

Delhi's Dilemma: A Growing Economy And Growing Unemployment



India is on its way to becoming the third-largest economy in the world, yet unemployment among young people with graduate degrees is at an all-time high.

India's glass is half-full – and half-empty.

The good news is India is the fastest-growing major economy in the world, on course to overtake Germany and Japan in the next five years in aggregate GDP. It will become the third-largest global economy after the US and China.

However, there is a concern that the benefits of fast GDP

growth are being undermined by low job growth and an accompanying pro-rich bias.

Unemployment among young people with graduate degrees is at an all-time high of 29 percent, and overall youth unemployment is hovering around 10 percent. This has prompted some young Indians to travel to war zones in search of employment and higher income opportunities.

Rapid economic growth in the past two decades has contributed to an unprecedented fall in poverty. The poverty headcount ratio, which indicates the proportion of

the population living below the poverty line, fell from 37 percent in 2004-05 to 22 percent in 2011-12.

This pulled 140 million people out of poverty.

Recent estimates by India's Knowledge Commission or NITI Aayog show that multidimensional poverty in India declined from 29.17 per cent in 2013-14 to 11.28 per cent in 2022-23, with about 250 million people moving out of deprivation.

At the same time, the share of the national income going to the top 10 percent of the population has almost doubled in the four decades between 1982 and 2022, to about 60 percent. The bottom 50 percent of people had 15 per cent of the national income in 2022. The top 1 percent's share was estimated to be 22.6 percent. The wealth distribution is even more skewed.

Several factors, including the lack of quality broad-based education and all-purpose skills, are responsible for these disparities.

An underlying feature of India's unique structural transformation

is also often cited as a reason.

The stage of industrialisation in which a country experiences employment-intensive growth driven by manufacturing has been bypassed here in favour of services-led growth. The services-led economic growth since at least 1991 has had the side-effect of increasing inequality.

National Sample Survey Organisation data shows that 45.5 percent of the workforce is employed in agriculture, 12.4 percent in construction, and only 11.6 percent in manufacturing, with the rest in services.

India's inability to pull more of its workforce away from agriculture towards more productive and better-paying employment remains a pressing challenge. While the services sector has contributed to growth, its share in employment (approximately 29 percent) is a little more than half of its share in GDP.

The shortcoming of India's sectoral composition of growth has, therefore, been that it has generated relatively fewer opportunities for productive employment for India's poor.

With more than seven percent real GDP growth in the last three financial years, India is now the fifth-largest economy in the world. Growth projections remain

optimistic.

In April, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) raised India's growth projection for the fiscal year 2024-25 (FY25) by 30 basis points to 6.8 percent on the back of strong domestic demand, rising public infrastructure spending, and a growing working-age population. The World Bank forecasts 6.6 percent growth.

While there is no doubt that growth is necessary for the fight against poverty, it is hardly sufficient.

The same is true for productive job creation, which has been high on the political agenda since at least the early 2000s. The ambition of "Targeting Ten Million Employment Opportunities Per Year" in 2002, or close to one million jobs per month, has now doubled to 20 million jobs yearly.

Rural youth unwilling to work in the place of their birth are increasingly seeking non-farm employment elsewhere. This includes foreign countries.

In May 2023, India signed an agreement with Israel to send workers for 42,000 jobs in construction and nursing. The government also started a scheme called Agnipath in 2022 to recruit soldiers, sailors and air force personnel.

Marking a departure from past

recruitment policy, the Agnipath recruits have a four-year tenure with no gratuity or pension benefits for three-quarters of each batch who will be discharged after the period. The scheme's announcement was met with protests in different parts of the country.

The slow transition away from agriculture and into the non-farm sectors is a bleak characteristic of the Indian labour market. The share of manufacturing employment, despite firm policies, has been stagnant, at around 12 percent.

Construction and services have absorbed excess labour but on the whole, most people are self-employed or in casual jobs.

Nearly 90 percent of jobs are informal. The share of wages in the net value added by industries has declined while the share of profits has climbed, reflecting a capital-intensive production process, exactly the opposite of what a labour-abundant country like India needs.

India thus needs to boost manufacturing growth to absorb more workers and realise the principal intent underlying the "Make in India" initiative. That would also reverse the "jobless" growth stigma which has typified the otherwise flattering Indian growth story.

Why the art of simple living is a forgotten art



by Neha Ramani

The art of simple living is a forgotten art. There once was a time when leading a relaxed life was the norm. Life used to be the same for generations. The peasant's son would be a peasant and a blacksmith's son a blacksmith. Talent in profession was often inherited and hence easily acquired. The outputs were also of exceptional quality as the techniques were time tested. The furniture or sculpture would be flawless; as, the minutest details were emphasised on by the trainer who was usually the father, grandfather or some acquaintance.

Leisure was ample, manufacturing being a time consuming job was limited to requirements. Possessions were handed over by generations and were much valued. Extras being limited did not pollute the land which beamed with health.

Less things, meant less hassle and less stress

In short, life was simple. Less things, meant less hassle and less stress. With the change in times, we have lost the mind-set to live a simple life and enjoy the journey called life. The society has developed an atmosphere where a relaxed life almost

seems like a crime. If a person likes to live a life of ease he would definitely go into depression, as the world around him is moving at an extremely rapid pace. The work accomplished per day has multiplied ten times over in the last three generations. Most of the time, the work is simply done because it will fetch money to spend on new acquisitions. It would also mean that the old acquisitions will have to be discarded as there is hardly any space or need to keep them all.

Now where would these things, which cannot be kept in the house go? Naturally they would end up as trash in mountains of garbage that are being piled up upon Mother earth without any fault of hers. These piles are non bio-degradable, and will not vanish with time. Each and every item that we buy with our hard earned money; sacrificing health, relations and priceless time, will end up in creating trash for the world.

The more you have, the more occupied you are. The less you have, the more free you are." Mother Teresa

We will be leaving behind a world without fresh air water or anything worth living for. The diversion from simplicity is taking us to a destination where we don't want to go. Yet, we are helpless... being socially pre-conditioned with an absurd set of expectations.

Many couples dread bringing children to this uncertain world

The huge skyscrapers, sleek cars, flyovers, industrial buildings will become an eye sore when they are obsolete and old. Many couples dread bringing children to this uncertain world. Yet, everyone contributes to the trash mountain in his or her own way...Every year, every month, every minute of the day. It is the other living beings, the plants and animals, who are the major sufferers in spite of liv-

ing the simplest life possible. They do not waste water, add to carbon footprints, yet they have to die or become extinct because of effects of climate change.

The best things in life aren't things.

Adopt the lifestyle of Mahatma Gandhi

The solution to a bleak future is adopting the lifestyle of Mahatma Gandhi, 'Simple living and high thinking.' Eating simple food, doing physical work, reading a lot, doing good for the world; will not only keep us healthy and happy but will act as a balm for the earth's malady.

Industrial and infrastructural development is not the only form of development. True development will be eco-friendly and reverse the harm done in every sphere of the earth. This will only be possible if we lead a simple life and take from the earth only that much, which is essential for life. We cannot and should not go back to lifestyle of the olden days, but for the sake of our own well being, we should adopt the minimalist approach towards life.

Development should not go beyond rationality

Development is fine and necessary but it should not go beyond rationality. Every freedom comes with some duty. We should also remember our duty towards the earth, where we are merely the guests of time. If simplicity of life can bring about wellness for all. We are all winners. If we don't spend much on unnecessary things we would also save a lot. Saving a lot would result in stress free life, resulting in good health.

One small positive change can bring about a chain of positive changes, and the end result will be bliss for all. Let the chain begin, by adopting a simple and happy lifestyle, which will be a boon for the generations to come. Live simply, so that others may simply live. The proverb simple living and high thinking is the one that encourages us to make our lives more meaningful rather than affluent. Here a simple way of living refers to a simple and non-expensive standard of living. We should



be worried about only the very basic needs essential for a living. For example, a diet consisting of simple non-vegetarian food and a modest house is enough for one to live and stay. Above these basic needs whatever we aspire is our greed, but not need.

The phrase 'high thinking' in the proverb refers to the purity and highness of thoughts and deeds. More than making our lives affluent, we should be more concerned about its value and worth. It is our thoughts and deeds and their impacts on others that matters the most. Thinking that is devoid of cruelty, jealousy, hatred, and is filled with love and respect is superior to a rich yet corrupt life.

Dr Vinay Mishra's corner...



Q. I have always been a person who got angry fast. Now that I am into a profession it has become quite difficult. How do I get over this problem?

A. The popular notion is that certain things, situations or individuals trigger an angry response. However, this is not exactly the case. It is your perception that determines the way you react to situations or individuals. It's an energy that is supposed to help you fight better. The opportunity of using such a powerful energy for a creative purpose is very real and it is a matter of conscious choice. Follow the anger management steps below and see how the positive side of anger can transform your life:

When you feel that surge of rage within yourself, try and distance yourself from the situation so that you can escape the heat of the moment.

Anger management step one: Try and put things into perspective

You need to ask yourself whether the incident is worth such a response. Thinking on these lines will help you to calm down and also identify the things that need to be changed. You can then think of a plan to execute the change. It is necessary to shift your thought or your focus from the negative to the positive that is from the crisis to its solution. Change of perspective can be attained by positive side of the anger only.

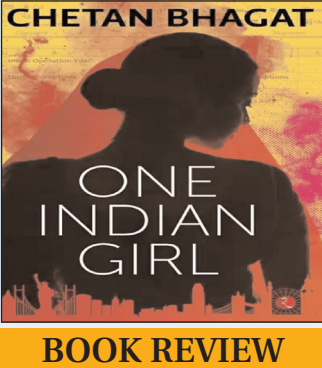
I will continue with step 2 and 3 in next week's column.

'One Indian Girl' addresses gender dynamics and women's empowerment

by Prakash Shrivastava; Title: One Indian Girl; Author: Chetan Bhagat

It is beyond the nests of doubt that Chetan Bhagat is one of the most popular authors in India today. Even if one claims that he is the most popular author in contemporary India that might not be an incorrect assessment on many grounds. However, a bigger and more sensible question that arises is whether popularity is directly proportional to the respect that an author commands in the literary community. What do you think? Another question to extend this debate might be whether writing craft and an understanding of literature are taken for granted if the author of concern is widely popular. These questions often arise because in the case of Chetan Bhagat, the literary community is apparently divided into two sections – one for and another against. And in today's article, I will try to critically examine, review, and analyse Chetan's popular novel One Indian Girl. Received by readers either as all good or all bad, what lies in between? What are the elements that make One Indian Girl a quality read? On the other hand, what are the things that fall short to make things look awry? Let's begin with the basics. What does the novel pose as? Chetan Bhagat's One Indian Girl presents itself as a contemporary novel addressing gender dynamics and women's empowerment. At least, the author claims the same and a few crit-

ics, who have found literary nectar in the works of Durjoy Datta and Nikita Singh as well, countersign those claims. However, upon reading the novel, unfortunately, one can easily gauge that it falls significantly short of its intended purpose. It is a contemporary novel, no doubt. However, the parts where the author claims that he addresses issues of women, gender dynamics and social expectations based on gender binaries are totally bogus, undressed and rather ridiculed. First and foremost, Chetan Bhagat's writing style is annoyingly simplistic and lacks the depth and nuance expected from literary fiction. Though the author does not assert he is writing for readers with lofty literary standards, there should be a limit to an author's cringe. Isn't it? I don't even find it worth commenting on the prose style or the diction of the author. However, just for the sake of a valid and just critical assessment of the novel, let's do it. The prose in One Indian Girl by Chetan Bhagat is riddled with clichéd phrases, repetitive dialogues, and an overreliance on colloquial language. Thus, if it was there to some extent, this style totally undoes the novel's literary merit. Though readers who



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are fans of Chetan Bhagat, might not notice anything. It is usual with his novels. A ritualistic absence of literary techniques and artistic craftsmanship often undermines the impact (if there is any) of the narratives in his novels, leaving readers longing for more substance and sophistication. Readers who may have read a few other novelists, some classics and authors like Ghosh and Narayan, may just bin the book by Bhagat as soon as they cross 10 pages. Conversations, conversations without merit, language that cannot harbour depth of emotions and thoughts, and predictable sequence of events define One Indian Girl in terms of the narrative style.

On the flip side, if I play the devil's advocate, I can say – who cares? Chetan Bhagat knows his audience. He knows who are readers interested in his novels. And, eventually and logically, he writes for the same audience. So, if he indulges in intellectual arm-twisting in terms of language, narrative, prose style, and literary merits (with sugarcoated compliments from those who have been controlling the narrative for decades), his readers will turn their backs on his works. And it might just overshadow all the

fame and money. A class 10 student or a call-centre employee does not care about literary merits. All he or she cares about is a good story that entertains, keeps one forgetting real-world problems and helps pass the time we call leisure. In those circumstances and putting it contextually, Chetan's tactics work and he knows how to win over his audience.

Entering the role of critic once more, the character development classes may be something this author did never attend. Barring the good work in One Night at Call Centre, Bhagat seldom exhibited any understanding of the character beyond the mental simulator he might deploy. In One Indian Girl, characters seldom show any real-world qualities. They are shallow and unconvincing. The protagonist, Radhika Mehta, is an investment banker attempting to navigate the complexities of love, career, and expectations of the family (and society in extension). However, one does not need a degree in nuclear physics to understand that Bhagat's portrayal of Radhika fails to create a truly relatable and authentic female character. Instead, and indeed, she becomes a mere caricature, embodying stereotypes and embodying a superficial feminist discourse. Many feminists in the true sense would agree if they read the novel with close attention and critical observation. It is ironic to witness Radhika's internal struggles and choices reduced to pre-

dictable patterns. Her character seldom veers through the complexities of women's experiences in a meaningful way.

It would be debated if I say that the character of Radhika is made a vessel for taking Chetan's puzzling thoughts on feminism and 'serious' feminist issues to a distance. However, if you look closely, the corporate lady does not make herself relatable, likeable or even meaningful through her conduct, choices, actions and decisions. Coloured by a series of monotonous and lengthy email exchanges between Radhika and her ex-boyfriends. This format, as expected, quickly becomes monotonous and fails to engage readers on an emotional or intellectual level (or even at a basic narrative level that entices readers to know what happened next). What the novelist could have done with such a character, logically and sensibly, was to explore the depths of Radhika's character through introspection and introspective prose, understand the dynamics of interpersonal relationships, emotional and sexual dimensions, identity in personal and social contexts, and ambitions as a person seeking stability in a male-dominated corporate space.

However, on the contrary, and as expected from him, Bhagat resorts to a disjointed and repetitive storytelling device that ultimately distracts from any meaningful exploration of the central themes.

