

Building buildings

beyond the *building*



 A S Gopal

GRK Reddy

He coined the phrase 'the spirit of visionering' and puts it into practice - pioneering in nurturing limitless human potential with a long term vision to encompass all sections of the society in the journey of growth. Meet GRK Reddy, the man behind SEZs, malls, townships, ports, etc.

"India is emerging in many ways in the global arena. Tremendous technical advancement and innovations keep happening. In fact, the industrial development is on an upswing with the likes of the automobiles, the electronics, and the information technology industries booming and the trend seems to only increase. India is breaking all grounds in all spheres. There is enormous power in the youth which has to be nurtured and the future looks very bright." As he said these words, there was pride in his eyes, a glee in his smile, power in his words, conviction in his body language and an undercurrent feeling, 'yes, its going to happen'. Hailing from an agricultural family

in Andhra Pradesh, he did his entire schooling in Telugu medium. He started his career as an executive in a small consultancy and today he is the chairman of one of the leading infrastructure development organisations in the country. His organisation builds ports, SEZs, malls, townships... currently working on projects worth over 5000 crores. The organisation is directly responsible for the well-being of about 3000 families and they won the NDTV 'Performer of the Year' award for the year 2007. Meet **GRK Reddy**, Chairman, MARG Group.

MARG represents the 'spirit of visionering'. Speaking about it GRK said, "Spirit is limitless; it has

no boundaries. Human potential cannot be defined or limited. This spirit of human potential can be nurtured only through ethical and moral values. To be a pioneer in nurturing human potential with a long term vision is what MARG stands for. We are striving for a holistic approach to the whole system that can address all sections. All our brand building exercises carry some messages with some ethos of the soil."

Talking about his driving force GRK said, "To be happy and to create happiness, to be productive and to create productivity there are so many challenges and you always get this feeling that there is so much to do. One of my prime

motivations is to nurture talent and develop it to the helm. Today's leader has to understand that his approach has to be different to the age groups of the 20s, the 30s and the above 40s. Their aspirations are different, their mindset is different, their values are different and a leader needs to reflect to each group accordingly. So, my responsibility is to provide enough knowledge base and guide them with my experiences. One has to be a role model, not just walk your talk, but breathe your talk. It is a journey of never-ending striving. I strongly believe that one should be a part of change for the change to happen. Spiritual evolution will help integrate all these and that's where my striving is. Every moment there is an encounter for a new learning, revealing one to him, but at the end of the day one has to keep his spiritual alignment."

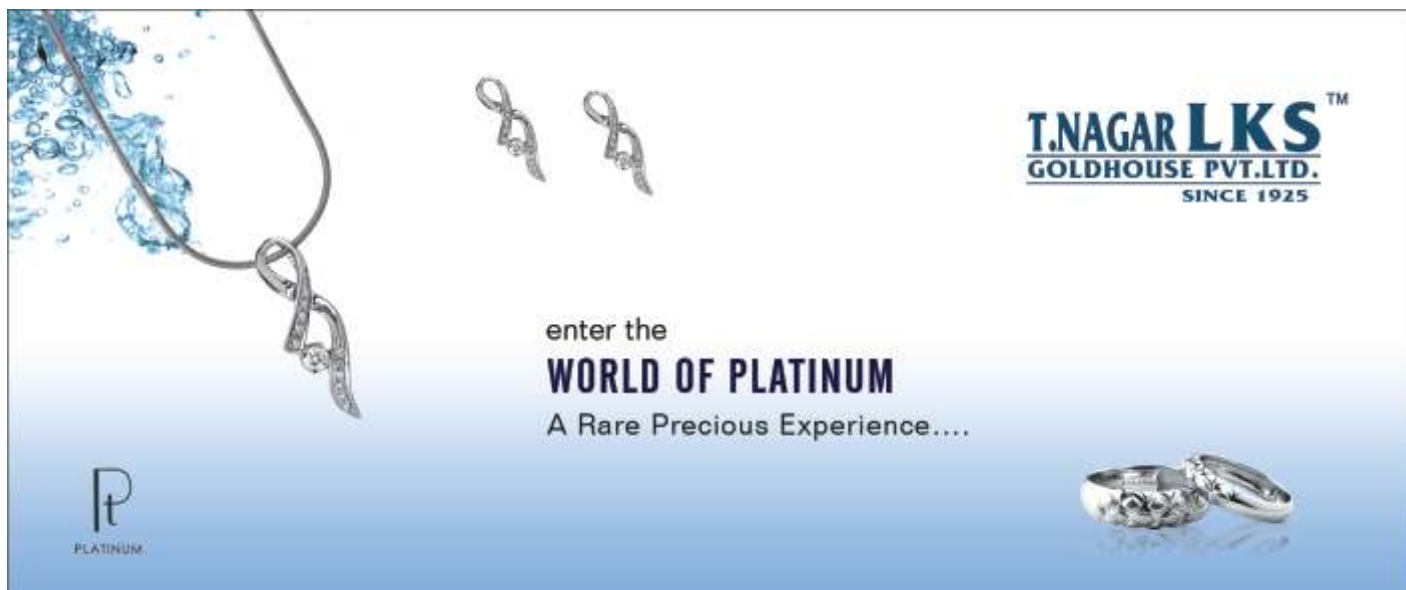
After finishing his graduation, GRK moved to Delhi to pursue his Masters. He added, "The challenges one faces and overcomes in the initial stages of life influences one's mind. My first job was with a financial consultancy. Interacting

with the promoters and the government officials gave me lots of exposure. Almost everyday, I used to go to the India International Centre to listen to speeches from political, social and economic leaders. It expanded my mind and energy. I began to believe I can do something with my life."

Then life put GRK to test. He lost his younger brother in an accident. He started MARG Securities, the first corporate member of the Madras and Coimbatore stock exchanges. Within two years the company employed 120 people and had 11 branches across the country. The stock market crashed and the company was down six crores. GRK clarified, "I kept telling myself, 'you created your situation and hence you also have the power to overcome the situation. When you are in trouble you have to discover yourself and come out anew'. Suddenly I found myself with no branches, 4 employees and 120 computers. If fate hands you a lemon, make lemonade out of it. To put the employees to use, I started MARG Constructions; to use the computers, I started a software training company."


GRK said, "Coming from an agricultural family I had understood that the farmer has faith in the seed, waters the plant with faith, doesn't know how the harvest will be, what the natural calamities could be, has no clue as to what he will make out of it. But he continues to do everything with faith, the strength to encounter all situations and pursue things without succumbing. I just continued to act, to come back. It was a tough phase, but I wanted to fight."

GRK continued, "It was at this time two important projects came up. The first one was to construct a building in a record time and I took up the challenge and completed the same. It helped me raise funds. Based on this work, a project worth Rs.15 crores for erecting windmills in a highly sensitive area in Tadipatri in Andhra Pradesh was offered to me. Nobody wanted to take it up. For me it was a question of survival. Either I get killed there or stay here to get killed. It was an ordeal. I got abducted several times and there were attempts on the lives of my workers. But I overcame everything to emerge. It was during these times I realised the power of



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mind - as you think so you become. I continuously believed that we will complete the project successfully against all odds. I was a revelation unto myself and I cleared all my debts and I was back. The software training company eventually was taken over by my wife Rajani and today it employs about 500 people and it is a success by itself.”

The resilient GRK said, “The most important lesson I learnt in life is that one should know how to handle his success and keep his feet on the

combination of stakeholders in which the promoter is one of the components and a key driver, and I understand my responsibility. I believe being ethical is where happiness lies at the end of the day. The construction industry as a corporate is in a nascent stage and in about a decade there will be more transparency.”

Explaining his core strength, GRK detailed, “If one can work on the detailing in all the projects, develop an intuitive mind, have clarity on

We were the first ones to construct an IT park in Old Mahabalipuram Road (OMR), now known as the IT highway - as testimony to the spirit of visioning.”

Any infrastructure development company has to operate in sync with the governments and when asked how he handles it, GRK said, “The telecom, the airline and other infrastructure industries emerged out of a regulatory environment, when India positioned itself after liberalisation. The software industry has rewritten the consulting business of the globe. I see it happening for the infrastructure industry soon, for we are at the tipping point. MARG, as an organisation and business model, is well positioned for that. The technological advancements are such that we will probably have a solar car, drinking water in capsules and the resurrection of the virgin minds from the villages, backed by their emotional sensitivity. This will go a long way in the development of the nation. At MARG, as an organisation, we carry out our social responsibility in all our projects.”

Talking about the future GRK said, “We are one of the weavers in the large fabric in the growth story of India. We are one of the designers of the 5000 year old country, building buildings beyond the building, carrying life in it, for the Taj, the Pyramids and the Great Wall aren't mere mortar and brick structures, but carry life in every bit of them.”

We wish this jewel to grow into one of the wonders of this nation and eventually in the globe.

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ground. I got carried away with the explosive growth I experienced with the securities company, which eventually caused my failure. It still nags me sometimes. Today, with growth happening at an exponential pace, I have understood that one needs to be focused, expand one's mind intensely to changing scenario and build relationships in this evolving world. I have also understood that it is my responsibility to transform many more and make them like me.”

GRK stated, “MARG stands for ethics, morals and principles. The definition of ethics is always in the interest of a larger good. We stand for ethics and the organisation is a

the expectations of the project, develop faith in the project and eventually translate all these through communication to the decision makers, it would happen. We exactly did that by putting ourselves in the shoes of our clients, by being honest and transparent. I believe there is a 'devil in the details', meaning if you gather the details well you will find the devil. If you don't do it initially then you will find it during the project, which will become difficult to handle. Our strength has been in detailing. But beyond all papers, it is the faith - faith that I can do it and developing that faith in the client that 'we' can do it that has given us our growth.