

INDIA'S DEVELOPMENT PATH

Prospects, challenges, and implications
for the emerging world order

Sandeep Shastri

A framework for analysis

Approaching the theme

The concept of development has, over the years, been defined from multi-track perspectives. The rich literature on the theme has sought to cover a wide range of perspectives on what the idea of development has come to involve across time and in varied socio-cultural, political, and economic settings. The multiple contours that have been part of the debate in India on what constitutes meaningful development have, over the years, enriched both the content of the development narrative and the wider context in which it unfolds.¹

It would be useful to add a few caveats at the start of this dialogue in order to outline the principal framework for analysis that this chapter outlines. Firstly, the attempt here is to look at India's development experiment within the specific framework of its tryst with democratic governance. Secondly, the specificities of the strategy of development grounded in an appreciation of the socio-economic environment and political conditions are attempted. Thirdly, this chapter places citizens as the main focus of assessment, often privileging popular common sense rather than expert opinion.

In order to undertake this task, this chapter, tentative in its formulations and limited in its sweep, draws heavily from the findings of survey research. Survey research has brought to the dialogue table a fascinating and stirring different dimension to the conversations on development,² both globally and in the specific Indian context. It has encouraged the discussion on development to permit the showcasing of popular attitudes and perceptions. What constitutes development is today being re-worked, keeping in mind the "vision" of citizens who constitute the core of any developmental experiment. This has allowed development to be viewed from "below" rather than merely constructing a meaning

and methodology that emanates from the academic "high ground". Thus, the anxieties and aspirations, trials and tribulations, and preferences and priorities of citizens, with regard to their vision for their collective future, are a key element in constructing the encounters with development.

Much of the survey data that forms the basis of this analysis revolves around a few specific studies. These include the National Election Study (NES) and other surveys in India pioneered by Lokniti-CSDS.³ Data drawn from the State of Democracy in South Asia (SDSA)⁴ studies, which are an integral part of the Global Barometer Surveys and is coordinated in India by Lokniti-CSDS, are a key element of the present study.

This chapter is divided into three segments. In the first, an attempt is made to contextualize India's development experience from multi-track perspectives. In the second section, the findings from different nationally representative surveys are presented to substantiate the key contours of the prospects and challenges in the development pathway. The final section attempts to summarize the key formulations on India's development strategy and its wider implications for a non-Western framework for analysis.

Contextualizing development

The assessment of development in the context of democracy and democratization has led, in recent years, to an increasing focus on the emergence of the "rest of the world" (as against the Global North) as an important site for the practice of democracy, development, and governance.⁵ Many contemporary studies on democracy prefer to make a distinction (and search for the distinctive features or similarities) between "old" and "new" democracies. The onus often was on the "new" democracies needing to fall in line with the ways in which democracy is viewed, understood, and practiced in established democratic polities. Thus, for a long period of time, the conversations on democracy (and of course development) privileged the procedural dimensions of democracy as being the core of the "idea" of democracy. The newer studies of democracy allow one to look at possible ways in which the idea of democracy itself can be democratized and pluralized. This attempt consciously avoids the temptation of essentializing or overemphasizing the differences in values as the main explanatory factor for understanding the different perceptions and conceptions of democracy. This attempt to "democratize the understanding of democracy",⁶ implies that substance-based ideas of democracy and development are now increasingly occupying the center stage. The focus on "outcomes" as against (or alongside?) the "processes", has the potential of enriching the quality and content of the contemporary debates on what constitutes democracy and development.

In the first SDSA report it was highlighted that:

democracy has come to stand for a substantive promise of rule by equal communities of citizens, and the well-being of all in terms of dignity and

freedom from fear as well as want. This version pays less attention to some of the procedural aspects of democracy seen to be central to liberal, western democracies such as equal access to rule of law and to guard against the tyranny of the majority or a powerful minority.⁷

By seeking to go beyond the established "prism" of the Global North, the SDSA studies attempted to reflect on both the "idea" of democracy and development on the one hand, and its "imagination" on the other, which have been a key focus of analysis. The second SDSA report underscored the importance of the core concerns of countries like India which are attempting to:

achieve substantive outcomes (reduction of wealth inequality and provision of basic economic goods and services) while maintaining procedural institutions (regular elections based on universal adult suffrage, political participation and contestation) to produce an electorally legitimate government.⁸

An important indication of the development priorities of citizens in India was clearly manifest in the way they defined democracy.⁹ In the second round of the SDSA study, half the respondent's defined democracy in the language of justice and welfare. Another one in five highlighted the procedural dimensions of democracy and a more or less similar number defined democracy in the language of rights and freedom.¹⁰ This finding was in line with what was reported in the first SDSA study.¹¹

In this sense, when half of the respondents in India privilege justice and welfare as representing the idea of democracy, this brings to the discourse on development a specific focus. It is clear that the appreciation of democracy is shaped by the context of poverty and asymmetries of well-being. Hence democracy is seen as a harbinger of welfare and fair distribution of resources. This expectation derives not so much from the procedural and "rule of law" dimensions of democracy, but it originates from the idea that democracy mandates that those in power will use the instrumentality of governmental power for a positive intervention in the socio-economic dimensions of life in a given society. This understanding posits an interventionist and transformatory character in democracy.

The multi-track focus

Having highlighted the fact that the welfare and justice dimensions of democracy were privileged by the citizens, it would be useful to mention that in the designing of India's development paradigm, the focus on equality, inclusiveness, freedom, participation, and partnership were considered critical.¹² From a social perspective, the development strategy involved ensuring a balance between accommodation and identity. Through an economic lens, it entailed balancing growth with distribution and politically it involved institutionalizing the practices of democratic governance. India has often been described as an "old" society with a "young" population. In this context, it has frequently been described

as the “poster child” of a potential “demographic” dividend.¹³ Leveraging the presence of a population, which would be close to 40% of the world’s working population by 2030, requires the prioritizing of the development strategy with a focus on empowering people to reap the benefits of the dividend. This would require the spotlight of attention to be turned to the questions of balancing concerns of equality with equity, and a focus on critical social indicators of development.

Given the fact of economic backwardness and poverty, high rates of unemployment, and relatively poor performance on key social indicators like education, healthcare and life expectancy, India in many ways faces multiple challenges. While India is considered the third largest economy in the world from the perspective of purchasing power parity (PPP), and the sixth largest economy of the world in terms of nominal GDP, it ranks 139th in the world in terms of per capita GDP (nominal) and 122nd from the angle of per capita GDP (PPP).¹⁴ Inclusive growth has been the focus of much of the debates in India on development.

A major challenge confronting India is the widening income inequality. A study titled “Reward Work, Not Wealth” by Oxfam, highlights the fact that during 2016–2017, the richest 1% in India held 58% of the nation’s wealth. Further, in this period their wealth increased by an amount that is close to the total expenditure estimates of the Federal Budget of 2017. In the same period, half of the population, who are at the lower end of the economic spectrum, saw their wealth rise by just 1%.¹⁵

Estimates of the prevalence of poverty in India have varied quite dramatically. A recently appointed expert group (the Rangarajan committee) developed a methodology to determine the poverty line based on certain normative levels of adequate nourishment, clothing, house rent, conveyance, and education, and a behaviorally determined level of other non-food expenses. As per the estimates drawn up by the committee, the all India ratio of population below the poverty line as in 2011–2012 was 29.5%. It was 30.9% when it came to the rural population and 29.5% when it came to urban India.¹⁶ A World Bank study undertaken in May 2014 came up with a revised methodology for poverty calculation and a purchasing power parity basis for measuring poverty. It estimated that 17.5% of the world population was below the poverty line and India has a 20.6% share of the world’s poorest as of 2013.¹⁷

More recently, the NITI¹⁸ Aayog (India’s Policy Commission) has suggested as part of its recommendations that rather than committing to a poverty line alone, a supplementary would be to track the economic progress of the bottom 30% of the population over time. Rising incomes of this group would then imply a decline in the levels of poverty. The Aayog went on to add the Two-Track Approach for Sustained Economic Growth. At one level, it stressed on the need to focus on raising real wages which would enhance capacities to purchase essential services as well as improve the ability to access government services. On another level, it focused on an increase in government revenues to expand social expenditure by the government.¹⁹

Economic reforms and the democratic governance debate

Given the nature of socio-economic challenges that India had to confront with around the time of independence, the country chose to pursue the mixed-economy road to development. While this model did provide the space for private initiative and enterprise, the state and its structures remained the key drivers of social change and economic development. Close to three decades ago (in 1991), partly by compulsion and also by conviction, the nation leadership decided to continue this journey of development by inaugurating a phase of economic reforms with a clear focus on liberalization and a market-driven economy.²⁰ Since then, there has been an animated debate on the role of the state and its attendant institutions. The NITI Aayog approach to sustainable economic development focuses on increasing the income (purchasing power) of people to enhance their capabilities to improve their well-being even as the resources of the state focus on social expenditures. Yet, the argument is made that:

a large segment of the society increasingly looks to the state as both a provider as well as a facilitator. For many, accessing the state for basic needs constitute the only choice and not one among a set of different options. In these circumstances, the responsiveness of the democratic state is critical to giving empirical meaning to the justice and welfare dimensions of democracy that citizens ...uphold and cherish ... (India) would sure face greater challenges of governance as (one) ... moves from mere welfare to expectations of well being.²¹

The centrality of the process of democratic governance merits elaboration as it appears to be at the core of both the successes and challenges of the developmental process. In the Global South, attempts at developing governance, measured from a non-Western perspective, have increasingly gained currency.²² The Asian Development Bank, for instance, not only has its own definition of governance, similarly sub-Saharan Africa also has its own Ibrahim Index to ensure governance quality.²³ Though the assessors in both these cases are different in the sense that they are not Western, the measures, methodology, and the values guiding the exercise are clearly guided by the same goals. International IDEA’s *Assessing the Quality of Democracy: A Practical Guide* is methodologically and conceptually refreshing. By bringing into account the background history and culture, and understanding democracy as “a shifting continuum”, it attempts to go beyond existing measurement indicators. By involving the citizens of the country in assessing the quality of democracy, it is trying to democratize the assessment procedures. The World Governance Survey which attempts a holistic assessment of governance takes into account the key processes that are relevant. They make a distinction between performance and process indicators.²⁴ They are more concerned with not how a country compares with others, but with its own past.²⁵ The United Nations Development Programme’s (UNDP) pro-poor, pro-gender governance indicators are also an example to get over the limitations of the

earlier generation of governance indicators.³⁶ It was based on the recognition that different groups within a society could have competing needs and interests.

In many parts of the Global South, the political system and its political elite, either by design or by accident, side-tracked the issues of "delivery". Similarly, it is a fact that the mobilization of large sections of society was taking place without adequate mechanisms being provided to ensure that the system was accountable to these sections of society. In other words, "measuring development" often sought to address the challenges with limited democratic sensibility. Rather, it attempted to rest on the ideological/conceptual premise of the 1960s that implicitly believed that once "efficiency" is attained and economic reform is on the right track, development will logically follow. This act of placing democracy on the backburner was partially corrected by the UNDP that engaged in the language of "governance for whom". This significant shift in expression resulted in echoing popular sentiments in more effective ways and shifting the focus from the concerns of the donors to the realities of the population of the Global South. Thus, in assessing India's development framework, this paper privileges popular perceptions of the development process. Within this overall context, this paper seeks to understand governance in a particular way. This paper considers and argues that "access" is the central theme in development and governance. The three most important dimensions of access, each with various domains that have a bearing on the contours of development, would need to be privileged. These dimensions include: (a) *ideological dimension*—normative acceptance of the right to access; (b) *institutional dimension*—the establishment of appropriate organizational structures to ensure access; and (c) *empirical dimension*—the actual practice of access. Access has to be integrated in the ideological basis of politics and power, elaborate institutional paraphernalia are put in place for access, and the people must enjoy the experience of accessibility. Access must thus be a routinely experienced fact. Access is the right theme to integrate the concerns of democracy and development because access is obtained at the intersection of responsiveness and efficiency.

The 2014 national elections and the development debate

In accessing the development priorities outlined by the Indian state and the attendant challenges and opportunities, one is using the last national elections (2014), and developments thereafter, as the framework for analysis. Several factors have influenced the choice of this "moment" in Indian politics. Firstly, the 2014 elections were heralded as symbolizing an important departure from the past.²⁷ It was also an election which ended a quarter century trend of no single party securing a clear majority in the Lower House of the national parliament. Most importantly, it was an election which many believed had an important focus on development²⁸ and ushered into power a party—the Bharatiya Janata Party²⁹ (BJP)—that was considered pro-market, pro-economic reforms, and pro-industry. The BJP skilfully used the "development plank" to enlist the support of the emerging middle class who "wanted to benefit from the triumvirate of liberalization, privatization, and globalization".³⁰ The BJP's promise of:

Unencumbered development and infrastructure growth attracted a whole section of the urban middle class and youth who needed job opportunities and business facilities ... the BJP under the stewardship of Narendra Modi has something to offer ... everyone.³¹

The BJP began its 2014 election campaign with a huge advantage. The ruling United Progressive Alliance (UPA) coalition government led by the Congress party which was completing a decade in office, was hugely unpopular on account of a near policy paralysis, perceptions of non-performance, and serious charges of corruption.³² Its reasonably popular prime ministerial candidate, Narendra Modi, adopted a clear pro-business line and the party "appealed to a large section of voters who saw it as an alternative to the apologetic welfare policies coupled with crony capitalism and mal-governance that India saw during the UPA government".³³ The election manifesto of the BJP highlighted the need to see India emerge as a global manufacturing hub that would incentivize individual freedom to operate legitimate businesses, thus creating jobs and prosperity. It went on to assure providing an enabling environment to do business in India, transforming the nation into a "hub for cost-competitive labor-intensive, mass-manufacturing industries" (BJP 2014).

A few key campaign slogans of the BJP Prime Ministerial candidate Narendra Modi during the 2014 elections, and statements made soon after coming to power, clearly privileged the 'development focus' of both the election campaign and the government that was voted into power. Early in the campaign, he announced that 'Good days were coming' as his party would be soon voted into power³⁴. This became a very popular campaign slogan taken forward by the party. Another campaign slogan was "With All, We All Develop" and this was projected as an all-inclusive development agenda.³⁵ During an interview during the election campaign, he reflected that India needed "better skill, greater scale, and faster speed"³⁶ if it is to compete with China. Yet another critical indicator of his government's development strategy was unveiled soon after the BJP came to power, when the Prime Minister said that his government would focus on "minimum government, maximum governance".³⁷ At the first anniversary celebrations of the government, the Prime Minister asserted that he wanted "skill India, not scam India".³⁸ All this was clearly a response to the expectations of people from the government. It has also been pointed out by Chhibber and Verma that the 2014 elections saw a "clear rightward shift on issues related to the role of the state in the economy".³⁹ They also make the point that the market-friendly approach of the BJP and its leadership helped swing support among the "economically rightward-leading middle class voters":

According to some estimates, the size of India's middle class grew five-fold in the past ten years and is currently around 250 million people... middle class voters are more likely to be aware of the discourse around state regulations and thwarted business development.⁴⁰

Yet this shift brought with it important contradictions. One saw a funnel of support for the BJP that was broad among the socially and economically elite segments of society and narrow as one came to the less socially and economically privileged.⁴¹ Having come to power with the support of the social and economic elite and having also promised “With All, We All Develop”, the development strategy initiated by the BJP led the NDA government to come under close scrutiny. The next segment assesses the citizen response to the policies of the government during its four years in office and relates the same to its popular expectations on the other hand, and the development strategy of the state.

Citizen assessment and perceptions

In this segment, citizen aspirations and expectations from the state and their perceptions of service delivery are presented. If development is to be seen from the “prism of access” for those whom the programs and schemes of the state are meant, it is important that their perceptions of the same become central to this analysis.

In order to gauge the public mood, the findings from three studies are being included in the analysis. Three years after the Modi-led NDA government came to power, Lokniti-CSDS conducted the Mood of the Nation Survey in May 2017. The same was repeated after six months in January 2018, and once again in May 2018, when the government completed four years in office. Wherever relevant, data from the *India Round of the State of Democracy in South Asia (SDSA) Report II* is also considered to provide a comparative framework.

Most important problems faced by the country

The role of the state as not merely a provider but as a key facilitator was underscored by citizens in their response to what they considered as the most important problem they faced and the agency that was responsible for addressing the issue.

Among the most important concerns of the people was the need to find jobs, and the role of the state in generating employment. Over one-fourth of the respondents saw this as their principal concern. The growing prices of essential commodities, rising inflation, facts of poverty, and the gap between the rich and the poor were the concerns making up close to another one-fourth. One out of every five respondents were deeply worried about lack of economic development, slow improvement of infrastructure, and the malaise of corruption. This trend relating to popular concerns has been patently visible in the National Election Study surveys over the last two decades and seems especially pronounced in the recent past (Figure 5.1).

A similar question was asked in the India component of the second round of the SDSA study. The manner in which citizens prioritized the problems was more or less similar. The SDSA study undertook a further probe on whether citizens trusted the responsiveness of the state to resolve the most important

What is the most important problem faced by the country

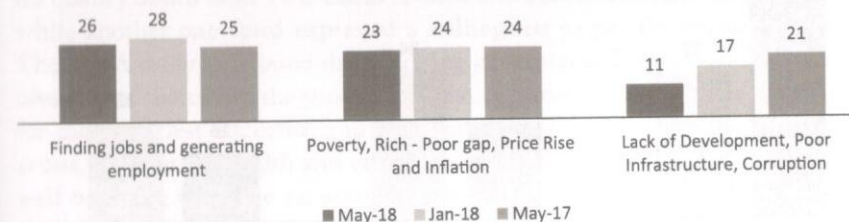


FIGURE 5.1 What is the most important problem faced by the people Source: CSDS-Lokniti Data Set

problems that they had identified. A little less than half the respondents opined that they had faith in the responsiveness of the state to solve the problems they considered as being most important. What is also important to note is that close to four in ten expressed low levels of trust in the responsiveness of the state to their most critical problems. The ratio of trust to distrust was 3:1. For every three people who trusted the state to be responsive, one had serious reservations.⁴²

Thus is it evident that what citizens considered as the most important problems facing the country required the intervention of the state through its policies and programs. There was a visible expression of the sentiment of unhappiness with the responsiveness of the state, possibly based on their own past experience. This has important implications for how citizens view the development priorities of the state. The SDSA study round two also found that the perception of the capacity of the state to deliver on the economic front is highly correlated with trust in state responsiveness. Citizens' satisfaction with the nation's and their individual household's economic condition greatly strengthens their trust in the state. There also exists a strong correlation between the belief in the responsiveness of the state and their assessment of the workings of democracy. Those who had higher levels of belief in the responsiveness of the state were more likely to have a positive attitude toward the workings of democracy in the country as well as its future.⁴³

Given the fact that finding jobs and generating employment were listed as the most important problems by people, respondents were also asked whether it was easier or more difficult to find jobs. Now close to three out of every five people said it was more difficult to find jobs with one out of every five saying that it was much easier getting a job or the situation was just the same. Over the last year this has seen a dramatic change. A year ago, one-third felt it was more difficult finding a job while another one-third said the situation remained unchanged and one in five felt that it was less difficult compared to before (Source: CSDS - Lokniti Data Unit) (Figure 5.2).

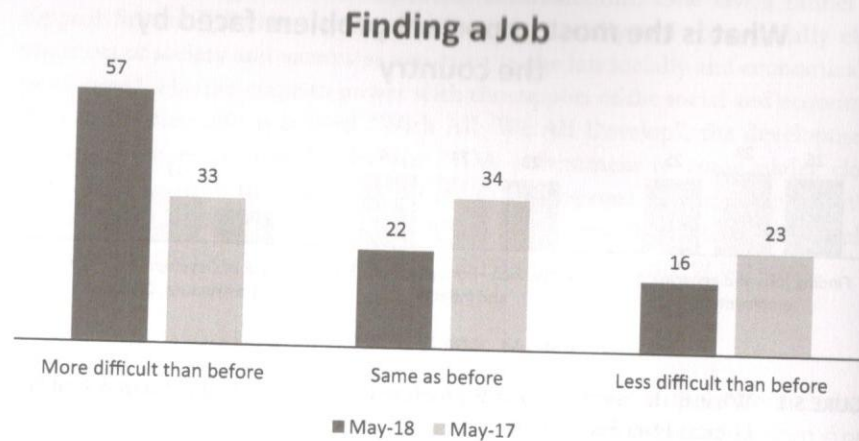


FIGURE 5.2 Finding a job Source: CSDS-Lokniti Data Set

If this response of despair with regard to the difficulties faced in being able to find a job is linked to their changing perception of the performance of the government, it is clear that from the perspective of common people, the inability of the state to contribute to the securing of minimum services and benefits clearly impacts their evaluation of the government.

In the latest round of the Mood of the Nation Survey, when people were asked whether or not their total household income was sufficient to fulfill their basic needs, only one out of every ten responded in the positive, and one-fourth opined that they were able to fulfill their basic needs with some difficulty. What is important to report is that more than two-thirds of the respondents said that they cannot fulfill their basic needs with their current household income. Four out of every five of those who were poor, two-thirds of the lower middle class, and half the upper middle class felt that their household income was inadequate to fulfill their basic needs. Thus, for the segment of society which was dependent on the state for securing their basic needs, the developmental initiative of the state appeared insufficient.

This fact was further reinforced in the SDSA study round two. In countries like India, ensuring universal health care and providing for access to education at multiple levels has often been used as an indicator of development. Public expenditure in these two sectors is often a barometer to measure the primacy given by the state to enhance the quality of key social indicators. As mentioned earlier, the key to the success of any healthcare or education scheme is its "accessibility" for those it is meant for. It was reported in India that for every three out of ten respondents, government hospitals and health care centers were at a distance of more than 5 km from their homes.⁴⁴ Government schools appeared to be more accessible, as for more than half of the respondents it was less than

1 km from their home. For close to nine out of every ten respondents, it was at a distance of less than 3 km from home.

Three out of every five respondents felt that they have a right to free treatment in a government hospital, while the balance of them were willing to pay for quality health care. Two-thirds favored free education in government schools while another one-third expressed a willingness to pay for quality education. The SDSA study also found that accessing government hospitals and schools was often not a choice but the product of "choicelessness".⁴⁵ It is often a compulsion for the poor, less educated, and rural residents. Furthermore, even those who access government health and educational facilities as a conscious choice could well be doing the same on account of the influence that they wield and their ability to "ensure a better quality of service" for themselves on this account.⁴⁶

It is clear that the experience of citizens with regard to obtaining state services shapes their perceptions of the responsiveness of the state. For many, accessing the state for basic needs constitutes the only choice and not one among a set of options. Close to two-thirds of the respondents of the second SDSA survey maintained that the government should take principal responsibility for taking care of the well-being of its citizens while only one-third were of the view that people should look after themselves and be responsible for their own well-being.⁴⁷

In these circumstances, the responsiveness of the state is an important measure for the quality and direction of development, especially from the perspective of citizens who are less economically privileged.

Development for whom?

Do people believe that development in the country focuses on all people, on the rich only, or has there been no development? Across the last two rounds of the survey it is found that one out of every five believes that there is no development. Today, two out of every five believe that development is only for the rich. Six months ago a much lesser percentage took that stand. In January this year, two out of every five felt that development was for all. As the government completes four years in office, the percentage who takes this positive stance has reduced (Figure 5.3).

Question posed: People have different opinions about the development that has taken place in the country in the last three to four years. Some believe it has only been for the rich, others say it has been for all people. What is your opinion?

It is clear that the rich and the middle class are more likely to say that development has been for all, while the poor are more likely to opine that development has only been for the rich. The inference one can draw is extremely clear. The poor and the economically marginalized are increasingly convinced that the development agenda of the state caters exclusively to the needs of the rich. Given the "provider" role that is expected of the state, the economically

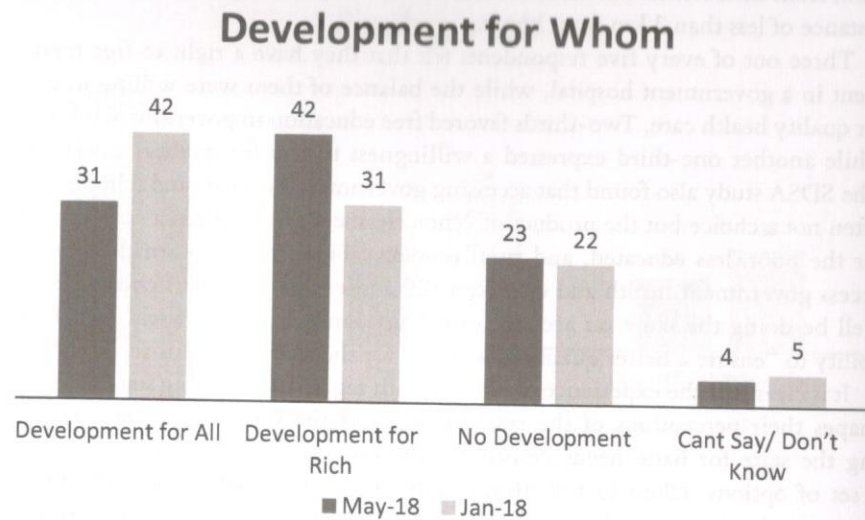


FIGURE 5.3 Development for whom? Source: CSDS-Lokniti Data Set

underprivileged are increasingly unconvinced of the genuineness of the development agenda of the state.

The promise of “good days”

One of the key promises on which the BJP-led NDA government came to power was the promise of “good days”. Those from different socio-economic segments of society who voted for the BJP had hoped that the new government under the leadership of Narendra Modi would usher in development for all, especially the “vision” of development that each segment of society had. How are people responding to that promise at the end of four years of this government? Last year, when the government had completed three years, three out of every five people still felt that the government had succeeded in bringing in “good days”. Over the last six months, it can be noticed that more than half of the respondents feel that the government has failed in ushering in the promised “good days”. The failure is even more pronounced at the end of the four year term. If one were to further divide those who said that the government has failed to bring “good days” between those who said it has somewhat failed and fully failed, it can be noticed that more than one-third of the respondents say it has fully failed (Figure 5.4).

From the perspective of expectations of development, it is important to record that this feeling that the government and its leadership has failed to bring “good days” is across all economic groups, right from the poor to the rich. This implies that segments of all strata of society are convinced that their expectations of “good days” from the government in terms of development policies, priorities,

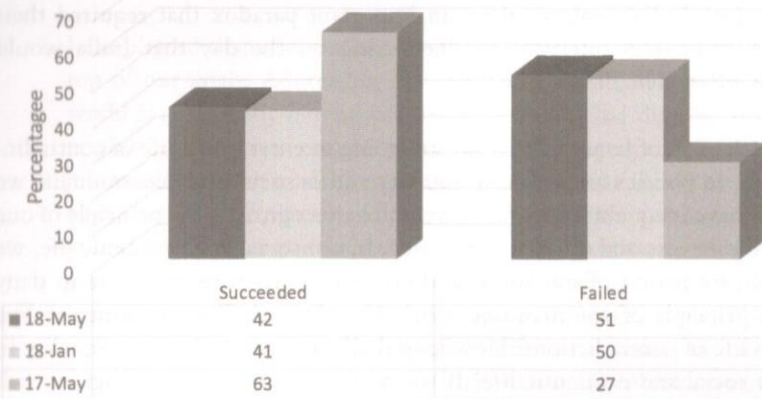


FIGURE 5.4 Has the Modi government promise of “good days” succeeded or failed? Source: CSDS-Lokniti Data Unit

and programs have not been met. While this sentiment is much stronger in urban areas than in the rural hinterland, it is similar across those with different levels of access to education and across all age groups.

The above narrative is indicative of the fact that a government that came to power on a “wave of expectations” of change, progress, and development has not been able to meet popular expectations and witnesses a dip in its ratings, essentially on account of its inability to deliver on its promise of development. The latest round of the Mood of the Nation Survey indicates that close to half of the respondents feel that things in the country are going in the wrong direction. A government and leadership which was reasonably popular a year into office on the basis of the heightened expectations, is today witness to a situation wherein close to half of the respondents would not like to give it a second chance in the next elections.⁴⁸

India's development pathways

Seven decades after Independence, India appears to have moved forward on its development journey with several striking successes, even as many of the contradictions that were visible in the social and economic framework of the society at the time of independence continue to confront policy makers. The mixed-economy model of growth that sought a partnership between private initiative and government involvement has fostered growth and development. Yet, keeping in mind the specificities of the Indian socio-economic context, the roadmap to development had to be dovetailed to the unique challenges that the polity faced.

At the time of the inauguration of the Constitution, the Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Constituent Assembly, B. R. Ambedkar, sought to present before Indian policymakers an important paradox that required their urgent attention and intervention. Reflecting on the day that India would emerge as a Republic, he stressed:

On the 26th of January 1950, we are going to enter into a life of contradictions. In politics we will have equality and in social and economic life we will have inequality. In politics we will be recognizing the principle of one man one vote and one vote one value. In our social and economic life, we shall, by reason of our social and economic structure, continue to deny the principle of one man one value. How long shall we continue to live this life of contradictions? How long shall we continue to deny equality in our social and economic life? If we continue to deny it for long, we will do so only by putting our political democracy in peril. We must remove this contradiction at the earliest possible moment or else those who suffer from inequality will blow up the structure of political democracy which is Assembly has to laboriously built up.⁴⁹

The life of contradictions that Ambedkar referred to 68 years ago still seems to be reflected in the life and living of common Indian citizens. Having adopted the framework of democracy to pursue development, it is important to underscore the fact that while there is a deep and abiding commitment to the 'idea of democracy', the 'practical imagination' of democracy as seen in the lived experience leaves much to be desired. This slippage between objectives and operational reality explains the intensely strong desire to remain democratic on the one hand, even as there is an element of deep frustration with the implementation of development priorities and policies on the other. While one cannot lose sight of the socio-economic context in which democratic politics operates, governments are also 'mandated to change that context as much as they are also prisoners caught in the web' of that same context.⁵⁰

It also needs to be emphasized that the Indian state and its policymakers are confronted with a huge "expectation overload". This is partly on account of the hopes and aspirations of common people from the state as well as the slew of promises offered by political parties and their leadership at the time of elections. The paper reflected on how the 2014 national elections in India saw the BJP coming to power on a "wave of expectations" flowing from its promise of "good days" through "all round development" catering to the needs of all segments of society. Four years down the line, one is witness to a dip in optimism in view of what is perceived as a "performance deficit". When high expectations are confronted by average or below-average performance, often not just on account of lack of will to perform but simply due to the multiple and often conflicting expectations, the stresses and strains it causes are patently visible.

It also must be stressed that in a globalized world, India has been attempting to dovetail its developmental priorities to the realities of the emerging global

economic order. Prime Minister Narendra Modi highlighted this fact in his speech at the UN Summit for the adopting of a Post 2015 Development Agenda:

I am pleased that elimination of poverty in all forms everywhere is at the top of our goals. Addressing the needs of 1.3 billion poor people in the world is not merely a question of their survival and dignity or our moral responsibility. It is a vital necessity for ensuring peaceful, sustainable and just world ... The goals (Sustainable Development Goals) recognize that economic growth, industrialization, infrastructure, and access to energy provide the foundations of development ... We welcome the prominence given to environmental goals, especially climate change and sustainable consumption. The distinct goal on ocean ecosystem reflects the unique character of its challenges and opportunities ... today, much of India's development agenda is mirrored in the Sustainable Development Goals.⁵¹

The "bedrock of this collective enterprise" was highlighted by the NITI Aayog (India's Policy Commission) as a "national responsibility" based on a faith in "international partnership and the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities".⁵² India is also alive to the fact that it is required to pay a more active role in multilateral institutions. The Commerce Minister of India drew attention to the Indian strategy in his address at the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) Partnership Summit. When talking of the WTO and similar institutions, he stressed that organizations "need reformation all the time and it needs to be changed with changing times".⁵³

Given its status and position in the community of nations, India is often seen as a case study by many other developing countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Its experiment with democracy and development indicates an effort to privilege both without placing either on the backburner. The success of its electoral democracy over the last seven decades has given hope to many nations that are similarly placed in terms of economic development to attempt to pursue the twin objectives of economic development and expanding democracy with the same degree of intensity.

The slippages and contradictions highlight the fact that the challenges have not in any way reduced the intensity to retain an abiding faith in democracy and its capacities to usher in economic growth and development. The socio-economic diversity mirrored in Indian society has also sought to be addressed by both the democratic and economic processes. The policy of reservations for the socially marginalized and the special concessions to the economically deprived have both provided a legitimate space within the framework of the fundamental right to equality. This balancing has ensured equity with equality and justice with freedom. The accountability in the economic development paradigm is an important safety valve of Indian democracy. As Ruchir Sharma in his analysis of Indian democracy points out, "real power resides with the political class but ultimate power resides with the Indian voter – the vote is the great leveler – the memo of the poor to the rich and powerful as to who is calling the shots".⁵⁴

This chapter attempted to present a vision of the pathways to development in India, as seen from the vantage position of the average Indian citizen. Through the findings of survey research, the aspirations, anxieties, experiences, and expectations of people on their individual and collective future were outlined. The more affluent segments of society, who have had access to education and benefits of economic reforms, favor a redefined role for the state as a partner in the process of development, more in terms of fulfilling its regulatory role. In contrast, the socially and economically underprivileged, who still see the state as a provider and not merely a facilitator, would believe in a more visible role for the state apparatus in the process of development. This contradiction often plays out in electoral politics and popular expectations of democracy. While the poor and less privileged would not favor the retreat of the state and its withdrawal from key sectors, the more emerging middle class and the more affluent would plead for a reworking of the state priorities, focusing on creating an environment to encourage private initiatives to contribute to economic development and prosperity.

In a nation that faces multiple challenges, striking the right balance between the multi-track expectations seems to be the biggest challenge of policymakers. The "principle" of democracy is often put to the test by the stark realities of the "practices" of development and governance. Given the privileging of the welfare and justice dimensions of democracy, the corollary expectation from the state and its institutions is to ensure an element of sensitivity towards the aspirations of the people relating to their basic needs and well-being. The development strategies adopted by the state to give meaning to this popular aspiration lie at the core of the development debate in India. Clearly "inclusiveness", "access", and "responsiveness" as an answer to the emergence of visible and invisible "divides" that compartmentalize people and groups into "we" and "they" is part of the way forward. The fact that people in India still wish to "invest" in democracy as the true hope for their collective future implies that the development agenda needs to address the multiple contradictions, diverse expectations, and manifold aspirations while moving forward.

Notes

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- 2 Ronald Inglehart, *Modernization and Post Modernization: Cultural, Economic and Political Change in 43 Societies*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997; Michael Bratton and Robert Mattes, "Support for Democracy in Africa: Intrinsic or Instrumental?" *British Journal of Political Science* 31:3, 2001, pp. 447–474; Ronald Inglehart, *Human Values and Social Change: Findings from the Values Survey*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2003; Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel, *Modernization, Cultural Change and Democracy: The Human Development Sequence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005; Dieter Fuchs and Edeltraud Roller, "Learned Democracy? Support for Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe". *International Journal of Sociology* 36:3, 2006, pp. 70–96; Michael Bratton and Robert Mattes, "Learning About Democracy in Africa: Awareness, Performance and Experience". *American Journal of Political Science* 51:1, 2007, pp. 192–217; Russel J. Dalton and Christian Welzel, *The Civic Culture Transformed: From Allegiant to Assertive Citizens*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014; David Denemark, et al., editors, *Growing Up Democratic: Does It Make a Difference?* Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2016; SDSA, *State of Democracy in South Asia*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008; SDSA, *State of Democracy in South Asia II*. Bengaluru: Jain University Press, 2017.
- 3 Lokniti Programme for Comparative Democracy that was established in 1997 as a research program of the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), New Delhi. By bringing various projects of the CSDS on elections and party politics together under a single program, Lokniti seeks to engage with the global debates on democracy. In an age where globalization of democracy has come to mean a universalization of a thin checklist model of managerial governance and cultural homogenization, the worth of a participatory model of plural democracy, a model that recognizes multiple paths to realizing the rich ideals of democracy, cannot be over-emphasized. For details: www.lokniti.org
- 4 Hereinafter referred to as SDSA.
- 5 SDSA, *State of Democracy in South Asia*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008, p. 2; SDSA, *State of Democracy in South Asia II*. Bengaluru: Jain University Press, 2017, pp. 12–16.
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- 7 SDSA, *State of Democracy in South Asia*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008, p. 8.
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- 9 This analysis is based on the findings of an open-ended question asked in both rounds of SDSA: According to you what is democracy?
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- 11 SDSA, *State of Democracy in South Asia*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008.
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- 14 As per World Bank database.
- 15 Oxfam, *Reward Work Not Wealth*. www.oxfamindia.org. Accessed 15 May 2018.
- 16 Government of India. *Report of the Expert Group to Review the Methodology for Measurement of Poverty*. June 2014.
- 17 World Bank, *A Measured Approach to Ending Poverty and Boosting Shared Prosperity*. Washington: World Bank, 2015.
- 18 The word *Niti* means "policy" in Hindi, India's national language. NITI is also an acronym for National Institution for Transforming India, and *Aayog* means "commission".
- 19 Government of India, "NITI Aayog", <http://www.niti.gov.in> "India calls for changes in WTO to transform world economy", *The Economic Times*, www.economictimes.indiatimes.com/articleshow/63067273.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst, 25 February 2018. Accessed 08 November 2019.
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- 22 Sandeep Shastri, *Karnataka: Governance and Human Development*. In *Karnataka Human Development Report 2018*. Government of Karnataka. 2018.
- 23 Ibrahim Index of African Governance assesses government on 57 criteria and is a project of the Mo Ibrahim Foundation. The project was carried out by the Kennedy School of Government's Program on Intrastate Conflict and Conflict Resolution under the direction of Robert I. Rotberg and Rachel M. Gisselquist. <http://www.moibrahimfoundation.org/the-index.asp>
- 24 The six issues they focus on include accountability, transparency, efficiency, decency, fairness, and participation in six arenas of civil society, political society, government, bureaucracy, economic society, and judiciary.
- 25 Goran Hyden, et al., "Conclusions: Governance in 16 Developing Countries". *World Governance Survey Discussion Paper* 10. 2003.
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- 28 Pradeep Chhibber and Rahul Verma, *The BJP's 2014 Resurgence in Electoral Politics in India: Resurgence of the Bharatiya Janata Party*, eds. Suhas Pakshikar, New York: Routledge, 2017, pp.15–33; Suhas Palshikar and K.C. Suri. "Epilogue: Critical Shifts in 2014 election", *Electoral Politics in India: Resurgence of the Bharatiya Janata Party*, Suhas Pakshikar, editor, New York: Routledge, 2017, pp.282–299.
- 29 Hereinafter referred to as BJP.
- 30 Sanjay Lodha, et al., "Introduction" in *Electoral Politics in India: Resurgence of the Bharatiya Janata Party*, edited by Suhas Pakshikar. New York: Routledge, 2017.
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- 32 Sandeep Shastri and Reetika Syal, "The Modi Factor in 2014", *Electoral Politics in India: Resurgence of the Bharatiya Janata Party*, edited by Suhas Pakshikar, New York: Routledge, 2017, pp.215–229.
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- 35 <http://www.thehindu.com/elections/loksabha2014/congress-trying-to-hide-in-bunker-of-secularism-modi/article5953432.ece>
- 36 <https://www.outlookindia.com/blog/story/narendra-modi-in-aap-ki-adalat/3234>
- 37 <https://www.narendramodi.in/minimum-government-maximum-governance-3162>
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- 39 Pradeep Chhibber and Rahul Verma, *The BJP's 2014 Resurgence in Electoral Politics in India: Resurgence of the Bharatiya Janata Party*, eds. Suhas Pakshikar, New York: Routledge, 2017.
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- 42 SDSA, *State of Democracy in South Asia II*. Bengaluru: Jain University Press, 2017.
- 43 SDSA, *State of Democracy in South Asia II*. Bengaluru: Jain University Press, 2017, p. 78.
- 44 5 kilometers is approximately 3.1 miles.
- 45 SDSA, *State of Democracy in South Asia II*. Bengaluru: Jain University Press, 2017, pp. 83–88.
- 46 SDSA, *State of Democracy in South Asia II*. Bengaluru: Jain University Press, 2017, p. 88.
- 47 SDSA, *State of Democracy in South Asia II*. Bengaluru: Jain University Press, 2017, p. 90.
- 48 <http://www.lokniti.org/pdf/Lokniti-ABP-News-Mood-of-the-Nation-Survey-Round-3-May-2018.pdf>
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- 52 <https://www.niti.gov.in>
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