

**Thomas** was born 1956 in the little town Chengalpattu, south of Chennai, in the most southern state of India, Tamilnadu. He was the fifth of eight children in a Christian family from the lowest strata of society. His father taught carpentry to juvenile prisoners. His mother was a primary school teacher who quit her job in 1969 to become a healer after ‘encountering God’. The family situation was all but calm with daily fighting between the parents, which the children watched. Thomas spent his childhood experiencing hunger, insecurity and discrimination. “When I think back on my childhood, hunger is the main recollection, in front of everything else,” says Thomas.



Thomas was the first in his family who receive a university education. He did his pre-university course and his Commerce Bachelors at Madras University. Later he did his Masters in Commerce at Madurai University by distance education, while working at an auditing firm in Chennai. “It was not an easy path – very, very spicy,” he says. He then studied law at Tiruchirapalli University with the evening college system and got enrolled as an Advocate in Chennai. Following which he did a Masters in Human Resource Management at Tiruchirapalli University. “Education is a proven escape route from poverty and discrimination” Thomas states.

## **Employment & family**

Thomas worked for Tamil Evangelical Lutheran Church for 12 years in various fields: non-formal education, formal education, property management and finally as assistant to the Bishop. “My stint there didn’t help my faith,” says Thomas.

In 1980 he was married to Karuna (principal at Intact Special School) and they have two children, Thomson and Asha.

## **Founding Intact**

In 1992 Thomas helped the organisation IDEAS arrange field study visits for students from Örebro, Sweden. One day a student asked him what his dream was and the answer was an organisation like what Intact is today and Thomas started to plan for its realisation.

Thomas left the church and founded Intact on August 12th, 1992. “I never looked back since I had found the secret for happiness,” Thomas says. In year 1995, he started Intact Special School for children with special needs, as his own son is epileptic. The aim was to give needy children a sense of security, good food, and shelter – things that he didn’t get during his childhood. “It is gratifying to see hundreds of children benefiting from Intact. Though it hasn’t always been easy, I only have to look back at my own childhood to keep going,” he says.

The projects in Kalrayan hills were started in 1993. Thomas first visited Kalrayan Hills in search of a secluded place that would help him with his own depression.