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Business

US-based Serial Angel Investor Launches Think Tank

By **NE Reporter** on November 30, 2018



NEW DELHI:

In a pioneering initiative to inject vigour into India's startup ecosystem, a top-notch Silicon Valley serial angel investor and venture capitalist today announced the launch of a one of a kind think tank that would facilitate a curated annual exchange between top scholars at Stanford University and their counterparts in South Asia and create new frontiers of human-centric technology.

US-based Asha Jadeja Motwani said her think tank, christened MITLI (Motwani Institute of Thought Leadership in Innovation), would facilitate exchanges in

key academic fields such as computer science, material science, education, health-tech, policy design and political science to give wings to aspirations of emerging entrepreneurs.

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Asha made the announcement at TiE Global Summit III at The Taj Palace hotel here as a Grand Key Note speaker at one of the sessions of the event, the largest Global Entrepreneurial Leadership Summit in the world, being attended by top industry leaders, decision-makers, startups, ideators, investors, influencers and professionals. Her topic of discussion was 'Where Angels Dare to Tread'.

“MITLI will be a permanent organisation designed to more systematically address the challenges through our entrepreneurial empowerment programmes,” she said, and also announced creation of MITLI India (regional) board, recruitments for which would be done through potential tie-ups with Indian universities, NGOs, and government.

California-based Asha is the wife of late Stanford Prof. Rajeev Motwani, an internationally acclaimed computer scientist and the architect of Google's algorithmic architecture that powers the world's leading search engine today. He had also the distinction of mentoring Larry Page and Sergey Brin, the co-founders of Google Inc in 1998, at Stanford University.

“My vision is to catalyze innovation and entrepreneurship in India at the grassroots level. Student exchanges between Stanford and South Asia will fuel key new vectors in our own research and teaching agenda,” noted the venture capitalist, who has

invested in more than a hundred Internet and high social impact startups in the Bay Area, Boston, New York, Africa and India, some of which have become public companies.

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“We have deep roots in Silicon Valley and our primary region of current activity is South Asia. We have a dynamic hub in Venice (Italy) that jumpstarts our companies with unprecedented access to design and European pilot customers. We are also architecting a core technology platform that will leverage Blockchain for providing instant capital to the unbanked,” she said.

Elaborating, Asha, who earned her doctorate in urban planning, civil engineering and political science from University of California, Berkeley and Stanford, said India and Indians have a unique capability to solve hard problems that enable exponential change for the greatest number of people around the world. “By building bonds that are even tighter between Silicon Valley and India and other key markets, we stand a better chance of creating truly innovative solutions and scaling new heights in human-centric development,” she observed.

During her 30-minute address, she also sought to underscore an approach that does not draw a distinction between the private and public sectors. “As business people, government representatives, academics, and entrepreneurs, we share a common objective and a common future. We must all work towards an inclusive approach,” said Asha, who is also the founder of ‘Maker Fest’ in India, Brazil, Pakistan and Africa that spots and supports aspiring entrepreneurs.

Her California-based Motwani Jadeja Foundation (perhaps the first ever US 501c3 with a venture fund of its own) is a non-profit, global fund, designed to transform entrepreneurial individuals into creative change makers. It supports and collaborates with leading institutions, companies and innovators from around the world. These include: Stanford University, University of California Berkeley, MIT, Google, startups in Silicon Valley, Acumen Fund NY, TED, IIT Kanpur, TIE Global, and Jumpstart.

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Asha is listed as a key executive in the Directory of Venture Capital and Private Equity Firms. She has launched the annual Rajeev Circle Fellowship, with the objective of developing a dynamic corridor of entrepreneurship, collaboration and community between Silicon Valley and South Asia. In particular, it helps Indian entrepreneurs connect with entrepreneurs, mentors and angel investors in Silicon Valley.

She is also creating a network of Fablabs around the world, to help spark off distributed manufacturing using just in time creation, tinkering and deliveries.



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