THE BHARATIYA AGRO INDUSTRIES FOUNDATION (BAIF) MODEL FOR TRIBAL REHABILITATION AND DRY REGIONS

I saw the integrated village cluster development programme during my visit with Narayan G. Hegde, an IIM graduate and an expert in farming and dairying. Chandra and Lachakadi, two village clusters in south Gujarat, have a population of 5,000. The tribal people from these villages migrate to nearby towns every summer. The BAIF model was installed here with the cooperation of the people and the participation of state authorities. First, water harvesting was undertaken to make water available to all. Every home was provided with livestock and a market for the milk produced by them.

DAIRY HUSBANDRY

BAIF members demonstrated the possibility of producing high-yielding cows by cross-breeding uneconomic, nondescript cattle with exotic dairy breeds while conserving the elite native breeds. Unemployed local youths were trained to undertake livestock breeding, pregnancy diagnosis, vaccinations for preventing disease, primary health care, forage production, feeding and other technical aspects of livestock development in rural areas. Each para-veterinarian assistant was assigned twelve to fifteen villages. This programme has enabled needy farmers to regain their self-confidence and produce good quality cattle. Door-to-door service has helped them avail of timely assistance and to develop faith in adopting technology. This programme has also helped conserve community pastures and forests, and promoted organic farming, women’s empowerment and food security through the easy supply of milk and the enhanced agricultural production.

CATTLE-BREEDING CENTRE

BAIF runs nearly 1,850 cattle breeding centres which they propose to increase to 5,000. The country needs over 30,000 cattle breeding centres in order to generate the cattle needed by 50 million families. This requires a replication of the BAIF type of organization in different parts of the country and simultaneously, additional input to BAIF, so that it can train and empower the local people to undertake the tasks involved in cattle breeding, cattle care, milk processing and marketing.

The BAIF model of integrated economic development with knowledge empowerment is an ideal example of the approach we need to take in order to empower the 3 billion rural population of the world through the PURA platform.