



## Thenur Sivaji !

("Sivaji" is a famous Tamil movie of Tamil super star Rajinikanth released in 2007. Rajinikanth plays the role of a reformist who returns to India after earning his fortune in the US. He wishes to do good for the down trodden, but faces many hindrances. The movie ends with how he succeeds in his goals. This was the biggest budget movie (Rs.60 crore) in Indian Film Industry, and the biggest hit too in the domestic and international market!)



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He studied engineering, worked in USA as a Software Engineer in Detroit, drew a salary of Rs. 4 lakhs per month 3 years ago ...

When the bank balance touched crores, a small thought triggered in his mind. Senthilkumar resigned his high paying job in the US and returned to Trichy in South India.



All his friends and relatives started enquiring 'Are you insane!' and poured in a lot of advice. Senthilkumar did not listen to any of their advices, and started visiting the villages of TamilNadu in South India in his bicycle. He finally decided to settle down in Thenur.

What will be there for a software engineer to settle down and achieve in a village which is termed 'backward' in all aspects of life including agriculture, job opportunities, roads, ... ?

As a first step he started a small hospital, computer center, school for the young kids under the trees using his own savings. Now the whole village calls him 'Sivaji of our town', after the iconic reformist figure that super star Rajinikanth portrayed in the movie 'Sivaji'.

Though Senthilkumar was born in Thinnanur village, near Trichy, he has adopted Thenur village and has spent more than Rs.40 lakhs of his own personal savings for the welfare of the village and the villagers. We met this ambitious man in Thenur village.

Inexpensive traditional dhoti and shirt, a cycle with a carrier, a lunch box tied to the handle bar of the cycle, a yellow cloth bag on the carrier with a laptop inside, closely cut hair, unruly mustache and beard - all the aspects of a typical villager - this is Senthilkumar.

"I'm always like this, I have not changed" Senthilkumar starts narrating about him.

"My dad Gopalan worked in a sugar mill. My mother is Leela, doctor brother is in London, sister is married and settled in Chennai - I decided to serve the villages and came to Thenur.

I started work in Thenur in January 24, 2005. Its going to be 4 years. Half my task is complete so far.

In villages, many people die due to lack of basic health care facilities. Thenur was such a village. That's why I build a hospital first.

Then the school. We follow non-formal, casual method of education, rather than the traditional mechanized approach. As a first step in education, it is necessary to know about the villages and environment surrounding you, and know about their specialty, rather than learning world history.



We have to increase job opportunities in villages. So we have started vocational training. We have increased job opportunities in the village by creating many jobs related to: making fertilizers using earthworms, data entry operator, threading of waste yarn from Tirupur, building a community hall. We have also planted 3000 trees so far to improve the environment, and created jobs as well.

These are regular, normal things, and provide comfort to the heart. So I don't feel the burden. My duty is to serve the village and improve it. All that I'm doing now, I have been thinking and planning for a long time.

Now my school, college and software friends have started helping in this work.

What we need now is if government school teachers, medical professionals, college students, national welfare planning students, nurses and others can spend a day in week or two days in a month in the village. This will help in developing the villages even faster. That is all my requirement now" Senthilkumar astonishes us by his words!

Senthilkumar's mother Leela says "We want him to get married soon. But who will marry someone who has spent all his savings on service to the people and charity. Moreover it is more painful when people say 'why has your son become like this after studying well and earning well'." Her eyes are filled with tears when she says this...

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