

Nanotechnology in India and the idea of 'Responsible Innovation'

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'Responsibility' is a very interesting term. Where, at one place, it brings positive, attributional overtones of ethics and morality to the discussion, at the other, it looks for evaluation, judgments and blames. In the Science and Society discourses, 'Responsibility' has always been a core recurrent theme. The debates on 'Responsibility' became more prominent with the public controversies related to nuclear technologies, environmental global justice, ICTs and surveillance technologies. The concept of 'Responsibility' is generally placed in relation to risk (as in risk society) and justice. Some argue that the discourse of 'Responsibility' is growing, in effort to incrementally replace the notions of risk and justice.

One such attempt (and a prominent one) is the recent focus of the Europe, UK and USA to bring in the concept of 'Responsible Innovation'. There are growing debates on what the term entails and how it could be developed into a framework to guide research and innovations. Though these discourses are growing in developed countries, there are very little discussions on the implications it might have, when it travels to other developing countries through international collaborative research projects, policy statements and bilateral and multilateral laws and agreement.

The present study is an attempt to incite a debate on 'Responsible Innovation' in India in context of nanotechnology ex-ante its solidification in international frameworks, protocols and codes of conduct. In a situation, where the whole world is talking about finding ways of reflecting on emerging technologies, without essentially harming the zeal of scientific innovations what could responsible innovation mean for a country like India which is attracting attention of the world as a fast growing economy? In what direction is Nanotechnology innovation in India heading, in terms of sustainability and inclusive growth? What could be the possible mode of institutionalization of Nanoscience and Nanotechnology in order to be in pace with the developments in science geared up with a reflexive, inclusive and anticipative regulatory and governance system?