



PRESS RELEASE

“Entrepreneurs are the agents of change”

This year, as we celebrate Gandhi Jayanti, the context of “Startup India” and “Make in India” emerge aptly to the foreground. How are we, as fellow citizens of this country, enabling complete economic freedom through self-reliance for those in India’s Tier II towns and rural areas? After all, 60% of India’s population resides in them.

New Delhi, 5th October, 2017

The fourth session of the Ananta-IEF Entrepreneurship Series “**Realising Poorna Swaraj through Entrepreneurship**” discussed how everyone – whether at the level of policy creation, among corporations, as torch-bearers of community creation, individual entrepreneurs, and media - can reignite this spark of self-reliance in India’s entrepreneurship ecosystem, and help achieve Bapu’s dream of Poorna Swaraj.

The panelists are active stakeholders of the entrepreneurship ecosystem: **Ms. Lakshmi V. Venkatesan**, Founding Trustee and Executive Vice President of Bharatiya Yuva Shakti Trust, **Mr. Rewaj Chhetri**, Founder, Startup Harbour (online entrepreneur hub), **Ms. Hanna Ruddies**, Global Growth and Onboarding Coordinator, Impact Hub. The session was moderated by **Ms. Bhairavi Jani**, Chairperson, IEF Foundation & Executive Director, SCA Group and Board Member, Ananta Centre.

The session started off by **Ms Lakshmi Venkatesan** addressing the main question: Why is grassroots and rural entrepreneurship important for India’s growth? In rural areas, entrepreneurship is a fundamental activity. **“Entrepreneurship is not a choice, there are necessity entrepreneurs not opportunity entrepreneurs.”** This is because, quite often no jobs are waiting back home for rural Indians after education. Hence, there is no choice and entrepreneurship becomes fundamental to survival and growth. However there is no ecosystem to support these entrepreneurs. The ecosystem hasn’t changed or grown but the number of people looking for a job has grown. There is an urgent need to create the right kind of entrepreneurship ecosystem. She also shared few success stories.

Ms Hanna Ruddies stressed the importance of community coming together to boost local entrepreneurship. Having like-minded people, mentors, etc. around creates a safe space and creates a community which helps to foster an encouraging environment. She also emphasized on the need to work together; to **‘work without borders.’** A good development in this regard is that we now tackle problems locally but are globally connected. She also stated that diversity in communities is important. There is a need to bring everyone to the same table. Everybody has to be involved in the decision making. It is important to feel like one is part of something. Empathy is very important in building this ecosystem for entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs are the agents of change. They can use the ecosystem to solve social problem.

Mr. Rewaj Chhetri shared his experience and journey of creating a startup. Startup Harbour was created to build a community entrepreneurship circle. Revealing a refreshing change in the entrepreneurship culture, he spoke about the idea behind his start up: local entrepreneurs need to help each other especially in a state where there is no access to Venture Capital firms and a supporting ecosystem. The problem is that local entrepreneurs tend to follow the same success model. Many give up just after a few months because of lack of an ecosystem. He also focused on the need to develop ideas. He stated that the government is coming up with schemes and responding to people's aspirations because of rise of entrepreneurship. **Ms Venkatesan** pointed out that rural entrepreneurs are still looking for the same things they looked for in 1992. The question arises: Are we demanding for the rights things? One keeps on asking for subsidies, but is that what is really needed to boost entrepreneurship. Money can be available. But if money is not utilized properly the entrepreneur fails. *'Mentoring' is the solution.*

About Ananta Aspen Centre:

Engaging India, Nurturing Change Ananta Aspen Centre is an educational and policy studies organisation based in New Delhi. It focusses on values based leadership and open dialogue on challenges facing Indian society to help foster its transformation. The Centre engages civil society, business, governments and other key stakeholders to share ideas and bring a wide range of perspectives on issues important to India's development, foreign policy, strategic affairs and national security. Ananta Aspen Centre is an independent non-profit organization registered under the Indian Trusts Act and under 12A and 80G of the Income Tax Act.

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