

The Narrative Asymmetry: Why International Indices Misread India's Global Weight

The evolution of soft power—the ability of a nation to shape global preferences through attraction rather than coercion—has transitioned from a secondary diplomatic asset into a core structural component of national strength. In an age defined by hyper-connectivity, a country's international standing is no longer determined solely by its material resources or military throw weight. Instead, the global narrative surrounding a nation—the story the world tells about its history, intellectual contributions, and future potential—serves as the invisible architecture of its foreign policy. For India, a nation possessing immense civilisational weight, the primary challenge of the twenty-first century lies in reconciling its profound historical depth with a global perception system that often fails to capture its modern scientific reality.



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Historically, the global understanding of scientific and cultural progress has been viewed through a geographically and temporally narrow lens. For centuries, a dominant historiography characterised the Indian civilisation primarily through the prisms of mysticism, philosophy, and spirituality, while frequently omitting its foundational contributions to empirical inquiry, mathematics, and logic. This perceptual distortion suggests that while India provided the world with "soul", the "mind" of modernity—the rigorous, analytical framework of science—was an exclusively Western invention. This is not merely an academic oversight; it is a profound diplomatic and economic disadvantage. When a nation is categorised exclusively as a land of "heritage" rather than "innovation", its influence in high-stakes technological and economic forums is subtly but systematically sidelined. This "narrow lens" effectively anchors a modern, rising power to a static, ancient past, denying it the agency to be seen as a contemporary leader.

The intellectual lineage of the modern digital age provides a stark example of the need for a narrative correction. The fundamental architecture of contemporary life—the decimal place-value system, the concept of zero, binary logic, and early formulations of calculus—has deep roots in Indian thought that preceded the Industrial Revolution by centuries. The binary code powering today's global servers and the probabilistic inference driving modern artificial intelligence carry a DNA that is thousands of years old. Reclaiming this narrative is not an exercise in looking

backward with nostalgia; it is an assertion of civilisational continuity. It demonstrates that the same mathematical rigour that birthed the decimal system now forms the bedrock of India's contemporary technological prowess. By establishing this link, India can challenge the idea that its current scientific successes are "borrowed" or "derivative", proving instead that they are the modern manifestations of a long-standing tradition of rigorous inquiry.

The importance of this shift becomes evident when examining how soft power is measured by the international community today. Global indices often rank nations based on metrics like familiarity, influence, and reputation. However, a persistent and damaging asymmetry exists in India's rankings: the country consistently scores highly on "Culture and Heritage" but underperforms on "Science and Technology" and "Influence". This gap is rarely a reflection of actual output or capability. Rather, it is a narrative problem rooted in a colonial-era knowledge apparatus that continues to view the Global South through a restrictive framework. For India to exercise true comprehensive statecraft, it must bridge the gap between its recognised cultural resonance and its unrecognised scientific achievements.

This discrepancy points toward a deeper systemic issue: the inherent bias within global indices themselves. Many such rankings—whether they measure soft power, press freedom, or economic innovation—are constructed on frameworks that embed the cultural and political assumptions of their creators. Often relying on ambiguous parameters, subjective expert surveys, and small, unrepresentative sample sizes, these indices are not neutral instruments. They shape sovereign credit ratings, investor perceptions, and diplomatic leverage. When these frameworks fail to account for India's unique scale, its specific models of digital public infrastructure, or its indigenous scientific successes, they produce results that are fundamentally skewed. India cannot afford to treat these rankings as background noise; the methodology behind them must be challenged and rewritten to reflect a truly global, representative perspective. This methodological skew appears even more glaring when contrasted with hard macroeconomic realities, as evidenced by the IMF routinely praising India's economic success and explicitly calling it "a

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bright spot on this otherwise dark horizon".

In the contemporary landscape, this rebalancing is essential as India demonstrates world-class capabilities in domains ranging from aerospace engineering to large-scale digital systems: Chandrayaan-3, Aditya-L1, the Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor (PFBR) and the awaited Gaganyaan Mission. These are not isolated successes; they are a testament to a robust scientific ecosystem. When these achievements are not reflected proportionally in global rankings, it highlights the urgent need for a more inclusive definition of "innovation" that looks beyond the traditional clusters of the North Atlantic.

The transition toward a multipolar world is as much about cultural and intellectual rebalancing as it is about economic and military shifts. As geopolitical churn continues, the space for diverse narratives is expanding. By highlighting its foundational contributions to global science and simultaneously challenging the narrow metrics of current international assessments, India is moving toward a position of civilisational confidence. This process is essential for fostering a truly global understanding of human progress, moving beyond the outdated binary of "traditional" versus "modern". Security and economic strength provide the framework for peace, but it is the perception of intellectual leadership that builds the bridges of understanding necessary for long-term global influence.

Ultimately, soft power is the currency of modern diplomacy. The ability to project a confident, comprehensive identity allows a nation to engage with the world on its own terms. Whether through the lens of ancient mathematical treatises or cutting-edge aerospace research, the goal is to prove that intellectual excellence is not the province of any single region or era. As the global community strives to solve complex challenges in climate, technology, and health, a more equitable and representative understanding of scientific history and national capability will be vital. By rewriting the biased narratives of the past and challenging the metrics of the present, India is not just telling its own story; it is contributing to a more accurate history of human achievement.

Fable with Moral

Still Mind, Calm Water

The core of Buddhist teaching stresses upon cultivating a serene mind, which helps an individual to attain inner peace. A well-known parable beautifully illustrates this timeless philosophy through a simple, everyday encounter.



While traveling from one village to another with his followers, the Buddha felt thirsty and requested a close disciple to fetch some water from a nearby lake. The follower happily agreed and walked over to the water's edge. However, upon arrival, he found the lake water to be rather foul. Many villagers were cleaning their laundry, and a heavy bullock cart had just trundled through the shallow waters. This commotion stirred up the sediment at the bottom, transforming the clear water into a murky, muddy soup. Believing this dirty water was completely unfit for his master, the follower returned empty-handed and reported the situation to the Buddha.

The Buddha listened quietly. After waiting patiently for more than thirty minutes, he requested the same follower to return to the lake. Though confused by the instruction, the disciple complied and walked back to the water body. To his absolute surprise, the scene had completely transformed. The water was now pristine and transparent. Since the chaotic activity had ceased, the suspended mud had naturally sunk to the lake bed, leaving the surface perfectly placid. He filled a vessel and brought it back.

Looking at the clear liquid, the Buddha smiled and shared a profound truth. He pointed out that the disciple did absolutely nothing to purify the water; he simply allowed it to sit undisturbed. Time resolved the chaos naturally.

The Buddha explained that the human mind too functions in precisely the same manner. When turbulent emotions, stress, or troubling thoughts cloud one's consciousness, forcing calmness only creates more agitation. Instead, one must simply step back and let things be. By practicing mindful, non-judgmental awareness which involves observing internal chaos without fighting it, the heavy sediment of anger, anxiety, and distraction will inevitably settle under its own weight. Peace is not achieved through laborious mental struggle. It is our natural, untroubled state that reveals itself the moment negative emotions subside.

Moral of the Fable: Never act impulsively; a calm mind and patient disposition form the foundation of clear judgement.

Did you know?

Ancient Pataliputra was one of the best-defended cities of the ancient world. Pataliputra, the capital of the Mauryan Empire (320-180 BCE) under Chandragupta Maurya and Ashoka, possessed one of the most sophisticated urban defence systems of the ancient world. The Greek ambassador Megasthenes described the city as being protected by a massive wooden palisade reinforced with 64 gates and 570 towers, along with a broad and deep moat surrounding the city. Strabo in his 'Geographia' adds that the city walls were made of wood. Archaeological excavations at Bulandi Bagh in modern Patna have uncovered remains of these wooden fortifications, including reinforcing wooden trusses, lending support to historical accounts.



waterways as natural protective barriers while also supporting trade, communication, and administration. The moat served both defensive and drainage functions, reflecting remarkable urban planning.

The city's location itself formed part of its defence strategy. Situated near the confluence of major rivers including the Ganga and Son, Pataliputra used

Pataliputra demonstrates that security is strongest when military defences, geography, infrastructure, and urban planning work together. More than 2,000 years ago, India's imperial capital had already integrated surveillance, fortification, mobility, and water management into a single defensive system.

Wisdom Word Search

K O N I N G T A M B A L L
I A A L I B O E A H A O O
Y K N Q L C I I O L P U N
P L O G A J L N L M K Y C
M A M U L J G U A A A H H
A N N S A O P R N W O A A
M O T G N I N K O L T O T
A J M W M L W L E I P A K
L K Q N I A H U K P L A P
E T H A N G T A L V O N G
I W J S H N S L B I U G K
L E I P A K K A N G L O N

WORDS TO FIND

Kanglon, Lallup, Lan, Lanmi, Leipak, Leipak Kanglon, Lonchat, Ningtamba, Thang-Ta, Yawol

KANGLON - The system of governance, administration, and political organization guiding society.
LALLUP - Manipur's traditional institution of compulsory military and public service, central to defence and state formation.

LAN - War or armed conflict undertaken for defence, sovereignty, or political objectives.

LANMI - A soldier entrusted with the protection of the land, people, and polity.

LEIPAK - The state, homeland, or political territory whose security, welfare, and sovereignty are to be protected.

LEIPAK KANGLON - Literally "the governance of the land"; principles of statecraft, administration, and public order.

LONGCHAT - The legal and customary framework regulating justice, rights, obligations, and social order.

NINGTAMBA - Sovereignty; the authority of a people or polity to govern itself free from external control.

THANG-TA - The indigenous martial tradition of Manipur combining sword (thang) and spear (ta) techniques, embodying discipline, self-defence, and warrior ethics.

YAWOL - Revolution or transformative movement seeking fundamental political and social change.

Note: These terms come from Manipuri, one of India's 22 Scheduled Languages.

Marvels of India

CHITTORGARH

Chittorgarh is a remarkable example of strategic defence, resilience, and long-term security planning. Why Chittorgarh Was a Security Marvel Built atop a steep hill rising about 180 metres above the surrounding plains, its location provided a commanding view of the surrounding region, allowing defenders to detect approaching armies well in advance. Access to the summit was deliberately difficult, with a winding ascent protected by a series of heavily fortified gates known as pols. An attacking army had to pass through these successive defensive barriers while exposed to attacks from above. This created a powerful layered defence system.



Security Through Self-Sufficiency What makes Chittorgarh remarkable is that it was not merely a fort—it was the political heart of Mewar for centuries. Different rulers expanded its walls, palaces, reservoirs, gates, and defensive systems. Under rulers such as Rana Kumbha and Rana Sanga, Chittor became one of the most powerful military centres in northern India. One of Chittorgarh's greatest strengths was its ability to withstand long sieges. The fort contained numerous reservoirs, tanks, wells, and water-harvesting structures capable of sustaining a large population during prolonged conflicts. In military terms, Chittorgarh was not simply a fort; it was a self-sustaining defensive city.

The Lesson for National Security Chittorgarh endured three famous sieges—by Alauddin Khalji in 1303, Bahadur Shah in 1535, and Akbar in 1567-68. While the fort was eventually captured on these occasions, its prolonged resistance demonstrated an important security principle: National security is not only about military strength; it is also about preparedness, resilience, logistics, and the ability to endure under pressure.

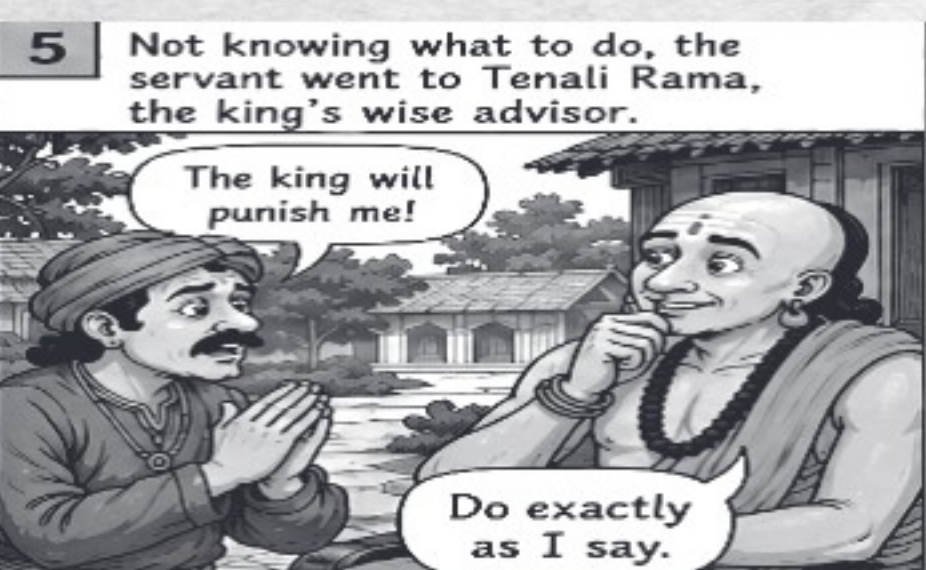
QUIZ National Security

Questions	Option A	Option B	Option C	Option D
1. What was special about Pataliputra, one of the most important capitals in ancient India?	Terrain suitable for many Fortifications	Located near the confluence of multiple Rivers	Availability of rich Forest resources	High spiritual energy due to Buddhism
2. Which two dynasties fought against each other before 400 CE to gain control of Malwa and Konkan coast?	Sungas vs Kanvas	Parthians vs Kushans	Guptas vs Vakatakas	Sakas vs Satavahanas
3. Which of these reasons led to the Hunas from Central Asia defeating the Gupta Empire?	Excelled in horsemanship and archery	Excelled in guerrilla warfare	Excelled in using swords	Excelled in gathering intelligence
4. Who were the secret agents in the intelligence department during Mauryan Empire?	Gudha Purushas	Dharma Mahamatras	Amatyas	Akshapatali-ka
5. Which of these martial arts was founded by Sage Agastya and made popular by the Pandyan Dynasty, also believed to have given impetus to acupuncture treatment?	Silambam	Malla Yudha	Mukna	Varmam

ANSWERS: 1 - B, 2 - B, 3 - C, 4 - A, 5 - D

tales of tenali rama

Wisdom of Careful Words



MORAL OF THE STORY: Speak the truth with wisdom and kindness.