



Crafts, Clusters and Institutional Innovation: Thoughts for Policy

A lecture delivered by Prof. Keshab Das

As part of the lecture series titled ‘Dialogues on Development’, the Bahá’í Chair for Studies in Development at Devi Ahilya Vishwavidyalaya, Indore is pleased to announce a lecture delivered online by Prof. Keshab Das, Dean, School of Social, Financial & Human Sciences, KIIT Deemed to be University, Bhubaneswar on Saturday 2 December, 2023 from 11 am to 12.15 pm on the theme ‘Crafts, Clusters and Institutional Innovation: Thoughts for Policy’. Those interested in participating in the lecture may register at the following link: <https://forms.gle/RxN49QvvF7Mx5ijf6>

Abstract of the lecture:

The craft sector in India has remained one of the most neglected domains of local economic regeneration and job creation. Pathetic official statistics on the sector notwithstanding, there has been little attempt to build up a competitive labour-intensive non-farm sector mostly comprising the ubiquitous craft sector – handlooms and handicrafts. This has been unfortunate as the growth and diversification of the farming activities have been unimpressive. The relegation of the crafts including artisan enterprises, rated as the largest source of employment following agriculture, has remained a sordid episode in employment and enterprise planning in both rural and urban India. With home to possibly the largest number of craft clusters in the world, the craft sector in India has received little attention in terms of creating an innovative ethos, diversification of products, organising key raw materials (as through input banks), product promotion and exploring newer markets including global markets. These efforts would involve an approach of internalising inclusive innovation wherein the producers (craftspersons and artisans) occupy centre-stage in a participative framework of engaging with various aspects of business development, cluster-specific and generic infrastructure that would, inter alia, facilitate building new skills to enhance labour productivity.

This presentation engages with the craft sector with the dual perspective of business development (including by identifying demand-side drivers) and creation of sustainable jobs through an ecosystem of inclusive innovation where skill formation and selective technological upgradation would be attained through a combination of traditional and new knowledge. An attempt is made towards critiquing and contributing to policy discourse on

rendering the crafts sector an important source of local income and employment. Lessons of innovative initiatives from a few Asian nations would also be discussed as policy learning.

About the speaker:

Keshab Das is Dean, School of Social, Financial & Human Sciences at the KIIT Deemed to be University, Bhubaneswar. He also is a Visiting Professor with the Institute for Human Development, New Delhi. He holds M.Phil. (Applied Economics) and Ph.D. (Economics) degrees from the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi (through the Centre for Development Studies, Trivandrum). He is a recipient of the VKRV Rao Prize in Social Sciences (Economics). He is a former President of the Odisha Economic Association and the Editor-in-Chief of the Odisha Economic Journal. His research and policy engagement concern issues in local and regional development; industrialisation strategies; informal sector; MSMEs, industrial clusters, GPNs; innovation; labour; infrastructure; and politics of development.