



Historical Background of Rural Development

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Abstract

Rural areas and rural development are not novice concepts. These concepts have been prevalent within the country since ancient times. The social, economic, political, and cultural spheres are the ones that need to be taken into consideration, when the concept of rural development is researched upon. The crucial aspects are, policies and programs need to be put into operation to alleviate the problems and challenges that are experienced by rural individuals. The various problems and challenges prove to be impediments within the course of their progression. It is essential to understand how the development of rural communities takes place in ancient times and in pre and post-independence periods. The main areas that have been taken into account include, emergence of rural development, rural development in the pre-independence period, rural development in the post-independence period, Mahatma Gandhi and rural development, significance of rural development concepts and policies and evaluation of rural development policies and programs.

Keywords: Economic Conditions; Evaluation; Policies; Programs, Rural Development

The development of rural areas in India is regarded to be a significant aspect in both economic and social spheres. In 1901, there were 212.6 million individuals living within rural communities. Whereas, in 2001, the rural population increased to 721.17 million. This depicted the increase in the density of the population. Furthermore, there was a decline in the land under agriculture. Rural development is a complicated area, despite the advancements taking place in technology and the availability of resources. Rural development has a long history in India. There are various approaches, strategies and philosophies, policies, programs, enactments, efforts, experiments and methodologies, which need to be studied and analysed [1]. This concept is not novice, particularly within the developing countries. The reason being, many developing countries have been practicing and promoting rural development for decades. Most of them have achieved success in the fields of education, health care, family welfare, poverty eradication, generation of self-employment, farm management and production, rural technologies and so forth [2].

The historical background of any activity or program provides its genesis, which may direct the authorities for the effective

implementation in future. Many programs of rural development were put into operation with the main purpose of bringing about development of rural communities. It has been unfortunate to find out that most of them were not successful. This has been the result of ineffective and inappropriate implementation. These programs could not make provision of complete benefits to the society. Therefore, the changing theme of rural development and the associated schemes, which have been implemented by the central government for the up-gradation of socio-economic conditions of the individuals need to be implemented in an appropriate manner [2]. In order to enhance socio-economic conditions of the individuals, it is vital to eradicate poverty and unemployment. Furthermore, improvements need to be brought about in the system of education and employment opportunities.

Emergence of rural development

In India, as well as in other developing countries, when emphasis is put upon the concept of development, then the development of rural areas is given utmost attention. There were misinterpretations in the aggregate figures, in terms of the practice of identifying growth and development. Economic growth had only the

selective impact, which benefitted the relatively developed areas and the moderately better-off individuals. The theory of growth has not been able to generate the desired outcomes. If development is not only viewed as economic growth, then the development of employment opportunities and measures were needed to accomplish the desired objectives. Development should cover the larger dimensions of the overall livelihoods opportunities of the vast majority of individuals. The realization that the traditional methods of agriculture within the developing countries could be transformed through modern technology and innovative farming practices. These were regarded as other aspects on rethinking on development. A major consequence of all these facts on the development experience is the current concern on rural development. It occupied the central space in the development dialogue on the World Bank, which is regarded as the supporter of the cause [1].

Rural development in the pre-independence period

Rural development has never been a new concept within the country. It has acquired significance and is interwoven in the heritage of the country. When history of mankind began, since then, the concept of rural development has acquired prominence. In the famous epics of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, rural communities are observed [1]. Since then, the rulers and the administrators are paying adequate attention towards enabling the rural individuals to sustain their living conditions in a well-organized manner. Furthermore, attention was paid towards areas such as, education, employment opportunities, agriculture and farming practices, administration, health care and medical and so forth.

Before the country achieved its independence, rural development within the country can be analysed under the influence of the British Empire. During the British rule, they did not have a major concern towards socio-economic development of the country. As a consequence, rural communities experienced deterioration and backwardness. The primary concern of the administration was the maintenance of law and order and the collection of revenue. Thus, fulfilment of the colonial interests was the primary objective and rural development was regarded as secondary. It was the famine of 1899, which compelled the British government to take into consideration the rural individuals, as they were undergoing detrimental effects [3].

The rural development functions in India were assumed by the government within the framework of recurrent famines. But in the beginning, they did not have any legal sanctions behind them. In the first few decades, after 1858, some of the district officers

seized in the middle of the famine, the food grain stocks and controlled the market. Their main objective is to ensure that these are distributed sufficiently among the poverty stricken and needy individuals. These strategies were put into practice without any formal legal sanction. The action was initiated, behind the determination to control profiteering and alleviate the problems and challenges, experienced by rural individuals [1].

The recurrent famines compelled the state administrators to seize the food grains and distribute them among the individuals and communities, who have been effected by famine. This task was implemented without any apparent legal sanction, motivated as the action was by the determination to control profiteering and alleviate unfavourable effects. There was removal of the barter system. The traditional barter system received a set-back, during the British period. Cash economy was introduced by the British, which enabled the farmers to adopt commercial crops. In this way, agricultural subsistence gave rise to commercial crops. Several measures were adopted to combat agricultural crisis, such as, provision of irrigation facilities, co-operative societies and so forth. In addition, efforts were made by voluntary organizations [3]. The various programs initiated have been stated as follows: [3].

Sriniketan experiment

Early efforts, putting emphasis upon rural development were initiated by Shri Rabindranath Tagore in 1908. These efforts were initiated through the establishment of youth organization in the Kaligram Progana of his zamindari. He made an attempt to form a class of workers, who could identify themselves with the rural individuals. This was a comprehensive program, which took into consideration aspects, such as, culture, health care, education, norms, values, and economic conditions.

The Martandam experiment

The main objective of this program is to augment the quality of life of the rural individuals. It was intended to symbolize the three-fold development, these include, social, cultural, economic, political and religious. The important technique of the centre was 'self-help with intimate expert counsel'. From the demonstration centre at the Martandam, the villages that were covered were hundred in number, through the location of YMCA centres in villages.

The Gurgaon experiment

The Gurgaon experiment was initiated by Mr. F.L. Brayne, Deputy Commissioner in the Gurgaon district of the Punjab state, as he was influenced by the prevalence of the conditions of poverty,

backwardness and misery of the individuals. Introduction of this program has led to improvements in seeds, methods of cultivation, agricultural practices and so forth. This project could not develop leadership in villages that would continue working, when the village guides have left the village.

Gandhian constructive program sewagram

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi had the main aim to see the rural areas of the country as, self-contained and self-sufficient. The problem of the rural individuals, which he was aware of was to completely eradicate those problems without any kind of interference from the outside agencies. He wanted to make provision of solutions to those problems with the help of local individuals and local resources. Therefore, for the betterment of the individuals, he formulated 18 programs. These include, the promotion of village industries, basic and adult education in terms of rural sanitation, upliftment of backward tribes, women and underprivileged sections of the society, education in public health and hygiene, propagation of the natural language, organization of labour unions, students and so forth. In addition, special attention was paid upon crafts, traditional oil press, leather works and grain processing. Gandhian rural work activities were based upon the principles of truth and non-violence. His ideas and perspectives in terms of rural reconstruction were adopted officially and resulted in the adoption of khadi and village industries program, the principle of village self-sufficiency and faith in the panchayati raj and Sahakari Samaj Movement.

Rural reconstruction programs in Baroda

The Baroda experiment was launched in 1932 by the Maharaja of Baroda. The Maharaja of Baroda, had the main objective of leading to progression. Hence, he generated awareness in terms of the areas, which needed to be improved and formulated measures. The major objective of this program was to develop the will to improve one's living conditions and capacity for self-help and self-reliance.

The Firka development scheme

The Firka Development Scheme of Madras was a government sponsored scheme, which was developed in 1946. The main objective of this scheme was to organize the rural communities in such a manner that would enable the individuals to lead more prosperous and fulfilling lives. Through this scheme, opportunities were made available to the rural individuals, not only bring about improvements in their overall quality of lives, but also develop both as individuals and as units of well-integrated society.

Rural development in the post-independence period

In the post-independence era, adequate consideration was given to the development of rural areas. This has taken place in an effective manner, through the initiation of programs and schemes. The country adopted the planned development. The first five year plan put emphasis upon the development of the agricultural sector. It formulated number of measures to bring more land under irrigation. Major irrigation dams, such as the Bakhra Nangal Dam, Hirakud, Nagarjunasagar and Tungabhadra were constructed, which generated power for augmenting industrialization within the country and water for irrigation. As a result of the construction of these dams, the Indian farmers were not exclusively dependent upon the monsoon season [3].

Intensive cultivation of the land is made possible through farm mechanization. There has been an increase in the production of tractors within the country and they are being made use of by the farmers, throughout the country. The other techniques that the farmers are making use of are, threshing machines, deep boring and irrigation pumps, which lead to improvements in high yielding improved seeds, fertilizers and other inputs. To enable the farmers to make purchases of the inputs, the rural credit system has been invigorated with the co-operatives. Furthermore, Regional Rural Banks and Rural Branches of Commercial Banks were established with the main objective of making provision of financial assistance to the rural individuals and augment their economic conditions. The initiation of the micro-finance system has been a recent measure that has proved to be advantageous to rural individuals to a large extent [3].

After the country attained its independence, there were introduction of the land reform legislation. The main areas that have been taken into consideration are, abolition of the zamindari system, abolition of the bonded labour system, land ceiling and so forth. It was all introduced to relieve rural indebtedness and the money lenders could no longer collect the money, which is more than the reasonable interest. Untouchability was abolished and special legislation was enacted for the up-liftment of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. There was commitment on the part of the Government of India to bring about rapid and sustainable development of rural communities, through the initiation of programs and schemes. The major aim of these programs is to bring about improvements in all facets of rural life. These include, agriculture, farming practices, animal husbandry, roads, infrastructure, communication facilities, health care and medical, employment op-

portunities, education, skills development, diet and nutrition and housing [3].

The three important programs that were formulated with the main aim of rural construction have been stated as follows: [3].

The Etawah pilot project

The Etawah Pilot project was established in 1948 by Albert Mayor for the development of rural areas in Uttar Pradesh. The main objective of this program to observe the degree of social and productive improvement. In addition, it also makes an attempt to develop initiative, self-confidence and co-operation.

The Nilokheri experiment

The Nilokheri experiment was initiated in 1948 by K. Dey, the former Minister of Community Development and Co-operation. The introduction of this experiment took place, when nearly, 7000 displaced persons were rehabilitated in the Nilokheri town, after independence. The scheme was also known as 'mazdoor manzil'. This principle highlights the fact that one who will not work will not eat either. Under this program, the main activities were the vocational training centre, functioning on the co-operative lines and the colony had its own dairy, poultry, piggery, printing press, engineering workshops, tannery and bone meal factory. The vocational training was provided to the individuals in accordance to their interests. They functioned to operate the Co-operative Enterprises Rights of Education and medical and health care were also guaranteed to the needy and the underprivileged.

The Bhoodan movement

The objective of the Bhoodan campaign was to prevent the emergence of the revolution. It ensured that in case of occurrence of any conflicting situations or disputations, peaceful resolution methods should be put into practice. The real intention was to create a right atmosphere, so progressive land reforms can be implemented. Therefore, it was noted in the first five year plan that the experience of early rural reconstruction schemes, which forced the rural individuals and there was not any keenness among them. Lack of initiatives for the individuals was considered vital for the success of the schemes.

The rural concern of the government is by no means entirely absent under the colonial rule. But it was only after the country attained its independence that rural development was given priority. The dominant philosophy of the constitution is justice, in the social, economic and political walks of life. Rural development re-

ceived attention and acquired a high level priority in the five year plans. The various programs of rural development were stated in the five year plans. Many of these programs were planned and implemented, due to the necessity of the situation that has arose within the country. At the same time, many programs were launched, due to the political interest of the ruling parties [2].

Plan period rural development programs

The rural development of programs in accordance to the plan period have been stated as follows: [2].

- **First Five Year Plan:** Community Development Program (1952) and National Extension Service (1953).
- **Second Five Year Plan:** Khadi and Village Industries Program (1957), Village Housing Project Scheme (1957), Multi-purpose Tribal Development Blocks Programme (1959), Package Programme (1960) and Intensive Agricultural District Programme (1960).
- **Third Five Year Plan:** Applied Nutrition Programme (1962), Rural Industries Project (1962), Intensive Agriculture Area Programme (1964) and High Yielding Variety Programme (1966).
- **Annual Plan, 1967:** Farmer's Training and Education Programme (1966).
- **Annual Plan, 1968:** Well-Construction Programme (1966), Rural Work Programme (RWP) (1967), Tribal Development Block (1968).
- **Annual Plan, 1968:** Rural Manpower Programme (1969), Composite Program for women and Pre-School Children (1969).
- **Fourth Five Year Plan:** Drought Prone Area Programme (1970), Crash Scheme for Rural Employment (1971), Small Farmer Development Agency (1971), Tribal Area Development Programme (1972) Pilot Projects for Tribal Development (1972), Pilot Intensive Rural Employment Programme (1972), Minimum Needs Programme (1972) and Command Area Development Programme (1974).
- **Fifth Five Year Plan:** Hill Area Development Programme (1975), Special Livestock Production Programme (1975), Food for Work Programme (1977), Desert Development Programme (1977), Whole Village Development Programme (1979), Training of Rural Youth for Self Employment (1979), and Integrated Rural Development Programme (1979).
- **Sixth Five Year Plan:** National Rural Employment Programme (1980), Prime Minister's New 20-Points Programme (1980), Rural Landless Employment Guarantee

Programme (1983) (RLEGP) and Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (1983).

- **Seventh Five Year Plan:** Integrated Rural Energy Planning Program (1985) and Special Livestock Breeding Program (1986).
- **Eighth Five Year Plan:** Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (1989), Prime Minister's Rozgar Yojana (PMRY) (1993) and Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS) (1993).
- **Ninth Five Year Plan:** Basic Minimum Service (BMS) (1996), Swamjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY) (1998), Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana (JGSY) (1998), Swajaldhara (Rural Sanitation & Drinking Water) (2002).

Mahatma Gandhi and rural development

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, the father of Indian nation has rendered a significant contribution in leading to progression of rural communities. The main areas that have been taken into consideration have been stated as follows:

- **Sarvodaya:** One of the ideal concepts of Mahatma Gandhi is sarvodaya. Gandhi believed in putting into practice the traits of truth and non-violence in promoting social welfare. The methods and strategies that were put into practice by Gandhi were different from the other leaders and social reformers. Individual was regarded as the major constituent of the society. He believed that well-being of the individuals is regarded as an essential area towards promoting well-being of the society. Social welfare meant the conscious submission of the individuals and the voluntary contribution to ones possession within the society. For the effective development of the individuals and the society, the principles of truth and non-violence are regarded to be of utmost significance [1].
- **Village Development:** The idea of village development is regarded as the complete republic, independent of its neighbours, for its own basic needs and interdependent upon many others for which dependence is necessary. The major concern in the case of village development is to put emphasis upon agricultural production. When the individuals will have sufficient productivity to fulfil their nutritional requirements, then they would be able to get engaged in the implementation of other tasks and activities. In addition to agricultural production, the other areas that need to be taken into consideration are, education, employment opportunities, health care and medical facilities, animal husbandry, administration, leadership and so forth.

- **All-round Village Service:** Gandhi was of the viewpoint that India lives in 700,000 villages. If the Indian civilization is to make its complete contribution to the building up of the stable world order, then it has to ensure that there is generation of awareness among the rural individuals to live their lives adequately. These areas include, cleanliness, hygiene and sanitation, alleviating various forms of pollution and preservation of the environment. Water is regarded as the basic necessity of the individuals, hence, rural individuals need to ensure that they keep the water bodies free from pollution. One of the vital areas is, waste materials should not be thrown into them. On the other hand, preservation of the environment is carried out by rural individuals by planting more trees and keeping the natural environmental conditions clean.
- **Samagra Gramseva:** The approaches and strategies formulated by Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, in terms of rural development gets reflected in the initiative of samagra gramseva. According to him, samagra gramseva must know everybody living in the village and render him such service as he can. This does not mean that the workers will be able to carry out various tasks and activities by themselves. Through this scheme, ways will be shown to the workers of helping themselves and procure for them, such help and materials as they will require. He would also provide training to his own helpers and win over the villages that he will seek and follow his guidance [1].
- **Arts and Crafts:** The strategies have been formulated for rural entrepreneurship and rural marketing. The rural individuals, both men and women are involved in the production and manufacturing of artworks and various forms of handicrafts. For this purpose, it is vital for them to possess adequate skills and abilities that would facilitate the enhancement of production. In addition, they also need to generate awareness in terms of marketing strategies to market their products. He possessed the viewpoint that when rural communities would be completely developed, then the individuals, belonging to these communities will possess a high degree of skill. The rural individuals will get engaged in various professions, such as, poetry, architecture, artists, craftsmen, artisans, linguists, educationists, social workers and research workers. These individuals would make use of their skills and abilities in bringing about improvements in their overall quality of lives.
- **Economic Reorganization:** Economic reorganization is regarded as one of the aspects that is of utmost significance, especially concerning the development of rural areas. The reason being, within rural communities, individuals are overwhelmed by the conditions of poverty, illiteracy and unemployment. As a result of poverty and illiteracy, they remain in a backward condition and are unable to adequately sustain their living conditions. Therefore, the main objective of eco-

conomic reorganization is to ensure that rural individuals do not experience any financial problems. It is vital to put into operation the measures that are necessary to alleviate the conditions of poverty and backwardness and enable them to overcome problems and challenges.

- **Non-Violent Economy:** In rural communities, there have been prevalence of criminal and violent acts. Girls and women experienced discriminatory treatment and more preference was given to the male children. Hence, there should be prevalence of the viewpoint among the rural individuals and communities that girls should not be regarded as liabilities. They can also bring about well-being of their families and communities, provided equal rights and opportunities are given to them. Men and women should be given equal treatment and there should not be any kind of discrimination on the basis of factors such as, caste, creed, race, ethnicity, religion, gender and socio-economic background. The aspect of non-violent economy puts emphasis upon implementation of programs and schemes in a peaceful manner. When there are occurrence of any disputes or conflicting situations among the individuals, then it is vital to ensure that the resolutions get put into practice in an appropriate and peaceful manner.
- **Food Reform:** Due to the prevalence of the conditions of poverty, rural individuals are unable to meet their nutritional requirements. There has been prevalence of the problem of malnutrition among them to a major extent. The aspect of food reform puts emphasis upon the fact that proper diet and nutrition should be made available to the rural individuals. In one's diet, it is vital to ensure, there are essential nutrients available, including carbohydrates, proteins, vitamins, minerals, fats and water. Scarcity of water has been a major problem of rural individuals, hence, it is vital to ensure that they make provision of clean drinking water. When the rural individuals will be able to obtain adequate diet, only then they will be able to carry out their essential tasks and activities in an effective manner.
- **Power Machinery:** Agriculture and farming are regarded as the major occupations of the individuals residing in rural communities. When they are engaged in these occupations, then their major objective is to enhance production and profitability. In order to augment production and profitability, the use of modern and innovative methods and strategies are regarded as indispensable. Power machinery puts emphasis upon the use of technology in the development of rural areas. For instance, in the agricultural sector, there have been usage of modern irrigation methods, modern methods of cultivation and so forth. The agricultural labourers and farmers, who are wealthy are able to upgrade their knowledge in terms of

power machinery. On the other hand, small farmers make use of traditional methods and practices.

- **Panchayat Raj:** The directive principles of state policy and later in the form of 73rd Constitution is referred to Gandhiji's ideas on panchayat raj and gram swaraj. The government within rural areas will be conducted by the panchayat of five persons, annually elected by the adult villagers, males and females, possessing prescribed educational qualifications. These will have all the authority and jurisdiction required. Since, there will not be any system of punishments in the accepted sense. This panchayat will be legislature, executive and judiciary. The outline of the rural government was presented. In this case, there is a perfect democracy, based on the individual freedom. The other areas that were taken into account are, policy formulation and execution, particularly in the administration and management of rural development [1].

Significance of rural development concepts and policies

The rural community development program in India had a quite sectorial approach. Its major objectives were to bring about improvements in food production at the local level and provide help and support to the individuals to bring about their own developments. The program encouraged the basic association as a basic tool to achieve the joint generating wealth and awakening of the rural population to participate in the changing processes. These are not only economic, but also institutional and political. During the last years of the colonial era, there had already been attempts to perform training and organizational activities for the development of rural communities. The individuals, organizations and agencies need to work in co-operation and integration to bring about improvements in the system of education in rural [4].

The policies and programs were initiated by the Government of India. Modernization of agriculture was regarded as one of the important aspects of rural communities. The men and women, are mostly employed in the agricultural sector. The ideas and strategies that were put into operation in the agricultural sector need to be improved. Though improvements are coming about and there have been establishment of training centres as well. The agricultural labourers and farmers are getting enrolled in training centres with the purpose of generating awareness in terms of modern and innovative methods and strategies that are necessary to enhance production. Research has indicated that wealthy farmers are able to make use of these strategies and methods. But small farmers, who do not possess adequate resources and struggle to make ends meet, still make use of traditional methods and strategies.

Evaluation of rural development policies and programs

A critical appraisal of various welfare programs and projects have revealed various types of constraints and limitations in the process of implementation. A comprehensive study of various programs have been conducted in various blocks across the country and there have been various constraints found in relation to IRDP (1980-1981 to 1983). It needs improvement, such as proper identification of the beneficiaries need to be there, elimination of scarcities in the infrastructure facilities that is involved in administration, involvements of people's representatives, and initiation of activities in support of the IRDP beneficiaries and requirement of detailed evaluation. The review of various programs and projects that put emphasis upon rural development have been conducted by various authors, researchers and reviewers [5].

The major problems that were identified were, there was lack of interest in the problems connected with rural community, followed by the lack of community feelings and welfare, lack of co-ordination among village schools, village panchayats and village co-operatives, caste, region and religion-based factionalism, lack of village plans, lack of co-ordination from the centre to the block level, multiplicity of responsibilities from the development functionaries, paying low wages to the rural poor and frequent transfer of specialists and other officers, adversely affected the rural development programs. Rural development has become one of the increasing goals of five year plans (Chapter 2, n.d.). But one of the major problems that the country is experiencing is the prevalence of the conditions of poverty. This is one of the major impediments within the course of rural development.

The public accounts committee of the Indian parliament in its 90th report (1980-1981) has drawn attention to the implementation of the National Rural Employment Program meant for rural people and rural youth [5]. In addition, it is essential to put into operation, the administrative functions in an appropriate manner. These should render a significant contribution in eliminating various forms of criminal acts, such as, theft, robbery, corruption, misappropriation and so forth. In the present existence, rural areas need to be developed in an appropriate manner, primarily aiming at elimination of poverty. It is necessary to ensure that within rural communities, individuals are able to sustain their living conditions in an appropriate manner by putting into practice the measures, including, obtaining two square meals a day, employment oppor-

tunities, income generation, education, training, and awareness in terms of approaches and strategies that are essential to bring about improvements in their livelihoods.

Conclusion

In India, the concept of rural development is turning out to be more complicated, despite of the advancements taking place in technology, the availability of resources and the continued efforts from the pre-independence period. Various programs were initiated to bring about development of rural areas in the pre-independence period. These are, Sriniketan Experiment, The Martandam Experiment, The Gurgaon Experiment, Gandhian Constructive Program Sewagram, Rural Reconstruction Programs in Baroda and The Firka Development Scheme. The three important programs that were formulated with the main aim of rural construction in the post-independence period are, The Etawah Pilot Project, The Nilokheri Experiment, and The Bhoodan Movement. After the country achieved its independence, there were establishment of five year plans, which focused upon rural development. In all five year plans, there were formulation of measures and programs that put emphasis upon development of rural communities.

Another aspect that has been taken into account is Mahatma Gandhi and rural development. The major areas that have been taken into consideration by Gandhi to bring about development of the rural communities are, sarvodaya, village development, all-round village service, samagra gramseva, arts and crafts, economic reorganization, non-violent economy, food reform, power machinery and panchayat raj. The programs and projects that are initiated to bring about development of rural communities are primarily focused upon enhancement of the agricultural sector, improvements in farming practices, eradication of poverty, backwardness, illiteracy and unemployment, bringing about development of the education system, generating employment opportunities for rural individuals, promoting health care and medical facilities, improvements in the administrative functions and leadership abilities among the individuals, providing equal opportunities to all and eliminating discriminatory treatment, particularly regarding women and girls. When the individuals will be able to acquire an efficient understanding in terms of the measures and strategies, then development of rural communities would take place in an efficient manner.

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