

A moment of truth – Is India really shining?



Comments 2



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India celebrated the 59th Republic Day with great patriotism and fervour. At moments, I am sure our eyes must have moistened with pride, while watching the parade and tableau showcasing our achievements. Even days later, the congratulatory mood is still on.

Without doubt, India has emerged as a country that no one can overlook. Acknowledged as the next super power, India is proving to be a tough competitor for China over this pageantry. It is noteworthy, that everybody is bringing laurels for this country, which is very good. The Indian cricket team is at its best form so much so that the rich and famous are investing on it. Indian economy is in good health and politics very robust. India also became the proud manufacturer of the world's smallest car and thanks to telecom revolution, Indian villages have gone global. Even Bollywood stars are doing their bit.

The disposable income of India is rising phenomenally. India is shining everywhere.

But, let me play a spoilsport and talk about our '**real**' achievements. This is the same country where poor farmers are committing suicide, defaulters due to the draconian credit reforms. As we celebrate India's status as a superpower and the achievements of the Mittals, Ambanis and Tata's, in some place, not far, some poor farmer and his family may be eating the last morsel of their life. Are we even bothered that since 1997, as many as 40,000 farmers have committed suicide due to indebtedness. Have we for a moment even given a thought to this problem and done something so that no other farmer ever needs to take such a step.

It is also very clear, that this country is reeking with violence against women. Incidences of rape, molestation, trafficking, homicide etc are common place. The whole of India watches, as women are raped in broad daylight in moving trains and buzzing streets; groped and molested in open public places, recipients of acid attacks, stripped naked and abused in front of the whole village. Statistics reveal that every hour 18 women become victims of crime in India. According to a 2006 report, released by the Home Ministry's National Crime Records Bureau, there were 19,348 rapes, 7,618 dowry deaths and 36,617 molestation cases.

India is also crippled by poverty. It is quite an irony that in one hand, Indian economy has been rated as one of the fastest growing in the world and on the other hand, people are surviving on income of less than **US \$1 a day**. Over 400 million people in India live below the above mentioned internationally agreed poverty line.

The problems are further compounded by low literacy rate and lack of adequate health facilities and services. Only 66% people are literate (76% men and 54% women). Despite various incentives and educational sops being provided, it is ironical that half of India's schools still have a leaking roof and have inadequate or no water supply. According to reports, 35% schools don't have infrastructure such as blackboards and furnitures. And close to 90 % have no functioning toilets. This clearly shows that the much touted 'right to education' is a farce in reality.

The health is in an equally abysmal shape. This is reflected in persistent malnourishment of children, very slow reduction in infant mortality and maternal mortality. India today allocates lower than 1% GDP to health. According to United Nations calculations India's spending on public health provision, as a share of GDP is the 18th lowest in the world. Even a cash strapped country like Nepal and Thailand are in better position than India. If there is availability of health infrastructure then it is definitely urban centric. The rural India doesn't even have access to doctors, nurses and medicines. There are only 585 rural hospitals compared to 985 urban hospitals in the country. Out of the 6,39,729 doctors registered in India, only 67,576 are in the public sector and the rest either in private sectors or abroad, pointing towards the severity of the problem.

Religious intolerance, racial slur, caste discrimination and deprivation all exists in India. It is a shame that even after so many years of independence; some communities are still fighting for their fundamental rights - be it the Advasis of Assam, Dalits or Gorkhas (ethnic Nepalis). I want to specially mention the plight of Gorkhas. Some fraction of this community, is dreaming an unachievable dream. Frustrated with the step motherly attitude and apathy of the Government, they are rising; their once silent voice is demanding a status of statehood for Darjeeling.

Therefore, ladies and gentleman, lets not celebrate our ornamental achievements. Lets dare to raise our voice and question the ones at the helm of affairs, how is India shining?

Let us stop being rhetoric and make enriched democracy a reality and ensure rights to every Indian citizen irrespective of their caste, creed, gender, language and social status. Till then I refuse to sing the India shining song and if this makes me unpatriotic, let it be. I am definitely not apologetic about it.

Courtesy.

- The Social Watch Report
- Ensuring Universal Health & Access to Education in India, Wada na todo abhiyaan, November 2007 Report
- NCRB Report 2006

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