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SECTION - A

(1) Achieving balanced regional development in India: Challenges and Strategies:

So diverse its landscape, so vibrant its reach,
A kaleidoscope of cultures, uniqueness its niche.
Inclusive in values, exclusive in impact,
The world gasps at diversity, unity still intact.
But the nodes are hither thither,
yearning for a suture,

To be a huge but balanced power,
India of the future.

The parts should join, regions hunky-dory,
Whole system should celebrate, development
of GLORY.

The magnanimity of geography,
diverse regions, vibrant cultures and
unique ~~reg~~ construct has been the
cornerstone of India's historic path to
the present power. From the differentiated
states of Mahajanapadas; to the
unification of Bharatvarsha; from the
provinces and princely state - to a union

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of states', our India continues to tread towards the mosaic modern art of gargantuan significance in today's world.

However, disparities do exist, urban-rural, north-south, east-west, interstates, rich-poor; but to chalk out the egalitarian system approach has been the aim to achieve synergistic utopian federalism.

This essay aims to identify the bottlenecks in the balanced regional development and remedy measures to achieve development for all.

Regional Disparities: visible joints in the pot:

While ever since antiquity, attempts have been made to unite the areas and divisions as by Ashoka and Samudragupta,

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disparities remain. There still reverberates the deep gorge between urban India and rural Bharat, in aspects of economy, standard of life and even political and social rights.

The vast latitudinal and longitudinal stretch creates the divide between the prosperous Gujarat and the endangered North-East. The North India-South India tug of war runs perennially along various aspects of education, economy and culture.

The deserted Rajasthan, mountainous north India, coastal Ghats and the deep interior have unique pros and cons. But, these are parts and parcel of the seventh largest country of the world. What hurts the unitarian politics is the lines of economic, social, political divide which scratches the body of India with pain.

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Impediments in filling the joints:-

The colonial history of 'Divide and Rule' has deeply ingrained the sense of divide among various regions. The Partition of Bengal on religious lines, the Ring Fence Theory, attempts to create regional and regional vendetta still rings death bells at the face of integration.

To add to it, unplanned division of states after independence led to regionalism on lines of language (eg- Andhra Pradesh), which still continues as in Bodoland, Vidarbha or Gorkhaland.

Economic disparities have played the Devil's advocate in creating rift to the path of development.

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The Green Revolution benefited only capital-rich states of Punjab, Haryana, and parts of Uttar Pradesh, and the eastern India (West Bengal, Jharkhand, North East) were left untouched.

Although endowed with resources, states like Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh suffered from dutch disease and continue to be stuck in the realm of poverty.

The geographic Vindhyas divide has personified in the perpetual divide between North India and South India. While southern states through education, women empowerment, population control, and smart urbanisation achieved fast forward development; northern states like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh continue to be behind the bars of unemployment, poverty, and degraded mindsets.

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Sailesh Gourda said,

"The boundaries between regions of India are not geographical, but developmental."

Moreover, the political differences based on capitalism, communism and the rift between centre and states continue to deepen the rift between various regions -

International borders and the regions around like Jammu and Kashmir, Arunachal Pradesh also face the brunt of porous borders, creating the ~~not~~ impediment to development -

Even intra-state, while Mumbai-Pune shines as the economic capital, the Vidarbha remains dry of hope and prosperity -

Apart from above, differential tax systems, labour laws and land patterns lead to rationing of states by industries (eg - Tata Nano plant from Bengal to Gujarat)

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Strategic Glue : invisible bridges to the chores of development.

When Sardar Patel was negotiating with states, or when Gandhiji was bargaining for a unified India, their aim was 'systemic nation with synergistic means to stupendous development.'

To achieve this, we need to put the economic divide foremost. The Goods and Services Tax (GST) has blown the conch, and the warriors of e-NAM, e-commerce and e-governance like PRAGATI are already on march.

These need to be clubbed with smart villages and Rurban mission to create rural India, an aspiring node to offer opportunities to 70% of Indians in habitates. Smart agriculture, extension services and opening BPOs and CSCs in rural areas can create wonders for rural economy.

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To protect the migrating culture, between and within states, the various policies like Ayushman Bharat and Food security should be made transferable and inter-operable.

Empowering the local bodies with funds, functions and functionaries can create a culture of competitiveness and development in Panchayats as well.

Following ~~Keynesian~~ Ricardian Theory of competitive Cost Advantage at the international trade, national disparities can be bridged through collective development and exchange of competitive economies of regions.

Social development of health and educational parameters of BIMARU states can be strategically remedied through NITI Aayog's SATH initiative and Aspirational Districts Programme.

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Cultural unity among regions is must to create a healthy exchange of ideas and cultures- Ek Bharat Shresth Bharat is rightly the nudge-creating scheme for synergy.

Further through enhanced infrastructural connectivities like UDAN, multi-modal transport system and economic zones like Coastal Economic Zone (CEZ) will make India tread to the path of development.

Further the SDG Index, which measures various sustainable trends within states, creates a competitive federalism culture through enhanced initiative towards growth.

Above measures, with systematic horizontal and vertical devolution of Finance Commission to meet region-specific needs can create the culture of development inclusive and vibrant.

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India has always believed in a unified culture of Varudhai kutumbakam and thus, inter-regional disparity cannot be a road-block to the integration towards development.

A sustainable, long-term, unified, cooperative and flexible approach can only make India a golden bird, with all its body parts and wings in perfect symphony.

The aspirations of a young nation, blessed with the myriad resources should use diversity as a competitive advantage to attain success, while maintaining the spirit of integrity intact. Along with the constitutional Preamble, an Inclusivity Preamble can make sense:

"We, the people of India, resolve to integrate each and every part of our motherland, assuring social, political, cultural and economic equity, and promoting an inclusive India in true spirit."

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SECTION-B

(8) Jobless Growth in India: a threat to demographic dividend.

"A country so young, its people so many,
So many hands, to earn the penny.
But there ain't no jobs, ~~chaos~~ ^{furor},
Poverty, crimes, unemployment ashore.
Education, vocation, skills and health,
Provide your children to capitalise the wealth."

From the subsistence and rural economy of the past, India has treated the path of globalisation and development towards modern economy. Moreover, ~~what~~ the population which was counted as a burden, has emerged to be a resource, powerful enough, to mend the part of poverty and degradation.

However, an increased population has increased aspirations and demands, with greater need for employment.

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As per the latest PLFS Report, the unemployment reached 5-6%, the highest in the past decades.

The disparity between demand and supply of jobs could lead the demographic dividend to disaster.

This essay is an attempt to identify the nitty-gritties of jobless growth and how it can affect our population dividend.

Indian Path to Demography and Joblessness:

As per UN World Population Report, 2019, the median age of Indian population will be 28 in 2020. This will give a window of demographic dividend from 2005-06 to 2055-56, meaning more working age population to create dividends of wealth and development.

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Various countries like China, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore have already passed through the window and successfully achieved in reaping the dividend from its youth.

It's now time that India gets its fair share in the development, and contribute to the Asian century, sharing prosperity among all through an inclusive model.

Ironically, for India, when the most valuable human resource is there; it cannot generate enough jobs to employ them.

Although India, as a whole economy is the 3rd largest on Purchasing Parity basis (PPP) and 6th largest by Market rate basis, the growth it has achieved has been dry of jobs.

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The trend of jobless growth started from the 8th Five Year Plan after the 1991 economic reforms and continues to deteriorate. The country's industries are excluding the job creating potential from its growth map.

The reason is vividly visible in the population-GDP map of various sectors. The agricultural sector which employs about 50% of India, contributes only 14-15% to its GDP; thus those employed in agriculture are poor and vulnerable, replete with disguised unemployment.

The service sector which contributes 60% of India's GDP, employs only about 30% of population. Those reaping the dividends are educated rich white collar workers.

The industrial sector, which should have created the wonders, have remained

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stagnant and mute spectators of the degrading agriculture and prospering services.

China, which has become a world superpower employed its hands in labour-intensive myriad industries, which acted as launchpads both for the Chinese population and the country as a whole.

India, on the other hand, invested in capital-intensive heavy industries, which couldn't multiply the jobs and couldn't even sustain the global competition.

To add to the structural imbalance, India failed to invest in human capital formation through education and skill development, which further aggravated the demand-supply imbalance.

Narayan Murthy said,
"Only 20% of the graduates are skilled enough to be employed."

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Indian unemployed youth :
Tax instead of Dividend !

To earn a dividend, we must invest and that too invest in fruitful analysed opportune areas. We, with our handful of human resources, kept them idle, which now has emerged to be the greatest disaster.

"If 60 lakh hands are without work, they are bound to wander, to the dungeon of ignominy."

The disgruntled youth from the rural areas are migrating to the urban areas, the ones already replete with unplanned development. Due to unfulfilled aspirations and reality choke, they are pushed to the underbelly of urban places - the slums - with further degraded lives and lack of resources.

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The educated youth due to lack of jobs or lack of requisite skills fall into the arms of underemployment, with rungs of depression and dissatisfaction plaguing our youth -

Moreover, lack of proper facilities like institutional and social means of health, education ~~in~~ the poor youth falls into the vicious circle of poverty, degradation and disparity -

The increasing competition for meagre seats ~~at~~ in colleges and dream jobs, creates a perpetual degradation of education to a system of rote-learning and mark-gathering system -

When this demand and supply mismatch reverberates at all social institutions, the arms of societal ills are found to be soothing -

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Our potential dividend-earning youth falls prey to crimes, terrorism, societal ills, alcoholism, corruption and perennial degradation.

The Indian mother who was hoping her children to raise her to the position of superpower, laments to see themselves topped in activities, further degrading her already weak base.

Time to reinvest: portfolio to be rebalanced:

While still there is a window of opportunity demographic dividend, we must take remedial measures in sharpening our axes and in creating more scope.

India needs to nudge the private players towards more labour-intensive industries like apparel, footwear, so as to absorb our young bloods into action.

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Agriculture needs to be made efficient and smart through Research and Development in agri-areas. It should be made remunerative by enhancing productivity - Krishi Vigyan Kendras, e-NAM, CHAMAN, poly farms should be clubbed with allied activities of fisheries, aquaculture, livestock -

Our human potential needs to be educated, and skilled. Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan and SKILL India Mission are right steps in the direction.

Moreover, our youth be encouraged to emerge as employment creating individuals through start ups, MSMEs and schemes like ASPIRE, SVEP, PMEGP can work wonders.

Formalisation of our 93% informal economy is utmost necessary, to bring them to mainstream and provide social security.

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Magnanimous dividends - Magnanimous

Jobs :

Mainstreaming Gandhi's ideas of Nai Taaleem and including our female force in the economy can make India, competitive and prosperous with great growth, which is inclusive and developmental.

Our aim of \$5 trillion economy by 2024-25 can only be achieved if we invest our demography prudently to earn quality dividends.

Educate, skill, reorient the force,
To reach the target, focus at the source.
Economic reorientation, welfare in its own,
It's a simple finance investment game.
More jobs, better jobs, prosperity in the play,
We need to shift gears, come what may!!