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India's Muted Voice, Its Detachment with Palestine

Context

- The **recognition of Palestinian** statehood by France, the United Kingdom, Canada, Portugal, and Australia **marks a significant moment in international diplomacy.**
- These decisions are **more than symbolic gestures**: they represent the global community's growing acknowledgment of the Palestinian people's legitimate aspirations for freedom, dignity, and sovereignty.
- **India, once a leading voice in this movement, recognised Palestinian statehood as early as 1988,** guided by its moral compass and a worldview shaped by its own struggle against colonialism.
- Yet, **in the present moment of unprecedented humanitarian crisis in Gaza,** India's silence raises critical questions about **whether the nation has abandoned its historic role as a champion of justice in global affairs.**

India's Legacy of Moral Leadership

- **Strategic Calculation Along with Ethical Clarity**
 - India's foreign policy has historically been defined **not only by strategic calculation but also by ethical clarity.**
 - Even before independence, **India condemned apartheid in South Africa,** severing trade ties with the regime and raising the issue at the United Nations.
 - **During the Algerian war of independence, India was a steadfast supporter of anti-colonial struggle.**
 - Similarly, **in 1971, India intervened to halt atrocities in East Pakistan,** contributing to the creation of Bangladesh.
 - **When the Vietnamese people were suffering** under foreign aggression, **India stood firmly for peace and justice.**
 - This **moral outlook was enshrined in the Constitution,** where the promotion of international peace and security is recognised as a directive principle of state policy.
- **Principled and Nuanced Position on Israel-Palestine Conflict**
 - **India was among the first countries to recognise the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO)** in 1974 and has consistently supported a two-state solution that upholds Palestine's right to

self-determination while encouraging peaceful coexistence with Israel.

- **It has consistently backed UN resolutions** affirming Palestinian rights and condemning settlement expansion, while simultaneously maintaining diplomatic relations with Israel.
- **India's contributions to Palestinian development**, through scholarships, healthcare aid, and capacity-building, **have reflected its commitment to justice.**

The Present Crisis and India's Silence

- The outbreak of hostilities in October 2023 placed the Israel-Palestine conflict back at the centre of global attention.
- **Hamas's brutal attacks on Israeli civilians were followed by an Israeli military response** that has devastated Gaza.
- **More than 55,000 Palestinians, including 17,000 children, have been killed.** Infrastructure has been obliterated, famine looms, and civilians are being shot while seeking food.
- In this humanitarian catastrophe, **the world has been slow to act, implicitly legitimising Israel's actions.**
- Against this backdrop, **the recognition of Palestine by new countries signals a long-overdue reassertion of international justice.**
- **Yet India, historically one of the strongest voices** for oppressed peoples, **has retreated into silence.**
- The **current government's approach appears driven less by constitutional values than by personal diplomacy**, particularly the Prime Minister's close relationship with his Israeli counterpart.
- This **personalisation of foreign policy is unsustainable**, reducing a nation's historic commitments to the vagaries of individual friendships.

The Way Forward: The Need for Ethical Continuity

- The **issue of Palestine cannot be treated merely as a matter of foreign policy.**
- It is also a moral and civilisational question, one that resonates with India's own history of colonial subjugation.
- The **Palestinian struggle for sovereignty echoes India's fight against imperialism**, both peoples endured dispossession, exploitation, and denial of fundamental rights.
- **For India, to remain silent** in the face of Palestinian suffering **is not neutrality; it is complicity.**
- **What is expected of India is not blind partisanship** but principled leadership, the ability to stand for human dignity and justice regardless of political convenience.

Conclusion

- **India's past foreign policy was defined by courage, moral clarity**, and a sense of global responsibility.
- At a time when much of the world is rediscovering its commitment to Palestinian statehood, **India cannot afford to be silent.**
- The challenge is not only geopolitical but ethical: **whether India remains true to its heritage as a voice for the oppressed or allows personal diplomacy to erode its role as a moral leader** in world affairs.

India's Muted Voice, Its Detachment with Palestine FAQs

Q1. Why is the recognition of Palestinian statehood by countries like France and the UK significant?

Ans. It signals growing global support for the Palestinian people's right to sovereignty and justice.

Q2. How has India historically positioned itself on issues of global justice?

Ans. India has often taken principled stands, supporting struggles against apartheid, colonialism, and genocide.

Q3. What has been India's traditional stance on the Israel-Palestine conflict?

Ans. India has supported a two-state solution, backed Palestinian rights, and maintained diplomatic ties with both sides.

Q4. How has India's response to the recent Gaza crisis been described?

Ans. India's response has been marked by silence and deeper economic engagement with Israel, despite the humanitarian catastrophe.

Q5. Why is Palestine considered a moral and civilisational question for India?

Ans. Because Palestine's struggle for freedom mirrors India's own anti-colonial history, making silence a betrayal of its ethical heritage.

Source: **The Hindu**

Just a Pinch Can Reduce an Indian's Salt Overload

Context

- In recent years, **the discourse on nutrition and health in India has largely revolved around the harmful effects** of sugar and excessive oil consumption.
- This is **unsurprising given the growing prevalence of non-communicable diseases (NCDs)**, particularly obesity, across all age groups.
- However, **amidst this focus, one equally significant dietary concern remains underappreciated:** the high consumption of salt among India's population.
- Despite being deeply ingrained in India's food culture, **excess salt intake has profound health consequences, making it imperative for public health policies to address this issue** with the same urgency as sugar and fat consumption.

The Extent of the Problem

- Scientific data reveal that Indian **adults consume between eight to eleven grams of salt daily**, nearly double the World Health Organization's (WHO) recommended limit of five to six grams.
- Unlike sugar and fat, where a substantial portion comes from processed foods, **nearly three-fourths of India's salt intake originates from home-cooked meals.**
- Staples such as pickles, papad, and other traditional items contribute to this problem.

- Furthermore, **the cultural habit of keeping salt shakers on dining tables and the rise in eating out**, where restaurants enhance flavours with more oil, butter, and salt, **only exacerbate the issue.**
- **Salt is not always visible. It exists in hidden forms in bread, cookies,** sauces, and even sweet items like cakes.
- Packaged and ultra-processed foods, **often categorised under the high-fat, salt, and sugar (HFSS) label, saturate the market.**
- While their harmful effects are recognised, **salt reduction seldom receives the same advocacy as sugar or oil reduction.**
- This **neglect persists despite the fact that hypertension, a condition strongly linked to excess salt intake, affects 28.1% of Indian adults** and significantly increases the risk of cardiovascular disease.

Misconceptions and Myths

- Public understanding of salt consumption is further complicated by widespread myths.
- **Many Indians believe alternatives such as rock salt, black salt,** or Himalayan pink salt are healthier options.
- In reality, **all salts contain sodium, and their excessive consumption leads to the same harmful effects.**
- In some cases, **these alternatives are consumed in greater amounts** due to their milder taste, compounding the problem.
- **Moreover, they are often not iodised, which can lead to iodine deficiency,** a condition India has long battled.

The Multi-Pronged Approach

- **Expanding Nutritional Boards**
 - Current initiatives such as **sugar and oil boards should evolve into HFSS boards that encompass salt as well.**
 - This would highlight the collective risks of ultra-processed foods high in sugar, fat, and salt.
 - **Behavioural Change Campaigns**
 - Public campaigns must encourage gradual salt reduction during cooking, flavouring food with herbs and spices, and using low-sodium substitutes when medically appropriate.
 - Crucially, **these substitutes should be consumed under medical advice,** as high-potassium alternatives can be risky for individuals with kidney disease.
- **Early Intervention in Children**
 - Since salt preference is an acquired taste, efforts must begin in early childhood.
 - **Infants and toddlers should not be given added salt,** while older children should consume the same minimally salted food as adults.
 - Establishing healthy taste preferences early can help reduce long-term salt dependency.

- **Reforming Public Food Programmes**

- Millions of vulnerable Indians, **including children in schools, pregnant women at Anganwadi centres, and patients in hospitals**, depend on government meals.
- These programmes should introduce salt regulations, train cooks, and implement procurement standards to safeguard public health.

- **Front-of-Pack Labelling**

- India should adopt mandatory warning labels for high-salt foods, drawing inspiration from countries such as Chile, which have pioneered such measures.
- Labelling, **salt ceilings in processed foods, and restrictions on marketing unhealthy foods to children** are crucial regulatory steps.

- **Community and Family-Level Interventions**

- Practical measures like **removing salt shakers from restaurant tables**, families auditing weekly purchases of HFSS items, and discouraging repeat purchases can curb consumption.
- Local innovations at the household and community levels will also prove vital.

- **Integration with National Health Programmes**

- Salt reduction is already part of India's National Multisectoral Action Plan (2017–22) for NCD prevention.
- However, **stronger cross-ministerial collaboration and integration into broader health programmes are necessary.**
- As the government formulates a new multi-sectoral plan, salt reduction should be embedded as a central objective.

The Case for Stronger Regulation

- The **WHO describes salt reduction as a best buy public health intervention**, yielding twelve dollars of return for every dollar invested.
- **Such evidence underscores the cost-effectiveness of salt reduction initiatives.** Yet, isolated awareness efforts are insufficient.
- A **mix of regulatory measures, such as mandatory labelling, procurement reforms, and marketing restrictions, must combine with grassroots-level interventions to yield meaningful results.**

Conclusion

- Salt, **an invisible but equally harmful component of modern and traditional diets alike**, demands urgent attention.
- **Excessive consumption is fuelling the country's rising burden of hypertension and cardiovascular diseases**, which strain both families and the healthcare system.

- **By debunking myths, reforming food systems,** and promoting behavioural change, **India can take bold steps toward reducing salt intake.**
- Ultimately, **an integrated and multi-pronged strategy that balances regulation,** awareness, and community participation **is essential to safeguard public health and reduce the burden of NCDs for future generations.**

Just a Pinch Can Reduce an Indian's Salt Overload FAQs

Q1. How much salt do Indian adults consume daily compared to the WHO recommendation?

Ans. Indian adults consume eight to eleven grams of salt daily, which is nearly double the WHO's recommended limit of five to six grams.

Q2. What percentage of salt intake in India comes from home-cooked meals?

Ans. Nearly three-fourths of salt intake in India comes from home-cooked meals.

Q3. Why are rock salt, black salt, or Himalayan pink salt not healthier alternatives?

Ans. They all contain sodium, which contributes to high blood pressure, and many are not iodised, which can lead to iodine deficiency.

Q4. Why should salt reduction begin with children?

Ans. Salt preference is an acquired taste, so reducing salt early helps children develop healthier eating habits.

Q5. What regulatory step can India adopt to reduce salt intake in processed foods?

Ans. India can adopt front-of-pack warning labels on high-salt foods, similar to measures implemented in Chile.

Source: **The Hindu**

Digital Payments and the Formalisation of the Indian Economy

Context:

- The Indian economy has witnessed **significant progress in formalisation** over the past decade.
- While formalisation of firms and workers has advanced gradually, the **most striking transformation has occurred in household transactions**, primarily driven by the **adoption of digital payments** platforms such as Unified Payments Interface (UPI).

Dimensions of Formalisation:

- **Firms:** GST registrations reflect increasing entry of businesses into the formal tax net.
- **Workers:** EPFO enrolments show rising formal sector employment.
- **Transactions:** The largest transformation has occurred here, with **UPI-led digital payments replacing cash in routine and non-routine expenditures.**

Rise of Digital Payments:

- **UPI transactions (April-June 2025):**

- **9 billion transactions** (person to merchant) took place through the UPI platform amounting to **Rs 20.4 lakh crore**.
- This is **equal to almost 40%** of private final consumption expenditure (PFCE) during the quarter, up from 24% two years ago.

- **Food and beverages sector:**

- Households **spent roughly Rs 3.4 lakh crore** on food and beverages (including alcohol) through the UPI platform.
- This works out to **around 17%** of all UPI transactions (person to merchants) or **around 21%** of all household expenditure on these items in the quarter (April-June 2025).

- **Non-food sector:**

- Digital payments are used for **paying for a wide range of goods and services**, ranging
 - From **payment of utility bills** (electricity, water and gas) and **petrol**,
 - To buying clothes, medicines, electronic goods and cigarettes,
 - To paying for haircuts and taxi.
- Expenditure on these non-food items accounts for **roughly two-thirds** of all person to merchant transfers through the platform.

- **Beyond routine consumption:**

- In July 2025, households transferred **Rs 93,857 crore to debt** collection agencies presumably to repay loans, a significant share of which are taken to finance consumption.
- In the same month, households also transferred **Rs 61,080 crore** to security brokers and dealers, presumably for the purpose of **investing**.

Cash vs Digital Paradox:

- Despite the surge in digital payments, **India still has high cash usage** — similar to countries like Germany.
- **Key areas of cash use:**
 - Land and gold purchases.
 - Election financing.
 - Precautionary household savings.

Trends in Cash Holdings:

- **Demonetisation (2016) and Pandemic (2020-21):** Led to surge in household currency holdings.
- **Post-pandemic decline:** Currency share in household financial savings dropped from 12.5% (2020-21) to 3.4% (2023-24).

- **ATM withdrawals:** Declined from 81 crore transactions (₹2.8 lakh crore, July 2019) to 44 crore transactions (₹2.3 lakh crore, July 2025), even as the economy doubled.
- **Currency with public to GDP ratio:** Fell from 12.9% (March 2022) to 10.9% (March 2025).

Key Takeaways from these Trends:

- **UPI as a tool of financial inclusion** and economic formalisation.
- **Shift in consumption behaviour** — both routine (food, utilities) and non-routine (loan repayment, investments).
- **Declining reliance on cash** for transactions and precautionary savings.
- **Macroeconomic impact:** Lower currency-to-GDP ratio, better monetary transmission, reduced black economy potential.
- **Challenges:** Cash dominance in land, gold, and political funding.

Way Ahead:

- India appears to be **nearing an inflection point** in its currency usage trajectory.
- With **digital payments steadily replacing cash** in both urban and rural consumption, along with formalisation of firms and workers, the role of cash in the economy may decline further.
- **Policy priorities:**
 - **Strengthen digital infrastructure** in semi-urban and rural areas.
 - **Enhance cybersecurity and digital literacy.**
 - **Address** persistent cash usage in land, gold, and political financing.

Conclusion:

- The deepening of digital payments marks **a structural shift** in India's economic formalisation journey, potentially heralding **a transition to a less-cash economy.**

Digital Payments and the Formalisation of the Indian Economy FAQs

Q1. What are the three key dimensions of formalisation of the Indian economy?

Ans. Formalisation occurs through firms (GST registrations), workers (EPFO enrolments), and transactions (UPI adoption).

Q2. How has UPI contributed to the formalisation of household transactions in recent years?

Ans. UPI transactions reached ₹20.4 lakh crore (Q1 FY26), covering ~40% of PFCE, signifying a major shift from cash to digital modes.

Q3. What evidence suggests a declining reliance on cash for precautionary savings in India?

Ans. The share of currency in household financial savings fell from 12.5% in 2020–21 to 3.4% in 2023–24.

Q4. Despite rising digital adoption, why does cash remain significant in the Indian economy?

Ans. Cash continues to dominate in land and gold purchases, election financing, and as a store of value for precautionary savings.

Q5. What trend does the currency-to-GDP ratio indicate about India's cash economy?

Ans. The currency-GDP ratio declined from 12.9% (2022) to 10.9% (2025), suggesting India may be nearing an inflection point toward a less-cash economy.

Source: IE

Source: <https://vajiramandravi.com/current-affairs/daily-editorial-analysis-25-september-2025/>

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