

Rural Innovators and Possible Linkages with UBA

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Marginal people need not possess marginal minds. They are creative too and innovate a lot. With this belief, Palle Srujana – a part of Honeybee nationwide network, nurtures the creativity in the rural regions of Two Telugu states. The journey of scouting the innovations, their documentation, and their horizontal dissemination from Land to land, farmer to farmer and villager to villager has been very exciting over the last 16 years. What we found are amazing grassroots innovations which are *appropriate, of affordable excellence* and meeting the unmet needs of the villagers in their livelihood activity. These grassroots innovators are humble, less or not educated, no access to money and materials, unaware of current technologies, and use mostly local resources and technologies to build solutions to their problems. Despite these, they innovate solutions to their unmet needs. It is important to respect them and treat them with appropriate respect and trust. Palle Srujana believes in the fact that we know what we know and villagers know what they know. *We are therefore equal in knowledge terms. None is superior to others.*

It is important to scout and document the creativity of the grassroots innovations as they solve their problems. An innovation in a village will be needed in many other villages of the country. Hence, horizontal dissemination is important. Such technology commons made by locals, with local resources, local problems and local solutions make them significant for their development and growth. Once we identify their ability to innovate and capture the innovations they found, we can pursue them for dissemination, reengineering, validation, manufacture, patenting, etc, where required. Having understood their ability to solve their problems, complement their efforts to improve their innovations and address

those problems which are beyond them. All efforts should be made *to supplement their creativity and not to replace it.*

Leveraging grassroots creativity involves *unlearning* by us to comprehend their creativity. Documentation of these innovations is very critical to connect the informal knowledge to the formal sector. As the innovator do not keep any record of how he developed the innovation, its documentation becomes a big challenge. Patenting is another aspect which needs due discretion. Do they need Patent as their innovations made from low technologies, easily replicable and hardly any black boxes? Can they defend their patents? If we opt for "No patent", are we causing any financial loss or intellectual property loss to the grassroots innovator needs deliberation. There are many challenges in scouting, documenting and connecting the grassroots innovations to the formal system for effective dissemination of these useful innovations across the Nation.

Under UBA, we may engage students and faculty for many tasks to enable, support and guide the villagers to move on path of higher productivity and growth. Identifying their strengths is a very important step. *Strengthening their strengths* is the best approach for the development of villages. Surplus resources, unutilized resources and skills, rate of regeneration, uncultivated products/food, per capita natural resources, agri diversity of the village, traditional agri practices, storage methods, human and animal health practices should be mined and contextualized for the benefit of villagers. An assessment of present state of imports and exports of the villages needs serious assessment. *Reduction of imports and increase of exports* should be the mantra for village growth. Focus should be on tools to enhance the individual productivity with local technologies and local resources. Engaging local technicians for decentralized manufacture should be the approach to provide appropriate mechanization to the villages. Innovation and manufacture should be in close proximity to the

villagers. Suruchi example at Bardoli is very relevant in this context. In consonance with the Policy of Govt to encourage "Natural Farming", leveraging local knowledge of converting natural materials to support the farming and suitable mechanized tools and equipment for making it effective should be the focus.

Gram Swayam Samruddhi (GSS) enables the villagers to grow and process what they eat, use and wear- mostly the basic needs and consumption by people and their animals. UBA should focus on making villages Swayam Samruddhi in this perspective. Villagers should be encouraged to make what they can by supporting them. For what they cannot make they need to be provided sufficient skills and technology. Ensure that they own the initiatives and UBA only supports them. Then and then only the changes UBA brought in the villages outlasts them.

UBA should adopt an approach of respect to villagers, develop their trust and get accepted by them. Rest of the initiatives become that much easier.

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