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ANALYSIS**

TOPIC

**NEW PATHWAYS FOR INDIA'S
CREATIVE ECONOMY**

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In Context

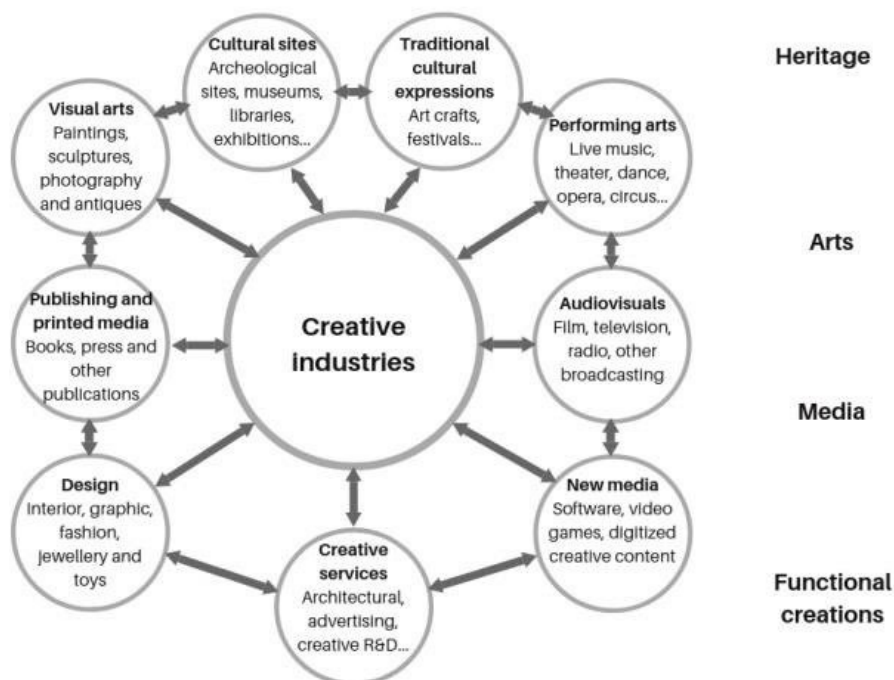
- India has a long and diverse history of creativity and innovation across disciplines like from art and astronomy to metallurgy and medicine.
 - As **India aims to become a \$5 trillion economy**, fostering a new wave of innovation, especially at the grassroots level is crucial. Creativity should not only be celebrated but strategically supported to drive economic development.

Creative Economy Landscape

- The global creative economy has seen impressive growth:
 - In 2022, creative services exports **reached \$1.4 trillion, a 29% increase from 2017.**
 - Creative goods exports were **\$713 billion, reflecting a 19% growth.**
 - Overall, the creative economy generates over **\$2 trillion annually and supports about 50 million jobs worldwide.**
 - According to UNCTAD's Creative Economy Outlook 2024, the key contributors in 2022 were Software services (41.3%), Research & Development (30.7%) & Advertising, market research, and architecture (15.5%).
- Also, India has made substantial contributions to the global creative economy. In 2019, **creative exports stood at \$121 billion**, with services such as **IT and design contributing the lion's share.**
- The design segment alone accounted for **87.5% of creative goods exports, followed by traditional arts and crafts** at around 9%. As of 2024, the sector is valued at \$30 billion and employs about 8% of India's working population.
- Most grassroots innovations remain informal, unscaled, and unrecognized due to inadequate investment, institutional neglect, and insufficient IP protection.

Understanding Creativity and Innovation

- Creativity is the **foundation of innovation**. It can be categorized **into four forms**: deliberate and emotional, deliberate and cognitive, spontaneous and emotional, and spontaneous and cognitive.
- Creativity may be **endogenous (internally generated) or exogenous (externally influenced)**.
- Like, in the Indian context, many grassroots innovations fall under the deliberate and cognitive or spontaneous and cognitive types, such as the **mitti cool clay refrigerator, pedal-powered washing machine, and amphibious bicycle.**



- This creative-to-innovative pipeline is often disrupted due to **lack of funding, formal recognition, and technical mentorship, especially in rural and semi-urban India**. Creativity thrives individually, but innovation demands systems and structures.

Social and Economic Implications of Grassroots Innovation

- Grassroots innovation serves a dual purpose: **economic empowerment and social transformation**. Empowering local innovators can:
 - ♦ Create jobs and livelihood opportunities.
 - ♦ Address local problems using context-specific solutions.
 - ♦ Reduce dependency on top-down technological imports.
 - ♦ Enhance inclusion by bringing marginalized communities into the innovation economy.
- Organizations like the **Grassroots Innovation Augmentation Network (GIAN)** have attempted to identify and support local innovations.
- A model such as **“One District, One Innovation”, akin to the successful “One District, One Product” initiative**, could help spotlight local ingenuity while ensuring region-specific economic development.

Challenges in India’s Creative Economy

- **Policy and Institutional Challenges:** The institutions such as **Startup India, Atal Innovation Mission, and National Innovation Foundation** have laid the groundwork however, several gaps remain like lack of knowledge about IP protection, lack of credit, bureaucratic hurdles & lack of innovation in current education.
- **Digital Divide:** A significant portion of rural and semi-urban India lacks access to digital tools and connectivity, which restricts access to knowledge, markets, and collaboration platforms crucial for creative professionals and innovators.
- **Ageing Artisans:** Many of India’s traditional crafts and creative practices are sustained by ageing artisans. The younger generation is often reluctant to pursue these crafts due to a lack of formal recognition, sustainable income, and institutional support.
- **Gap Between Creativity and Innovation:** While individual creativity is abundant, there’s a lack of structured mechanisms to convert these ideas into scalable innovations. This gap is due to limited funding, absence of mentorship, and weak industry linkages.

Global Best Practice: The Antrodam Project (Indonesia)

- A compelling example of biomimicry and creative innovation is the **Antrodam Project by students of Binus School, Bekasi, Indonesia**. Confronted with the perennial challenge of urban flooding, the students turned to nature for solutions. Drawing inspiration from:
 - ♦ **Indian Harvester Ants:** known for their sophisticated tunnel systems that channel water away,
 - ♦ **Rose Petals:** whose layered surfaces direct water flow,
 - ♦ **Lettuce Leaf Coral:** with its intricate branching network,
 - ♦ **Giant Pill Millipede:** which showcases compact, resilient design,
 - ♦ **Frigate Birds:** which use their water-resistant throat pouches to survive marine conditions,
- They designed a biomimetic flood protection system that works with natural water flows instead of resisting them.

Key Initiatives Supporting the Creative Economy

- **UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN):** Indian cities like Jaipur, Varanasi, and Srinagar have joined this global initiative, recognizing and supporting local creativity in crafts, design, and heritage. UCCN fosters knowledge exchange, cultural tourism, and sustainable urban development.
- **All India Initiative on Creative Economy:** A national framework aimed at promoting creative industries as a major pillar of economic development. It includes policy support, entrepreneurship facilitation, and skill development in the creative sector.
- **Zonal Cultural Centers (ZCCs):** These centers promote regional culture and heritage through festivals, training workshops, and artist support programs. They help bridge the rural-urban divide in creative expression.

- **National Creators Award:** This newly launched award recognizes creators from across India who have made an impact through art, storytelling, and digital media. It not only honors talent but also motivates youth to pursue creative careers.

Investments and Policy Support: The Need of the Hour

- As India charts its path towards becoming a \$5 trillion economy, a robust, inclusive innovation ecosystem must become central to the strategy. This requires a synergistic approach:
 - ◆ Investing in creative education and design thinking from school levels.
 - ◆ Creating district-level innovation hubs and community labs.
 - ◆ Reforming IP laws to recognize informal and traditional knowledge.
 - ◆ Allocating a defined share of climate finance and CSR funds to grassroots creative projects.
 - ◆ Encouraging public-private-people partnerships to co-create scalable innovations.

Source: TH

Mains Practice Question

[Q] Discuss the role of grassroots innovations in boosting India's creative economy. What challenges hinder their scalability and how can they be addressed?

