

Innovations need of the hour for an inclusive society



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In most democratic societies, there has been a steep increase in social aspirations for an improved quality of life.

Thanks to the rapid economic progress in the last few decades, such an upswing of community expectation is completely legitimate and understandable. The challenge before policy planners, thinkers, practitioners and civil society members is to meet these expectations in the shortest period of time, at least cost and with highest social satisfaction. Recognising the role that grassroots innova-

tions play in triggering a self-reliant, decentralised and distributed inclusive development, the office of the President decided to host the Festival of Innovations at Rashtrapati Bhavan. India is perhaps the only country where the head of the state not only celebrates the creative and innovative potential of the common people but also hosts some of them as Innovation Scholars in Residence at Rashtrapati Bhavan.

The concept of inclusive innovations implies that we should overcome exclusion of certain economically disadvantaged spaces, sectors, skills, and social segments particularly during uncertain seasons such as drought, floods or other calamities. Innovations that address the unmet needs of socially excluded sections



President Pranab Mukherjee interacts with Innovation Scholars In-Residence

of society thus become the focus of the global roundtable on inclusive innovations.

There are several ways in which inclu-

sion can take place; we can reduce transaction costs (both ex ante and ex post) for making innovators, investors and entrepreneurs meet and work together as has been tried by the Honey Bee network in India through the National Innovation Foundation, GIAN and SRISTI for several decades. Inclusion takes place by providing in situ incubation support as being tried under Start-up, Stand up India policy of the government. Several weavers have made many innovations in looms and weft system. Handloom, handicrafts, household manufacture are areas in addition to agriculture, fisheries and livestock where a very large number of people get employment. Innovations that improve their productivity in these sectors without hurting environment make

inclusion of have-nots possible. Certain skills are losing out in the market place such as traditional performing arts, paintings, food processing, leather work and so on. Unless one creates an online market place for them and generates global demand for them, they are bound to be eroded. Some of them may need reskilling for the digital world while others may need to be linked to schools and other cultural centres where they can teach younger generations. Culture, language and identity of diverse cultures are linked. Inclusion of one with other sub-sets makes such communities become integrated with larger identities involved in nation building. Numerous sub-cultures have survived in India for millennia and we have to find ways for providing

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enough space for these minority voices.

One or two episodes of droughts or floods may lead to loss of several years of savings. Those landless workers who depend upon labour are further affected because of loss of work or opportunities at such times. With climate change, such fluctuations in weather are likely to increase. The resilience in innovative solutions are necessary for sustainable and inclusive social outcomes.

Thus inclusion will require innovations which increase resilience and enhance risk absorption capacity of the community through entrepreneurial models. Mudra Bank has made significant efforts to alleviate economic stress. But social and cultural stresses also have to be alleviated by institutional innovations.

