



## Dr. Manmohan Singh

**For Prelims:** Dr. Manmohan Singh, [Chief Economic Advisor](#), [Reserve Bank of India](#), [Right to Information](#), [Padma Vibhushan](#), [India-United States Civil Nuclear Agreement](#)

**For Mains:** [Impact of 1991 Economic Reforms on India's Growth](#), Integrity in Governance

[Source: DTE](#)

### Why in News?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid tribute to **Dr. Manmohan Singh**, the **former Prime Minister** and key architect of the [1991 economic reforms](#), following his passing on **26<sup>th</sup> December 2024**.

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### Who Was Dr. Manmohan Singh?

- **Early Life:** Dr. Manmohan Singh born on **26th September 1932** in Gah, Punjab (now in Pakistan), his life was shaped by the aftermath of **Partition of India and Pakistan in 1947**, which led his family to **migrate to India**.

- He pursued higher education in economics, earning a Bachelor's and Master's degree from Panjab University and later studying at **Cambridge** and Oxford, where he received a D Phil in Economics.
- His doctoral thesis focused on **India's export performance between 1951-1960**, laying the foundation for his future contributions to the Indian economy.
- Singh held teaching positions at Panjab University and the Delhi School of Economics, shaping future policymakers.
- **Literary Contributions:** *India's Export Trends and Prospects for Self-Sustained Growth*.
- **Economic Administration:** Held critical government positions, including **Chief Economic Advisor**, **Secretary of Economic Affairs**, **Governor of the Reserve Bank of India**, and **Chairman of the University Grants Commission**.
  - As RBI Governor (1982-1985), Singh pushed for **financial stability and policy discipline**.
- **1991 Economic Reforms:** As Finance Minister during the **1991 balance of payments crisis** (**foreign exchange reserves** were just adequate to finance 15 days of imports), then **Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao**, along with **Finance Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh**, initiated the **LPG reforms (Liberalization, Privatization, and Globalization)** (also known as **Rao-Manmohan Model**).
  - Dr. Manmohan Singh implemented key reforms, including the **devaluation of the rupee to boost exports** and dismantling the **License Raj to reduce industrial bottlenecks**.
  - He also **liberalized foreign investment policies** to attract global capital, which helped **stabilise and grow India's economy**.
- **Contributions as Prime Minister (2004-2014):** India's **14th Prime Minister**, Dr. Manmohan Singh, served as **India's third-longest-serving Prime Minister**, after **Jawaharlal Nehru** and **Indira Gandhi** (excluding PM Narendra Modi, who is currently serving his third term). He was known for balancing coalition politics with effective governance.
  - India experienced sustained economic growth, with the **economy growing at 8-9% annually** during his first term.
    - India emerged as the **world's second-fastest growing major economy in 2007** and Dr. Singh steered India through the **2008 global financial crisis**.
  - Key legislations such as the **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) of 2005**, **Right to Information Act (RTI) of 2005**, and the **National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) of 2005** were passed during his first tenure.
  - The **Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act of 2009**, **Right to Education Act (RTE) of 2009**, **National Food Security Act (NFSA) 2013** and **Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act of 2013** were important legislations of his second term, focused on equity and justice.
- **Foreign Policy and Global Relations:** Singh played a key role in **India-United States Civil Nuclear Agreement (2008)**, which facilitated **civilian nuclear cooperation with the US and other countries**.
  - Dr. Singh represented India at various international forums, leading delegations to the **Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Cyprus (1993)** and the **World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna (1993)**.
- **Awards:** **Padma Vibhushan** (1987), the **Jawaharlal Nehru Birth Centenary Award** (1995), and multiple **Finance Minister of the Year awards** from Asia Money (1993, 1994) and Euro Money (1993).
  - He also won the **Adam Smith Prize** (1956) and the **Wright's Prize** (1955) from the University of Cambridge.

# Key Positions Held In Government Of India

• **1971–1972**

Economic Adviser,  
Ministry of Foreign Trade

• **1972–1976**

Chief Economic Adviser,  
Ministry of Finance

• **1977–1980**

Secretary,  
Department of Economic  
Affairs, Ministry of Finance

• **1982–1985**

Governor,  
Reserve Bank of India

• **1985–1987**

Deputy Chairman,  
Planning Commission

• **1990–1991**

Advisor to the  
Prime Minister on  
Economic Affairs

• **March 1991 –  
June 1991**

Chairman,  
University Grants  
Commission

• **1991 – 1996**

Finance Minister of  
India

• **2004 – 2014**

Prime Minister  
of India



## What Lessons Can Be Drawn from Dr. Manmohan Singh's Leadership?

- **Academic Rigor Meets Policy Pragmatism:** Singh's grounding in economics ensured that his decisions were **informed by empirical evidence and theoretical rigor**, making his policies

both effective and sustainable.

- His belief in **dialogue and education** translated into a consultative leadership style, where he was **approachable and open to ideas** from diverse quarters.
- **Balancing Pragmatism with Principles:** He emphasized **gradual, socially acceptable reforms**, such as the carefully phased **1991 economic liberalization, to minimize disruptions**.
- **Commitment to Equity:** Singh championed inclusive growth through **rights-based initiatives** like the **National Rural Employment Guarantee Act** and the **Right to Education**, even while supporting **market-oriented reforms**.
- **Integrity and Ethical Leadership:** Known for his strong moral compass, Singh maintained **integrity in a system prone to corruption**, earning respect across political lines.
  - His readiness to resign over ethical issues, like the **Harshad Mehta Stock market scam (1992)**, underscored his commitment to principles.
- **Strengthening Institutions:** Singh believed in empowering institutions like the **RBI** and the **Planning Commission**, ensuring that their policies were both independent and aligned with national goals.
  - His tenure saw systemic changes like introducing **service taxes, abolishing ad hoc treasury bills**, and modernizing **India's tax structure**, which outlived his time in office.
- **Leadership in Adversity:** Despite facing political challenges, Singh maintained a calm, focused approach. His dignified handling of political setbacks, including the United Progressive Alliance defeat in 2014, solidified his legacy as a respected leader.

**Drishti Mains Question:**

Evaluate the significance of Rao Manmohan Model and its impact on India's transformation from a closed to an open economy.

**UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)**

**Prelims**

**Q. Which of the following has/have occurred in India after its liberalization of economic policies in 1991? (2017)**

1. Share of agriculture in GDP increased enormously.
2. Share of India's exports in world trade increased.
3. FDI inflows increased.
4. India's foreign exchange reserves increased enormously.

**Select the correct answer using the codes given below:**

- (a) 1 and 4 only
- (b) 2, 3 and 4 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

**Ans: (b)**

**Q. With reference to the Indian economy after the 1991 economic liberalization, consider the following statements:**

1. Worker productivity (Rs. per worker at 2004-05 prices) increased in urban areas while it decreased in rural areas.
2. The percentage share of rural areas in the workforce steadily increased.
3. In rural areas, the growth in non-farm economy increased.



4. The growth rate in rural employment decreased.

**Which of the statements given above is/are correct?**

**(a)** 1 and 2 only

**(b)** 3 and 4 only

**(c)** 3 only

**(d)** 1, 2 and 4 only

**Ans: (b)**

PDF Reference URL: <https://www.drishtias.com/printpdf/dr-manmohan-singh>

