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RATIONALE BEHIND ADOPTING GST: PRE AND POST IMPLEMENTATION ANALYSIS

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Abstract

Taxation as a concept has existed in the globe for a long time, with historical references tracing back to ancient texts of Kautilya's Artha Shastra. The system reflects the economic strength of a country as majority of the government's revenue comes from taxes. India's tax system after undergoing several revisions, adopted the Goods and Service Tax (GST) model. This research uses comparative analysis to study the rationale behind adopting the GST system in place of VAT. Earlier, various direct and indirect taxes were paid, which led to corruption and increased the burden on taxpayers. GST has helped accelerate the government's revenue collection. This study intends to examine GST implementation, compliance, and benefits. It addresses challenges associated with tax avoidance and compliance. Secondly, it analyses the shift in tax rates and policies under GST in the real estate sector.

Key Words: GST · VAT · Tax Evasion · Real Estate

Introduction

According to the Taxation Enquiry Commission, A tax system refers to the allocation of revenue resources and the separation of taxing authority between the federal government and states. The Constitution grants the Union and states the power to levy and collect taxes. The 7th schedule outlines the distribution of subjects between the centre and the state. Taxes are the largest source of revenue for the government. This funding is deployed for various purposes and projects for national development.

In 2000, the Vajpayee government initiated a discussion to set up a GST model under the chairmanship of an empowered committee headed by Asim Das Gupta, Finance Minister of West Bengal. Later, P. Chidambaram, in the 2006 budget, proposed the implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) by April 1, 2010. A joint working group (JWG) was established with the advice of the union finance ministers and the minister's secretary of the empowered committee. The empowered committee would prepare a roadmap for the introduction of GST

in India at the request of the finance minister. The committee released its 'first discussion paper' in November 2009.

It suggested a dual GST model, one levied by the Centre and the other levied by the state. A GST council was to be set up within 60 days of the passage of the bill, which would be chaired by the Union Finance Minister. Its members will include the Ministry of State for Revenue and the finance ministers of states. It will focus on GST rates, exemption limits, and other key aspects of the tax structure.

GST is charged for all transactions of goods and services at the time of supply, except for the exempted goods and services, which are outside the purview of GST. The department issues explanatory notes from time to time to keep taxpayers updated about changes related to compliance procedures, tax rates, and related matters. Despite the intended ease of compliance under GST laws, businesses and taxpayers find themselves burdened by the rigidity of a tax regime, which requires litigation even for the smallest clerical errors. Situations of

perceived non-compliance are verified by a tax officer, known as the adjudicating authority, through audit, examination, and anti-evasion. The reluctance of tax authorities to allow rectifications and adhere to procedural deadlines, coupled with a lack of practical approach, has compelled taxpayers to seek judicial intervention repeatedly, even for simple corrections. Appeals under GST first lie with the commissioner and thereafter before the GST Appellate Tribunal (GSTAT).

Genesis of GST

Direct taxes are regulated by the Income Tax Act of 1961, while indirect taxes are governed by the Goods and Service Tax Act of 2017. The Central Board of Excise and Customs (CBEC) is a statutory body responsible for formulating policies related to levies and the collection of duties and service tax. Corporate entities and individuals pay direct taxes on their earned income. The burden of depositing taxes in the case of direct tax is on the assessee.

Table 1

	Gross Tax Collection	Refunds	Net Tax collection
Corporate tax	1240308	271224	969084
Non-corporate tax	1290144	188740	1101404
Securities Transaction Tax	53095	0	53095
Others	3399	60	3339
Total	2586947	460024	2126923
Y-o-Y change (percent)	16.15	32.51	13.13

Table 1 Source: Income Tax Department, Direct Taxes Data, Income Tax India (last visited May 28, 2025),

<https://incometaxindia.gov.in/Pages/Direct-Taxes-Data.aspx>

The data released by the Central Board of Direct Taxes for FY 24-25 reflects a growth of 16.15 percent year-on-year in direct tax collection. The growth shows a positive trend in the economy with improved compliance.

The Constitution divides tax responsibility between the centre and the state. Prior to GST, Central Sales Tax (CST), central excise duty, customs duty, corporate tax, service tax etc. were to be collected by the central government. On the other hand, the states are responsible for the collection of Value Added Tax (VAT), property tax, stamp duty and land revenue. The tax system was highly complex and inefficient, owing to its cascading effect. Taxes were levied at each stage, thereby increasing the overall cost of the product.

A manufacturer was required to pay an excise duty on the goods produced. At the time of sale, although excise duty was charged, the state VAT was to be paid. In the case of interstate sales, CST would be added to the product, making the goods even more expensive. A cascading effect resulted from this tax-on-tax burden, which raised the prices of products for end consumers. Additionally, VAT rates vary from state to state, leading to inconsistencies in pricing and compliance.

A unified tax system, the Goods and Services Tax (GST) was introduced on July 1, 2017, in India with the intention of subsuming multiple indirect taxes. France was the first country to adopt a GST model. Under GST, a uniform rate would apply under three categories: Central Goods and Service Tax (CGST), State Goods and Service Tax (SGST) and Integrated Goods and Service Tax (IGST). Tax would be charged at the final point of consumption, that is, at the 'supply of goods' and the 'supply of services'. Input Tax Credit can be claimed at all stages of production, i.e., tax paid at the time of purchase (input tax) against tax collected at the time of sale (output tax). Earlier, the CENVAT Credit mechanism would set off only the central excise

duty and service tax paid up to the level of production. Any adjustments in income tax rates and slabs are made through the budget presented by the Finance Minister of India. Under Budget 2025, presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitaraman, the Nil tax slab was raised to 12 lakh per annum in order to provide relief for the middle class in nation-building. Further, adjustments were made to the custom rate structure, along with changes to the Tax Deducted at Source (TDS) and Tax Collected at Source (TCS) limit. Notably, the budget aimed at eliminating TCS on the sale of goods, thus simplifying the compliance burden.

Tax Evasion in India

Tax evasion and black marketing are closely related. Black marketing denotes unaccounted money, concealed income or undisclosed wealth. Worse still, they are a growing burden on honest taxpayers, damage the proper functioning of the public sector, and undermine the equity concept, thus warping its progressiveness. In fact, there is a considerable amount of leakage, commissions and transactions of unutilized money. Illegal activities include concealing the true state of affairs that remain outside the reported and accounted proportion of one's activities. This is due to factors such as high tax rates, less respect for the government and its laws, lenient penal action, and the nature of the economy.

Sanjay Kumar Agarwal, chairman of the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC), highlighted cases booked in new and complicated areas such as e-commerce, digital services, online gaming, banking and insurance. The White Paper on Black Money presents different facets of tax evasion and its relationship with policy and administrative regimes in the country, along with the policy and strategies the government follows to address the issues of tax evasion, black money, and corruption in public life.

The online gaming industry has evaded almost ₹2.01 lakh crore in indirect tax across 6,084 cases in FY 2023-24. The GST intelligence

agency focused on the non-payment of tax by firms resorting to clandestine supplies or undervaluing item values. It identified 20 percent of the cases relating to fraudulent input tax credits. Tax authorities should focus on fake registrations and beneficiaries of fake tax credits. GST-simplified taxes and methods like e-invoicing, e-way bills, and invoice matching have improved interstate trade monitoring and tax evasion enforcement. Moreover, particularly in the micro and small enterprises with unskilled labour manipulation of the books of accounts and/or omission of entries leads to tax evasion.

In India, businesses contribute to parties with the primary goal of influencing political leaders that allow them to avoid taxes and exploit loopholes for profit. High-profile raids are crucial for the Indian government to uncover concealed income and unaccounted assets, thus ensuring compliance by individuals and corporations. The 2014 income tax raid on the conglomerate run by Subrata Roy uncovered alleged tax evasion and the hiding of undeclared cash. Subsequent investigations in the Sahara Group case revealed financial irregularities and accusations of manipulations to dupe investors, including the issue of Optionally Fully Convertible Debentures (OFCDs) to raise cash in contravention of regulatory standards.

Timely audits will discourage tax avoidance and tax evasion by allowing faithful reflection of the books and records of the taxpayer. Moreover, cross-verification by auditors will help deter tax evasion, saving considerable time for the assessing officer. Tax authorities must take appropriate steps to enhance the overall percentage of GST compliance, including GSTR-1 and GSTR-3B compliance, periodically. Detailed records of all transactions, including sales, purchase and inventory must be maintained.

The detention of goods causes serious prejudice to an assessee, and the same can only be done based on specific, valid and reasonable grounds. In **Govind Tobacco**

Manufacturing Co. vs. State of U.P. [2022], it was held that as there is an expiry of e-Way bill on transit, the seizure of the said vehicle and the goods is not permissible under the law. Here, the intention appeared to be bona fide without establishing any fraudulent or deliberate intention to evade tax.

Measures including the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002; the Benami Transaction (Prohibition) Bill, 2011; the Public Procurement Bill, 2012; the Lokpal and Lokayukta Bill, 2011; the Citizens’ Grievance Redressal Bill; Indicial Standards and Accountability Bill, 2010; Public Interest Disclosure and Protection to Persons Making the Disclosure Bill, 2010; and the Electronic Delivery of Services Bill, 2011 are among the various legislative initiatives aiming to prevent tax evasion and the generation of black money.

An income tax scheme called Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana mopped up Rs 4900 crore of undisclosed income by 21000 individuals. Demonetization plays a major role in tax administration by cleansing the economy of counterfeit currency. Penalties under the Income Tax Act of 1961 are provided under Chapters XXI & XXII.

GST – Success or Challenge?

GST provided India with a world-class tax system and improved the government’s revenue. The major benefits that were identified include a higher threshold for registration, elimination of the cascading effect, defined treatment of e-commerce operators and availability of Input Tax Credit (ITC).

Table 2

Indirect Tax Collection Before and After GST			
YEAR	AFTER GST	YEAR	BEFORE GST
2017-18	1856945	2012-13	1036732
2018-19	2032864	2013-14	1119772
2019-20	2161306	2014-15	1217289

2020-21	2441371	2015-16	1466981
2021-22	3173782	2016-17	1662518

Table 2 Source: Harshita Gupta, *Impact of GST on Real Estate Sector in India*, **J. Positive Sch. Psychol.**

<https://journalppw.com/index.php/jpsp/article/view/14034/9099> (last visited May 28, 2025).

The above table shows increased revenue collection through the implementation of GST. GST rates are standardized for both the rich and the poor; thus, the same amount of tax is collected from both groups, which increases the revenue from indirect taxes.

A Nil tax rate has been introduced to grant relaxations to the middle-class group. Certain goods and services are excluded from the levy of Goods and Services Tax(GST).The government, on the recommendation of the GST Council, may exempt certain goods or services or both, wholly or partially, from any levy with effect from the date as may be specified in such notification for the public’s interest. Section 6 and section 11 of the CGST Act and the IGST Act, respectively, have the power to grant exemption. Exemption can be made for a specific supplier, specific recipient, specific supply or a specific supplier and recipient. To illustrate, services received by the government are not subject to taxation. In the case of a supplier, charitable institutions are exempted from any taxation regardless of the nature of the supply.

Certain products such as alcohol for human consumption, electricity, customs duty, real estate, and petroleum products [crude oil, natural gas, ATF (aviation turbine fuel)] are exempted from GST until the GST Council announces a date of their inclusion. Similarly, products such as animal Products, agricultural Products, certain medicines, spices, etc., are Nil rated (0 percent tax). Excluding such products such as petrol and diesel from the ambit of the GST has resulted in revenue losses for the states. Furthermore, lower GST rates on particular goods and compliance issues

provide a financial challenge. Policy actions are essential to avoid GST tax revenue leakage, enlarge the tax base, and establish an appropriate tax rate structure.

Conditions to grant exemption are-

- Exemption should be in public interest
 - Healthcare services, educational services, and public utility services such as water supply are exempt from GST.
- By way of issue of notification
 - Electricity, salt, fresh fruits, plastic bangles, passenger baggage etc., amended vide Notification No.28/2017, 35/2017, 42/2017, 7/2018, 19/2018 – Central Tax (Rate)
- Must be recommended by the GST Council
- Absolute exemption or conditional exemption may be for any services and /or services of any specified description. Exemption by way of special order (not notification) may be granted in case of exceptional circumstances.
 - Conditional exemption - Room charges in hospitals are exempt from GST if they do not exceed ₹5,000 per day (excluding ICUs). Similarly, intrastate supplies from unregistered persons are exempt under reverse charge if the total value does not exceed ₹5,000 per day.
 - Absolute exemption- Transmission or distribution of electricity by an electricity utility company is entirely exempt from GST.
- A Registered person supplying the services and / or services is not entitled to collect tax higher than the effective rate where the supply enjoys an absolute exemption.

The compliance rate of MSMEs is significantly poor. Changes in accounting systems and business processes, proper accounting, record keeping and training of their personnel requires extra cost, time and skill while complying with

GST needs, which is observed as a great problem for MSMEs. As a result of the financial constraint, MSMEs are less likely to meet their compliance obligations on time. To aid MSMEs, the government granted an exemption for all companies with annual turnover up to ₹40 lakh for goods and ₹2 lakh for services. Moreover, subject to certain exceptions, the Composition Scheme can be opted which allows reduced GST rates between one percent and six percent.

As per section 9(4) of the CGST / SGST (UTGST) Act, 2017/ section 5(4) of IGST Act, 2017, payment of tax in respect of the supply of taxable goods or services by a supplier who is not registered to a registered person shall be paid on a reverse charge basis by the recipient. All the provisions shall apply to such recipient as if he is liable for paying the tax concerning to the supply of such goods or services or both. The Reverse Charge Mechanism (RCM) ensures compliance in cases where the supplier is an unregistered dealer.

Impact on real estate sector

Earlier, multiple taxes along with registration charges and stamp duty were to be paid by homebuyers while purchasing properties under construction. Tax rates, then, varied with every state. Developers had to bear the excise duty, VAT, customs duty, entry taxes, etc. on raw materials as well as service tax on various input services like approval charges, professional fees, labour charges, legal charges, etc. ITC could not be claimed for duties such as CST, Customs duty, Entry Tax, etc. This impacted the pricing, and subsequently, the burden was transferred to the buyer. In the real estate sector, GST is applicable on the sale of under-construction properties. Notification No. 03/19 has introduced new GST rates.

Table 3

	Type of mix	GST	ITC
Affordable- more than 90 carpet	RREP REP other	1	Not eligible

	than RREP		
Residential but non-affordable	RREP	5	Not eligible
	REP other than RREP		
Commercial	RREP	5	Not eligible
	REP other than RREP	12	Eligible

Table 3 Source: GST Council, Revenue from Import of Goods under GST (May 17, 2024), https://gstcouncil.gov.in/sites/default/files/2024-05/download_2024-05-17t161406.556.pdf.

A real estate project is defined under clause (zn) of section 2 of the RERA Act, 2016. It includes Residential Real Estate Project (RREP), carpet area less than 15 percent, and Real Estate Project (REP), having carpet area of more than 15 percent. In case of Residential and Commercial RREP, the effective rate of tax is 5 percent after land abatement with no Input tax credit available. In the case of Real estate project (REP), the rate of tax for residential units is 5 percent with no ITC and 12 per cent for commercial units with ITC. An Affordable unit having gross amount charged less than 45 lakh and a carpet area up to 90 sq./m in non-metropolitan cities/town) or 60 sq./m in metropolitan cities will be charged one percent tax with no ITC. Since, sale of land is a non-taxable item under GST, only the construction services or built-up property are subject to GST. As per the framework, GST is levied on 67 per cent of the total consideration/agreement value, after allowing a standard land abatement of 33 per cent of the total agreement value. No GST will be charged after obtaining a completion certificate or first occupancy.

Additionally, the state government impose stamp duty along with registration charges, which differ based on the location, type of property and its value. Buyers are required to pay stamp duty either on Ready Reckoning Rate (RRR) or the agreement value, whichever is higher. The RRR determines minimum property value and prevents underreporting in real estate transactions. In Mumbai, male homebuyers are subject to 6 percent stamp duty, while female homebuyers pay a stamp duty of 5 percent, both rates include one per cent of metro cess. Maharashtra state witnessed an average hike of 3.89 percent while Mumbai itself recorded a 3.4 percent increase in Ready Reckoner Rate (RRR) for the financial year 2025-2026. Such heavy tax results in cost escalation for the final customer.

Municipal corporations or local authorities levy property tax, which is influenced by factors such as the location, size, type, condition, features, etc. of the property. As per statistics, Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) collected ₹6,198 crores in property tax for FY 2024-25, meeting 99.97 percent of their ₹6,200 crore target.

Conclusion/findings

The current research provides valuable insights on the evolution of GST. A well-constructed tax system ensures a healthy tax culture. Under the previous tax regime, a multiplicity of taxes, comprising VAT, service tax, excise duty, and entry tax, were levied separately by the Centre and the states. The Indian tax system has been unorganized, unregulated and unplanned due to historical reasons. The introduction of a unified and transparent system, the Goods and Services tax (GST), marked a decisive shift in India's indirect tax framework. GST was envisioned as a solution to address key structural issues, notably the cascading of taxes, inconsistent tax rates, procedural complexities, and interstate trade barriers. Moreover, new concept of Input Tax Credit (ITC) eliminates the chances of double taxation. Unrecording of expenditure has been reduced

due to credit availability on inputs and cloud billing. Further, certain sections have been granted exemptions in order to reduce the tax burden. Despite improvements, certain loopholes still prevail in the existing tax structure. The provision of Input Tax Credit (ITC) remains restricted. As per the study, In the real estate sector, ITC can be claimed only for commercial Real Estate Projects (REP). Issues like fake invoicing, stock manipulation, inflated input claims and mismatches in returns pose a challenge, leading to revenue leakage. Frequent rule changes by the government create ambiguity, resulting in a lack of clarity, particularly in the classification of supplies. Small businesses find it difficult to comply, particularly due to inadequate training, higher administrative costs, strict deadlines and lack of professional assistance, resulting in errors and penalties.

Young adults primarily play a pivotal role in shaping the future of GST compliance, as their tax mentality and behaviour as daily consumers contribute to the development of an ethical tax culture in India. The discouragement of evasive behaviour by young adults influences the potential of an ethical GST tax culture.

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