

# Angel investor Asha Motwani launches fellowship for Indian startups

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Silicon Valley venture capitalist Asha Jadeja Motwani has launched an annual fellowship programme, Rajeev Circle Fellowship, to enable Indian entrepreneurs to visit and connect with entrepreneurs, mentors and seed investors in Silicon Valley in the US.

Rajeev Circle Fellowship is a programme launched by Asha, wife of late Stanford Professor Rajeev Motwani, who was a globally acclaimed computer scientist. Rajeev was a mentor to the likes of Larry Page and Sergey Brin and was also a key architect of the algorithms that power Google today.

As part of the annual programme, over a dozen entrepreneurs will be picked each year for the Silicon Valley visit.

As part of the first round, a few entrepreneurs from different startup incubators in India were picked and taken to Silicon Valley. They met with the likes of Twitter founder Jack Dorsey and NetScape Communications co-founder Marc Andreessen. They also visited Stanford Design School, and the headquarters of Google, Facebook, Twitter, AirBnb etc.

The entrepreneurs for the first round of programme included incubatees from IIM-A, Ahmedabad-based National Institute of Design (NID) and Kochi-based Startup Village.

"Asha is helping us set up the Rajeev Circle corridor for startups to move to and fro from India to the heart of Silicon Valley. It will give exposure to young startups in our country to the best in the Valley, besides access to angel investors and their perspectives on how to build global product startups," said Startup Village chief mentor Kris Gopalakrishnan.

A serial investor, Asha has invested in over 75 startups in Silicon Valley. She is now focusing on Indian startups. "I met several bright young entrepreneurs in India pursuing excellent ideas and experiments but they don't get the kind of mentoring horsepower that is so common and abundant in Silicon Valley. Unless the entrepreneurs understand the

culture, the walk, and the talk of Silicon Valley, serious dialogue was unlikely to emerge," said Asha.

(Edited by Prem Udayabhanu)

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