

A STUDY ON ATMANIRBHAR BHARAT ABHIYAN DURING THE COVID-19: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY*

BY

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Abstract: Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan is one of the important initiation taken by the Government of India to become self-reliant to fulfil its domestic and global needs as well. This realisation felt in during Covid-19 Challenges. An attempt has been made in this paper so as to analyse the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan scheme in India during the Covid-19 period. The Period of study has been taken from May 2020 to July 2021. The Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan has been analysed as follows: 1. The Five pillar of Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan. 2. The Five Phase of Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan. 3. The Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan Scheme & The Gandhian Model of Self-Reliance in the Indian Economy. On the basis of the findings of the study, conclusions have been framed.

Keywords: Covid-19, Atmanirbhar, Bharat, Abhiyan, Gandhian Model, Self-reliance, Indian economy, etc.

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INTRODUCTION: At the time when the world is facing tremendous challenges emanated from the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, India plans to convert this immense threat into an opportunity and strengthen its fight against such odds by becoming Atmanirbhar or self-reliant. Undoubtedly, the COVID-19 has put the global economy at a major risk and the Indian economy has also been hit hard by this pandemic-driven global crisis. In fact, presently India has been encountering two major odds. First, the country has been trying to adopt suitable measures to control the spread of COVID-19 and to provide healthcare facilities to the people as much as possible because the prime concern of any government is to save lives. Secondly, the country has been engaging itself to take appropriate steps to save its economy from the economic uncertainty stemmed from the outbreak of coronavirus and subsequent global as well as national lockdowns. India's business environment has been severely affected. The operations of different business units belonging to various sectors have been disturbed. People have been facing a sudden loss in their incomes resulting in a massive decline in personal consumption expenditure.

Atmanirbhar Bharat is the mission started by the government of India. On May 12, 2020 Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi, in his speech while addressing the nation made a call to make India Self-reliant (Atmanirbhar) and announced special economic package of Rs. 20 lakh crores which is around 10% of India's GDP, to fight the COVID-19 induced slowdown. The vision was based on a wide and deep consultation with several sections of the society. The need for Atmanirbhar Bharat was

felt more acutely when China had blocked active pharmaceutical ingredient exports to India, especially of Hydroxy Chloroquine, which is used to treat COVID-19 and India was standing at a point where it had to decide to move towards being self-reliant while also supporting the world.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES: The Study has been based on the following research objectives:

1. To Identify the contributions made by the five pillars of Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan during COVID-19.
2. To Identify the performance of the Five Phases of Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan during COVID-19.
3. To Identify the relationship between the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan and the Gandhian Model of Self-reliance in the Indian Economy.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY: The study is based on descriptive in nature and is purely based on secondary sources of data. The Secondary sources of the descriptive analysis have been collected from various news reports, research works, published information and working papers. Various websites were also visited to fulfil the above desired research objectives and to know how the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan scheme promoted the factors of production activities during the Pandemic Situation in our economy and generate a better future for our country and thereby lead us towards self-reliant India. At first the researcher has collected available and appropriate information about the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan scheme and its implementation during the pandemic situation. The available relevant information has also been clearly analysed to conclude on the material role that can be undertaken by the further implementation of the scheme and thus the researcher has also been provided several recommendations which can lead to India towards economic empowerment and be Atmanirbhar.

ANALYSIS: Economic empowerment is one of the base of being Atmanirbhar and that too during the pandemic situation. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in his address to the nation on 12th May, 2020 has made an emotional appeal to the people to use local made in India products for implementing his vision of 'Vocal for Local with global outreach. It would promote the 'Make in India' initiative taken by the Government of India and ultimately help India to establish itself as the global manufacturing hub by replacing China.

The Five pillar of Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan (Self-reliant India) as laid down by PM Modi are:

- First Pillar: An Economy that takes quantum jumps and not incremental change.
- Second Pillar: Infrastructure that should be world-class and becomes the identity of India which is synonymous with a modern India.
- Third Pillar: A system that is based on the technology-driven arrangements, fulfilling the dreams of the 21st century, not the policy of the past century.
- Fourth Pillar: A Vibrant demography which is the source of energy for a self-reliant India.
- Fifth Pillar: Demand, whereby the strength of our demand and supply chain should be utilized to full capacity.

Finance Minister, Ms. Nirmala Sitaraman in her five press conferences on five consecutive days from 13th to 17th May, 2020 are:

- Phase - I: Business Including MSMEs

- Phase - II: Poor, Including migrants and farmers
- Phase – III: Agriculture
- Phase - IV: New Horizons of Growth
- Phase – V: Government Reforms and enablers

Phase – I: Rs. 1.70 Lakh Crore relief package under Pradhan Mantri Garib kalyan Yojana for the poor to help them fight the battle against COVID-19 Situation, which is benefited for the various people of the society like Insurance Cover of Rs 50 Lakh per health worker, 80 crore poor people given the benefit of 5kg wheat or rice per person for next 3 months during the COVID-19 Situation along with the 1 kg pulses for each household for free every month for the next 3 months. Government of India has come up with new plans in order to eliminate the fear among MSMEs of graduating out of the benefits and hence killing the urge to grow and made some changes for the MSME sector as part of the Atmanirbhar Bharat package, it approved changes to the definition of the MSMEs.

According to the new definitions, MSMEs with an investment of Rs 1 crore and turnover of Rs 5 crore will be classified as micro-units. Units with an investment of Rs 10 crore and turnover of Rs 50 crore will be classified as small units while those with an investment of Rs 50 crore and turnover of Rs 250 crore will be classified as medium units. This would extend the coverage of the sector significantly resulting in inclusion of more number of enterprises including firms belonging to the service sector which would be highly benefited by a considerable number of measures implemented by the Government of India to provide necessary weapons to them to fight the battle against the COVID-19 pandemic situation.

Reserve Bank of India has taken certain measurements in order to enhance the liquidity position of the system and also announced Special refinance schemes to NABARD, SIDBI and the NHB for a total amount of Rs 50 thousand crore at the policy repo rate. This would be helpful to the MSMEs Sectors, who were facing the liquidity crunch in the COVID-19 Pandemic Situation. RBI has taken many more initiatives in order to improve the economic condition during the pandemic situation.

Phase – II: The Government of India has taken important steps in order to fulfil the basic requirements of the poor people including Migrants and Farmers during COVID-19 Pandemic situation. Free food grain supply to Migrants who are neither NFSA or state card beneficiaries, for a period of two months. During this time Government of India has decided to implement Technology systems to be used enabling Migrants to access Public Distribution system from any fair price shop in India by March-2021 – One Nation One Ration Card. During this Pandemic Migrant labour/urban poor faced challenges in getting houses at affordable rent, so Government of India launch a scheme under PMAY by converting affordable rental housing complexes (ARHC). And many more other facilities/schemes are provided by the Government of India in order to enhancing the economic development and livelihoods of small businessmen including urban vendors as well as rural vendors doing business in this COVID-19 pandemic situation.

Phase – III: The Government of India has announced/started implementing various schemes, which are related to Agriculture for the purpose is to become a self-reliant of India under the head of Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan scheme. Rs 1 Lakh crore Agri Infrastructure fund for farm-gate

infrastructure for farmers to provide adequate cold chain & Post Harvest Management infrastructure in the vicinity of farm-gate causing gaps in value chains during this pandemic. Rs. 10,000 crores scheme for Formalization of Micro Food Enterprises (MFE) to promote vision of Hon.PM: 'Vocal for Local with Global outreach and Rs 20,000 crores for Fishermen through PMMSY scheme in order to fulfil the critical gaps in fisheries value chain. Government of India has shown also keen interest in the development of Animal Husbandry Infrastructure Development Fund, Promotion of Herbal Cultivation, Beekeeping initiatives and to develop the supply chain (Operation Greens) facilities extended from Tomatoes, Onion and Potatoes to all fruits & vegetables.

Phase – IV: The Government of India has made certain important decisions with regards to Policy reforms on introduction of Commercial mining in Coal Sector, Diversified Opportunities in Coal Sector, Liberalised Regime in Coal Sector, Enhancing Private Investments in the mineral Sector, Enhancing Self-reliance in Defence Production, More world class Airports through public-private partnership (PPP) basis, India to become a global hub for Aircraft Maintenance, repair and overhaul(MRO) etc., Due to these policy reforms would certainly provide essential inputs to the nation to create itself in the global market by surrogating synergy between research facilities and tech-entrepreneurs.

Phase – V: Finance Minister announces Government Reforms and enablers across seven sectors under Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan package. The Government of India allocated an additional Rs 40,000 crore under MGNREGS. It will help generate nearly 300 crore person days in total addressing need for more work including returning migrant workers in monsoon season as well. Creation of larger number of durable and livelihood assets including water conservation assets will boost the rural economy through higher production.

Public Expenditure on Health will be increased by investing in grass root health institutions and ramping up Health and Wellness Centres in rural and urban areas. Setting up of Infectious Diseases Hospital Blocks in all districts and strengthening of lab network and surveillance by Integrated Public Health Labs in all districts & block level Labs & Public Health Unit to manage pandemics. The revolution of digital education system has taken place rapidly with the help of advancement of technology and government has taken some initiative to implement some of the digital platforms such as PM eVIDYA, MANODARPAN, New National Curriculum and Pedagogical framework and National Foundational Literacy and Numeracy Mission where students, teachers and others can access directly from their smart phones or any other supporting devices.

ATMANIRBHAR BHARAT ABHIYAN AND GANDHIAN MODEL OF SELF-RELIANCE IN THE INDIAN ECONOMY:

Hon'ble Prime Minister of India on May 12 in his speech to the nation announced Rs 20 lakh crore package, which would be equivalent to 10% of the country's GDP as a part of COVID-19 relief measure. Named 'Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan', which translates to "Self Reliant India Campaign", and said this package would emphasize on Land, Labor, Liquidity, and Laws. Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan would encompass cottage industries, home industries, small-scale industries and MSMEs whilst also lending a shoulder to labourers, farmers, middle class and also for Indian industries. In his speech, he also said that the upcoming reforms would have a broadened

impact. These reforms will be for, rational tax system, simple and clear rules-of-law, good infrastructure, capable and competent human resources, and building a strong financial system to encourage business, attract investment and strengthen the 'Make in India' programme.

Though the "Make-in-India" initiative to encourage self-reliance in the country was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2014, its seeds were sown several decades ago by the Father of the Nation Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi had promoted the use of Khadi clothing in the 1920 as a twin-pronged approach for empowering people with technology on the one hand and for opposing the commercial interests of the British on the other. The objective of this movement was boycotting the imported foreign cloth promoting the spinning of khadi for self-employment. Even in the current situation also India directly or indirectly following the Gandhian model for self-reliance of India from the economic development point of view by utilizing the domestic resources in an appropriate manner. Khadi has its relevance in present day India because it is a symbol of the country's culture. It is also relevant as a symbol of the Swadeshi concept of indigenouness. A significant section of India's population uses Khadi clothing even today. That's because the fabric is suitable for the hot and humid climate of the country. It is not only a symbol of refinement but a symbol of necessity so far as clothing is considered as a basic need of man like food and shelter. (Outlook, 2019)

CONCLUSION: With the new incentive schemes, the Government of India has provided the required support to the Five Pillars and Five phases of Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan Scheme to rid India of import dependence for various goods & services and realize the localization vision of the principle of Vocal for Local. In spite of financial difficulties owing to COVID-19, the Government of India is determined to strengthen the MSMEs, Agriculture, people of the country, New horizons of Growth and government reforms & enablers to contribute their full potential for the overall development of the country during the COVID-19 Pandemic situation. Now, it is for the Businesses including MSMEs, farmers and other stakeholders, to make use of these benefits and contribute their best to enable the country to realise its ambitious goals of Make in India and Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan scheme (Self-Reliant India) through the development of goods and services to substitute the imported goods and services, and also to improve its export performance. The Gandhian model of self-reliance in the Indian Economy is relevant in the present COVID-19 Pandemic Situation because a nation should be economically self-reliant in order to fight against this pandemic situation independently.

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