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India's G20 Presidency:

A Beacon of Hope for Global South and the Rest..

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From being a struggling economy to emerging as the fifth largest globally, from an era of technology denial that it faced, to becoming a hub for tech-based innovations, from being a nation ravaged by colonialism and invasion for centuries, to emerge as a military powerhouse, from being a recipient of foreign aid, to evolve as among the first respondents for any major global challenge today, India's unique journey, independent voice, spirituality and empathy for the downtrodden makes India an ideal candidate to bridge a deeply divided world. The G20 Presidency may just be the beginning of the same.

The G20 presidency happens on a rotational basis every year. Each year, one of the member states of G20 is given the presidency to host and organise events in her nation. Yet, the G20 events of 2023 are not like that of any other year. In 2023, under the presidency of India, G20 events are taking a whole new dimension in terms of the kind of expectations that not just the developing countries from Global South have from India to create a level playing field for the smaller states, but also among the major economic and military powerhouses of the world who are increasingly looking up to India to emerge as an arbiter and solution provider for many of the complex and profound challenges the world is grappling with.

In a world marred by deep ideological divides and military face-offs, where credibility is fast becoming an extremely elusive commodity, India under the leadership of Prime Ministership Narendra Modi has not just emerged as a 'bright spot in a dark horizon' for global economy, but also as one which is trusted by states even on extreme ends of ideological and economic divides.

India: A Breath of Fresh Air for a World Mired in Multiple Crises

From seeking India's active participation in developing resilient supply chains, to sustaining global economic growth through its own growth momentum amidst tumultuous recessionary phases across Europe

and US, from creating a viable and sustainable model to cater to aspirations of populace of developing countries, to taking innovative strides in the realm of renewable energy generation, from becoming voice of innumerable voiceless developing states of the world, to ushering an era of inclusivity and peace in a deeply divided world, India under Prime Minister Modi is therefore, like a breath of fresh air for a world mired in one crisis after another.

India's emergence therefore, can be classified into three distinctive features for which there is so much anticipation from India's G20 Presidency and thereafter. The three distinctive features are the following,

- 1. India's Quest to Usher an Era of Inclusivity through the Philosophy of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam**
- 2. India's Emergence as the Voice of Voiceless Nations**
- 3. India's Emergence as a Solution Provider for Global Challenges**

This paper would enumerate and focus on these three aspects and explain as to why India is being perceived as a major player of 21st Century in the decades to come

1. India's Quest to Usher an Era of Inclusivity through the Philosophy of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam

On December 1, 2022 India officially assumed the presidency of G20. In early November, the logo and theme of G20 for 2023, under presidency of India was unveiled. The theme of G20 has been set as Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam- One Earth. One Family. One Future.

A press release by Government of India on the same states,

The logo and the theme together convey a powerful message of India's G20 Presidency, which is of striving for just and equitable growth for all in the world, as we navigate through these turbulent times, in a sustainable, holistic, responsible, and inclusive manner. They represent a uniquely Indian approach to our G20 Presidency, of living in harmony with the surrounding ecosystem.

Critical Importance of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam in Today's Era of a Deeply Divided World

It has to be remembered that

Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam as a theme has not been kept just for the heck of it. In today's context it denotes India's stride to create a new narrative through which ideally the global multilateral institutions must set rules for the world and deal with pertinent challenges without any bias.

At the core of all the problems that plague the world today is the deep divide that exists between Global North and Global South, or between developing countries and developed countries. That deep divide is also sadly amplified by the sheer lack of empathy that has permeated among global institutions whose job it is to usher a peaceful world and make sure that conflicts do not happen.

Unfortunately, the global multilateral institutions that were created to usher an era of global peace in the aftermath of the Second World War, have failed to prevent conflicts. Since the end of Second World War, when it was hoped that a new era of global peace would prevail for centuries to come, that hope was dashed within a span of a mere few years as the world not just got divided between two extreme ideological blocks but also triggered an unfortunate arms race, followed by a series of wars that mostly were fought in third world countries, which sadly became theatres for major power blocks to settle their scores.

Eventually it was the poor, impoverished and underdeveloped countries that suffered the most. This happened because the powers that be considered ideological issues more

pertinent than to have empathy or concern for humanity as a whole. It was considered justified to wage wars for ideology's sake even if it resulted in death of millions.

End of Cold War Brought No Respite

Even when Cold War ended with disintegration of Soviet Union, peace did not prevail for long, and once again, global institutions mandated to usher peace remained mute spectators as the world witnessed an unprecedented rise of violent non-state actors with extremist ideologies, (terror groups in other words) most of which, if not all, had some or the other kind of covert or overt support from deep states of certain nations. The world was besieged once again into a quagmire of spiralling violence that eventually resulted in death of hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians, pushed nations into civil war kind of situations and dangerously threatened the sovereignty of many countries. In between, the whole of Middle East and North Africa saw one war after another.

If all this was not enough, close of the heels of the world barely limping back on its feet once again, after being ravaged by the devastating Covid pandemic, a cataclysmic war between Russia and Ukraine started last year, and which drove many countries on the brink of financial collapse due to steep rise in prices of many essential commodities. No end of that war is in sight even now and the possibility of the war spiralling out of control, and

having devastating spill-over effect beyond the boundaries of Ukraine-Russia, cannot be ruled out at all. There is an unfortunate situation all along of Ukraine allegedly becoming proxy or theatre for major powers to settle their rivalries.

Once again, at the core of the problem has been the lack of empathy for all. This is exactly what India has been trying to convey to the world that unless the world is looked upon as one family, and unless there is empathy for people of all countries, the hope for long lasting peace would always be elusive. Problem starts with the concept of predisposed notions of who is right and who is wrong, driven by powerful narratives created and pushed through global media to make the world believe in a specific narration. Then a situation is created wherein unless a state sides with that view of the world, often driven by powerful blocks, it would be considered a 'rogue' and 'pariah' state. This classification has to stop.

The Alleged Role of Military Industrial Complexes in Shaping Conflicts

Also, there is the unfortunate saga of powerful military industrial complexes with deep pockets, allegedly manipulating geopolitical situations to further their own agenda and boosting the war economy that benefits a select few at the cost of global peace. It is as if war has become a business of sort and for some, triggering a war has becoming the end objective for which disputes are germinated. This has

been exacerbated by the silence and inaction of dysfunctional multilateral organisations whose job it was to prevent wars. Instead, they have been reduced to fence sitters who prefer to toe to the line taken by Global North.

Reforms in Global Multilateral Institutions is a Must

The same is the case with global financial institutions where too Prime Minister Modi has been pitching for reforms and inclusivity with greater say from the developing countries. Unfortunately, global financial institutions have been slow to reforming themselves and have lacked the alacrity that was needed to help smaller and vulnerable economies, among the developing world, who were ravaged by the twin strikes of pandemic led economic meltdown and Russia-Ukraine-war-triggered steep rise in price of crucial commodities. Here too, what lacks among the Global North controlled financial institutions have been empathy, something that India wants the whole world and especially the Global North led multilateral institutions to embrace before it is too late.

Deciphering the Core Essence of PM Modi's 'Not an Era of War' Statement

It is also important to mention here that when Prime Minister Modi made the statement, 'this is not an era of war', even though the immediate issue on which it was made was in the context of the Ukraine-Russia

war, yet in the larger context, one can also make the conclusion that this statement is also aimed at those major powers who have been responsible for innumerable wars and subsequent mess in various parts of the world, including the Middle East, North Africa, and South East Asia in the past. The statement was also relevant for India's Far Eastern neighbour who on a regular basis have been ushering war cloud over the Taiwan Strait and South China Sea, and which can have devastating impact on global peace in coming years. Also, this statement reflects the sheer failure of global multilateral organisations such as UN in institutionalising the right kind of conflict resolution mechanism that can resolve disputes and prevent wars from happening. Even in more than 70 years of its existence, UN has not been able to create a seamless and flawless conflict resolution mechanism. Worse, it is yet to come out with a definition of terrorism to make sure that terrorism and violent non-state actors are not used as instruments of statecraft by states to farther their geopolitical agenda.

The Indian Template of Conflict Resolution: Nuanced, Measured and Pragmatic

In this respect, it must be acknowledged that India's conflict resolution mechanism can be showcased as an example of how to resolve pending disputes without getting into any conflict situations in spite of grave provocations. India's resolution of the Article 370 issue was done seamlessly even when Pakistan

threatened war. However, India executed the whole thing without any major conflict happening because India, while it was prepared for any eventually, even then her objective was to solve the issue on ground and not go for a war.

Eventually J&K and Ladakh were converted into Union Territories of India, major crackdown on terror conduits and terror groups preceded by Balakot airstrike brought down incidents of terrorism drastically. Today J&K talks about business investments and competing with other states to vie for investments, something that was unthinkable even half a decade back.

Likewise, the manner in which India under Prime Minister Modi's leadership solved the long pending border issues with Bangladesh, managed and drastically brought down insurgency issues in Northeast India, ushered an era of infrastructure development and cultural integration there, are not just praiseworthy but template for many others to follow.

Even on the issue of India's long standing border disputes with China, in spite of major challenges, military build-up, border infrastructure development and provocations, India, under Prime Minister Modi, as a responsible nuclear and military powerhouse, managed the issues along LAC in a matured manner. While being firm on issues of territorial integrity and sovereignty of India, the objective of India has always been to use dialogue and diplomacy as tools of dispute resolution rather than use

of kinetic force. It is indeed true that both India and China have massively developed military infrastructure along the border areas and yet, in spite of pertinent issues and challenges on ground, in spite of situation being far from tranquil, the possibility of war has always been very low because of restraint factor. PM Modi is essentially practising what he stated, in terms of making sure that war does not become the means to solve any issue and 21st century should never be an era of war.

Even when India conducted pre-emptive airstrikes on Balakot terror camps, the reason why the issue did not escalate into a full-fledged war between India and Pakistan was because India, all along, made it clear that its strikes were 'non-military pre-emptive action'.

Excerpts from the Press Statement by the then Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale, after the Balakot Strike in February, 2019 read as follows

Credible intelligence was received that JeM was attempting another suicide terror attack in various parts of the country, and the fidayeen jihadis were being trained for this purpose. In the face of imminent danger, a preemptive strike became absolutely necessary.

In an intelligence led operation in the early hours of today,

India struck the biggest training camp of JeM in Balakot. In this operation, a very large number of JeM terrorists, trainers, senior commanders and groups of jihadis who were being trained for fidayeen action were eliminated. This facility at Balakot was headed by MAULANA YOUSUF AZHAR (alias USTAD GHOURI), the brother-in-law of MASOOD AZHAR, Chief of JeM.

The Government of India is firmly and resolutely committed to taking all necessary measures to fight the menace of terrorism. Hence this non-military preemptive action was specifically targeted at the JeM camp. The selection of the target was also conditioned by our desire to avoid civilian casualties. The facility is located in thick forest on a hilltop far away from any civilian presence.

What Sets the Indian Story Apart from the Rest

In the past the world has witnessed how nations went to wage war against other nations because of one assassination or one major terror attack. Even though India had enough reasons to wage a full-fledged war against Pakistan, India did not do so. Be it in case of Kargil war or

Balakot air strike, India restricted its operations to bare minimum so that the end objective is attained even without escalating the situation to a point of no return.

The Balakot airstrikes altered the threshold of India's counter terror response mechanism, broke the backbone of one of Pakistan's biggest terror training infrastructures, killed hundreds of terrorists, and yet India made it clear that it was not interested in waging a war against ordinary civilians of Pakistan and was only targeting terrorists. That airstrike followed by abrogation of Article 370 drastically reduced incidents of terror in the Kashmir valley. The end objective was attained even without going in for a war.

2. India's Emergence as the Voice of Voiceless Nations

During the Voice of Global South Summit in January, 2023, Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his inaugural speech, made some pertinent points.

The Prime Minister stated,

'As India begins its G20 Presidency this year, it is natural that our aim is to amplify the Voice of the Global South. For our G20 Presidency, we have chosen the theme of – "One Earth, One Family, One Future". This is in line with our civilizational ethos.

We believe the path to realizing 'oneness' is through human-centric development. People of Global South should no longer be excluded from the fruits of development. Together we must attempt to redesign global political and financial governance. This can remove inequities, enlarge opportunities, support growth and spread progress and prosperity.

To re-energise the world, we should together call for a global agenda of 'Respond, Recognize, Respect and Reform': Respond to the priorities of the Global South by framing an inclusive and balanced international agenda. Recognize that the principle of 'Common but Differentiated Responsibilities' applies to all global challenges. Respect sovereignty of all nations, rule of law and peaceful resolution of differences and disputes; and Reform international institutions, including the United Nations, to make them more relevant.

He further stated, In the last Century, we supported each other in our fight against foreign rule. We can do it again in this Century, to create a new World Order that will ensure the welfare of our citizens. As far as India is concerned, your Voice is India's Voice. Your Priorities are India's Priorities.

In fact, the most profound aspect of India's rise in the last one decade under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi has been that India not only emerged as a more resilient economy that braved through extremely tumultuous times of Covid pandemic triggered economic challenges and Russia-Ukraine triggered commodity price rise issues to take the spot of the fifth largest economy of the world, but has also risen to the occasions to speak for those countries that seldom can take a strong defiant stand against powerful lobbies and economies of the world.

India's Mission G20, thus is aimed at initiating fundamental transformations in the manner in which the world is managed, into one where smaller, marginalised and even impoverished nations would have an equal say or at least would be given a patient hearing. In other words, in spite of marching strongly towards becoming a \$5trillion economy, in spite of being a major military powerhouse, in spite of its stature as a major economy of the world, India has not lost its connect with its 'developing nation' root, and continues to be one which not only strives hard to manage the aspirations of its own gigantic population, but also often fiercely takes on global multilateral institutions, and pushes for reforms that would be more inclusive and empathetic towards developing nations whose imperatives and priorities have never been considered that important when global policies are made by powerful nations.

India has steadfastly risen to be

not just a voice for the Global South but also one, which in spite of having extremely cordial relations with Global North, or some of the most advanced economies of the world, has often demonstrated its independence of foreign policy by charting on courses which were disliked by powerful blocks of Global North, but were beneficial for the betterment of its people, and became a template for the rest.

A classic case to bolster this point is India's defiance on the issue of Russia-Ukraine conflict. In spite of taking a strong stand against armed conflicts and favouring dialogues to resolve disputes, India steadfastly refused to side with West in its sanctioning and censuring of Russia. India's reason for having an independent view of the issue stems from its deep-rooted understanding of the issue, which many other nations understand too, but perhaps lacked the wherewithal and conviction to take a stand against the West, for fear of earning their wrath.

India Showed the Mirror and Walked the Talk

In February 2022, during an interaction with the French think tank IFRI, on the issue of Ukraine-Russia face-off, India's External Affairs Minister S Jayshankar stated, In the case of Ukraine, a lot of it derives from the post-Soviet politics, the expansion of NATO, the dynamics between Russia and Europe, and Russia and the West broadly," he said.

NATO's expansion spree even

two decades after the disintegration of Soviet Union, was bound to create problems especially when NATO had almost reach the backyard of Russia. Had it not been for NATO's expansion, Ukraine-Russia war would not ever have had taken place. This is something that is known to most but seldom could any nation stand and state it in the manner India had taken a stand on it even while remaining in the good book of the West.

India's stature is such today that in spite of its deep and profound trade and strategic partnership with many of the major Western nations, it has the gumption to take an independent path on various issues, often being critical of West, even while continuing with the good relation with them. This is victory of India's diplomacy in Modi era that the world now admires with reverence.

India's Oil Diplomacy That Made India Stand Apart

However, the story does not end there alone. In spite of severe pressure from the NATO countries, India went ahead to continue buying crude oil from Russia. When questioned on the same, India's hawkish, defiant yet nuanced replies became talk of the town.

In April 2022, during the annual 2+2 Dialogue between India and US in Washington, India's External Affairs Minister told to Reporters, ***"I noticed you refer to oil purchases. If you are looking at energy purchases from Russia, I would suggest that your attention should be focused***

on Europe. We do buy some energy, which is necessary for our energy security. But I suspect looking at the figures, probably our total purchases for the month would be less than what Europe does in an afternoon,”

The Anglo-Saxon world had not heard this kind of hard hitting raw facts directed at them for quite some time now. And it did take some time for them to digest it.

In June, 2022 while speaking at GlobSec 2022 Bratislava Forum, Mr Jaishankar again questioned the European double standards. In a reply to a question, he stated, ***“Today, Europe is buying [Russian] oil, Europe is buying [Russian] gas.... The new package of sanctions (European sanctions on Russia) is designed in a way where consideration has been given to the welfare of its population.... People need to understand that if you can be considerate to yourself, surely you can be considerate to others,”***

He further stated, “Is buying Russian gas not funding the war?” he asked. “It’s only Indian money and oil coming to India that funds it, but not the gas coming to Europe? Let’s be a little even handed out here.”

Also, India’s External Affairs Minister questioned the Western Anglo-Saxon tendency to project anything that is happening in that part of the hemisphere as a global issue while ignoring the same when things more disastrous and devastating happen in other parts of the world especially Asia.

In the same context, while replying to a question, he said **“Somewhere Europe has to grow out of the mindset that Europe’s problems are the world’s problems but the world’s problems are not Europe’s problems. That if it is you, it’s yours, if it is me it is ours. I see reflections of that,”**.

In fact, the Global North dominated world order has a tendency to have one set of rules for its own self while another for the rest of the world and then with tactical use of global media, it pushes a narrative that as if going against the Western view of the world is akin to being against ‘democracy’, ‘free world’, ‘liberty’, ‘rules-based order’ etc. India has been precisely against that and Modi Government has been constantly striving towards creating a more equitable and inclusive world order.

Incidentally, India’s emergence as a more resilient economy in the least three years, as it became the fifth largest economy of the world with record exports and robust foreign exchange reserves, would not have been possible had India not charted an independent foreign policy to continue buying crude oil from Russia at a discounted price, defying sanctions, at a time when due to sanctions and supply chain constraints, prices of oil and many other commodities have continued to be sky high globally. It would also not have been possible had India abandoned coal based thermal power plants just to keep western lobbies happy.

India, through her actions, made it

clear that if the Global North reserves the right for securing its energy supplies, India has the right too to take care of its energy security concerns.

Eventually, Russia not only emerged as one of the biggest suppliers of oil and coal to India but also of many other commodities, as also weapon systems especially because of several security imperatives that India faces because of India had simply could not have given up on Russian weapons, ammunitions and spares.

Further, India has started working on a rupee settlement scheme to spearhead its global trade in areas where due to sanctions on Russia, use of Dollar or Euro as currencies were turning out to be problematic.

India's Foreign Policy Became the Talk of the Town

India's independent foreign policy not only became the talk of the town but a template for developing world to embrace. India through its statements and actions have spoken for those middle- and low-income countries which suffer the most due to tendency of West to impose arbitrary sanctions on critical global suppliers of commodities.

It is important to mention here that India's defiance against western culture of imposing sanctions is not a new phenomenon. Even when the CAATSA, or the Countering American Adversaries Through Sanctions Act, sanctions were imposed by US on Russia and Iran, India had refused to comply by the sanctions and had

gone ahead with acquisition of several critical weapon systems from Russia including the S-400 air defence systems among others. Eventually US gave India waiver on CAATSA, and did not create any roadblock on India's defence deals with Russia.

How India's Independent Foreign Policy Got Vindicated

Eventually, India has been vindicated. The statement by IMF's Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva wherein she describes India as 'A bright spot in a dark horizon' can be exemplified by the recent event of Air India giving an order for acquisition of 470 aircrafts, 220 from Boeing and 250 from Airbus, in a \$70 billion deal has been hailed by the Presidents of both US and France.

The President of US has gone on record in stating how this deal would create almost 1 million jobs across 44 states in US, a proof of how a defiant India created a strong economy that is now creating jobs in many parts of US and Europe. In fact Air India deal can eventually move upward into a total of 840 planes wherein apart from the firm order for 470 planes, there is an option for 370 more aircraft purchase. Several other airline majors of India have plans to order hundreds of similar planes from Airbus and Boeing. Needless to say, it would be Europe and US who would benefit from a robust Indian economy that has started to spread its wings further in its journey towards becoming a \$5 trillion economy.

In fact, India's independent foreign

policy, and bold foreign policy has been backed now by none other than Germany, by far the most powerful economy of European Union. In reply to a question, the German Ambassador to India Dr Philipp Ackermann, **“India buying oil from Russia is none of our business basically. That’s something which the Indian Government decides and as you get it at a very low price, I cannot blame any government who buys it,”**

This major change of stand from major European states is primarily because of the realisation that a strong Indian economy would eventually help them too. India, therefore, has been successful in demonstrating to the world that what it did was the right thing to do. It is for this that Global South wants India to be their voice.

3. India’s Emergence as a Solution Provider for Global Challenges

The third important reason because of which Global South has pinned its hopes on India is because of India’s emergence as a solution provider for many of the complex global challenges that the world, and especially the developing world faces.

The Indian Journey through Tumultuous Times

When the Covid Pandemic struck the world, like others, India too was taken aback. It did not even have adequate capacity to manufacture

enough number of N95 masks and PPE kits for its own requirement. Till March 2020, India had merely three suppliers of N-95 masks with a capacity of a mere 1 lakh masks a day. The same was the case with PPE kits. Yet, in just a matter of few months, India, due to the initiatives of Modi Government which joined hands with India’s private sector, emerged as the second largest manufacturer of PPE kits and N-95 masks in the world, which was not only good enough to take care of its own requirements but also, a significant amount of the same was exported to other countries which desperately needed them.

Likewise, when Covid vaccines production became a reality, India judiciously utilised its industrial scale vaccine manufacturing proficiency to not only make finest quality vaccines for its own eligible population, but also provided the same, in millions, to other countries who were in dire need of the same.

At a time when developed economies of the world were accused of vaccine hoarding, India’s Vaccine Maitri initiative provided 235 million vaccines to 98 countries, especially those who were middle- and low-income countries such as Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal, Bhutan, Maldives, Mauritius, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Congo and Nigeria among others.

It is also important to mention here what PM Modi stated recently, and which has extremely deep meaning.

A Press Information Bureau press release on PM's post budget webinar on health and medical research states

The Prime Minister reiterated the lessons learnt with regard to supply chain during the pandemic and said that it has become a matter of great concern. He lamented the fact that life-saving equipment like medicines, vaccines and medical devices were weaponised when the pandemic was at its peak. The Prime Minister underlined that in previous years' budgets, the government has constantly tried to reduce India's dependence on foreign nations and emphasized the role of all stakeholders in this.

In fact, India battled the whole phase of Covid Pandemic by massively mobilising its own industrial scale proficiency in vaccine development, as well as by making other critical medicines by using the capacity of its gigantic pharma industry that has made a name for itself globally in generic and bulk drug manufacturing, as well as clinical research.

Also, realising the ramifications of having a sizeable pharma industry, but one which depends on imports even for something as critical as Active Pharma Ingredients (API), as part of its Production Linked Incentive Scheme, a major push was made by

Government of India to incentivise the making of APIs in India.

Recent reports indicate that 21 projects under this scheme, have already got operationalised for making critical APIs, with a combined installed capacity of 33,895 tonnes. Having a resilient supply chain for a sector as critical as pharma, is extremely crucial especially when geopolitics overtakes geoeconomics and supplier nation is in a conflict situation with the recipient or procuring nation. It results in a potential weaponization of even the business of exporting medicines or medical components, which has severe ramifications.

India's Global Outreach as a First Respondent

When Sri Lanka was besieged with the worst kind of economic collapse last year, when it was staring at a civil war like situation with total breakdown of law & order situation, as a result of tremendous shortage of essential commodities, India went overboard to help Sri Lanka tide out of that situation, especially at a time when most of the developed economies, global multilateral development finance institutions, and the much hyped Western NGOs remained incognito. India's total assistance to Sri Lanka touched almost \$4 billion in terms of financial aid, food items, fuel and essential medicines which were shipped on a priority basis.

India further allowed for rupee settlement of trade with Sri Lanka that made sure that Sri Lanka need not dip into its extremely low level of forex

reserves to buy commodities from India.

Also, when Turkey, in the recent past, was struck by a devastating earthquake, India became one of the first respondents to send a huge quantity of relief material, along with a large contingent of its specialised NDRF and Army Medical Corps personnel, who were among the first to reach in Turkey and were among the last to leave the nation, only when the rescue operations were officially called off by the Turkish Government.

Recently, the Government of India started shipping 20,000 metric tonnes of wheat to Afghanistan. While India does not have any diplomatic relation with Taliban, keeping people at the centre of its humanitarian aid strategy, India, once again, is among the first respondents to help the impoverished people of Afghanistan who are reeling under severe economic crisis.

There are several such instances of India going out of its way in assisting other countries in distress. In many cases, India has demonstrated its capacity and willingness to do such things which otherwise was the mandate of global multilateral institutions whose performance often in the recent past has been far short of expectations.

India's Rule-Based, Democracy Driven Development Model: A Tested Template for Global South to Emulate

In any case, India's phoenix like

rise from being a struggling economy to one which faced severe balance of payment crisis in the 90's of the 20th century to one which in just thirty years, since then, emerged as the fifth largest economy of the world in terms of nominal GDP (\$3.469 trillion) and third largest in terms of purchasing power parity (PPP) (\$11.665 trillion economy), and one which is expected to be a \$5 trillion economy in the next few years, (as well as a \$10 trillion economy in the next one decade), is itself a matter of inspiration for many other developing economies of the world.

India has shown that the journey from being a struggling and impoverished economy to one which is now among the big-league economies of the world is very much possible even while remaining a vibrant and pluralistic democracy where rule of law and voices of the mass are still valued. India's inclusive and institution-based approach of development is a classic template for the rest of the world because India did not push its economic reforms agenda by force as it happens in dictatorial or hegemonic communist regimes, but made it possible through an inclusive approach. India's reforms in sectors like telecom have benefitted the mass and not just a minuscule few. In other words, India's benevolent rise is often preferred to, or considered as an antidote to the rise of hegemonic dictatorial regimes, especially the one in the far east.

Further, India has Demonstrated that Development can be Human Centric.

The most impressive thing about India's rise, especially in the last one decade, under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi, has been its willingness to share its experience and technological initiatives with the rest of the world so that, the world as a whole, especially the developing economies, can have a shared goal of development.

In fact, PM Modi has always stressed on the need for human centric globalisation. During the peak of the Covid pandemic, India under PM Modi, demonstrated that human centric capitalism is very much possible that would essentially benefit all. India combined its industrial scale proficiency of the private sector to produce world class vaccines that Government of India administered free of cost to its eligible population.

Eventually more than 200 crores of such vaccines were administered free of cost even as Modi Government continued to provide free additional rations to more than 80 crore people that made sure that even during the peak of the pandemic and lockdown triggered economic challenges, no Indian died of starvation. No country, not even the developed nations have provided such scale of free food to its populace during the peak of pandemic crisis the manner in which India did.

India However, Restrained itself from Providing Populistic Cash Aid to Populace During Covid

PM Modi led Government of India did not go into a profligacy mode during pandemic phase for the sake of keeping the economy running. While free vaccines and additional free rations were invested upon, India did not give out any cash aid to its gigantic population even though there were huge clamour for it, especially from among certain opposition leaders. Instead, India went ahead further with structural economic reforms. Had India gone ahead with cash disbursal to its populace through additional printing of currency notes, it would have faced similar conditions of severe economic turmoil as many other countries are currently facing, including even US, which witnessed massive increase in printing and circulation of currency in the last three years. US did so just to keep the economy running during the peak of covid pandemic.

A New York Times article titled, 'Where \$5 Trillion in Pandemic Stimulus Money Went' and published in March 2022 stated, '*Stimulus bills approved by Congress beginning in 2020 unleashed the largest flood of federal money into the United States economy in recorded history. Roughly \$5 trillion went to households, mom-and-pop shops, restaurants, airlines, hospitals, local governments, schools and other institutions around the country grappling with the blow inflicted by Covid-19.*' This also included Economic Impact Payments

of \$3200 given to US households in three tranches. Further, to fund this stimulus, there has been unprecedented amount of dollar printing by US Federal Reserve since beginning of 2020. All these added up to the inflationary pressures on the US economy that necessitated the Federal Reserve to eventually raise the interest rates at frequent successions. This in turn is now creating systemic challenges for the US banking system and volatility in the markets, thereby bringing back the fear of scary nightmares of 2008 Sub- Prime Lending crisis all over again.

India too had to raise interest rates because of similar rate hikes by US Federal Reserve. Nevertheless, India has remained relatively more stable because it did not take the route of currency printing to create a temporary semblance of normalcy for its economy. It instead focussed on developing resilience. One more reason why it was termed “bright spot in a dark horizon’ by IMF.

India’s Economic Reform Agenda: Aimed at Greater Good

Meanwhile, even as India took care of its people through free vaccines and food aid, Modi Government also went in for vigorous reforms pivoted around the concept of Atmanirbhar Bharat to make India a major manufacturing hub, for not just finished products but also intermediary products, so that India not only becomes a key part of global supply chain of manufactured goods, but also create resilient supply chains across sectors, which can

adequately immune India from global supply chain challenges that the world witnessed during Covid pandemic and the ongoing Ukraine-Russia war. Related to this, India initiated the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme in more than dozen sectors to attract investments. Notably, India in the last few years, has already emerged as the second largest manufacturer of mobile handsets in the world.

It is also to be remembered that India’s journey towards a \$5 trillion economy is also pivoted around key structural reforms that were implemented over the last half a decade, vindicating their importance for any developing economy. Starting from Insolvency & Bankruptcy Code Act, to GST, allowing 100% FDI in contract manufacturing, reduction of corporate tax rates, to providing major institutional support to India’s Start-up ecosystem through Startup India initiative, MUDRA Yojana to provide institutional support to India’s millions of micro enterprises, each of these had a key role to play in India’s economic journey over the last half a decade.

While the Startup India initiative pivoted around Atmanirbhar Bharat Yojana resulted in India now having the third largest startup ecosystem in the world with more than 84,000 registered startups and more than 100 unicorns, the MUDRA Yojana gave the much-needed support to the micro enterprises to expand and become more stable, while creating jobs for crores of people since MUDRA Yojana gave them the fillip to expand their business and thus needed more helping

hands in their businesses, resulting in creation of more jobs. However, since these jobs in the unorganised sector seldom result in opening of EPFO or ESI account, in most cases, they don't get counted while statistical enumeration of annual job creation is done. But from the perspective of creation of remuneration bases productive engagement, MUDRA Yojana for micro enterprises has done a phenomenal job. As per latest inputs more than 34 crore loans worth around a whopping Rs 20 lakh crore have been provided to micro enterprises that has also created a new generation of self-employed people.

Also, among many other key initiatives, India's One District One Product Initiative is expected to play a key role in emerging as a game changer for Indian producers of food and other products to reap benefits of scale for clusters in terms of

procurement of input commodities, development of value chain and support infrastructure through shared application of marketing and services framework and eventually reaching out to a larger audience through better branding, quality control etc.

It is also pertinent here to mention about incredible role played by women led Self Help Groups in sustaining self-employment and entrepreneurial spark especially among the rural women folk in India. PM Modi specifically mentioned, in the recent past, as to how in the last 9 years, more than 7 crore women have joined Self Help Groups and that Self Help Groups have taken bank loans worth Rs 6.25 lakh crore, a vindication of the kind of value creation they have been involved in. In this respect, it is also important to mention here that more than 70% of MUDRA loan beneficiaries in India, in the last 8 years have been women.

Excerpt from PIB Press Release on

PM addresses Post Budget Webinar on “Economic Empowerment of Women”

The Prime Minister reiterated that in the last 9 years, the country has moved with a vision of women-led development. He continued that India has taken these efforts to the global stage as it is figuring prominently in the G-20 meeting presided over by India. This year's budget will give new momentum to these efforts of women led development, he said.

The Prime Minister underlined the Nari Shakti's strengths of determination, will power, imagination, ability to work for goals and extreme hard work as reflection of 'Matru Shakti'. He said these qualities are playing a major role in increasing the speed and scale of India in this century.

The Prime Minister said that today, the results of efforts for women empowerment are visible and we are feeling a revolutionary change in the social life of the country. He said that that number of women compared to men is increasing,

and the number of girls studying up to high school and beyond has tripled in the last 9-10 years. Girls' enrolment in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths is at 43 percent today, more than countries like America, UK and Germany. In fields like medical, sports, business or politics, not only the participation of women has grown but they are leading from the front.

The Prime Minister touched upon the fact that 70 percent Mudra loan beneficiaries are women. Similarly, women benefit from schemes for promotion of collateral free loans under SVANidhi and promotion schemes in animal husbandry, fisheries, village industries, FPOs and sports.

Shri Modi said "The reflection of how we can take the country forward with the help of half of the country's population and how we can increase the potential of women power is visible in this budget." He mentioned Mahila Samman Saving Certificate Scheme where women are to get 7.5 percent interest. "80 thousand crore rupees for PM Awas Yojna is also a step in the direction of women empowerment as most of the 3 crore houses are in the name of women", Shri Modi said. The Prime Minister emphasized the empowering aspect of PM Awas in a scenario where, traditionally, women had no property in their name. "PM Awas has given women a new voice in economic decisions of the household", he said.

The Prime Minister informed about the announcement for the support to the Self Help Groups for creating new unicorns among SHGs. The Prime Minister illustrated the strength of the country's vision for women empowerment with changing scenarios. Today 1 out of 5 non-farm businesses is run by a woman. More than 7 crore women have joined Self Help Groups in the last 9 years. Their value creation can be understood by their capital requirement as these Self Help Groups have taken loans worth 6.25 lakh crore.

The Prime Minister pointed out that these women are contributing not only as small entrepreneurs but also as capable resource persons.

He mentioned the Bank Sakhi, Krishi Sakhi and Pashu Sakhi programs that are scaling new dimensions of development in villages.

The Prime Minister dwelled on the transformation in the cooperative sector and role of women in the sector. "More than 2 lakh multi-purpose cooperatives, dairy cooperatives and fisheries cooperatives are to be formed in the coming years. A target has been set to connect 1 crore farmers with natural farming. Women farmers and producer groups can play a big role in this," the Prime Minister said.

Shri Modi elaborated on the role of women self help groups in promotion of Shree Anna. He said more than 1 crore tribal women with traditional experience in Shree Anna are part of these Self Help groups. "We have to tap the opportunities related to marketing of Shree Anna to processed foods made from it. In many places, government organizations are helping to process minor forest produce and bring it to the market. Today, so many self-help groups have been formed in remote areas, we should take it to a wider level", he said.

Source- Press Information Bureau

India's JAM Trinity and Application of IT to Deliver Good Governance

Also, India has set new benchmarks in the realm of application of information technology for reducing leakages in delivery of welfare schemes, and thereby making sure that the government funded subsidies reach the end beneficiaries bypassing the middlemen, which in the past had been a major menace.

The combination of Jan Dhan Accounts, Aadhar biometric ID system and Mobile phone number, or the JAM trinity has become a major success in massively controlling leakages and checking corruption. Crores of fake ration cards, fake LPG connections and fake MNREGA cards, among others, have been weeded out by Aadhar linkages of schemes. Prime Minister Modi's personal initiative driven Jan Dhan Account Policy resulted in making sure that almost every household today has an account number. Eventually, more than 44 crore Jan Dhan Accounts has been opened, which as of October 2022, had Rs 1.75 lakh crore cumulative account balance.

In fact, IMF has termed India's direct benefit transfer (DBT) scheme as a 'logistical marvel'. From 2013 onward to up till FY2022, more than Rs 24.8 lakh crore has been transferred to end beneficiaries through direct cash transfer. The pace of this transfer had witnessed exponential increase since the opening of Jan Dhan Accounts by Modi Government, and inking schemes with Aadhar biometric

systems of end beneficiaries. In FY 2021-2022 alone, Rs 6.3 lakh crore were to beneficiaries.

Paolo Mauro, Deputy Director of the Fiscal Affairs Department of IMF states, "In fact, just because of the sheer size of the country, it is a logistical marvel how these programmes that seek to help people who are at low-income levels reach literally hundreds of millions of people."

In fact the monumental scale of India's achievement under Modi Government in the realm digital cash transfer can be gauged from recent reports of even an advanced Western European state like Germany, grappling with the issue of matching bank and tax ids for digital cash transfer and the process takes around 18 months. Compared to that, India has gone ahead by leaps and bounds.

In the realm of filing income tax returns or GST returns too, India's application of information technology and creation of the online filing mechanism to reduce human interface to bare minimum has been a great success.

In the realm of digital transactions too, India's UPI has been a grand success. As per Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw, India's total digital transactions in the year 2022 stood at \$1.5 trillion on an annualised basis and it surpassed the combined digital transactions of UK, US, Germany and France.

India's Jan Dhan Account revolution is now amplified by Digital

Banking Units, 75 of which were opened in 2022 in 75 districts of India.

Addressing the gathering, the Prime Minister started by stressing that the 75 Digital Banking Units (DBU) will further financial inclusion and enhance banking experience for citizens.

“DBU is a big step in the direction of Ease of Living for the common citizens”, he said. The Prime Minister informed that in such a banking setup, the government aims to provide maximum services with minimum infrastructure, and all of this will happen digitally without involving any paperwork. It will also simplify the banking procedure while also providing a robust and secure banking system. “People living in small towns and villages will find benefits like transferring money to availing loans. Digital Banking Units are another big step in that direction which is going on in the country to make the life of common man of India easier”, he added. The Prime Minister said that the aim of the government is to empower the common citizen and make them powerful, and as a result, policies were made keeping in mind the last person and the entire government moving in the direction of their welfare.

He pointed out the two areas on which the government worked simultaneously. First, reforming, strengthening, and making the banking system transparent, and secondly financial inclusion.

Recalling the traditional ways of the past where people had to go to the bank, the Prime Minister said that this government transformed the approach by bringing the bank to the people. “We have given top priority to ensure that banking services reach the last mile”, he said. A huge change from the days when it was expected that poor will go to the bank to a scenario when the banks were going on the doorstep of the poor. This involved reduction of distance between the poor and the banks. “We not only removed the physical distance but, most importantly, we removed the psychological distance.” Highest priority was given to cover far flung areas with banking. The Prime Minister informed that today more than 99 percent of villages in India have a bank branch, banking outlet or a ‘banking mitra’ within 5 km radius. “Extensive Post Office network too was harnessed via India Post Banks for providing the banking needs to the common citizens”, he said. “Today the number of branches per one lakh adult citizens in India is more than countries like Germany, China and South Africa”, he added.

Despite initial misgivings in certain sections, the Prime Minister said, “today the entire country is experiencing the power of Jan Dhan Bank accounts.” He informed that these accounts enabled the government to provide insurance to the vulnerable at a very low premium. “This opened the way for loans for the poor without collateral and provided Direct Benefit Transfer to the accounts of the target beneficiaries. These accounts were the key modality for providing homes, toilets, gas subsidy, and benefits of schemes for farmers could be ensured seamlessly”, he said. The Prime Minister acknowledged the global recognition for India’s digital banking infrastructure. “The IMF has praised India’s digital banking infrastructure. The credit for this goes to the poor, farmers and labourers of India, who have adopted new technologies, made it a part of their lives”, he emphasised.

“UPI has opened up new possibilities for India,” the Prime Minister continued, “When financial partnerships are combined with digital partnerships, a whole new world of possibilities opens up. A huge example like UPI is before us. India is proud of this as it is the first technology of its kind in the world.” He informed that today 70 crore indigenous Rupay cards are in operation, a vast change from the days of foreign players and the elite nature of such products. “This combination of technology and economy is enhancing the dignity and affordability for the poor and empowering the middle class, while at the same time it is also eliminating the digital divide of the country”, he said. He also praised the role of DBT in eliminating corruption and said that more than 25 lakh crore rupees have been transferred in various schemes via DBT. He informed that he will transfer the next instalment to the farmers tomorrow. “Today the whole world is appreciating this DBT and the digital power of India. Today it is being seen as a global model. The World Bank has even gone so far as to say that India has become a leader in ensuring social security through digitization”, said the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister informed that fintech is at the heart of India’s policies and efforts, and it is playing a key role in shaping the future. Digital banking units will further expand this capability of fintech. “If Jan Dhan accounts had laid the foundation of financial inclusion in the country, then Fintech would form the basis of financial revolution”, he said.

Source- Press Information Bureau, Ministry of Finance, Govt of India

In fact, India's CoWin App is another example, of one of the world's most profound benchmark of embedding a government funded initiative for vaccination of more than 100 crore people, keeping a digital tab of the same, and issuing of digital certification to vaccinated people.

Further, in case of 5G or green hydrogen mission, India's recent initiatives are being eagerly looked upon by the Global South because India as a nation has always been willing to share its technological innovations with developing countries for greater good, instead of restricting access to them.

Why Global South is Pinning Its Hope on India's Pioneering Innovations

India's offering or sharing of innovations and technologies does not come with any ideological baggage. India's growing technological, military and economic capabilities are not aimed at any distant goal to control or rule the world, or to wield influence by browbeating others or by buying influence. India does not tell anyone to toe to its views of the world if they want India's assistance or technology. Further, most countries can trust India, for its innovations, especially in the realm of IT or telecom, it would come without any apprehension of surreptitious siphoning of data or surveillance of host. India's credibility as a just nation is its biggest asset among the Global South countries.

India's Fight for Climate Risk Mitigation: Pragmatic, Nuanced and Realistic

In case of issues related to climate change as well, India has not only been a pioneer in terms of spearheading climate negotiations with the developed countries, and have vigorously fought for the developing nations against alleged climate injustice meted out to them. India has always voiced the necessity of developed countries to do more for mitigating the challenges of climate change and have urged the developed nations to understand the complex challenges that developing countries face.

Here too, over the last one decade or so, India has emerged as a benchmark for developing nations in terms of what a developing or a rapidly developing economy should do in terms of managing the paradoxical and extreme challenges of managing the climate change issues, even while taking care of the aspirations of people, which would necessitate building more industries, infrastructure, and root for viable energy sources that are cost effective.

India's nuanced approach in sustainable development by ushering massive investments in infrastructure and economic development even while reaching major milestones in the realm of renewable energy generation capacity expansion is a template to follow. While setting a target to have 500 GW of renewable energy generation capacity by 2030, India has already installed 172 GW of

renewable energy capacity and is now ranked 4th globally in the same.

Calibrating Change to Avoid Sudden Disruption

However, even while setting its own benchmarks, India is making sure that the transition is made in a nuanced manner so that it does not lead to sudden and massive disruptions in economic activities or society or even the grid. Without succumbing to pressure from the developed countries, India continues to source a significant proportion of its power generation from fossil fuel, especially coal, even while being mindful of the fact that eventually it must make the transition but does not want to do it in haste or under pressure.

India wants to achieve the same on its own terms, which itself is an example for the rest of the developing countries to follow. The reason being that any sudden and abrupt shift entirely to renewable energy and away from thermal energy, may have major impact on the stability of the grid and may eventually lead to its collapse. Also, sudden and abrupt change would mean India would have to massively invest on renewable energy in a very short span of time that would wean away investment requirements in other priority sectors. It would also make a huge amount of the existing capacity in the thermal arena totally redundant, and in a country which has to cater to aspirations and basic necessities of 1.4 billion people, to suddenly abandon such huge capacity in thermal arena would be self-defeating. India has no

reason to do the same just for the sake of keeping the western lobbies in good humour

Therefore, India's calibrated approach is a more pragmatic one especially when developed countries have used coal to the hilt for more than two centuries but are now creating roadblocks for developing countries. This makes little sense especially for countries like India at a time when crude oil price continues to be extremely high and climate disruptions often make renewable energy availability, especially solar and wind, quite unpredictable.

In reality, India's abundance of coal, is like a boon to push forward its economic goals. India's is mindful of the environmental challenges, and therefore is having a measured approach to make the transition in a gradual manner so that both the issues of economic growth and environmental imperatives are adequately addressed. It has also simultaneously charted stringent emission norms to take care of environmental issues.

Also, a comprehensive transformation to renewable energy generation would necessitate creation of a sustainable supply chain ecosystem for all the intermediary products, components, as well as finished products that are critically required in the solar and wind industry. Both Government of India and major players in India's private sector have been working towards creating the whole ecosystem for renewable energy generation, research and component manufacturing in green hydrogen,

solar and wind energy segment.

In fact, India's calibrated approach has been vindicated by the massive rise in global prices of energy due to the Ukraine-Russia war that has compelled even some of the biggest proponents against coal usage to reactivate their coal based thermal power plants to tide over the energy crisis. India would not have been able to emerge as the fifth largest economy, against all odds, during tumultuous times of last three years, had it shut down all its coal based thermal power plants for keeping the anti-coal lobby happy.

In the meantime, however, India has taken major initiatives to promote solar energy by being one of the pioneers and founding members of the International Solar Alliance. Its green hydrogen initiatives under the aegis of, National green Hydrogen Mission, are definitely going to create a new and a viable energy source for Global South which has to perpetually deal with unpredictable vulnerabilities in the international energy market.

Incidentally, in the last 9 years, India's installed capacity of solar energy has gone up by 23 times, while India's installed renewable energy

capacity has gone up by 396% in the last 8.5 years.

India's Push for Electric Vehicle: A Planned and Gradual Transition to Make it Seamless

The same is the case with India's electric vehicle sector as well. Here too India has set ambitious targets to make sure that by 2030, India's EV penetration reaches the level of 30% for private cars, 70% for commercial cars, 80% for two and three wheelers and 40% for buses. Here too India's calibrated approach is pivoted around the fact that India's gigantic \$ 222 billion automobile industry is predominantly based on combustion engine driven vehicles and therefore any abrupt change invariably would lead to major upheavals in the sector that may even lead to job losses and loss of revenue for state.

The change therefore, once again, has to be calibrated wherein adequate breathing space is being given to the industry players to make the transition smooth even as a large number of startups in the EV sector is making India a major hub for innovations in EV domain. Also, a comprehensive transition would require development of adequate charging infrastructure across the length and breadth of the country as well as major capacity building in development of energy storage products. India's recent discovery of a large amount of lithium ore in Jammu & Kashmir may boost India's journey toward an EV led future.

Interestingly, India's silent, low profile yet gigantic leap in the realm of last mile connectivity through making e-rickshaws as the most effective and preferred option, is already a template to emulate.

From Ujjwala to UJALA: Pioneering Initiatives with Game Changing Results

In the same league, India's Ujjwala Yojana to distribute LPG connections among 80 million rural households that are below poverty line (BPL), for the purpose of replacing wood with clean cooking fuel, or India's major initiative to distribute LED bulbs that has been termed as the world's largest zero subsidy based domestic lighting programme, are classic indigenous templates that are feasible for low and middle income countries to emulate, embrace and implement, for effective results in climate management.

India's UJALA scheme for distribution of LED bulbs resulted in disbursement of more than 36.78 crore LED bulbs, 72.09 lakh LED tube lights and 23.41 lakh energy efficient fans, in seven years up till 2022. It in turn resulted in saving of 47,778 Million Kwh of energy per annum and cutting down of CO2 emissions by 3.86 crore tonnes. It also resulted in annual savings of Rs 19,156 crores in consumer electricity bills.

Also, this scheme has led to India's LED bulb manufacturing industry gaining the much-needed economies of scale that resulted in the price of LED bulbs coming down drastically by almost 90%.

It has to be remembered that compared to its size of population, India has one of the lowest per capita emissions and carbon footprint in the world. In this context, India's Environment Minister, Bhupinder Yadav recently made some pertinent points on issues of managing the climate change crisis. He stated that India remains committed to reducing emissions intensity of India's GDP by 45% by 2030 and achieve the target of net-zero emissions by 2070.

He (Mr Bhupinder Yadav) said he would like to remind, especially friends from the Global North, that we must understand that this crisis is starkly different from other global crisis of trade and finance and therefore traditional responses and the tendency of profiteering from a disaster need to be shunned.

He said Greenwashing, abrogating historical responsibilities and protectionism in the name of Climate Action need to be stopped.

He had also stated that we are now witness to how mindless consumption and unplanned development has jeopardized food and energy security across many a nation. He said there are developing countries that are reeling under the menace of unsustainable debt and at the same time are also victims of unsustainable consumption and production processes of the developed world.

Source-PIB

While mentioning this, he also had a word of caution for the Global North.

This statement itself vindicates as to why the Global South nations want India to be their voice, because very few nations have been able to withstand the pressure from Global North and show them the mirror.

Importantly, India has recently raised the issue of how environmental concerns are increasingly being used by developed countries to create 'green barriers' for trade. If one looks at the trends over the last one decade or so, environmental concerns are apparently being used less for the cause of protecting the environment, and more for making sure that in areas where developed countries are finding it difficult to compete with developing countries, in such areas of trade, non-tariff barriers such as environmental ones are being applied to blunt cost related edge of developing economies, for the sake of giving some headway and protection to entities of developed countries.

The four areas on which India has raised concern are namely, carbon border measures, environment based minimum residue limits in agriculture, deforestation related steps and quantitative import restrictions based on green content of commodities.

After having exploited coal to the hilt for two hundred years, and after having rampaged the environment with mass production fuel guzzling SUVs for decades, after having promoted deforestation to explore minerals in continent after continent, the least the

developed countries can do now is to stop using 'environmental concern' argument to shield their dwindling competitiveness against emerging economies of Asia. There is a pertinent need to be more accommodative and a little less hypocritical on this issue on the part of Global North. The battle however, is far from over.

Preserving Traditions to Conserve Nature & Humans

Frankly, most countries of Asia and Africa are more rooted to nature than Global North, and have conservation in the whole essence of their lifestyle. India is also a classic example of a nation which, while embracing modern lifestyle and emerging as a pioneer in harnessing the power of cutting-edge technologies, has not given up on the traditional values, ethics and philosophies which, for generations have helped India, and also many of the Asian nations, maintain a sustainable relation between nature and mankind through practicing of value systems that have conservation of nature at their core.

Further, in a world mired with mental stress as a result of cut-throat competition and vulnerabilities associated with modern lifestyle India's gifts of spiritualism and Yoga continue its effort to heal a world that is increasingly getting prone to violent acts directed not just against others but also inflicting wounds on themselves. Mental health, issues of suicides and gun violence call for greater embracing of yoga, and spirituality that India has traditionally offered for

centuries to the world in crisis.

In fact, the Covid pandemic exemplified that intrinsic immunity of a body is not developed merely by taking pills but by having a healthy lifestyle and embracing food habits that are wholesome. In today's era of fast food, sugar filled beverages and preservatives, the Covid pandemic reminded the world of having a healthy lifestyle, the necessity of regular exercise and Yoga, the importance of traditional herbs, and consuming such kind of food that helps in holistic immunity development of body. It is only then that vaccines and anti-viral or anti-biotic medicines can help as compliments to secure the body from all kind of external and internal challenges. Incidentally the opening of World Health Organisation's (WHO) Global Centre for Traditional Medicines in India is a vindication of India's Ayurveda and its necessity in today's world to develop holistic well-being of body and mind.

WHO states, *The WHO Global Centre for Traditional Medicine (GCTM) is a knowledge centre for traditional medicine. As part of WHO's overall traditional medicine strategy, it has a strategic focus on evidence and learning, data and analytics, sustainability and equity, and innovation and technology to optimize the contribution of traditional medicine to global*

health and sustainable development. At the same time, respect for local heritages, resources and rights is a guiding principle.

Source- WHO WEBSITE

From Ayushman Bharat to Price Control of Implants

It is important to note here that the initiatives of Government of India in terms of providing affordable or free healthcare was not restricted to Covid vaccines alone. In fact, Ayushman Bharat is one of the primary flagship schemes driven by the personal initiatives of Prime Minister Modi that strives to extend affordable and quality healthcare through a centrally funded health insurance scheme, that covers a significant portion of the population, 40% or around 50 crore people. It entails a health cover of Rs 5 lakh to around 10 crore families, and has been boon to that segment of the population for whom, accessing quality healthcare facilities in the private sector, have otherwise always been out of bound.

The other key aspect of this scheme is the **PM Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission.**

As per a Press Release by Press Information Bureau on PM Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission,

it states the following

The aim is to strengthen the critical healthcare network from village to block to the district to the regional and national level in the next 4-5 years. Describing the initiative taken by the government under the new Mission, the Prime Minister said that there are 3 major aspects of the Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission to address the different gaps in the health sector of the country. The first is related to the creation of elaborate facilities for diagnostics and treatment. Under this, Health and Wellness Centers are being opened in villages and cities, where there will be facilities for early detection of diseases. Facilities like free medical consultation, free tests, free medicine will be available in these centres. For serious illness, 35 thousand new critical care-related beds are being added in 600 districts and referral facilities will be given in 125 districts.

The second aspect of the scheme, the Prime Minister said, is related to the testing network for the diagnosis of diseases. Under this mission, the necessary infrastructure will be developed for the diagnosis and monitoring of diseases. 730 districts of the country will get Integrated Public Health labs and 3 thousand blocks will get Block Public Health Units. Apart from that, 5 Regional National Centers for Disease Control, 20 Metropolitan units, and 15 BSL labs will further strengthen this network, said the Prime Minister.

The Third aspect, according to the Prime Minister, is the expansion of existing research institutions that study pandemics. Existing 80 Viral Diagnostic and research labs will be strengthened, 15 Biosafety level 15 labs will be operationalized, 4 new National institutes of Virology and a National Institute for One Health are being established. WHO regional research platform for South Asia will also strengthen this network. “This means, through PM Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission an entire ecosystem for services from treatment to critical research will be created in every corner of the country”, said the Prime Minister.

Capping of Prices of Stents and Knee Implants

One very important move by Modi Government to make healthcare more affordable, has been the price capping of both stent and knee implants. It has been like taking the deep pocketed MNCs

of the medical devices industry by horn, but had a tremendous positive impact in terms of making both knee surgeries and implanting a coronary stent affordable for the middle class. For long, Indians suffered immensely because of the exorbitant pricing of both, and often patients were taken for a ride by hospitals.

While the price of stent was reduced by a whopping 85%, in case of knee implants, the reduction was to the extent of almost 69%.

This is also a template and an example for many of the Global South nations. Often smaller economies find it difficult to fight out the prohibitive pricing of medical devices by deep pocketed pharma and medical device MNCs. India stands as an outlier as well as an example to emulate.

In the recent past, Prime Minister Modi mentioned that the Ayushman Bharat Scheme has resulted in poor patients being able to save Rs 80,000 crore while the 9000 strong network of Jan Aushadhi Kendras, under the aegis of **Pradhan Mantri Bharatiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana** that provides quality medicines at affordable price, has resulted in poor people being able to save Rs 20,000 crore.

On a Concluding Note, Two Important Observations are Needed to be Mentioned with Emphasis.

In the first place, it is not that India does not have its own set of problems. India's development is still a work-in-progress and it has its own set of complex challenges to deal with even as it strives to reach the \$5 trillion mark.

Also, India as a solution provider does not mean that India now has suddenly found a magic wand or a philosopher's stone to turn whatever

it touches, into gold. The reason therefore, for which India is being looked upon by the Global South nations is that being a nation that has traversed through tumultuous times after having been invaded, plundered, colonised and ravaged for hundreds of years, India started its new innings as a sovereign state in a difficult neighbourhood and charted her own journey to reach where it is today. It has found unique solutions to deal with her complex challenges and has consistently never succumbed to any external pressure. It evolved through challenging phases of technology denial, and yet instead of capitulating, it improvised and innovated to find its own unique place in the technology world. It learned from its follies to evolve better economic policies that helped India catapult itself from a struggling and impoverished economy to one which is now among the largest in the world.

The fact that it has traversed through those terrains through which many other developing countries are now traversing, makes India a better candidate to seek advice from, so far as Global South is concerned. Also, as stated earlier, India has not lost its touch with its past, and does not carry the air of a large economy. Its humane approach and empathy for developing countries, its 'humanity before profit', 'reconciliation rather than war' approach makes India a more suitable candidate whose ideas, suggestions and advices are more suited to deal with practical challenges of Global South countries

than those which come from the West, which often are high on ideals but lack touch with ground realities, and often fall short of expectations on practicalities.

Secondly, India is not against the West or Global North. India deeply admires the contribution of Europe and US in the field of global technological advancements. It is also true that globalisation enabled access to western markets and it did help innumerable developing economies.

However, all that India wants is a level playing field, an equal and just consideration for each nation and their pertinent issues. India wants a more inclusive world which is not possible until global multilateral

institutions are more inclusive in their composition and approach.

India wants a world where views of all nations would be valued instead of those imposed by some. India wants Global North and Global South to merge as one to give shape to Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam in its truest sense. It is because of this that India's G20 presidency is being looked upon as a beacon of hope by many and not just the Global South. Each considers India on their side. That is the true essence of the idea of India.

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