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Nine Years of GST in India: Achievements, Challenges and Future Prospects

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Abstract

Goods and Services Tax (GST) was introduced on July 2017 in India. This tax is the most significant and unified tax system in India. It has been nine years since its implementation and hence it is important to assess its achievements, challenges and prospects. This research study examines the data related to GST in India from 2017-18 to 2025-26. The data used in this study is secondary data. The study aims at analysing its major achievements and evaluates impact on tax compliances and taxpayers' participation. This study also measures its contribution to revenue generation and financial efficiency. This study further identifies challenges related to GST implementation and analyses its future performance.

The findings of the study reveal that GST has significantly increased the revenues of the government in India. It has also expanded the taxpayers' base in India. It has promoted tax digitisation through initiatives e-way bills and e-invoicing. It has also improved tax compliances processes in India. But there are also challenges associated with the implementation of GST in India. These include input tax credit difficulties, multiple tax slabs and emission of few key sectors from its purview. The study concludes that while GST has largely achieved its intended objectives but continued reforms are necessary to strengthen the tax system so as to maximize its contribution to India's economic development.

Keywords: Goods and Services Tax (GST), Indirect Taxation, Tax Compliance, Revenue Generation, Fiscal Efficiency, Digital Tax Administration, India

Introduction

The implementation of Goods and Services Tax (GST) on 1st July 2017 marked historic renovation in India's indirect tax framework. Considered one of the most important fiscal reforms GST replaced multiple indirect taxes imposed by the Central and State Governments, (including excise duty, service tax, value-added tax, octroi and entry tax) with an unified tax system. The prime objective of GST was to implement the concept of "One Nation, One Tax" system. GST was implemented to reduce the cascading effect of tax and improve economic efficiency. (Nayyar & Singh, 2018)

Before the GST was implemented, indirect tax regime in India was fragmented. It was characterized by complex procedures, lack of uniformity across states and multiplicity of taxes. This structure created barriers to interstate trade and supply chain efficiency and increased the cost of doing business in India. GST was implemented as a destination based tax system intended to streamline taxation through the mechanism of Input Tax Credit (ITC) to promote transparency and efficiency. (Khan & Khan, 2022)

Over the last decade GST has significantly transformed India's taxation and compliance system. This transformation is possible through digital governance namely e-way billing, e-invoicing and GST network. These initiatives have added to the strength of the GST as a tool to administer tax and improve tax monitoring mechanism. Past studies have already indicated that GST has improved transparency in taxation and formalised the Indian economy. (Dwivedi, 2024a)

In spite of these achievements GST still faces several operational as well as structural challenges. Repeated revisions in tax policies, delays in refund, multiple tax slabs and compliance issues related to small businesses coupled with technological challenges compile together as major concerns in GST framework. Latest literature related to GST 2.0 also highlights the need for tax slabs justification, modernising compliance systems and return filing simplification. (Mohanty, 2026)

Hence the present research study titled 'Nine Years of GST in India: Achievements, Challenges and Future Prospects' is a critical appraisal of the past performance of GST in India.

Literature Review

The available literature on GST focuses on the challenges related to its implementation, revenue performance, compliance mechanisms and its economic impact in long term.

Many research studies have already studied this tax system as a transformative fiscal reform. Research scholars have highlighted operational and structural challenges related to GST in their studies. This includes compliance burden, instability in tax policy, technical difficulties and most importantly multiple tax slabs. The present literature review examines major studies related to GST in India in order to understand the achievements, challenges and future prospects associated with the reform.

(Chaudhary, 2024) conducted a study to analyse the implementation and future prospects of GST in India. The study observed that GST signified a major milestone in India's taxation by substituting various indirect taxes under an unified system. The author concluded that GST simplified taxation and promoted the concept of 'One Nation, One Tax', but certain implementation related challenges still remained.

(Haldankar & Patkar, 2026) conducted a systematic literature review to study to review GST related research published after GST implementation. The authors identified major themes such as economic impact, tax compliance, digital governance and sectoral outcomes. The authors suggested that future research should focus on long term policy outcomes and structural reforms within the GST system.

(Mehta, 2024) in a study examined GST as a tool for economic integration and tax transparency. The author stated the importance of GST in reducing tax cascading, strengthening tax compliance and improving related technology. The author also stated the need of making tax slabs more rationale and simplifying tax compliance procedures.

(Abbasi, 2018) examined the GST's impact on economy. The author also studied the challenges related to the implementation of GST. The author found that GST has significantly contributed towards the integration of Indian economy and also made the indirect tax structure simple. The study also identified the tax

compliance complexity, administrative challenges and technological issues related to the implementation of GST.

(Bhadoriya, 2025) analysed the history and evolution of GST. The author also studied the Indian constitutional framework and the economic implication of GST in India. The study concluded that GST as a tax structure has the potential to make the economic integration strong and improve tax efficiency.

(Rani, 2022) in a study discussed the implementation and structure of GST in India. The author also studied the role of GST in promoting economic growth. The author concluded that GST has pioneered the tax reform in India, but it requires more simplification and also policy stability to maximise its effectiveness.

(Shacheendran V, 2024) examined the compliance barriers and operational challenges faced by businesses under GST. The study also identifies issues faced by small and medium enterprises related to GST. The author listed the issues namely; complex filing procedures, compliance burden and technological difficulties faced by businesses. The study highlights the importance of technological and administrative simplification in the GST system.

(Dwivedi, 2024b) in a study evaluated the long term performance of GST. The study concluded that GST has successfully reduced the cascading effect of tax and established a uniform tax structure. The study also pointed at the containing concerns related to multiple tax slabs, policy implications and compliance burden.

(Pargi, 2022) analysed the macro-economic impact of GST on GDP, fiscal deficit, inflation and economic performance of a nation. It was concluded that GST has positively contribute to the economic integration and modernising tax. The study also pointed that GST has created a challenge related to transition during its implantation phase.

Research Gap

The literature reviewed indicates that many studies have studied GST from various perspectives. These perspectives are tax compliance, economic impact, implementation challenges and sectoral outcomes. Most of the research studies focus on short term or sector specific analysis. The availability of comprehensive research study covering last nine years of GST in India are limited. This can be studied by integrating its achievements, challenges and future prospects in a single research study framework using the secondary data.

Additionally a few studies provide a long term assessment of the role of GST in revenue generation, economy formalisation, digital governance and policy evolution. Hence the present study attempts to address this research gap by conducting secondary data analysis for the last nine years.

Objectives of the study

1. To analyse the major achievements of GST in India during the last nine years.
2. To evaluate the impact of GST on tax compliance and taxpayer participation in India.
3. To assess the contribution of GST towards revenue generation and fiscal efficiency.
4. To identify and critically analyse the challenges associated with GST implementation.
5. To examine the future prospects and reform measures for strengthening the GST framework in India.

Research Methodology

1. Research Design - The study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design.
2. Sources of Data – Secondary sources namely;
 - a. GST Council Reports
 - b. Economic Survey of India

- c. Ministry of Finance Reports
- d. Research Articles
- e. Industry Reports and Policy Papers
- 3. Period of Study- From Financial Year 2017–18 to Financial Year 2025–26

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Analysis of GST Revenue Collections in India

One of the primary objectives of GST was to create a robust and efficient indirect taxation system. This system was aimed at generating stable revenue for both the Central and State Governments. An examination of GST revenue collections provides useful insights with respect to the effectiveness of tax system and its contribution to fiscal efficiency.

Financial Year	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25
Gross GST Collection (₹ Lakh Crore)	7.19	11.77	12.22	11.37	14.88	18.08	20.18	22.08
Growth Rate (%)	-	63.70	3.82	-6.96	30.87	21.51	11.62	9.42

Table 1: Year-wise Gross GST Collections in India

Table 1 indicates a substantial increase in GST collections since its implementation in July 2017. Gross GST revenue increased from ₹7.19 lakh crore in FY 2017–18 to over ₹22 lakh crore in FY 2024–25. The collections declined during FY 2020–21 due to the economic disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic but a strong recovery was observed in subsequent years.

The data reveals significant fluctuations in revenue growth during the study period. During FY 2018-19, the GST collections increased by 63.70 % compared to FY 2017-18. Stabilisation of the newly introduced GST lead to this high growth rate. Further the expansion of the taxpayer base also increased the growth rate.

The growth rate declined sharply to 3.82 % in FY 2019-20, indicating a period of adjustment and moderation in revenue expansion. In FY 2020–21, GST revenue growth rate was -6.96 %, due to the severe economic disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic that adversely affected production, consumption and trade activities across the country.

A strong recovery was observed in FY 2021–22. GST collections during this period grew by 30.87 %. This recovery was supported by economic revival, increased business activity and enhanced compliance monitoring. The growth rates in table 1 further indicates a sustained improvement in GST performance. This claim is supported by the growth rates of 21.51 % (in FY 2022-23) and 11.62 % (in FY 2023-24).

The growth rate in FY 2024-25 at 9.42 % are moderated, but for the same period the collection of GST continue to increase in absolute terms. This data point suggest that the GST system has entered in a phase of maturity in revenue generation. The data also shows that GST has become an increasingly reliable source of revenue for government.

Analysis of GST Revenue-to-GDP Ratio of India

GST revenue to GDP ratio indicates the effectiveness of tax system in mobilising the relative revenue and size of the economy.

Financial Year	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25
GST to GDP Ratio (%)	4.2	6.2	6.1	5.7	6.3	6.6	6.7	6.7

Table 2: GST to GDP Ratio of India (%)

Table 2 shows that the GST to GDP ratio has increased after the implementation period. The ration remained relatively stable at 6 % to 7 % in recent years. The data trend in table 2 also shows the improvement in tax buoyancy and improved revenue mobilisation capacity. The temporary fall in FY 2020-21 is because fo the slowdown of the economic activities caused by the pandemic. But a subsequent recovery can also be seen which demonstrate the resilience of the GST framework.

The increasing GST to GDP ratio shows a growing effectiveness of GST in generating tax related revenues and strengthening India's financial position.

Analysis of Growth in GST Registered Taxpayers in India

Financial Year	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25
Number of GST Registered Taxpayers (Crore)	1.05	1.19	1.24	1.28	1.34	1.39	1.45	1.52

Table 3: Growth in GST Registered Taxpayers in India

The data available in table 3 shows a stable growth in number of GST registered taxpayers since it inception. The figure grew from 1.05 crores (in FY 2017-18) to 1.56 crores (in FY 2025-26). These figures show a substantial growth in the taxpayers' base in India.

The data in table 3 indicates a continuous rise in GST taxpayers' registration in India. This data suggests that GST has played an important role in formalising and expanding Indian economy. This data also shows that more businesses register as GST taxpayers' in India year on year. This increase can be attributed to factors namely; better compliance procedures, enriched digital infrastructure and mandatory registration requirements.

The increasing trend in registration of GST taxpayers' also reflects the success of GST in expanding the tax collection base in India. The said growth has also increased the tax collection transparency in tax system. Due to implementation of e-way bills, e-invoicing and GSTN the registration of GST taxpayers' have become easy.

Analysis of GST Return Filing Trends in India in India

Financial Year	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25	2025–26*
Average Return Filing Rate (%)	68	72	76	78	82	85	88	90	91

Table 4: GST Return Filing Trends in India

*Indicates provisional figures. These figures based on available GST compliance reports and government publications.

Table 4 revels stable growth in GST compliances. The average rate of return filing increased from 68 % (in FY 2017-18) to 91 % (in FY 2025-26). Lower filing rate is observed in the initial years. This can be because of taxpayers' adjustment to the new tax system and limited information on the compliance requirements.

Major improvisations were noticed in return filing procedures and taxpayer education initiatives. The implantation of systems namely; e-invoice, e-way bills added to the strength of the compliance mechanisms.

The continuous increase in filing rates indicates greater taxpayer awareness and increased confidence in the GST framework. The findings suggest that GST has contributed significantly to improving tax compliance and expanding the formal tax system in India.

Analysis of E-Way Bills Generated in India

Financial Year	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25	2025–26*
E-Way Bills Generated (Crore)	53.8	61.2	49.5	74.1	92.3	103.5	118.7	125.4

Table 5: E-Way Bills Generated in India

*2025–26 figures are provisional/estimated based on available trends and may be revised.

Table 5 presents the trend in e-way bill generation in India. The e-way bill mechanism was introduced in India to electronically track the movement of goods and improve transparency in supply chain transactions.

The data in table 5 shows a significant growth in the number of e-way bills generated over the years. The volume increased from 53.8 crore e-way bills in FY 2018–19 to 125.4 crore e-way bills in FY 2025–26. The increasing adoption of digital compliance and the expansion of economic activities conducted resulted in increase in volume.

A decline was observed in FY 2020–21. This happened when e-way bill generation fell to 49.5 crore. This fall was primarily due to the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic which adversely affected transportation, manufacturing and trade activities. But strong recovery was observed in FY 2021–22, with e-way bill generation increasing to 74.1 crore.

The continuous rise in e-way bill generation demonstrates greater integration of businesses into the GST framework. It also indicates increased digitalization of tax administration and also better coordination between taxpayers and regulatory authorities.

The findings suggest that the e-way bill system has played a significant role in reducing tax evasion, improving transparency, and strengthening the efficiency of GST administration in India.

Analysis of E-Invoices Generated under GST in India

Financial Year	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25	2025–26*
E-Invoices Generated (Crore)	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	37	79.7	168.3	370	560	650

Table 6: E- Invoices Generated under GST in India

*2025–26 figures are provisional/estimated based on available trends and may be revised.

Table 6 presents the trend in e-invoice generation under the GST regime in India. The e-invoicing system was introduced in October 2020. This was done as part of the government's efforts to strengthen digital tax administration and improve compliance monitoring. Hence in the above table, no e-invoice data are available for the period FY 2017–18 to FY 2019–20.

The data show a significant increase in e-invoice generation. The number of e-invoices generated increased from approximately 37 crore in FY 2020–21 to about 650 crore in FY 2025–26. This substantial growth can be attributed to the phased expansion of e-invoicing requirements to taxpayers. This was also possible because of lower turnover thresholds and the increasing adoption of digital compliance.

The rapid increase in e-invoice generation indicates that there is a successful integration of technology into the GST framework. This system has enhanced transparency in business transactions and also improved the verification of input tax credit claims. Also, the integration of e-invoicing with GST returns and e-way bill systems has strengthened tax administration.

The increasing trend also shows the increasing formalisation of economic related activities. It also shows the increasing number of taxpayers in India. The data suggests that e-invoice as a tool has become a vital instrument in advancing the transparency and efficiency under GST regime.

Analysis of Average Monthly GST Collection in India

Financial Year	2017–18*	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25
Gross GST Collection (₹ Lakh Crore)	7.19	11.77	12.22	11.37	14.88	18.08	20.18	22.08
Average Monthly GST Collection (₹ Crore)	79,889	98,083	1,01,833	94,750	1,24,000	1,50,667	1,68,167	1,84,000

Table 7: Average Monthly GST Collection in India

*FY 2017–18 collections represents the period after GST implementation (from July 2017 onwards).

The data in table 7 is the average monthly collection of GST in India during the period of study. The data shows a significant increase in GST collections on monthly average basis. This increase is from ₹79,889 crore (approximately in FY 2017–18) to ₹1,84,000 crore (approximately in FY 2024–25). In the initial years of implementation the revenue collections are relatively moderate. This is because during these years the businesses adjusted to the new tax regime procedures.

A slight decline in FY 2020-21 is seen. The average monthly collection decline to ₹94,750 crore for the said period. This is due to the disruptions in economy caused due to COVID -19 pandemic. But a strong recovery was seen in FY 2021-22 when the collections increased to ₹1,24,000 crore per month. This increase reflects the economic revival post COVID -19 pandemic.

Subsequent years witnessed a continuous increase in collections. The collections crossed ₹1.5 lakh crore (in FY 2022–23) to reach ₹1.84 lakh crore (in FY 2024–25). The increase indicates that economic activities rose the taxpayers' base in India.

The data in table 7 GST collections demonstrates that GST has evolved into a reliable and stable source of revenue for both the Central and State Governments. It also reflects the success of digital initiatives such as e-way bills and e-invoicing.

Analysis of Share of GST in Total Tax Revenue of India

Financial Year	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25*
GST Revenue (₹ Lakh Crore)	7.19	11.77	12.22	11.37	14.88	18.08	20.18	22.08
Total Tax Revenue (₹ Lakh Crore)	19.92	23.37	24.23	20.27	27.07	30.54	34.37	38
GST Share in Total Tax Revenue (%)	36.09	50.36	50.43	56.09	54.98	59.2	58.72	58.11

Table 8: Share of GST in Total Tax Revenue of India

*2024–25 figures are provisional.

The data in table 8 indicate that GST has become a major source of tax revenue since its implementation in 2017. The share of GST in total tax revenue increased from 36.09 percent in FY 2017–18 to more than 58 percent in FY 2024–25. This substantial increase shows the growing importance of GST in India's taxation system. It also highlights effectiveness of GST in generating revenue for both the Central and State Governments.

The increase in GST's contribution can be attributed to several factors. This include expansion of the taxpayer base, better compliance, digitalization, enhanced monitoring, e-way bills and e-invoicing systems. This is also achieved due to gradual stabilisation of the GST framework. Even during the COVID-19 pandemic period, GST maintained a significant share in total tax revenue, demonstrating its resilience as a revenue source. The data in table 8 shows that GST has become a cornerstone of India's fiscal structure.

Analysis of Major Challenges Associated with GST Implementation

Challenge	Description	Impact
Multiple Tax Slabs	Existence of multiple GST rates (0%, 5%, 12%, 18%, and 28%)	Increases complexity and classification disputes
Compliance Burden	Frequent return filing and documentation requirements	Higher compliance costs, particularly for MSMEs
Frequent Policy Changes	Continuous amendments in rules and procedures	Creates uncertainty among taxpayers
Refund Delays	Delays in processing GST refunds	Affects business liquidity and working capital
Technical Issues	Initial GSTN portal glitches and system-related challenges	Disrupts compliance and filing activities
Exclusion of Certain Sectors	Petroleum products, electricity, and real estate remain largely outside GST	Limits the effectiveness of a unified tax structure
Input Tax Credit (ITC) Issues	Complex conditions for claiming ITC	Increases compliance burden and disputes
MSME Challenges	Smaller businesses often lack technical and financial resources	Difficulty in adapting to GST requirements

Table 9: Major Challenges Associated with GST Implementation

The data in table 9 is summarising major challenges related to the implementation of GST in India. The most significant challenge is the multiple tax slabs. This complicates the tax classification and the tax structure itself. This complication gives rise to the tax related disputes. The burden related to compliance is another major concern. Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) particularly face difficulties in filing returns and maintaining records related to GST.

Recurring amendments in GST rules and regulations has also added the uncertainty. Also delays of refund processing have negatively affected the working capital requirements and management for businesses. The issues related to the technical aspect of GST framework complicates the compliance activities. Petroleum products, electricity and other components of real estate sector are excluded from GST. This limits the fully integration of GST as a indirect tax system.

The evidence from table 9 suggest that while GST has achieved the substantial success, but there still exist operational and structural challenges that affect its effectiveness and efficiency.

Analysis of Future Prospects of GST in India

Proposed Reform	Expected Outcome
Rationalization of GST Tax Slabs	Simplification of tax structure and reduction in classification disputes
Inclusion of Petroleum Products under GST	Creation of a more comprehensive and unified tax system
Inclusion of Electricity under GST	Reduction in cascading taxes and lower production costs
Simplification of Return Filing System	Improved taxpayer convenience and compliance

Strengthening the Input Tax Credit (ITC) Mechanism	Reduction in disputes and enhanced transparency
Expansion of E-Invoicing Coverage	Improved tax monitoring and reduced tax evasion
Increased Use of Artificial Intelligence and Data Analytics	Better fraud detection and compliance management
Strengthening GST Appellate Tribunal System	Faster resolution of tax disputes
Enhanced Support for MSMEs	Reduced compliance burden and improved participation
Greater Centre-State Coordination through GST Council	Improved policy consistency and cooperative federalism

Table 10: Proposed GST Reforms and Expected Outcomes

The existing multiple rate structure many times leads to classification disputes and administrative complexity. A simplified rate structure could improve ease of compliance and also bring down the litigations. Similarly, the inclusion of petroleum products and electricity within the GST framework would broaden the tax base. It would also help achieve the objective of a truly unified indirect tax system.

The simplification of return filing procedures are expected to reduce compliance cost. The expansion of digital initiatives such as e-invoicing can further enhance transparency to reduce tax evasion. Special attention has also been given to improving support for MSMEs. Also strengthening the GST Appellate Tribunal system would facilitate faster resolution of dispute.

Overall, the proposed reforms indicate considerable scope for further strengthening the GST framework. These measures can enhance revenue generation, improve compliance, reduce administrative complexities, and contribute to long term economic growth.

Discussion Based on Findings

The findings in the study depicts that GST as a tax reform has emerged as the most significant tax based reforms in India. It has substantially enhanced the transparency and efficiency of indirect tax system in India. It has added to growth in revenue collection consistently, expanded the taxpayers' base and enabled digital compliance of indirect tax.

The study also reveals that GST as a tax structure has positively contributed to the tax compliance and financial efficiency. The technology related to GST namely; e-way bills and e-invoicing has made the monitoring capabilities better and reduced the occurrence of tax evasion. As a result of this the formalisation of economic activities have strengthened and collected revenues are better mobilised.

This study also points out the challenges related to the implementation of GST in India. The major challenge is because of multiple tax slabs and the burden arising out of compliances on small businesses. Frequent changes in policy and omission of a few important products and sectors from the ambit of GST affects its universal applicability.

The current as well as the future of the GST appears to be promising. The simplification in compliance procedures and increase use of digital technology will further enhance GST's contribution in economic development of India.

Suggestions

1. Rationalize GST Tax Slabs to simplify the tax structure and reduce classification disputes.
2. Include petroleum products and Electricity under GST to broaden the tax base.
3. Simplify compliance procedures for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).
4. Strengthen the Input Tax Credit (ITC) mechanism by reducing procedural complexities.
5. Improve refund processing systems to ensure timely refunds.
6. Enhance digital infrastructure and technology adoption through wider use of e-invoicing.
7. Strengthen the GST disputer framework to facilitate faster settlement of tax disputes.

Conclusion

GST has proved to be a landmark reform in the indirect taxation system in India. The present research studied the achievements, challenges and future prospects of GST in India, using the secondary data.

The findings of the study show that GST has considerably increased the revenue generation for the government. The taxpayers' base in India has expanded after the implementation of GST. The current GST system has also strengthened the tax compliances through digital initiatives. The importance of GST can be seen in its revenue collections and in its increasing contribution in GDP in India.

In spite of these attainments, GST continues to face several fundamental challenges. This includes input tax credit complexities, compliance burden, multiple tax slabs and non-inclusion of certain products and sectors.

To conclude with, it can be said that, GST has achieved its objectives at large. It has created a transparent and integrated indirect tax system. The events of frequent reforms namely; rationalisation of tax slabs, compliance simplification and increasing GST base is essential to maximise its long term benefits.

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