

Ten policies that will transform India, not in our life time but within next three to four years:

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Recasting the employment guarantee programme: mental, not just menial jobs

1. Why should 250 million people for 100 days be engaged in only menial jobs. Does not each poor person also possess knowledge? How can we build upon his knowledge about local resources, map knowledge and resources, pool the best practices, develop products/srvices, market them and create at least 25 million contemporary innovations and traditional knowledge and skill based entrepreneurs. Within ten years, we should not need employment guarantee programme. Young volunteers in colleges will help in mapping the resources and knowledge with the help of these knowledge rich –economically poor people. In place of NSS (now almost defunct), we should try to bring in National Innovation Service (NIS) which will be mandated to engage with 250 million poor in urban and rural areas, workers, mechanics, farm laborers and farmers, crafts people and cultural artists.
2. Not even one per cent of the savings of the micro finance groups is spent on purchase of the product made **by** them. While we have done a lot of research on **verticals**, isn't that it time that we start doing research on **horizontal** markets. While I do realize the need for us to allocate part of our purchasing power for the products made by poor people (through verticals), there is a need for similar allocation among the poor people as well. Food processing is one area where traditional foods can create tremendous environmental, health and nutritional advantage (more than 40,000 people visited Traditional Food Festivals – Saatvik at IIMA during four days in Dec first week, 2007). The food that rich people take is often poor and some of the food poor people consume is actually rich. Can we create demand for such foods and give impetus for creativity, conservation and healthy consumption.
3. A large number of knowledge and culturally rich, economically poor people whose cultural skills and repertoire can enrich our life and provide income transfer from our pocket to their pockets. We need to design a portal of creative culture of India. There are so many renderings of Ramayana or for that matter other folktales, songs and plays in local language for which market exists. People will listen free for 25 sec or more and then if they download, the money say, one rupee per local song will go to the artists' account. Enrichment of cultural landscape, creation of markets for folk cultural artists and conservation and augmentation of diversity will be some of the outcomes. Two students tried to do a pilot at IIMA last year as a part of a small project.
4. There are Five lakh technology students in the country, each one of them does a project but nobody knows what happens to these projects. If we create an innovation relay or kho kho, then one project developed in one college may be taken forward in another, and another, till it becomes a product. Neither the problems of small sector and informal sector are

posed to the students nor do they get a chance to work with the grassroots innovators. We should connect them, mentor them and support them. If just one per cent of the projects solved the real life problems partially or completely, we would solve at least 5000 problems per year. We need to give feed forward to them from SSIs and other social sectors. At the same their ideas can and should go in cases where applicable, to market. We will eliminate project writing industry, put premium on originality and in the process create/reinforce a culture of creativity, collaboration and compassion¹

5. There are about 172 districts in India where the writ of the sovereign nation does not completely run. Various kinds of ultra left activists have taken upon themselves the responsibility of dispersing justice and maintaining order. Notwithstanding the fact, the violence can never achieve solution to any problem, the violence by state will also be counter-productive. Can we have an innovation insurgent programme so that having betrayed the poor people in terms of *Jal, Jungle and Jamin* in the fight on *Jankari*, i.e., knowledge rights, we don't let them suffer. National Knowledge (C) ommision is disengaged from the minds of majority. History will judge the morality of this disengagement.
6. National Innovation Foundation has pooled more than 70000 innovations and traditional knowledge practices from over 500 districts beginning with about 12000 in February 2000. How many of these innovations are known to the children in schools or colleges? How many are being tried or tested in farmers fields or artisanal workshops. A large number of these are open source, though for some patents have been filed and obtained in India, US and elsewhere. How can science and technology, education, culture and other developmental departments engage with creative people in the informal sector and turn around the mood of the society? The bridge between the formal and informal science is beginning to deliver results (partnership between NIF with ICMR and CSIR has delivered some useful results already). But a lot more remains to be done. Why should it not be mandatory for every public funded educational institution to engage with informal knowledge sector of the country so that all tax payers (since indirect taxes are regressive and they generate more revenue for the government, poorer people pay more taxes than the rich) get their due. In addition, it will also give educational institutions to learn from the economic 'have-nots' and knowledge 'haves'.
7. Grassroots to Global: Can India take the leadership in providing low cost affordable solutions to the whole developing world and provide a new model of benevolent super-power mindset. Western solutions are costly and often inappropriate. Chinese solutions are low cost but often mass manufactured within China, and therefore they meet affordability criteria but do not generate local manufacturing and entrepreneurship

¹ Department of Information Technology, Media Lab Asia and Knowledge (c) ommision may ignore it for present but then time of such an idea has come and already a few vice chancellors of some of the universities have agreed to take it forward. A few hundred projects have already been pooled through volunteer students from various IITs who have worked with me on this in past. If we allow our young minds to get satisfied with any thing which is not original, innovative and creative then, all their life they would have tendency of being satisfied too early with too little. They will also not develop sensitivity towards problems unsolved around them, in their own discipline and profession.

opportunities. India has to develop an alternative vision of providing open source solutions as a part of its diplomatic policy after compensating the creative people(through technology acquisition funds), create investment SPV (special purpose Vehicle) which will invest in the small ventures in the developing countries and generate local jobs. As the income increases, it is likely that the second order needs so arising might be met by Indian companies/products and services. This will not only provide linkage between innovation, investment and enterprise within the country, but also internationally. China has already started the journey on Honey Bee Network path. Brazil is trying and so are Ethiopia, Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia and many other countries. Board of Governors of Latin American Development Banks, will listen to HBN presentation on April 5, 08 to scale up the experience of grassroots innovation movement in Latin America and a jury has been set up to give grants for inclusive innovations for the majority. NIF has marketed grassroots innovation based products to all the six continents. A new model of Globalization is on the anvil.

8. In primary education, a similar search for innovations by primary school teachers without any help of the state was started by my colleague, Prof. Vijaya Sherry Chand. There is no doubt that in education, a similar transformation will take place. Only problem is that many of these solutions don't need much money but require time. Recently, the postal department has requested us to help them develop an innovation reward system. My first suggestion to them was to make each postman a scout for creative ideas. Imagine a map of creative minds of this country once made and renewed every year will forever remove the stigma on inertia and conservatism on common people for all the time. At the same time, a culture of initiative, innovation , sharing and creating a common good at local level will also get institutionalised.
9. Markets seldom monitor the misery. And the state tries to mask it. It is the civil society and social movements which articulate it. Every protest, whether creative or destructive is a signal of a need not met. We have to make our antenna more samvedansheel. How to use the energy underlying social protest movements and harness it to generate feedback, and responsiveness in the state. If we track such movements and create a national portal on social protests, we will institutionalize opportunity to learn from social dissatisfaction. No other country will do it. State will get a chance to share its response on every such response. The centralization of arena of protest (why should every body come in large numbers to boat club to protest) will get reversed. Dissent is the salt of civic life. India alone can do it.
10. **Deviant research** triggers lateral thinking and tangential pursuits (see New Scientist, Sept 22, 2007). Can we create ten per cent allocation in every scheme for those who find problems with the existing rules coming in the way to serve larger society. We also provide incentives to reduce unit cost in every sector and try approaches radically different from what is current dogma, or 'truth'. Pursuit of dissent, deviance and diversity will provide a model for sustainable development. Any other mirage is misplaced.