

# PR SEIZE

Spreading positive vibrations

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## Men of the month



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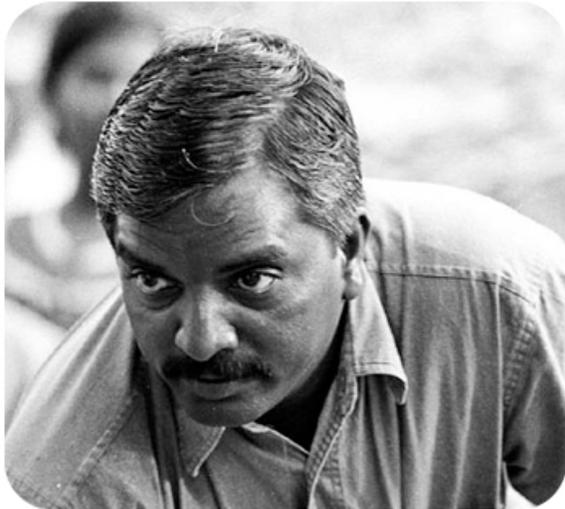
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## Ignited Minds

### Elango turns Kuthambakkam village as a model village

Mahatma Gandhi said that India lived in villages. He wanted the villages to be developed. While everybody talks on every platform, nobody takes the serious initiative. Here is the story of R Elango, a Dalit leader turning his village into a Model village in India.



R Elango, born and brought up in Kuthambakkam village, in the adjoining district of Chennai City was involved in the social work right from his childhood. After completing his B.Tech in Anna University, he joined Oil India and shifted to CSIR as a Scientist. His village Kuthambakkam with 7 hamlets and with more than 50% of Dalit population was always facing caste clashes. Due to illicit liquor trade, the poor villagers were losing money, health and family relations.

He was inspired by the idea of the then PM Rajiv Gandhi, who promoted the idea of 'Panchayat Raj' to give full freedom to village Panchayat. Later in 1992, Narasimha Rao Government passed the 73rd Amendment in the Parliament to implement Panchayat Raj in the entire country. The first elections were held in 1996 for Panchayats, based on the new Act.

Since nobody was willing to contest election to become the President of the Kuthambakkam village, he resigned his Government job to contest the elections.

In the 1996 Panchayat election, he was elected by the villagers with a three-fourth majority to become the first President of the village under the new Act. Panchayat Raj Act gave powers to the villagers for self governance. He started implementing word by word the guidelines given in the Act.

He visited many model villages across the country and developed a model for his village. He brought peace between the warring casts. The illicit liquor was totally eradicated through persuasion. He brought transparency in the village administration. The first Gram Sabha was constituted as per the Act with full powers.

Since he brought transparency in the administration, many of the contractors and the Government officials did not like his way of functioning. On some flimsy grounds, he was suspended in 1998 by the then Collector. As the Collector read out the charges before the Gram Sabha, the entire village stood by Mr Elango, rejected the charges completely. he was reinstated by the Government as the President. After this incident, the Government realised his potential.

In 2000, for the first time in India, he built 50 twin houses in a single colony called 'Samathuvapuram' (Place for equality). In every twin house, one dalit and one non dalit

lived. This scheme was later adopted by the Tamilnadu Government and extended to the entire State.

During the first five years, he made a lot of transformation in the village, including creating opportunities for employment generation and education. In 2001 Panchayat election, he was elected unopposed by the villagers. During his second term, he completed all the unfinished works and placed his village in the Indian map as a Model village.

He made the systems to work well and improved the economy of his village. Now in 2006 and 2011 elections, he encouraged others to become the President. Till date, his system continues.

Elango feels that though India has around 2.70 lakh Panchayats covering around 6 lakh villages, there are only 100 to 200 model villages like Kuthambakkam. In order to train the Panchayat leaders to function properly, he started a 'Panchayat Academy'. Through this Academy, he has networked over 700 Panchayat Presidents. By 2016, he wants to help 200 villages to become model villages and to train 1000 aspiring Panchayat leaders.



Though people in and around his village respect him, he is not interested to join any political party and to contest for Assembly or Parliament elections. "I will move only horizontally to develop villages", says Elango proudly. Mr Elango can be reached at [panchayat@yahoo.com](mailto:panchayat@yahoo.com).

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## Accreditation for communication, marketing & HR professionals - Podcast

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globally. Similarly, IT professionals have now started benchmarking their individual talents through Microsoft Certification and ISACA certification. These certifications enable the IT professionals to compete globally and succeed professionally.

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