our notice the gulf between haves and have-nots prevalent in India. He calls it the failure of economic policies of the government. Due to which the fruits of economic growth never percolated to the lower strata of the Indian society. His economic vision is based on the conversion of economic growth into development. He emphasized that the growth without significant development is no growth. For him real growth is one which brings qualitative change in the life of majority and not just the minority. He has also identified the conflict in the economic benefits of the developmental projects and social and economic ramifications. He concluded that economics is the most important influential force for an Indian. His analysis is based on the impact of new economic policy—Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization (LPG). His economic theory takes cues from the economic philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi. He has identified how the politics of aid, debt relief and pro-poor trading terms have shattered economic policies of Indian government. He termed the Indian method of globalization a failure. His economic conclusions discussed increasing world inequality which is increasing at an alarming pace in India. He also challenged the economic methods to combat poverty in India. He used a comparative method for economic analysis and compared the life of an individual before new economic policy and after ten years of new economic policy. He concludes that the fruits of Liberalization and Privatization have not been shared with all the sections of the society and there is no major change in their lives. The standard of living is still poor or in fact it has deteriorated. The unemployment is at a rise and discontent and discomfort is also at a ripe. The basic public amenities are in a dire state. The government panacea of growth has failed miserably. The new schemes of the government such as Employee Guarantee, Economic Rehabilitation etc have become a new breeding ground of corruption and nepotism. The missing healthcare services in villages also tell the haunting/scary stories of economic failure. In fact the rich got richer and the poor got poorer. His economic lens has shown that a high growth rate in India is accompanied by an unprecedented rise in the number of slum dwellers.

Although India has generated many entrepreneurs and increase in industries and manufacturing companies have elevated the status of Indian economy and expansion of industries and commerce (which was of course the part and parcel of License Permit Raj) has gifted new luxuries and products in the market yet in her major sectors of development economic growth has become stagnant.

Especially in Patna where India's so called anarchy is in chaos. There is a race to move ahead from another to earn and survive leaving behind others. "The strength of India lies in the resilience of the poor."(Tully, No Full Stops in India 303)

Poverty is very much seemingly inseparable parts of India for millions of Indians live below the poverty line. Many don't have adequate facilities, or commodity to utilize, or lubricants to export, or monopoly to follow: it seems we have learnt to cope up with poverty. "There are countries which are poorer than India, there are countries which have made far less economic progress, there are countries which don't have even the rudiments of a modern state, but there is none which has so many poor people". (Tully 2)

Yet India is committed to encourage the students educationally so that they can add in something relevant in shaping country's future. Future Doctors, Managers prefer to study in India than in foreign as to use their skills for its betterment.

➤ **Investigating the Role of Indian Parliamentary Democratic System as the Reason for the Plight**

Indian Parliamentary Democracy might be the reason for the plight; whereas almost all the communist countries have provided better education, health services and other necessary commodities of life to survive. The faulty governance and its inability to check social problems like consumerism, corruption, inefficient workers etc are to be blamed for the deterioration of the Indian economy.

Thanks to the LPG policy i.e. Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization started by Former Prime Minister Late Rajiv Gandhi, the growth rate in unemployment has declined. Western economic School of thought is getting popular in India. One talks about the policies to liberalize the economy.

Some of Indians have made smart moves to enhance country's economy. Many of them have revamped their father's dilapidated business with westernized ideas and philosophies. An American carpet manufacturer company believes in the quality and efficiency of work. One such company is Rugmark Foundation which guarantees that they are importing 'child-labour-free carpets'. It heightened the demand of the carpet in the market and maintained their social status as well.

➤ **Offshoots of Bad Governance:**

- **Perpetual Illiteracy**

The basic problem in the degradation of country's economy is illiteracy. Presently many NGOs have started working to provide equal education facilities for children. Project Mala has made remarkable changes to make the poor children aware enough to get educated for the uplifting of their social status. Literacy and its utilization can effectively contribute to the improvisation of economy. It has the power to stamp out poverty in the nation and liberate children from the shackles of bonded labour. In the current scenario poor children are bound to work for survival, to manage the household expenses. "The trouble is the poor can't wait for tomorrow. Today is what matters to them. This is the economic reality of the situation."(Tully, India in Slow Motion 45)

- **Corruption**

The other major problem is corruption which has severely damaged the backbone of Indian economy. Even the villages have fallen prey to the corruption. NGO like MKSS has tried to open the eyes of villagers about their rights, justice, laws etc.

- **Consumerism**

Consumerism is a common culture everywhere which is sturdily distressing the modern lives. It not only refers to the advertising area but also focuses on living a better and luxurious life with all amenities around. Humans are surrounded with advertisements—

newspaper, billboards, internet, television etc together allures man to buy a particular product or enjoy the service offered. The tempting advertisements grab the attention and generate undesired desire to buy the product. The false promotions embrangled innocent people and exploit their mutual trust. It creates an obsession in the mind of the buyers to spend extra amount on the undesirable things especially the foreign products which cause profit to their economy. These series of desires require surplus amount of money and man does everything to grab it. The intrusiveness, manipulability and unsustainability of consumerism bring drastic changes in the lives of people and hold the power to wobble the economy. The consumerist culture conflicts with the aim of the any economy individually and globally.

- **Inefficient Working**

Earlier apart from the problem of unemployment, lack of training was one of the major drawbacks responsible for the disaster in the economy. People were not that skilled to achieve refinement in any work. Even the inefficient working system, the unjust rules, low wages, atrocities at work place demotivated the hard workers to perform well in the concerning fields.

- **Criminalization of Politics**

Politics has become the poignant hub of scandalous activities. Fraud, forgery, murders, unlawful electoral acts, scams has been synonymous to politics. Through electoral frauds many unscrupulous people take entry in the realm of politics and destroy the image and economy of the country, and forces other to vote for a particular candidate. Its roots are spread from legislature to executive and from executive to judiciary.

Indian weak judicial system increased the severity of the problem. They fight elections shamelessly and our system protects them. It is appalling that the legislature responsible for making and executing the laws and policies for the progress is itself acts as stumbling block in the development of the nation. Serious steps should be taken to mark a full stop on such activities. “It is high time for the custodians of democracy in India—its common man—to pressurize the political parties to stop giving tickets to candidates with tainted records so that the politics will not become a smooth and easy task for criminals.” (<http://www.slideshare.net/arzoosahni/news-contemporary-issues-criminalization-of-politics-2>)

➤ **A Malnourished Agricultural Sector**

Coming to the agriculture sector the farmers the backbone of Indian economy, are traumatized by the moneylenders. Obscurity of survival makes them commit suicide. Though Nationalized Banks are trying hard to save them from the loan sharks by providing them loan handy to their pockets yet Farmers are in debt everywhere in the country. Even the most prosperous state Karnataka could not save itself from the disaster. Few policies of government have exacerbated the situation. They sell their crops to the local traders at a very cheap rate in order to get the quick cash which at the same time worsens the condition. The Government Procure Centers pay more but never at the time of selling and never on time as well. It is also very hard for them to get a loan from any nationalized bank for they have to reproduce a series of documents for the same.

He has to produce, one—land records, two—records of rights, three—no dues from the government, four—records of all land revenue paid, five—no dues

certificates from other banks, six—land valuation certificates, seven—no dues from agricultural societies, and if he is a minor, permission from the court. (Tully193)

The government has always stressed on the economic growth through industries and hardly cared for the agriculture. The idea of new crops has also not been given due attention. Thus few farmers started working at central government's commission for manufacturing and marketing of handicrafts. Some have started teashops or some other business. Those who succeeded survived and those not committed suicide. The debt is always too heavy to come out of. "The Indian farmer is born in debt, lives in debt and dies in debt."(Tully 194)

Time has changed a lot and people's life in a village is relied on the electrical gadgets; still they are unaware of the petty matters like health and hygiene. It is surprising to note that in Indian villages number of television sets is more than that of toilets. The industrial sector snatched the growth of agriculture. Government always wanted to invest in industries and the rural people wish to work in same. Rather agro industries must be given importance so that it creates a sense of affinity in them. It can help a farmer to feel himself as a businessman when he gets profit in the products manufactures.

**In your book you refer to how Gandhi describes the real India as the villages. What's your view?**

No, only partly. I think the real India, as a whole, is not just the villages. I think India made a mistake with concentrating on top-down development and it should have listened to Gandhi and concentrated on growth from a grass roots level, at least, as much of the country would be quite a different place. One of the biggest challenges India faces is making development happen in the villages rather than sitting in Delhi making plans and shelling out the money, without consulting at a village level. The panchayat are there but even at a village level, governance does require some institutions to prevent them becoming corrupt or falling into the hands of the wrong people. At the moment there is inadequate administrative infrastructure. India will make progress on poverty when these problems of governance are resolved. The recent budget hasn't helped with the questions I have talked about. If you budget some money, then you have to make sure that money is effectively spent; otherwise the whole budget becomes futile. Many business people were disappointed as there was not enough of, what they would like to see, such as tax reductions, in the budget."(blogs.hindustantimes.com/.../i-have-no-plans-to-leave-india-it-is-my-destiny-to-be-here"-says-sir-mark-tully/)

➤ **Tales Of The Open Road-- An Insight Into a Common Indian Life**

The economic development of the cities are clearly visualized by the physical infrastructure like panorama of lush green fields, factories, townships which have replaced the barren fields. And cities have been spread with a great speed and length to engulf the rural land with townships, bungalows, multistory, factories etc.

The advancement in technology and economy has changed the lives of the people. In the early 40s people had only one way to save themselves from the scorching heat i.e. splashing water on the khas mats but now ACs and refrigerators have changed the scenario completely. They have

variety and options too. Even the mode of transportation has come up with drastic change. Replaced by auto rickshaws, even then nostalgia invoking tongas and tramcars have vanished from the roads.

The economy has changed everything in and around the streets, the milk shops have been converted into coffee shops, cinema halls have been flourished with discotheques, pubs and restaurants. Cities are like dream places for the villagers. Liberal economy and better ventures have provided all a path to earn and spend accordingly.

While travelling to Mussoorie the famous Indian writer Ruskin Bond gets nostalgic remembering how the power of money has changed everything. It has made the things easy and comfortable. Huts, kachha roads, mud houses, pathshalas are hardly seen on the ways, the fiscal wave has changed the whole thing. How the Kipling Road (named on Rudyard Kipling who often visited Mussoorie to write prose and poetry) has changed into a motorable one.

Ruskin Bond's enthralling travelogue *Tales of the Open Road* takes the readers to trivial and uncharted places with filthy roads. The reader can enjoy travelling along with the experiences of author whether it is a Tonga ride or live through the 'gulabithand' of Bhaironghati.

The intact places like Chuttmalpur and Najibabad, have been prettily penned by Bond. The four parts of anthology sketches a preview of the landscape and the riveting milieu with mesmerizing pictures taken during his travelling. "Ruskin Bond writes about the uncomplicated things in life, and raises the experience to the sublime" - Deccan Herald.

Bond has travelled in all sorts of transportation and enjoyed it heartily and has paid attention to the flora and fauna of the places that never changes with the span of time. He himself remarked, 'The world keeps changing, but there is always something, somewhere, that remains the same.' It has been said with the context of the eternal beauty of the Tajmahal but one realizes the truth in the statement with respect to the socio-economic condition of Indians which haven't changed much or at all over the time.

It is interesting to note that India is always talked about, for her social domain, and one completely forgets to talk about her economic status, which is not up to the mark and through the hands of which social domains frets into a new shape with every sun.

Ruskin Bond has explored the closely intertwined socio-economic fabric of India. His work provides an insight into Indian lives. He mentioned about the economic lives of common Indians like the truck drivers who rule over the road with heavy loads and loads of commitments.

They are the connectors who provide us with the necessities of life that are exported from other cities. If compared from the earlier time the scenario has changed completely, the roads too look democratic as all sorts of vehicle move on the road to their journey but the condition of the truck driver is untouched by the economic development. "The truck driver is modern India's lifeline...he drinks, he swears, occasionally he picks up HIV; and frequently he is killed or badly injured."(Bond, *Tales of the Open Road* 10)

Despite so many upright changes, there are still in India many families that consider the availability of the bare minimum as the luxury. Indians are considered as hard workers and are capable enough to do a number of jobs excellently at the same time to make two ends meet. But the question arises if they are doing all this willingly? Didn't they want to enjoy or relax?

The dancers of Kannur are bound to do rigorous work for nine months in a year. They have to dig well, work as a jail warden where there is always a threat of life but they are bound to take such risks to earn livelihood. And for the three months they are finally appraised by the rich as they become the messenger of God. The question is if they would like to continue the practice if given a better option for earning livelihood.

Indians are well known for their fighting spirit, but up to what extent they can fight to survive? It is a big question, an unskilled and illiterate Indian man can earn through petty jobs, hard work, or by any of the unfair means but what about such a woman? She is forced to brothel to survive. “For the very poor, and the very pious, the Devadasi system is still seen as providing a way out of poverty while gaining access to the blessings of the Gods, the two things the poor most desperately crave.”(Dalrymple, *Nine Lives* 72)

This is how the several thousand girls, aged six to nine are dedicated to the Goddess Yellamma to be Devdasis annually and thus they step up at the door of prostitution. “Bihar is in fact one of the last areas of the subcontinent which really conforms to the image of India promoted by well-meaning Oxfam advertisements, all beggars, cripples and overpopulated leper hospitals.”(Dalrymple, *The Age of Kali* 16)

Because of the stagnant economic scenario, the crime ratio is increasing like anything. Bihar comes at the bottom of the percentage of the literacy rate. It has the highest number of deaths in the police custody, the worst roads, it's per capital income is less than half the Indian average; even the state is now nearing a situation of anarchy.

#### ➤ **Far from Being a Tiger Indian Economy a Lumbering Great Elephant**

“India, far from being a tiger is in fact a lumbering great elephant...a huge country and it moves very slowly and ponderously.” (Dalrymple, *The Age of Kali* 161) The economic development in India has started from Bangalore where the supermarket, shopping malls with ultra-modern infrastructure erected it as a model town for India. The establishment of IT Company Infosys has added a feather in the enhancement of the city. But the economic growth has created a major gap between the rich and the poor. The luxurious amenities can only be enjoyed by the rich not by the poor. The MNC's have raised the inflation in Bangalore. It is no more affordable for a common man to live. The privatization has provided a cushion to the rich to save themselves from the economic breakdown.

Hyderabad, the city of the palaces of the Nizams has developed a lot. The forests have been recklessly cut down in urban settlement. New buildings, restaurants, offices have changed the form of Nizam's city. “Everything that is special about Hyderabad is going. Day by day old ways are disappearing and being replaced by a monotonous standardization.”(Dalrymple 214 )

Dalit (low caste) had always been oppressed and dominated by the upper caste, their women were misbehaved with and there was no one to protect them. The law made in their favour has changed everything. Some of the Indians blamed Gandhi for the poor economic condition as he wanted only social prosperity in India and was in the favour of the equal opportunities and reservation at the same time for Dalits for a constructive transformation in their lives Hence India is powerful in spirituality but lacks in good industrialization. Peasants, farmers, labourers, small trade merchants are ample in number.

The economic condition of people is in terrible state. The slums are packed with the robbers, smugglers, prostitutes and gamblers. They have stirred an outcry in the cities as well. The urban are below poverty line in India so the state of rural cannot be imagined. Beneath every poor urban people there are three rural people. It is not easy to improve the quality of life rapidly. The population over 100 million requires houses, good educational facilities, water, electricity, roads, employment sector which seemed difficult to Dom, the author of *Out of God's Oven: Travel in a Fractured Land*. Author has encountered with many poor people on the footpaths of Mumbai who have been deliberately 'dumped in the streets to die', some are forced to live like this as had no money or no aim/property left at their native. Some are working in brothels to earn and survive and are bound to sleep with around 20 men in a day. The girls are brought from different places of India and Nepal. Even those parents who killed girl child have started valuing them as they can be sold to brothels at a good price. But the danger of AIDS is always there, yet some NGOs have started monthly checkups in these areas but it is not sufficient.

Dom discussed about the plight of Indian currency; foreign exchange has swallowed the root commodities from India. People die here with malnutrition rather than starvation. Despite having money they cannot utilize as lack of education. Education is the greatest inequality matter in India. Although to some extent we make them literate but real education is still far from their reach. Lack of proper education increases the number of unemployable youth in any state.

The economic conditions are changing rapidly in India. The government is ready to compete with the global cities by making international airports, malls, luxurious hotels etc. which is the duty of every developing country. But what about the poor, their plight is same. Even several years after Independence there aren't any major change in the pitiable condition of poor in India. They have remained only the on-lookers of the high society drama and become preys of their atrocities at times. They are bound to perform different services afar what they have been waged. Nothing major has been done for poor.

Whilst creating Hyderabad to Cyberabad Naidu stressed on the policy of decentralization to run the economy. People must have the right to information regarding the government activities. It's better to facilitate them with information rather than making them watchdogs. With such views Naidu put an approach to make a SMART government—Simple, Moral, Accountable, Responsive and Transparent. His one more philosophy of setting up the TWINS (twin Cities Integrated Network Services) provided 18 services like electricity, registration of birth and death etc. at one place that improved precision in work. The IT industry has taken over the manual work; smart buildings replaced the dirty and crowded government offices. But the overburden of work created hurdle in serving common man. "Manual work must continue but system must change. The rules we work under were laid down by the British, we did not bring in administrative reforms. The system has to be updated; it's not efficiency which is lacking but political will". (Tully, India in Slow Motion)

### ➤ **A Faint Ray of Hope**

Although the government has decided to strike a balance between market and economy and the issues related to social and economic discrimination have also been discussed to stabilize the economy yet there is much left to be done. Different ventures are found to develop modern five star hospitals, health tourism, retail and manufacturing market. The Green revolution has also motivated the farmers to sow new breeds of high-yielding seeds. They understood how to use chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Globalization has changed everything. Capitalism controls all

the disciplines. It is governing politics, market, private enterprises etc. Economists have found a way to strike a balance between socialism and economy. For example: The Indian automobile industry has worked out and maintained the status of an independent growth sector and has itself freed itself from the License-permit Raj and has managed a globally renowned status. An overall rapid growth of industrial sector has changed the scenario e.g., India has developed its own nuclear industry for the economic recovery.

It is said that change is inevitable; one has to maintain the pace with the changing world. The world's economy has been totally changed than what it was four decades earlier. The hamlets have been turned into towns, towns into cities along with the architecture. Huts have been transformed into block apartments; multiplexes have taken place of theatres and nukkad natakas; high tech gyms have replaced the vyayamshalas and many more. These all indicates that how mindsets have moved ahead with the budding economy and technology.

Praying the idols is not only a culture but has also become a way to earn. The art is successfully put to use by the artist, idol makers to grab the attention of the tourist, as India has become a tourist spot and demand for show pieces is gaining popularity.

With the passage of time, the economic statuses of people and living standards have changed substantially. The middle class in 1970's could not afford to buy basic electronic appliances; but today now It spends the amount as a pocket money in bars, pubs and discotheques. People are ready to change their values for money even to disrobe them. Bangalore has become the IT hub and has progressed like anything. A cosmopolitan and westernized city has brought liberalization in the economy. The economic establishment has changed the lifestyle of people. India has been accredited as among one of the seven principal manufacturing powers on the earth. The westerners, either bankers or businessmen, are clustering to establish their branches in Indian metro cities. The prospects for the economic vision of India are strengthened day by day.

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