



India: A Dharma based country in 2050



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ABSTRACT

A complex country such as India whose trajectory has been unique in history compared to Europe or China or the USA, poses the possibility of many scenarios that could emerge in the latter half of the 21st Century. This paper looks at a range of issues from, governance and education to the environment and culture. The paper considers how the past could shape the country in 2050, together with changes in technology, better governance and environmental awareness. The move towards globalization is relentless and the paper indicates the role India could play in world trade, world food production and governance. In the end this is a fairly optimistic view of what could be possibly achieved over the next 38 years.

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1. Introduction

Fernandes [1] discusses the emergence of a wider national culture in India which is shifting from the older ideologies of a state-managed economy to a middle-class culture of consumption. After the reforms in 1991 India now boasts of a growing middle class with around six million luxury brand consumers within its midst, according to a KPMG report [2]. Hatcher [3] argues that this middle class is now connected in complex ways with the South Asian diaspora, sharing spiritual truths and habits of consumption through a web of global trade, travel and entertainment. This class is essentially freed from the need to labour and flush with capital it expresses itself in the marketplace. The impact goes even further as new innovations such as the IPL cricket league touch a range of countries including Britain, Australia, South Africa to name a few and go into the heart of the other countries such as Bangladesh, Malaysia and Holland's populations. At the same time Bollywood is now making inroads into Hollywood and the global stage [4]. From the initial beginnings around 2010 when there were cross over stars in Films such as Mission Impossible Ghost protocol and the Life of Pi. The new films are now termed HollyBolly Blockbusters, with many filmed in English, some in Hindi and most in Hinglish. With the growing influence of Bollywood Hinglish has now become a commonly accepted dialect. Many people around the world accept Hinglish in its more Anglicised format. The youth of India are seen all around the world and have a great spending propensity. This is spreading not only the language but also the sheer exuberance of the HollyBolly films. Thus both economic and cultural changes are being felt well beyond India. Gurcharan Das also considers middle class aspirations and the politics of aspiration as being crucial to the development of India. However he could not have foreseen the impact this middle class would have on world culture [5].

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Just as great English writers such as Jane Austen, Shakespeare, Orwell and Huxley had an impact on the world stage and it was important to be British, Indian writers are now dominating the world stage. The beginnings can be traced back to Salman Rushdie winning the Booker of Booker prize [6]. In his company were other well-renowned Indian authors such as Vikram Seth, Arvind Adiga (Booker prize winner), Rohinton Mistry, Arundhati Roy (Booker Prize winner) and Jhumpa Lahiri (Pulitzer Prize winner). India now hosts the biggest eBook launches in the World and the world's greatest writers are to be seen at the Taj literary Awards Festival in Mumbai. As a growing power India is also flexing its muscles in science research, agriculture, business, defence, communications and diplomacy.

2. Future scenario 2050 overview

India's population has overtaken China's population [7] and there is a sense of excitement and trepidation at this announcement within India itself and global forums. The picture across the country is varied with some states boasting a world-class infrastructure and environment with others languishing in deep poverty.

The fastest growing states with good education for all females and alleviation of poverty are Gujarat, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Punjab and following in their footsteps are Orissa and West Bengal [8]. Many of the other states are still mired in poverty with poor infrastructure, degraded environments and a high male to female ratio. This in turn is leading to instability in some parts of the country with bandits from these states venturing into the more prosperous areas. Amongst the others Maharashtra is growing very unequally with Mumbai and Pune being log jammed with traffic and covered in smog. Many parts of the country are experiencing water shortages and the proposed national water-grid has failed to materialise as yet. The water stress is affecting people, livestock and wildlife not to mention the biodiversity of plants. Well-intentioned people from the more prosperous states have begun mobilising self-help groups and are beginning to work in the poorer areas volunteering help in education, agriculture and infrastructural projects. The central government racked with corruption is now showing signs of positive changes with strong, almost benevolent dictatorship from the new Prime Minister, who came into power in 2030. The bureaucrats in government have been replaced by professionals drawn from all parts of the world consisting of a range of nationalities as well Indian diaspora, all of whom have a vested interest in India's success. India is becoming a crucible for forward thinking on governance as there is talk of how the country with the largest population in the world can influence the world in a positive manner. Throughout its history India has always had a seam of spirituality that has been prevalent in pockets right from the beginnings at Mohenjo Daro to Ashoka and Buddhism and the Vedic Yoga tradition. It was in danger of being overridden by extreme Westernisation in the 2020s but the growth of the Dharmic [9,10] tradition has now reasserted itself and many Indians are no longer satiated with Materialism and are turning back to the old traditions. This seems to be hard wired into Indian genes and India is now attempting to emulate the Happiness Index as propounded by Bhutan [11]. This Dharmic resurgence is helping in the eradication of poverty in the poorer states as people selflessly give up time for volunteering. Many individuals from the Moslem and Christian faiths are also selflessly devoting themselves in this manner. This Dharmic wave is having a big impact in many countries in the world.

3. Water

Over the last twenty years the weather patterns have been very erratic throughout the world and especially in India with very heavy monsoons and sometimes prolonged droughts. This has exacerbated the problems associated with water for drinking, bathing cooking and crop growing not to mention the water needed by industrial plants. Climate change and environmental degradation have a symbiotic and complex relationship that manifests itself in many ways. For instance modern farming methods contribute to soil degradation, increasing consumption of water leads to dry rivers and low water tables, heavy use of chemicals and oil leads to poor air quality, chemical pollution degrades seawater quality and forest felling not only affects the amount of carbon dioxide in the environment, but also affects soil degradation. At the same time all these factors leading to climate change affect atmospheric temperatures, leading to melting ice caps and the threat of climate change. It was often argued that water endowment dictates the direction of virtual water flow. However this thesis was found wanting as a study [12] showed that a country's virtual water surplus or deficit is not determined by how much water it has. It appears that no correlation exists between the relative water availability in a country and the virtual water trade or the volume of water trade or the volume of water embedded in food and food related products. Many of the water rich countries including Japan, Portugal and Indonesia continue to record high net virtual water imports. Access to arable land actually plays a more important role. For this reason, Punjab, Haryana and Gujarat became net exporters of water compared to other states. However their groundwater levels are now so bad that do not permit any more water extraction, so there is pressure on balancing water resources via a national water grid. In the same way that Egypt is a net exporter of water because of the Nile and has good arable land. In fact historically Egypt was the literally the breadbasket of the Roman Empire. In a similar way Jarkhand, Kerala and Bihar over the years became net importers of water. Bihar, however, is now working towards improving its agriculture sector (Fig. 1).

India now has the dubious position of being a net water importer rather than as an exporter as it was in the past. The differences between the states have been balanced by large water networks straddling the country. However the full water grid has yet to be completed [13] largely owing to delays posed by corrupt bureaucrats. The water stress predictions mentioned by Pachauri in the 2011 report looking at China and India came to pass in 2020 [14,15]. There were widespread riots, which led to a rethink of policies and a rebalancing of the water resources in India. These large-scale changes have also

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