SELF-RELIANT INDIA

In the ever-evolving journey of nation-building, the pursuit of self-reliance has emerged as not merely a policy direction, but a national imperative. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's clarion call for Atmanirbhar Bharat (Self-Reliant India) is not just a slogan-it is a strategic vision aimed at transforming India into a resilient, globally competitive, and economically independent nation. As India strides towards its ambitious goal of becoming a developed nation by 2047, the centenary of its independence, selfreliance remains the cornerstone upon which this vision rests.

Self-reliance is fundamentally about reducing dependence on external systems while strengthening internal capacities. In India's context, it entails the development of indigenous capabilities in key sectors-manufacturing, technology, agriculture, defense, energy, healthcare, and education-while integrating efficiently with the global economy.

A self-reliant economy is essential for sustained growth. India's import bill, especially in sectors like electronics, energy, and defense, continues to be substantial. By promoting indigenous manufacturing through initiatives like Make in India, PLI (Production Linked Incentive) Schemes, and Startup India, the government seeks to boost domestic production, create employment, reduce trade deficits, and increase exports.

Strategically, self-reliance is crucial for national security. A country dependent on imports for defense equipment is inherently vulnerable. Indigenous defense production, space technology, and cybersecurity infrastructure not only enhance military capabilities but also ensure strategic autonomy in a geopolitically volatile world.

Self-reliance is not limited to economics and defense-it is deeply rooted in India's civilizational ethos. The Gandhian philosophy of Swadeshi was about promoting local industries, empowering villages, and ensuring equitable development. Today, the Vocal for Local campaign echoes this sentiment, urging citizens to support local artisans, entrepreneurs, and industries.

From traditional crafts to cutting-edge startups, empowering local production enhances socio-economic inclusion. It helps bridge the rural-urban divide, uplifts small-scale industries, and encourages women and youth entrepreneurship. Self-reliance, in this sense, becomes a tool of social justice and inclusive growth.

No nation can become truly self-reliant without investing in human capital. Education and innovation are central to this transformation. India's growing network of IITs, IIMs, AIIMS, and other premier institutions must now align their research, curriculum, and outreach towards nation-building.

The National Education Policy (NEP 2020) rightly emphasizes experiential learning, vocational training, and interdisciplinary education-essential for producing a future-ready workforce. At the same time, innovation ecosystems such as incubators. research parks, and startup hubs must be expanded and supported to create intellectual property and technological solutions that are globally competitive.

Achieving self-reliance is not the job of the government alone. It requires a cultural shift-where citizens become conscious consumers, prefer indigenous goods, and support local industries. It requires youth to embrace entrepreneurship and innovation as a path of nation-building. It calls for the private sector to invest in R&D and for academia to collaborate on solving real-world challenges

Better Foods for a Healthy Life

■ DR. BANARSI LAL

very year 16th of October is observed as the World Food Day to inspire the peo-ple about the healthy diets across the globe. On this day Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) was established and launched by the United Nations Organization (UNO) in 1945. The theme of 2025 World Food Day is "Hand in Hand for better Foods and a Better Future" highlighting the FAO's hand-inhand initiative, which fosters evidence-driven, country-led partnerships aimed at transforming agri-food systems and strengthening food security. Amid climate change, conflicts and economic instability, the theme highlights the urgent need to collective action in bringing together governments, farmers, businesses and communities to build nutritious, resilient and sustainable food systems. The major objective to celebrate this day is to tackle the global hunger and strive to eradicate hunger across the globe. This day is celebrated by the various organisations concerned with the food security with full enthusiasm and people commit together to eliminate hunger and poverty from society. This day revolves around agriculture because investment in agriculture supported by education and health can turn around this problem. This day reminds us that we should take action for the eradication of hunger and poverty. World Food Day was established by Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) member countries at the Organization's 20th General Conference in 1979. The idea of celebration of World Food Day was given by Dr. Pal Romany, the then the Minister of Hungary for Agriculture and Food. On this day awareness on eradication of hunger and poverty from the society is created among the people. The reasons behind hunger and poverty are acknowledged. The celebration of this day helps in increasing awareness on the effective agriculture and food policies to mitigate the food problem. On this day people make rangoli and perform street plays. On this day several organisations guide the people about the use of safe and healthy food and avoid the fast food. The World Food Day calls for the global solidarity to help the most vulnerable people recover and make food systems more sustain-

Although the world produces sufficient food to nourish about 8.2 billion people across the globe but still about 673 million individuals dealt with hunger at some point. About 99 per cent of undernourished people in the world live in the developing nations. About 60 per cent of the



hungry people in the world are women. About 20 million infants are born in each year with low birth weight and out of them 96.5 per cent live in the developing nations. About 50 per cent of all the deaths in children are under 5 years due to under-nutrition. In a world of 805 million people, one in nine persons lives in chronic hunger. Every year about five millions children under the age of five die due to malnutrition. Out of ten, four children are malnourished in the poor countries of the world. It is estimated that world produces enough food to feed every person on the earth. No one in the world should have the experience of hunger. With the climate change food crisis is a challenge for the entire world. There are more than one billion people in the world who are undernourished. About 733 million people suffer from undernourishment across the globe whereas about 2.8 billion people are unable to afford a healthy and nutritious diet due to increasing prices and increasing the

Food is a common element for all the human beings on the earth. In India during the marriage ceremonies lot of food is prepared out of which many times lot of food is wasted. Such food can be preserved and distributed among the poor and needy people. A scheme can be launched in which certain percentage of the salaries can be deducted from the employees of various organisations who voluntarily want to donate for food bank and such money can be utilized to feed the poor people. On this day various aspects of agriculture and food security such as biodiversity, climate change etc. are discussed. People are guided to save the food and eliminate food wastage. There is a need to concentrate on zero hunger. With zero hunger we can save the lives of 3.1 million children per year. Well nour-

ished mothers have healthier babies with strong immune system. With the elimination of under nutrition in the children GDP up to 16.5 per cent can be increased. Proper nutrition in the early age can increase 46 percent of lifetime earnings. Iron deficiency in the population can boost 20 percent of the workplace productivity. Zero hunger can help to build a safe, prosperous and healthy world.

In the pre-Green Revolution period, much of the increase in food grain production was mainly due to expansion in area under cultivation. India's food grain production has been on the rise despite year-to-year fluctuations since the Green Revolution of the 1960s. After the Green Revolution, increase in production is due to introduction of yield-increasing technologies, supportive services and infrastructure. The country's total food grain production was 50 million tons in 1950-51 which was 354 million tons in 2024-25. The per capita availability has also been risen during the same period from around 395 grams per day to nearly 568 grams per day despite unabated increase in population. The country appears to be not only self-sufficient in food grains but also having surplus as well. But the issue whether the present level of nutritional intake is adequate or not is still being debated. India has been regularly exporting rice and wheat since December 2000 and the government started offering grains for exports to prune the excessive stock-holding. India has since become the exporter of rice and wheat. The subsequent drought and increased domestic grain utilization in its wake slowed down the exports but even then the export surplus has continued to persist. Food-sufficiency does not reflect food security for the entire population of the country though it makes the country food

secure at the micro-level. Food security needs to manifest in all its dimensions, covering all regions and all economic strata of society.

Time and again India evolved strategies to tackle rural as well as urban poverty. The real issue is not the availability of food but of its affordability by the poor. The issue is of food and nutrition security based on the access to a diet of high nutritional quality. The modern concept of food security has become rather broad-based, encompassing livelihood security and poverty alleviation as means to ensure economic capacity to buy food. Once that is achieved then the question of adequate nutrition arises. This has attained significance issue because of the problem of malnourishment has been more acute than stark hunger. The concept of food security also needs potable drinking water-something a sizeable chunk of the Indian population still lacks. Food security is meaningless without adequate health cover. There are different levels at which the food security needs to exist-from individual level to household, social, regional and national level. Within the household food security, there are issues related to gender, children and the old. Thus, the debate on the aspects of food security seems to an unending process and is also undergoing a constant change, depending on the circumstances under which the definition is sought to be viewed. From time to time different approaches have been adopted to overcome the problem of food insecurity. The struggle for ensuring the uniform food security is going to be dynamic as this is a complex issue. This is also because the nature of food security or food insecurity will go on changing socio-economic scenario. The channel between production and consumption is weakening now. Production is undertaken for the market and driven by the market. This might have created uncertainties over local level food availability. Diversification in agriculture and livestock improves livelihood access and food security. A holistic and flexible approach is needed towards food production that keeps in view the capabilities of the available production resources including natural resources. If scientific knowledge is efficiently provided to the farmers, then about 40-45% food production can be increased. Regenerative agriculture is helpful to improve soil health and biodiversity while improving yields and reducing emissions. Sustainable agricultural practices need to followed for transformation in food sys-

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The Joy of Innocence: Rediscovering Life's Simple Pleasures

SHONIMA MALHOTRA

appiness is not hidden in wealth or status; sometimes, Lit floats gently in a paper boat on rainwater.' It was memory in the making - the kind only innocence knows how to write. Today in the market place.

I saw a child who had come with his parents. While they were engrossed in conversation, he was busy tapping away on his phone seemingly disconnected, yet entirely aware of his surroundings. When his father called him to come along, the boy, though clearly listening, chose to pretend he had not heard. It was a playful silence, not defiance. As soon as his parents stepped out, he stood up - ready to follow. But unaware of his intent his father returned to call him again. And here, the most innocent game unfolded. On seeing his father approach, the child, quickly sat back down, feigning disinterest. The father, now in on the game, played along pretending to leave once more. In that very moment, the boy leapt up again and ran behind him unable to contain his giggles. What unfolded wasn't just a child's mischief. It was innocence in motion pure, unfiltered and heartwarming; a

simple moment that brought smiles to the faces of everyone around. Through this little game the child reminded me of a powerful truth: Innocence doesn't need grand gestures. It finds joy in the simplest of acts.

Innocence is often misunderstood as naivety, but in truth, it is the art of seeing the world with open eyes and an open heart. It helps us approach life without excessive expectations, material desires, judgment, or without the constant weight of comparisons. This simplicity allows us to truly enjoy life - the small joys, the fleeting moments, and the beauty around us.

As children, our hearts beat with innocence and simplicity - we find delight in the little things. But as we journey through life, we often drift away in the endless pursuit of wealth and possessions, weaving our once-simple lives into tangled webs of complexity. The serenity of being with nature is quietly traded for the constant motion and clamor of modern progress. The simple pleasure of building sandcastles is replaced by the pride of owning luxurious houses. The laughter once shared on walks and in noisy school buses is now confined with-

in the quiet luxury of gleaming cars. The excitement of buying four toffees with a single rupee is overshadowed by the race for infinite money. The simple joy of walking with friends or riding school buses while enjoying snacks from local hawkers is quietly lost to the comfort of luxurious cars, grand vehicles, and expensive meals. The fun of playing in scorching heat or dancing in the rain and the pure laughter of friends without the interruption of phones is overtaken by the silent glow and the cold light of our phones. The moments of entire family once gathered around a single TV or VCRare now fragmented, with each room boasting its own LCD. Somewhere along the way; the carefree laughter shared with friends is overtaken with sophistication and showmanship. The art of living in the moment is made insignificant by the urge to capture everything on a screen. In this chase for comfort and excess, the simple joys that once sparked laughter and wonder-the innocent delights found in trivial, everyday moments-gradually get drowned. slipping quietly out of reach. These contrasts reveal how materialism and complexity slowly erode our ability to appreciate the simple joys that once defined happiness. And in that exchange, we lose the very essence of what it means to truly live and feel alive.

As we grow older, it isn't just materialism that distances us from innocence it's also the quiet development of certain non-material traits like ego, judgment, discontentment, and unhealthy comparison. As children, we are blissfully unaware of these tendencies; our hearts are open, curious, and unburdened. But with time, the degree of these traits grows with us, subtly shaping our thoughts and behavior. When we repeatedly nurture emotions like envy, pride, or constant judgment, we begin to build invisible walls around our hearts. These walls keep us from fully embracing the little joys and simple wonders that once came naturally to us as we begin to lose the sensitivity to feel these small yet profound pleasures - the very moments that make life truly beautiful.Letting go of these habits allows us to breathe more freely -to find fulfillment in small victories and to notice the everyday beauty that often goes unseen beneath the clutter of our judg-

uncontrolled material desires and negative traits - wouldn't it be a picture of beautiful simplicity? A life where purity of heart prevails, contentment flows effortlessly, and joy blossoms in the most ordinary moments.

Just imagine a life untouched by the

It is high time we realize that the small, simple joys that once filled our days - those moments of genuine happiness untouched by extravagance are gradually fading from our lives. Let us pause to reflect and acknowledge that true happiness has never been about wealth or luxury; it has always been about perspective. A person with little may live a deeply content life, while one surrounded by abundance may still feel a void - for real joy arises from seeing life through an innocent, open-hearted lens, cherishing simple moments, nurturing curiosity, and celebrating everyday wonders.

Let you play, laugh, dance without hesitation, pursue hobbies with excitement, and laugh without restraint. Let vou remind yourself that life is meant to be lived deeply, not merely measured by achievements or possessions.

Otherwise, someday later in life, you

may find yourselves softly humming a Yeh Daulat Bhi Le Lo, Yeh Shohrat

Bhi Le Lo Bhale Cheen Lo Mujhse Meri Jawani Magar Mujhko Lauta Do Bachpan Ka

Saawan Woh Kagaz Ki Kashti, Woh Baarish Ka Paani.

Kadak Dhoop Mein Apne Ghar Se Nikalna

Woh Chidiya, Woh Bulbul, Woh Titli

Pakadna Woh Gudiya Ki Shaadi Pe Ladna-

Jhagarna Woh Jhoolon Se Girna, Woh Girke

Sambhalna Woh Pital Ke Chhallo Se Pyaare Se

Woh Tooti Hui Chudiyon Ki Nishani

Woh Kagaz Ki Kashti, Woh Baarish Ka Paani..

a melody that so beautifully captures the essence of lost innocence and the simple joys of childhood - and the song continues, evoking memories that remind of a time when life was effort-

lessly pure and joyful. (The writer is Assistant Professor in Sociology, GDC Sidhra)

India-U.S. Relations in Flux: Strategic Autonomy and the Politics of Compulsion

AMEET KUMAR BALI

or nearly two decades, India-United States relations were hailed as a cornerstone of the 21st-century world order, a partnership built on democracy, development, and shared values. Yet, the return of Donald Trump to the White House has cast this relationship into turbulence. What was once a story of convergence has become one of compulsion, competition, and recalibration. At the heart of this tension lies Trump's revived "America First" policy, which seeks to safeguard U.S. interests through economic and geopolitical assertive-

But India, under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has refused to be cornered or coerced. New Delhi's firm adherence to strategic autonomy has made it clear that the partnership must rest on equality, not subordination.

Trade, Tariffs, and the Politics of Pressure

The first signs of strain appeared when Trump re-imposed 50% tariffs on Indian goods, targeting India's growing export sectors. Claiming to protect American industries, he also withdrew India's preferential trade status under the GSP scheme and labelled India's economy as a "dead economy." This was less about economics and more about political theatre. Trump wanted to signal toughness to his domestic base, portray-

ing India as a beneficiary of U.S. generosity. However, the move backfired diplomatically. India remained calm but firm, countering that growth slowdowns are not collapses and that economic cycles are natuemerging for Washington soon realised that its tariff-based coercion would not yield compliance. India did not alter its energy policy, nor did it change its stance on trade protection for smallscale industries. Instead, India subtly reminded the U.S. that the era of one-sided partnerships is over.

America First vs. Atmanirbhar

Trump's "America First" doctrine and Modi's "Atmanirbhar Bharat" (self-reliant India) vision reflect two distinct models of nationalism. One seeks dominance; the other seeks resilience. The U.S. strategy aimed to pressure India to align completely with American global interests, to distance itself from Russia, to act as a frontline state against China. and to open its markets further to U.S. goods and investments. But responded with quiet India strength. It made it clear that strategic autonomy was non-negotiable. New Delhi continued to buy affordable oil from Russia, maintained balanced ties with China through regional platforms, and pursued technology collaborations with France, Japan, and even the Middle East. This marked a turning

point, the U.S. learned that India would not trade sovereignty for favours, and that New Delhi's policies are guided by national interest, not external pressure.

The Indo-Pak Conflict and the "Peace Prize" Episode

The situation escalated during a four-day Indo-Pak military operation along the Line of Control, when both nations briefly clashed before de-escalation. Trumpquickly claimed that his mediation had averted a war and even hinted at a Nobel Peace Prize for himself. Prime Minister Modi publicly dismissed the claim, asserting, "No one forced India into it." The statement resonated globally - not as defiance, but as dignity. India's message was clear: its regional actions are sovereign decisions, not stage-managed by global powers seeking headlines. This episode deepened Indian mistrust of Washington's political opportunism, reminding policymakers that American diplomacy often conflates self-promotion with peacemaking.

Energy, Eurasia, and the Optics of Independence

India's continued oil trade with Russia became another flashpoint. Despite U.S. sanctions pressure, India prioritised economic pragmatism over Western approval. Its participation in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) alongside Russia and China further

symbolised an independent foreign policy posture. For Washington, these optics were unsettling. For India, they represented balance. Modi's diplomatic engagements with Putin and Xi Jinping at the SCO summit illustrated that India is not beholden to any bloc, it seeks stability through dialogue, not dependence.

Strategic Domestic and

Compulsions Both Trump and Modi face distinct but equally compelling domestic pressures: Trump's compulsion is populism. He must appear unyielding on trade, immigration, and foreign policy to secure his political base. Modi's compulsion is developmental. India must generate millions of jobs to utilise its demographic dividend, transform infrastructure, and attract investment, all while maintaining dignity on the global stage. This duality explains much of the friction: Trump thrives on confrontation; Modi thrives on self-reliance. Yet, both understand that global influence demands strategic balance, not submission.

The U.S. Pressure Strategy and Its Reversal

Trump's administration initially believed that economic coercion through tariffs, harsh rhetoric, and trade isolation, could pressure India into alignment. The U.S. expected India to yield in order to preserve its access to American markets and technology. However, India turned the equation around. Through resilience, diplomatic restraint, and diversified global partnerships, India proved its survival capacity without American support. Today, Washington has come to a sobering realization: India can survive and grow without the U.S., leveraging partnerships with Europe, Russia, ASEAN, and the Middle East. But if the U.S. wants to remain relevant as a superpower, it cannot afford to alienate India. Without India's cooperation: The Indo-Pacific strategy loses credibility. The Quad alliance weakens. U.S. access to Asia's largest consumer market of 1.4 billion people which will be diminish. In essence, the U.S. now recognizes that India is not a junior partner; it is a strategic equal. India's Economic Confidence and

America's Realisation Trump's "dead economy" remark, meant as a jibe, has ironically reinforced India's economic narrative. Despite global slowdowns, India remains one of the fastest growing major economies, a hub for digital innovation, and a leading destination for global investment. For the United States, India's vast middle class and youthful workforce represent not just a market, but a necessity, the engine of global demand that can sustain American industry, technology, and exports. Thus, Washington's attempt to pressure India through trade hostility has transformed into a realisation of

interdependence The New Balance of Power

The truth is now evident:- India without the U.S. can survive through self-reliance, alternative partnerships, and domestic innovation. The U.S. without India risks strategic decline, in Asia, in technology partnerships, and in moral credibility as a global democratic leader. Trump's administration, though adversarial in tone, has inadvertently helped New Delhi assert its global identity, not as a follower, but as a force of balance in

Conclusion: From Dependency to Dignity

an unstable world.

India-U.S. relations are not collapsing; they are maturing. They are moving from emotional optimism to realistic equilibrium. The United States has learned that India cannot be pressured into partnership; it must be persuaded through respect. India, in turn, has shown that friendship with the U.S. is desirable, but never indispensable. For both nations, the way forward lies in partnership, not patronage, a cooperation built not on threats or tariffs, but on trust and shared democratic purpose. In the final analysis, it is not India that needs the U.S. to survive, it is the U.S. that needs India to remain relevant as a superpower in Asia and beyond.