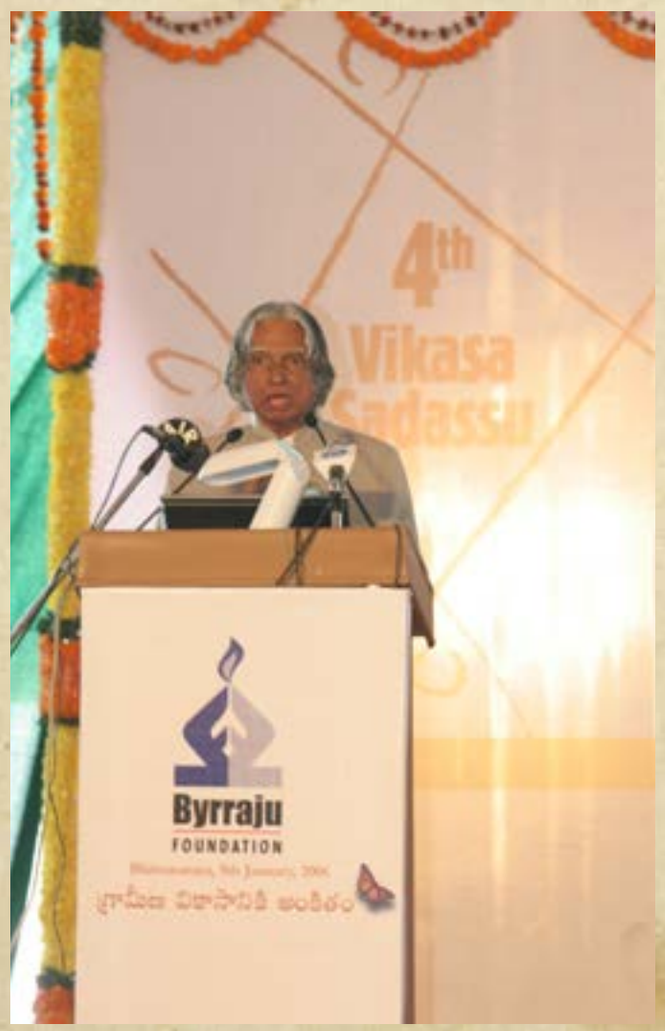

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BRF 2.0 – The sustainability phase

- After 2009, for a few years, BRF focused on economic sustainability and consolidation
- Expansion into more villages was put on hold
- BRF and 117 villages became financially independent by 2010
- No external funds were required at all till 2018
- Health, drinking water and livelihood programmes continued
- The tremendous goodwill among rural communities for BRF remained undiminished, despite there being no expansion. This was testimony to the high esteem in which BRF was held by its village residents

Address at the vikasa sadassu (Development Forum)

Rural Prosperity and its Multi-dimensions

I am delighted to participate in the Vikasa Sadassu (Development Forum) being organised by the Byrraju Foundation. My greetings to Byrraju Foundation and its members, Vikasa Sadassu fraternity, Ashwini project team, community change agents, trustees, associates, farmers and the participants of the Vikasa Sadassu event in Bhimavaram. I particularly greet Mr. B. Ramalinga Raju, Chairman, Satyam Corporation, who pioneered not only in Information Technology but also extended his wings to the rural transformation. I am very happy to know that four consecutive Vikasa Sadassu of the Byrraju Foundation and its activities have brought a difference in the life style of the people of 150 villages from the five districts of Andhra Pradesh. When I am seeing thousands of persons participating in this Vikasa Sadassu, I am thinking what thoughts I can share here. I have chosen the topic for discussion as "Rural Prosperity and its Multi-dimensions".

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Evolution of First Green Revolution

I would like to share with you an event that happened when I was a young boy in Rameswaram during the post independent period. At that time, I vividly recall the village community eagerly awaiting for the wheat ship to reach the Madras port so that wheat can reach the village by road. This was the main feeding force for the country in those days. The country used to have hardly a week's reserve and any delay in the arrival of the ship would cause severe supply problems. This situation was prevalent till the early 60's. The Green Revolution Programme was launched by the political visionary Shri C. Subramaniam and the scientific visionary Dr. M.S. Swaminathan with the help of the scientists, entrepreneurs and the farmer community. In addition, what was needed was a good water management system, availability of high-quality seeds, good storage facility and proper distribution mechanism. The Government through its various development schemes provided these facilities. This has led to intensive agriculture in the country, which produced a substantial amount of food grains and liberated India from the situation of what was called 'ship -to -mouth -existence'! As part of this first Green Revolution, the country has been able to produce 200 million tons of grains per year. But farmers earning capacity is continuously reducing. Hence it is essential to add value to agricultural produce through agro food processing so that farmers' earning capacity can increase. The 2nd Green Revolution includes agro food processing and marketing.

Second Green Revolution

Now is the time for India to embark upon the Second Green Revolution, which will enable it to increase its productivity in the agricultural sector. The production of cereals needs to increase from the present 200 million tonnes to 400 million tonnes by 2020 in view of population growth and increase in the purchasing power. But the requirement of land for the increasing population and urban pressure will bring down the availability of arable land from 170 million hectares to 100 million hectares by 2020. In addition the water availability will be reduced and the people working on the farms will also come down due to attraction of farmers towards the services and industrial sector. All our agricultural scientists and technologists have to provide right type of technologies and work with the farmers for doubling the productivity within the available land and the other constraints. The type of technologies needed would be in the areas of biotechnology, proper training to the farmers, additional modern equipment for preservation and storage etc. The second Green Revolution is indeed graduating from grain production to food processing and marketing. It involves soil characterisation, matching the seed to the soil, water and fertiliser management, pesticide management, pre and post-harvest management, agricultural waste management, agro processing and marketing, encompassing the total value chain. While doing so, utmost care should be taken for various environmental and people related aspects leading to sustainable development. In the 2nd Green Revolution farmers should be encouraged to adopt precision farming techniques which will enable them to produce high quality products consistently and compete in the international market.

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Our challenges

Presently, the annual GDP growth rate of the nation is around 7% to 8%. There is a need to increase the growth rate of the GDP by additional 2% a year for transforming India into a developed nation and making the number of people below the poverty line to be near zero, we need to progressively implement the PURA programme in different parts of the country. As you are aware, the number of PURAs required to be brought out in the whole nation is around 7,000. However, I would like to discuss about the enabling environment provided by the Government, and some of the components of PURA and its models available in different parts of the country, which will enable large-scale provision of employment in the rural sector.

Bharat Nirman Programme: The Union Government has evolved the Bharat Nirman as a four-year business plan for building infrastructure, especially in rural India. It will have six components, namely, irrigation, roads, water supply, housing, rural electrification & rural telecom connectivity. The broad goals of Bharat Nirman would be:

- Bringing an additional 10 million hectare of land under assured irrigation
- Providing road-connectivity to all villages having a population of 1000 (or 500 in hilly/tribal areas)
- Constructing 60 lakh additional houses for the poor
- Providing drinking water to the remaining 74,000 habitations that are uncovered
- Reaching electricity to the remaining 1,25,000 villages and electricity connections to 23 million households
- Providing telephone connectivity to the remaining 67,000 villages.

The programme has been estimated to cost Rs. 174,000 crore and is to be completed in the next four years. The government has allocated an additional Rs. 25,000 crore for social sector programmes during the current financial year. Bharat Nirman will involve Panchayati Raj Institutions in its planning and implementation. The challenging task here is the evolution of the management structure for a mission mode operation through PURA where an integrated development is possible. The need for the interventions on facilitating rural credit, rural energy like biogas plants, integrated zero waste management need to be concentrated to build green villages. This helps in self-generating system and creates various opportunities for farm-based livelihoods, thereby helps rural economic growth.

Operations of PURAs

Many of the PURA complexes in the country may like to follow such examples for economic benefits and keeping the rural setting clean, tidy and disease free. In Andhra Pradesh itself, there are two operational power plants in Vijayawada and Hyderabad which generates 6.5 MGW of power from the municipal waste. The PURAs are efficiently run by the private, social organisations and institutions. Byrraju Foundation may like to study the operational PURAs in the country. These PURAs have focused on employment generation using physical, electronic and knowledge connectivity leading to economic connectivity. This experience I am sure that Vikasa Sadassu may like to consider.

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Here I would like to share my experience with the Disaster Management system, which is operational in ICELAND. Iceland has a model Civil Defence Control Centre (CDCC) connecting sea vessels, coast guard and police organisation. Anywhere from the country, the CDCC can be accessed through a single digit number. If it is an earthquake the experts immediately rush to the CDCC and generate the plan of action in few minutes. The identified relief organisation reaches the spot instantaneously.

Health Care and Emergency Management: I am happy to see that primary health care services are provided to the remotely located patient using the system designed by the Satyam Computer Services. Byrraju Foundation has brought the emergency medical services to the people of 5 districts such as Hyderabad, Vijayawada, Tirupathi, Visakapatnam and Warangal in association with the EMRI (The Emergency Management and Research Institute). I am happy to know that, when a person dials 108, a toll-free number from any telephone, the Advanced Life support system" ambulance reaches the spot and saves the life. I understand the services will be further extended to two more districts, that is East Godavari and West Godavari.

I have witnessed the live environment in their Disaster Management Control centre and their live operations. The entire ICELAND has been mapped into various zones and is electronically connected and is video and digitally monitored from the central control station. Since Satyam aligned with EMRI has embarked on a mission of providing emergency services in healthcare, you may like to study the model and expand the scope into various disaster Management aspects, which deals with earthquake, volcano, hurricane, fire, accidents and household emergencies. You need to link health with the other disaster management services.

Recently, I have given assent to the Bill "Establishment of National Disaster Management Authority" at centre and state level. It provides the establishment of State and Central level disaster management teams. When Andhra Pradesh government constitutes the State level disaster management agency, institutions like Byrraju Foundation can assist the Government so that the experience gained in emergency responses to healthcare can be shared for managing other types of disasters.

Change Agents: What has attracted me was the process of selection of 2700 change agents from these villages, that is 18 change agents per village. The Gram Vikas Samithi comprising elders, men and women selects 9 members from each village who will work as a change agents for this programme in the areas of health, education, water, sanitation, livelihood, infrastructure, agriculture, village level productive enterprise in the fields of IT, Garment manufacturing, lathe making, tailoring and construction and artisans. I am sure the Change agents will make a difference to the life of the villagers.

Education: I have also witnessed the tele-education sessions through the video conferencing with the 4 schools. The electronic connectivity between 32 villages has been established by the UNDP funding of Rs. 2 crores to provide wireless connectivity, setting up of studio and computers, video conferencing equipment and camera.

Dear friends, we have developed a tele-education software and I have been using the software for my interaction with the virtual universities, schools and other conferences. This software is called "Virtual Tele-ED". This has a unique feature of providing multimedia, that is audio, video and data synchronously with the collaborative tools. A teacher can teach 100's of remote locations connected in a VSAT, broadband and wireless network and create a virtual classroom. I would be willing to share the software with the Byrraju Foundation.

With the emergence of PURA Clusters in different parts of the country including Byrraju PURA, what is now required is to establish the linkage to PURA clusters by setting up of Domain service providers through PURA nodal knowledge data centres.

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PURA Nodal Knowledge Data Center

I have studied a system, which is working and used by the farmers and fishermen in different parts of the country. This is called the Kisan Call Centre (KCC) established by the Ministry of Agriculture. Kisan Call Centre offers three levels of interaction and support in Agriculture, fisheries and Animal Husbandry domains through the nationally nominated experts and corresponding directorates at the Central level. In the last one year of its operation the call centre hasprovided consultancy, information, assistance and guidance to over 6 lakh callers from the villages of eight states. As we have seen in the Agriculture and fisheries oriented Kisan Call Centre setup, similar Domain Service Provider Call centers are required in the domains of Commerce and Industry, Entrepreneurial skill Development and Employment generation, Travel and Tourism, Banking and Insurance, Meteorological forecasting, Disaster Warning systems, Human Resource Development, Education and Health care and other necessary domains. These call centres will act as a service provider to the PURA Nodal Knowledge Data Centres located in the PURA Complexes, which in turn will provide the area specific and customised knowledge to the Village Knowledge Centres in the villages in a holistic manner.

Conclusion

I have discussed some of the components of PURA, which are essential for realising the integrated rural development complexes. I would request the Byrraju Foundation to work in partnership with Shri. Vishnu Educational Society and other educational institutions and societal organisations and private industries to undertake the value-added implementation of these components in their rural clusters.

My best wishes to all the participants of Vikasa Sadassu for success in their mission of promoting accelerated societal transformation in integrated and sustainable rural development of the Bhimavaram region of Andhra Pradesh.

May God bless you!

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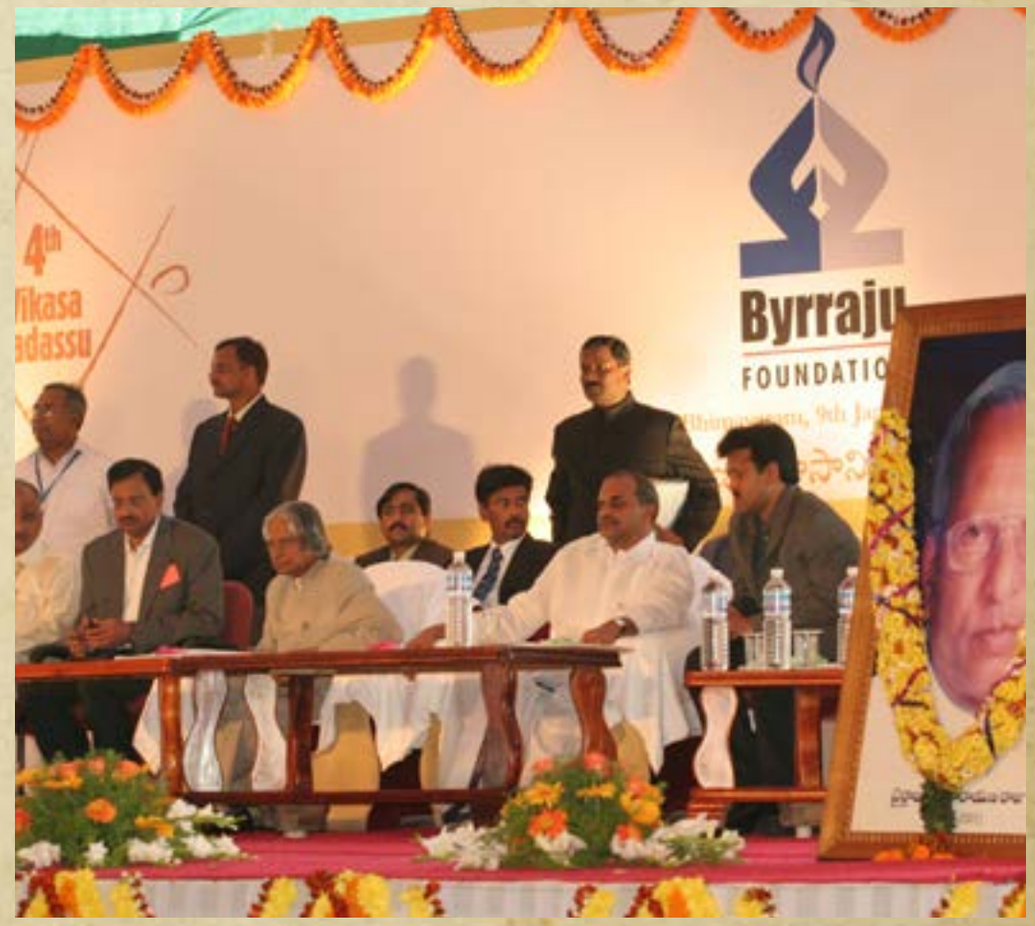

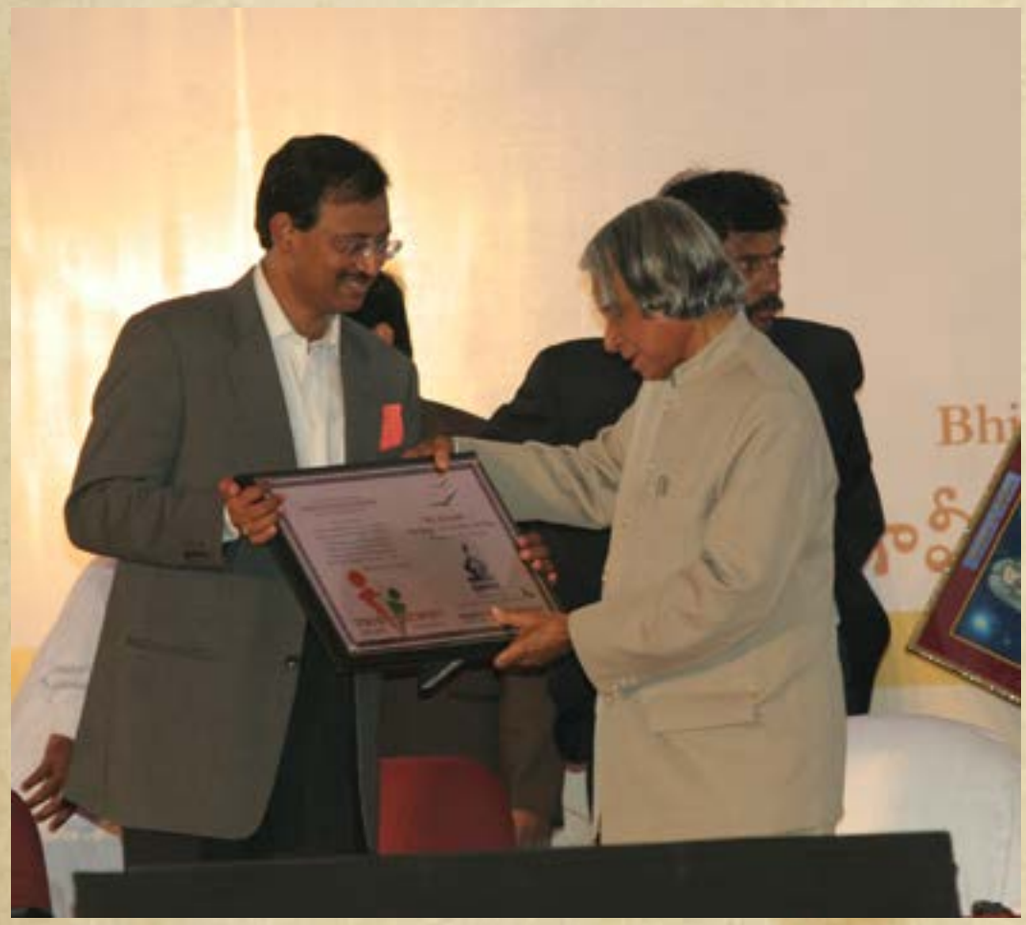

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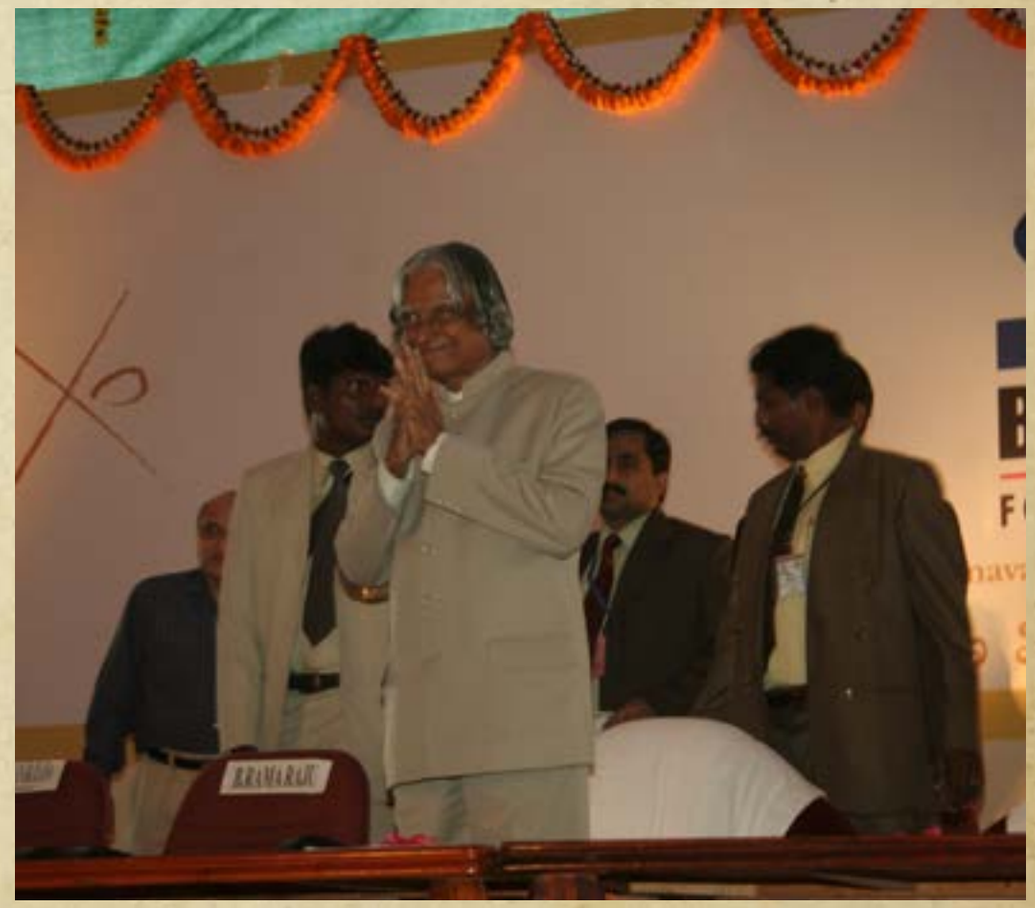

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