

Visit to Thulir

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I visited Thulir between November 12th and November 16th 2011. The previous visit was during August 2011. Three months is definitely a very short period to observe any significant development in Thulir. Yet, one interesting development was worthy to be noted.

Four of the senior students, Senthil, Jayabal, Dhanapal and Jagannath, have come together to move forward to set up their 'Agro-based enterprise.' The key activities of the enterprise are:

1. Dairy products - Thulir currently has one milch cow which gave birth to a male calf a year ago. It has again given birth to a female calf and the boys are involved in grazing, maintaining and milking the cow. The current output is adequate for the requirements of Thulir Kitchen and Anu and Krishna's home kitchen. The boys also account for the produce in market prices.



2. Organic Farming - The boys have taken an active role in cultivation of paddy and millets. They have already sown paddy which will be cultivated in late February. They are looking to cultivate millets and pulses in the remaining land. They are also involved in banana plantation and maintenance of vegetable garden. Currently, the focus of these cultivation is Thulir kitchen although they are optimistic of getting surplus produce for external consumption.

3. Gobar Gas Plant - Thulir has currently installed one Gobar gas plant which is used in the Thulir Kitchen. The boys have taken up the maintenance of the set-up and monitoring its performance.



4. Campus maintenance - The boys have decided to stay on the campus to handle the project. They have also taken up other maintenance work within their campus.

Irrespective of the outcome of this new venture, it is important to understand and appreciate the impact of the education on them.

First, the entire initiative is self-driven. The idea was conceived by the boys and implemented with advise and guidance from the elders. For students who are generally taught only to listen to instructions, this presents a significant development.

Second, the increasing desire to stay back in the village. The two elder students, Senthil and Jayabal look very much convinced that their future is in the village. They are convinced that they can seek their livelihood and a decent standard of living through agriculture and related income in the village. They are also continuing in their education in electronics and craft which provides them with a diversity in work and possibly in earnings too. When most of the villagers are drawn into the false promise of prospects in big city, the boys can very well prove them wrong.



Third, they are now working on their strengths. The recent trend among village boys have been in getting lured to engineering colleges and failure to seek appropriate employment. Sadly, those has not been their strengths and most of them fail in their efforts. Working on farms and other physical work is very much within their strengths and they are more likely to excel in this initiative.

Fourth, the desire to be self-reliant. On knowing that Thulir Kitchen spends Rs.75 on getting firewood, the boys volunteered to collect firewood on their holiday. They volunteered to gather the grass required for the cows instead of buying them from outside.

Finally, their ability to inspire other children in Thulir. I am sure they will set a good example for the other students in Thulir.