

**AN ARTICLE ON HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF INDIAN ECONOMY****Ragini Agrawal, Ph. D.***Associate Professor, Department of Commerce, K R Girls (P.G.) College, Mathura, U.P.**Scholarly Research Journal's is licensed Based on a work at www.srjis.com*

Indian economy exists from the Vedic Era. The documented history of India begins with the dawn of Indus Valley civilization which flourished between 3500 BC to 1800 BC. The Indus civilization's economy appears to have depended significantly on trade, which was facilitated by advances in transport. Its citizens practiced agriculture, domesticated animals, made sharp tools and weapons from copper, bronze and tin and traded in terracotta pots, beads, gold and silver, coloured gem stones such as turquoise and lapis lazuli, metals, flints, seashells and pearls. They used to ships to reach Mesopotamia where they sold gold, copper and jewellery.

Ancient times till 1707 AD

Around 600 BC, the Mahajanapadas minted punch-marked silver coins. The period was marked by intensive trade activity and urban development. By 300 B.C., when Middle East was under the Greek Seleucid and Ptolemaic empires the Maurya Empire (c. 321 -185 BC) united most of the Indian subcontinent. The political unity and military security allowed for a common economic system and enhanced trade and commerce, with increased agricultural productivity. The empire spent considerable resources building roads and maintaining them throughout India. The improved infrastructure combined with increased security, greater uniformity in measurements, and increasing usage of coins as currency enhanced trade. For the next 1500 years, India produced its classical civilizations which generated wealth in huge amount. Between 1st and 17th centuries AD, India is estimated to have had the largest economy of the ancient and medieval world, controlling between one third and one fourth of the world's wealth.

During the **Mughal period (1526–1858 AD)** India experienced unprecedented prosperity in history. The gross domestic product of India in the 16th century was estimated at about 25.1% of the world economy. An estimate of India's pre-colonial economy puts the annual

revenue of Emperor Akbar's treasury in 1600 AD at £17.5 million (in contrast to the entire treasury of Great Britain two hundred years later in 1800 AD, which totalled £16 million). The gross domestic product of Mughal India in 1600 AD was estimated at about 24.3% the world economy, the second largest in the world. By this time the Mughal Empire had expanded to include almost 90 per cent of South Asia, and enforced a uniform customs and tax-administration system. In 1700 AD the exchequer of the Emperor Aurangzeb reported an annual revenue of more than £100 million.

Given below are the figures produced by **Professor Angus Maddison**, Emeritus Professor at the University of Groningen, Netherlands, and Honorary Fellow at Cambridge University, estimating India's wealth relative to world GDP for the years 1000 AD, 1500 AD, 1600 AD, and 1700 AD. India's share of world GDP was slightly more than a quarter in the year 1000 AD, and slightly less than a quarter between 1500 AD and 1700 AD.

| GDP in 1000AD millions of1990 International Dollars | 1000AD | 1500 AD | 1600 AD | 1700 AD |
|--|---------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| India | 33,750 | 60,500 | 74,250 | 90,750 |
| China | 26,550 | 61,800 | 96,000 | 82,800 |
| West Europe | 10,165 | 44,345 | 65,955 | 83,395 |
| World Total | 116,790 | 247,116 | 329,417 | 371,369 |

In the 18th century, Mughals were replaced by the Marathas in much of central India while the other small regional kingdoms who were mostly late Mughal tributaries such as the Nawabs in the north and the Nizams in the south. The British imperial empire began to grow in India in the middle of 18th Century. The phase of decline of Indian industry set in.

British rule

The British East India Company whose political power gradually expanded in India from 1757 onwards, used huge revenue generated by the provinces under its rule for purchasing Indian raw materials, spices and goods. Thus the continuous inflow of bullion that used to come into India on account of foreign trade stopped altogether. The Colonial government used land revenue for waging wars in India and Europe leaving little for development of India. In short span of 80 years (1780-1860 AD) under Colonial rule, India changed from being an exporter of processed goods for which it received payment in bullion, to being an exporter of raw materials and a buyer of manufactured goods. More specifically,

in the 1750s, mostly fine cotton and silk was exported from India to markets in Europe, Asia, and Africa; by 1850s raw materials, which chiefly consisted of raw cotton, opium, and indigo, accounted for most of India's exports.

The ruthless exploitation under British colonial rule completely devastated India's economy. India's population was subject to frequent famines, had one of the world's lowest life expectancies, suffered from pervasive malnutrition and was largely illiterate. As per British economist, Angus Maddison India's share of the world income went from 27% in 1700 AD (compared to Europe's share of 23%) to 3% in 1950.

INDIA AFTER INDEPENDENCE

1950-1979

After India got independence from colonial rule in 1947, the process of rebuilding the economy started. India went for centralized planning . The Five Year Plans which successfully transformed erstwhile USSR were made a tool for development. First five year plan for the development of Indian economy came into implementation in 1952.

1980-1990

The rate of growth improved in the 1980s. From FY 1980 to FY 1989, the economy grew at an annual rate of 5.5 percent, or 3.3 percent on a per capita basis. Industry grew at an annual rate of 6.6 percent and agriculture at a rate of 3.6 percent. A high rate of investment was a major factor in improved economic growth. Investment went from about 19 percent of GDP in the early 1970s to nearly 25 percent in the early 1980s. Private savings had financed most of India's investment, but by the mid-1980s further growth in private savings was difficult because they were already at quite a high level. As a result, during the late 1980s India relied increasingly on borrowing from foreign sources. This trend led to a balance of payments crisis in 1990; in order to receive new loans, the government had no choice but to agree to further measures of economic liberalization. This commitment to economic reform was reaffirmed by the government that came to power in June 1991.

Liberalisation and its effects (1991 Onwards) :

While commending his first budget in 1991 Dr Manmohan Singh had quoted Victor Hugo and said, "No power on earth can stop an idea whose time has come. The emergence of India as a major economic power in the world happens to be one such idea". Since then economy has progressed immensely with GDP progressing at the rate of 6-8% per annum. The GDP (nominal) has grown from US\$ 267.52 billion in 1992 to US\$ 1.85 trillion in 2012. India is third largest economy of the world and a preferred FDI destination. India's foreign trade reached US\$ 785 billion in 2012. India's major industries include information technology,

telecommunications, textiles, chemicals, food processing, steel, transportation equipment, engineering goods, cement, mining, petroleum, machinery, software and pharmaceuticals. Major agricultural products include rice, wheat, oilseed, cotton, jute, tea, sugarcane, potatoes, cattle, sheep, goats, poultry and fish. In 2011–2012, India's top five trading partners are China, United Arab Emirates, United States, Saudi Arabia and Switzerland. The percentage share of various sectors in the economy in the year 2011-12 is given below. The high contribution of services and manufacturing sector indicates the huge progress made by Indian economy since its Independence when it was predominantly agrarian economy (59% in 1951).

| Percentage Share in GDP in | 1950-51 | 2011-12 |
|-----------------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Primary Sector | 59.0 | 16.1 |
| Secondary Sector | 13.0 | 24.9 |
| Tertiary sector or Service Sector | 28.0 | 59.0 |

Being largely a agrarian economy, investments were made in creation of irrigation facilities, construction of dams and laying infrastructure. Due importance was given to establishment of modern industries, modern scientific and technological institutes, development of space and nuclear programmes. However, despite all efforts on economic front, the country did not develop at rapid pace largely due to lack of capital formation, cold war politics, defense expenditure, and rise in population and inadequate infrastructure. From 1951 to 1979, the economy grew at an average rate of about 3.1 percent a year in constant prices, or at an annual rate of 1.0 percent per capita. During this period, industry grew at an average rate of 4.5 percent a year, compared with an annual average of 3.0 percent for agriculture.

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