**REIMAGINING THE GOOD CITY FROM ENNORE CREEK**

Interview Transcription

**Interview Information**

Interviewer/s: Antony Jude, Gajendran V., Mohammed Sakib (AJ, GV, MS)

Place of interview: Ennore Kuppam Village

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Audio: 1. 230608\_Housing\_EnnoreKuppam\_Interview\_2.1\_AJ,GV,MS.mp3

 01:55:43 hours

 2. 230608\_Housing\_EnnoreKuppam\_Interview\_2.2\_AJ,GV,MS.mp3

 00:19:20 hours

**Interviewee Information**

Pseudonym: W1, W2, M1, C1 (respondent)

**Interview note:** The interview was done in their Displaced Ennore Kuppam Village on the south side of the bank. The Responded W1 speaks about the life struggles and happenings during her life in the old Ennore Kuppam village, in the interview while referein River she refers to the Estuary of the River, which is between the River mouth and VNC bridge of the River. She Also refers to the 4 different villages that were displaced: Ennorekuppam, Mugadwarakuppam, Ennorekuppam colony and Melur where the Reddiyar community lived owning casuarina farms and cultivating other farms like vegetable, green leaves, etc.

***Audio 1 - 01:55:43 hours***

***230608\_Housing\_EnnoreKuppam\_Interview\_2.1\_AJ,GV,MS.mp3***

**-00:00:00**

W1: I belong to Chinna Kuppam; it’s opposite to Ashok Leyland. My husband is my mother’s Aunt’s (Chithi) son. They asked my parents if they could get their son married to me, as they are relatives to us; then I got married to my husband. In 1979, I was 14 years older, in 14 years itself I got married and was sent to that village. This village (Chinnkupam) had quite fair infrastructure, it had some light; children were able to play. But in that village it wasn’t like that; it was a village surrounded by darkness.

In the initial days of my life in that village; if the darkness approached, my soul would be filled with fear; thinking ‘what would be coming here, if snakes and such insects come here’. Next to our house, plants, climbers and bushes would be present. After 6 PM, a fox would come into our backyard and howling; shouting ooooooohhhh, ooooohhhh. What could be done by me? I would be sitting in the house and I would be crying; no one would be knowing about that. My husband would not be here in the house most of the time. He was working in Village Panchayat; he would come home, he would eat dinner by 6 PM and he would go to his uncles (Chithappa’s) house; it’s in the center- street, he would go there. Only I would be there, his sister (naathanar) would be there; only we two would be here. After some days, she also got married to some and she went from here. WIth old father-in-law and the old-mother-in-law parents-in-law, I was suffering a lot. The place had the intense darkness (iruttunaa- iruttu- apadi oru iruttu).

If the fish are caught and brought to the shore, we have to carry that fish on our head and walk for 2 kms; we have to cross that distance and reach the River. These people would live (mugadwarakuppam) in the small-small huts; we have to plead with them (kaiyilaa kaalla vizhundhu) asking them to ride their boats to take us to the opposite bank, they would leave us here. We have to go, sell our fishes and we have to come back. If we come back, the boat owner has to decide if he (he would in that opposite bank) wanted to come to other bank and take us back there to the opposite side; even if he could be sleeping or awake. Only when he (boat rider) is satisfied-convinced that he would earn money by taking us to the opposite side; only then, that boat would be coming to this side. If not, we would be shouting from here to the opposite bank; till that compound there, asking them to take us. We would be shouting ‘Padagaeee, Padagaee’. People who have left their children in their home, people who are sick would be just sitting here till that boat arrives here. If people from the same village (Mugadwarakuppam) are sick, they would be coming here in a boat, again we have to plead with them; then they would be taking us back to the opposite side from here; from there if their (boat owner/riders) known people comes here, we would convince and provide money to them to get us back to the opposite bank; in that village (old Ennore Kuppam) we suffering so much. Again from there we have to walk for 2 kms to reach our village. If we reach the River bank by 5 PM, it would take 7 PM to reach our village. We lived like a Forest human (kaattuvaasi) in that village surrounded by darkness. But I was born in Madras, but I got caught in this Village. I was caught and suffered much; like that only we lived our life.

If a large quantity of fishes were caught, we can’t do anything with those fishes, we would dump them on sand (mannula thelichiduvom). If we need ice, we would buy and if we reach this bank by 5:30 PM, it would be 8 PM at night while we reach our village with one ice bar carried on our head. If the fishes are caught by that time, we are escaped or else if the fishes are caught later (than 5:30 PM), it might be midnight 1 PM or 2 PM, ghosts might be there, hermits would be there in the farm; foxes would be howling. We have to run through the farm and get the fishes to this side of the River and store the fishes with ice. In our lives, we struggled so much. There were no instances in our life that we lived with joyness or with entertainment. Even this era’s life is with joiness, if the flour is needed, we have to grind it manually, we have to use mortar and we have to use grindstone with our hand to grind anything; our family was running like this with our life. If the father-in-law is sick, I have to make him bathe, I have to feed him food and do all the care for him. You see, any of this era’s daughter-in-laws are doing such things? Are they doing it? No! Even my own daughter would be doing it in this era. But we: the daughter-in-law has to do it. It was our fate; elders would be shouting at us,”why you can’t do that, he is your father-in-law”. I lived like that, life was running like that. Now it’s not like that (for others). People are living based on their wealth. In that village, foxes would be running here and there, wild-dogs were existing there; if that came, it would hunt the dog immediately and run away (labbakku nu kavvinu oodi podium); like that goats have been lost, chicken have been lost.

W2: Tell him about the cyclones.

W1: Yes, you should have asked about that. I got married in 1979 and there was a cyclone in 1984; then Rajive Gandhi was alive; only then he was leading the government, after his brother's death and his mother’s death; he came to the governance. That one cyclone demolished many large houses; at that time, we were in a small house with my 4 children. my last child was not born; 2 boys were there, and my 3rd child was a girl, she was just 8 months old at that time. That cyclone surge was very intense, we had 8 days of intense rainfall; there were no firewoods, all the firewoods got wet. There was no kerosin; no light and even if we wanted to light fire, the matchbox also got wet. The time was like, we had food one time and 2 times we were hungry (for a day); only my mother-in-law was helpful with getting anything from the neighbors for the food; even if she was elderly person, she would be running here and there without even worrying about rain. One day, it was 8 PM, it was raining heavily; a heavy wind hit us at that time, the large neighboring house got crushed and falled. There were no people in that house; cupboards, rice and such things were in the house. Anyhow we escaped from that house and came to our hut house; even the hut would have been uprooted by the cyclone, if there were no trees. In our backyard, there were 50 coconut trees and the trees were larger; the wind crossed all the coconut trees and the sand carried by the wind completely covered the hut; sand was completely covered. We were sitting inside that house, the sand falling on our heads from the hut ceiling; there were only small ways available in that hut; it was not a stone house, it was only a hut. We tied the ‘Veshti’, Sarees towards the ceiling to stop the sand falling on us; even though we were not able to eat food, sand was falling on us. Even during that cyclone time, my husband was not with us; he went to his mother-in-law's house (Chinnakuppam) and he was not able to come here. He tried coming here, twice he came by the river side and he found no boats and he returned back to mother-in-law's house. He arrived at our house only after the 2 day cyclone; my mother-in-law was scolding him severely and asking,’did you come here to check if we are dead?’. We were suffering too much, my mother-in-law was crying and my children were crying in that situation.

(crying for a minute)

We were struggling so much in that village (speaking while crying); then a light was shining on us (oru vedivukaalam porandhadu), this North Chennai Thermal Power Plant acquired our land and provided land outside this village. The demolished house wasn’t constructed again as we were informed that land would be acquired and we would be resettled. By then we received this 3 cent land; but there we had 10 cent land; that land was acquired and another 3 cent land was proved in the ‘Mel-ooru’ and employment was provided for every family. People were speaking that in an industrial job, people can get cheated or they can be fired from employment at any time. My husband was educated till 6th or 7th standard; as people were having fear about employment, my husband recorded audio and got signatures from the bureaucrats for safety reasons and only then he joined that job. He argued,”we are not educated, the government should provide employment to the uneducated people. If we are resettled from here, we have to leave our land, our house. So, we definitely need employment”. Only because of us, if any land is acquired by the government, people are asking for the employment as we gained the employment from the government; it’s started only because of us. He was saying,’it’s fine even if we lose the land, but we need employment, our people need employment’. Even if a person had 10 cent land, the person was awarded only 3 cent land. If the same even if the person had 20 cent land. In that village people had more lands. But all the families were provided with just 3 cent land and we were resettled here. Now people are consuming food peacefully and running their life; people are not facing the intense level of struggles that they had in the old village; now they are having peaceful food and living with the time. But the future generation, not having any job opportunity and they don’t have any place to live.

-00:10:12

W2: Tell them about the drinking water you had with the old Ennorekuppam.

W1: In the seashore, we could only get sea salt water; we needed to get the drinking water from a common source, we had to walk a certain distance to get the water. We have to get 2 or 3 pots of water; we would be carrying on our heads to our houses.

W2: Is there any difference between the fishes caught in that place and the fishes caught from here.

W1: Not like that, but if we cast net in the sea, we would get the fishes.

W2: How do you consume fishes in her and how did you used to consume fishes in the old village?

W1: In our old village, we would cook the fish immediately after it reached the shore; we would choose the fishes that best out the fish species that are in the overall catch; we would be cooking vanjaaram, vavvaalu, paara. In that village it was hard to sell the fishes for 10 rupees, 20 rupees, but after coming here we are buying the fishes for 50 to 300 rupees and cooking the fishes.

W2: That too, we are not getting good fish.

W1: yes, we get only the iced fishes. But there were fishing without ice, the fishes that are readily caught.

MS: What was the employment for the people in that village?

W1: We are fishers, we do fishing and on the other side (meela-aanda) Reddiyars would be there; they were doing agriculture; they used to cultivate paddy and they would be selling that. There was another village that was 1 km apart, we won’t interact with that village and they would not be interacting with us; they were resettled in the New Athipattu (Athipattu Pudhunagar). From that village, only the Reddiyar would have relationships with us; they would interact with us as relatives and they would be asking for good fishes from us. If we provide them good fishes; they would be provide us 1 sack full of paddy; chili, coconut, all that they grow in their garden and farm, they would be providing us. Like that they would be providing their farm produced materials to my mother-in-law. My mother-in-law would get and provide the good fishes to them; only after providing them, she would get the fishes for the sales. Because of that, in those days the Reddiyars were called ‘Uravukaaranga’ (the relatives); for any good or bad in their family or villages, we both would be engaging with one another; that’s how we were. In the ‘Melur’, some people had cows. So, our village would be getting milk, curd and such dairy products. So, we had that facilities of getting dairy products; interested people would be getting from them.

MS: How many families were there in our village?

W1: There were 150 to 160 families in our village.

MS: Did you have the boats next to your village?

W1: No, we have to travel for a kilometer to access boats, we need to walk for 1 km. If the babies are sick and if a woman is pregnant, we have to carry them in a bed till the boat docked area like they do in the forest. I have even suffered from that cruelty; I got aborted with twin babies as there was no one to take me to the hospital.

I took the sarees in my hand and I was traveling alone; If I recollect those stories, I would start crying (crying…..)

M1: Those twin babies died; only after that I was born.

MS: We are asking about the changes that happened after the companies started coming here.

W1: Yes, oil is getting mixed in the River water; since then we stopped consuming fishes from the River. If we consume fish we would be getting diseased.

MS: Now government might plan something

W1: Nothing can’t be done for that; the oil has been discharged into the River. All that have been taken control by the people in power; the village people get money and they do whatever needs to done. So, for the River nothing can’t be done.

MS: But the government is not aware of the background, the activities that happen with the River; they don’t hear people who are connected to the River. What is your position in this region, you got employment, you got land; the River is yours; the people who are here and how you wanted to get connected to the River and how wanted to use the River.

**-00:15:33**

W1: Their hot water released in the River has to be diverted; if that water gets on to the other side, this River would be good. Only because of that, we were not able to consume the fishes in the River.

MS: We are trying to build a story narrative of the River from people’s perspective from their history, sufferings and aspirations and present to the government.

W1: I would think in a similar way that all our stories can be told to the children. If my father has made me study till at least 7th or 8th standard, I would have written about things like stories and book stores. We were 4 girls, for my parents; we all didn't know how to read. In total there were 7 children for our father. One girl died and 4 girls were there, 4 of us were the eldest of all children, 5 & 6 were the boys, they were little ones. Think how hard our families would have been. But somehow, we (girl siblings) were got married to our husbands in the relatives itself with dowry of 1 soveren (sovereign) and some house stuff (generally provided from bride’s house to start a life). One of my siblings got married in a village in Goonakuppam, she only left from here yesterday; husband has died. If you wanted to write our story of our life, only our family's story would be so long that you can even shoot a movie with that; I used to think that way.

MS: Did you go to school when you were here?

W1: I lived in Chinnakuppam; my mothers house and the school was in Preriyakuppam. I only have 5 classes, all the classes were very small; it was just our house size. In a class, ‘standard one and two' would be learning together; third, fourth and fifth ‘standard’ students would be learning in a single room sitting separately as a group. Even for them, only a teacher existed. Even we wear poor, our sir was gold, he was teaching well; he only beat boys if they had done anything wrong and he would never beat girls; but he used to intimidate the girls. He used to tell different stories about why education is important for life. He used to say that girls should be ‘Jansi Raani’, like that he would be giving such reference names. He wanted the girls to grow as warriors. But my father stopped me saying,”it’s enough if you study till ‘standard 3’, because if the girls are educated much, they would become arrogant’. As they were not educated he would be saying,”if you (girls) study much, you would not respect men”; because that era was like that, women used to be dependent on men to live, but now women are also dependent on men and men also dependent on women; if they wish they stay together, if they don’t wish to continues, they live partitioned in their life. Then it was not like that, only depending on the men, all the women had to live. Women have to respect all men, mother-in-law, father-in-law, husband’s brother’s wife (naathanaar); even if the cruelty is high within the family, women have no options, other than living with husband. We were struggling that much in our days.

My mother-in-law is like, even if she cooks food she would not serve anyone; her sons has to come and her husband has to come, only then everyone has to eat food. Even if the children are crying she would not serve food to children; they would be served food only after their songs and husband come home.

MS: How did the village Chinnakuppam look in the past?

W1: It was the same like that, earlier there were more huts in the village. Now people have developed; gained knowledge and senses, they educated their children and houses with ceiling, stone houses and terraces are built. During my childhood, there were only 3 houses with ceilings; those houses belongs to ‘Chettiyar’; all other houses were huts. Even in our old Ennore kuppam, there were only 5 houses with concrete ceilings (Thalam potta veedu). All other houses were huts; many people lived only in huts. Two columns would be positioned with palm tree; the palm tree plant was used to construct the huts, sometimes bamboo would be used; that is how a hut house would be built. People who are poorer, would build smaller huts with palm leaves (oolailaye thachittu vaalvaanga).

**00:20:09**

MS: What the People in old Ennore kuppam doing in their village ?

W1: They only do fishing in the village; all were fishers.

MS: If men were fishing, what would the women do?

W1: Women would be in the houses and they have to sell the fishes that are caught by the men.

MS: All the women have to sell the fishes.

W1: That’s their only job. Nothing else.

GV: How one day would be spent in that village?

W1: In one day, we have to work all the hour. Husband would get the fishes to the shore by 8 or 9 AM in the morning; From there I have to carry the fishes to access the boat to cross the other side; from the other side I have to walk till the road, in the road a rickshaw would be standing; with board the rickshaw and we have to run to the fish market.

MS: How long is the fish market?

W1: It’s the Ennore market; it’s the only market for every village. Only now there is a market here, that market exited next the Municipality building; all the markets existed in that place. We have to take the fishes to that market and we have to sell it. From my village, it would take 2 hour to reach here; from here to our village it would take 1 hour. If we are starting at 9 AM from our village, it would be 11 AM or 10;30 AM by the time we reach this side of the River. From 10:30 AM, we have to sell the fish by 1 PM at most and it would be 2 PM by the time we reach our home. So, what we do is, we would not sell the fishes; there business people would be coming, they would ask for fishes as whole. If the fishes could be sold for 20 rupees, we would be providing the fishes to business people for 15 rupees as we (women) have to cook food in the houses; even if it would be 12 or 1 PM; by the time we arrive, we have to cook food. It was only the fire-wood stove; in one stove we have to cook rice, in the other stove we have to cook curry and we have to cut and clean the fishes to cook. More than men, women are the ones who suffer most. Men would only catch fishes, they would bring them to the shore and they would spread the nets to dry it. Then they would eat food and they would repair the torn nets. But women's lives are not simple as their’s, we have to take fishes to sell; after it is sold, we have to come back, have to cook the food and care for the children and if we have firewood stock, we have to run for the firewoods. If we don’t go to get the firewoods, in our house we would have children’s clothes; we have to pick all those clothes and we have to run to the well, in ‘well’ we have to draw the water manually. We would draw the water, pour it, wash the clothes and we have to dry the clothes. In that village women are ones who suffered a lot, not the men; men suffering is only till the catch the fish. More suffering is with the Women; no one would have suffered the cruelty as the women suffer. After coming here, as they (men) started working in the EB, we don’t face such sufferings. If they (men) earn and provide money, we would buy groceries; now mixer is invented, grinder is invented, TV is invented; there we didn’t have any TV.

MS: Then women don’t have any entertainment in their lives.

W1: We don’t even have any time left in our lives; women have to suffer in the morning and night. If I remember the abortion, next minute I would start crying. We have suffered that much in that village, but we haven’t suffered much in our mother’s house. Only in the mother-in-law's houses did we suffered much.

MS: How much connection do you have with the River?

M1 (to W1): Say,’River is everything’. Say it.

W1: River and sea belong to us. If there is no River, we couldn’t not catch the fishes; if we don’t catch fishes, nothing is available for us to eat food; it's the same in that village also. On the way to our village, there existed a canal (oodai); there we see live crabs next to the bank of the canal. It would be in green color; called as ‘River crab’ (aathu nandu); that would crawl and be on the canal bank like they were lying on a mat, but if we walk near them, it would slowly crawl and get into the water; that was our life. If you need fish, if you need crab, there would be net that would be tied to two long sticks (yendhu valai), with that if we walk in the water by bending the net fishes, crabs, prawns and all that would get into the nets.

**00:25:00**

Once it's caught; all that would be hanging the net as a cluster; if we shed the net, we would see the live things, if we need prawns we would cook prawns, we would cook crabs or fry it. There is no requirement of money to buy these fishes/prawns/crabs in that village. But after coming to this village, everything is monetised; even we are paying money for the water. In that village no money is required for water, fishes and even the green leaves (keerai) would be bought for just 10 paise from vendors who bring it from Melur; we would get more for 10 paise.

M1: -Or they would just exchange with fishes; commodity exchange. If they are Urakukaaranga (relatives), they would provide the green leaves (keerai) for free. Even they would provide us brinjal and such crops cultivated in their land for free. So the Melur (western village) are called ‘Uravukaaaranga’;Reddiyaarnga, they are wealthier people.

MS: What are the festival that are celebrated in the olden village?

W1: Roabadhi amma temple festival would take place there.

M1: The statue has been stolen from there.

GV: Is that so?

M1: Ayam-pon statue.

W1: Even a gold statue existed in that temple; there were 3 statues in total. But it was not installed by us; it was installed by the white men. An incident took place in that place when a ship was coming this way in the sea, now that place has been demolished and changed to harbor; which extends till the deep see (the break water)

GV: Are you saying about the Kamarajar Port

M1: Yes.

W1: I don't know about that as we are going that side. If ships comes that side, it would hit the sea bed (tharai thatti vidum); it would bend and extend till long into the sea (sholes) and end there; we would call it ‘munai tharai’ (edge floor). As the floor starts from the sea side, we call it ‘munai tharai’ (edge floor). When my grandfather was a child, a ship hit the ‘munai tharai’; if the ship hits the sea bed, people can't run the ship nor can the people get down. Seems my the incharge of the boat was worshiping the god to save them; this was told to me by the father-in-law, I was not personally aware of this. At that instance, the person was paying the god that is in the village,”I am not sure which deity is in this village. But if the ship could get released from here, I would build a temple for that god”. After 2 or 3 hours of the boat incharge praying to the god, somehow the boat moved away from the sholes and it reached the deeper sea; the person was unsure about the reason. So he was thinking that the god has more power and he came to that village, built using eggs and lime; at that time cement did not exist. I think cement should be invented recently, I wasn’t sure about that. That temple was not able to be demolished by the EB people (during eviction); so they dredged large pits surrounding the temple and pushed the temple inside the sea. People used to say that these temples are built with eggs and lime. In the past that temple was built and the statues were provided by them; there were 3 statues in that temple.

GV: Was it Whitemen?
W1: It was the white men; a gold statue was provided by them, for them gold was so simple, not a big matter to get that. Three gold statues were provided.

GV: What did they do with the temple as it was not able to be demolished?

W1: They were not able to destroy the temple; they were not able to touch the temple, they dredged pits surrounding the temple and let hot water in those pits.

M1: that temple was able to be demolished by the EB people and there were some issues with the while they tried to demolish the temple; some accident has happened to the people trying to demolish.

W1: So that temple was not demolished; surrounding the temple hot water was discharged and the temple area was joined along with the other canal (paambu canal) that I was talking about.

MS: What is your god's name?

W1: Our god’s name is ‘Roabadhi amman’.

GV: You were talking about the 3 statues?

W1: ‘Roabadhi amman’, ‘Chinnamman’ and ‘Thulakaathamman’.

GV: What is the last deity’s name?

W1: Thulukaaththamman.

GV: What is the speciality of that deity?

W1: It’s the family god of the fishers community (kula deivam); that is called ‘periyapaalayathamma’. Some people would call that by a different name. It’s the native name of the goddess in every village. Chinnamman would be in every village; if you go to the Kuppathu area (fisher’s village), there would be no village without Chinnamman temple.

**00:30:08**

W1: You know who Chinnamman is? The goddesses who are the reason for pox (ammai) in the children. As we lived in a remote village, mostly we would not visit doctors for any health issues. Rather, we would go and worship the god, the temple priest do some rituals (mandram) with neem leaves to eliminate the sickness from the body. The priest would flame camphor in front of the goddess, would apply ‘Thirunoor’ (person’s ash) and perform rituals with the neem leaves (mandhirikkaradhu); next day the baby/children would walk straight normally without sickness. It would play normally and also take normal foods; that is how we lived our life.

M1: Even if we practice that, nothing can happen because the air pollution is high.

W1: Even today, I have a neem tree in my house. My mother-in-law would worship the bowl of water with neem leaves as Maariyaatha; it’s the Chinnamman, we would be calling it as Maariyaathaaa. It’s a small story. We would keep water in a bowl front of the tree to worship Maariyaatha, my mother-in-law has 2 girl children; they have attended puberty. During the ‘Periods’ time, they would be impure at that time. She was thinking about moving the goddesses (bowl of water with neem leaves) next to a larger neem tree away from our house. She took the water kept in the bowl with some neem leaves and surrounded the large neem tree next our house with sand, and built a large circular solid structure. Then she sprayed some water in that structure and placed the ‘water in the neem tree in a bowl’. Once it was kept there, I asked my grandmother,”why can’t you keep it in our backyard or in the land in front of our house; I only call my mother-in-law as grandmother, I married my grandmother's son. So, I only call her grandmother (aaya). My grandmother told me ,“these small girls are impure, they would be wandering anywhere, it’s not good to have the ‘water bowl’ here”. But on the next morning, there was no rain, wind or anything happening, but that big neem tree got uprooted and fell down. Would you be able to believe that? That tree was larger than our house. We can’t believe that. After seeing that my mother-in-law (grandmother) was crying like anything shouting,”amma, thaaye (mother, goddesses), I have done wrong, excuse me”. There was no rain, there was no wind, but the tree got completely uprooted and fell down, people would not believe that it’s not god’ act. But I would believe, I am a devotee of god.

M1: She is god Shiva's devotee. She is ‘Guru saami’ (joking).

W1: No! I would like to read ‘Thiruvaasagam’. There is a ‘Guru saami’ (senior priest),along with that person we would sing the 51 ‘Thiruvaasagam’ (Tamil Literature) songs.

M1: She would only learn things which are not beneficial for people.

W1: There are fraud priests and there are good priests. If someone does fraud, we are not the reason for that. We can believe in good things and we can leave the bad things. God will take care of the people who are bad; that’s my opinion. He (M1) would not believe in anyone, that’s fine, but I have the gods with me. That’s it. Then I convinced my mother-in-law and took that ‘water bowl’ to a small hut we had next to our house; at that place, there won’t be any people’s movement. There, cow dung would be applied (saani valippaanga), Kolam would be drawn and god, the ‘water bowl’ would be kept there. Without god, there is no ‘time pass’, there are a lot of people who used to cheat with god’s name. But if you have good thoughts and are true to yourself, God would come to you and speak to you. If I am facing hardships and If I am in a crisis; I got shattered by organizing a chit fund (seettu pudichu alinjittan), I was so much in crises. People part of the scheme were asking for their money, immediately men in my house said that “we can’t be accountable if you got shattered, you were only organizing the chit fund”; my husband told,”I don’t know about that”. At that time I used to sit and cry like anything. These are all facts which happened in my life. Once I sat, closed my eyes and I was crying in my house. At that time, the god was showing different relatives faces from whom I can get money; those thoughts would come across my mind. If some 4 people are chatting with each other and If I close my eyes, I would get any one face coming across and if I go and ask that person for money to my interest, that person would help more that; my most of the issues was sorted like that. For the person who doesn't believe in god, there is no god. Even the stone would not talk to me, but sometimes, the stone could also talk; it would talk to our soul. It will happen when we close our eyes. Without God, we can’t wander. If god thinks, he could bother anyone if the person is adamant.

**00:36:30**

MS: In your chit funds you got associated with a women group. What are all the issues you used to talk with? In that old village…

W1: In that old village, my mother-in-law would not let me speak to anyone there. So, I haven’t spoken to anyone there, I just greet people (ennma nalla irukiya, naa nalla irukan); that’s it in that village. Even though our house was the last house in our village, it would be next to the farm (kaadu). If the fox comes and hauls, it would be so terrifying. So, i would close the door by 6:30 PM in the evening and I would be sitting idle. If no one is there in the house, I have to sit alone and I would be crying; my life was like that.

MS: Did your children go to school?

W1: They were all small kids, they used to play. He (M1) went to school only after coming in here; he was a small baby, he was only 2 ½ or 3 years older when we were resettled here. In that house we were able to experience the natural breeze; we haven’t suffered without the breeze. In the coconut farm, if we just lay a mat and we can sleep peacefully in that village. Here we have constructed a house and we are suffering, we are installing A/C and all that; these are all not suiting us.

MS: In my case, if there is a festival or celebration, we used to cook Biryani. Is there any special things like that in your village?

W1: We wouldn’t cook Biryani, at that time, we did not know anything about Biryani. In our village temple festival, we used to get goat and we would serve (padaiyal) the god with ‘Kozhukattai, banana, mango fruit, apple and all that would be bought. We would serve ‘Padaiyal’ (served edibles to god) and make the goat stand in front of it with a garland. The goddesses would come in procession in a cart (thear) to every house in the street. Once the cart arrives (thear), we would make the cart stand in front of the house and we would lit camphor in front of that goat, at that time the goat would be shaking its head; once it shakes the head, we would be beheading the goat’s head. The ritual is when the goddess (amma) comes to the house and gives the order (utharavu kuduthuttanga) to kill the boat; all that were fact. Now that the era has changed. In the present times, the goats are not shaking their heads, the goat would be staring at those people or it was looking to escape. These are facts happened in the past, once the goddess (amman) comes in the cart and sits in front our house, we would light the camphor, the goat would be looking the camphor and once it raises the head and shakes the heard, the goats head would be beheaded with one hit (with a sword); with that, the skin would be peeled, curry would be made in a large vessel; a gravy would be cooked, like that the meat would be cooked. At that time, we won’t be using much spices, tomato, onion, green chili, ginger; all that would be made using the grindstone (ammi), tastes of food made by this way is different

MS: Won’t you add Masala powers?
W1: No we would not add anything to it. Only tomato, onion, green chili, ginger and garlic; we cook only with these and also, we would add the homemade chili powder. Only that way we would be cooking, even now I would not use much readymade things in the cooking.

**00:40:00**

Only they (women family members) would be adding chicken powers, mutton powders and all that. I also stopped eating chicken mutton. I only eat fish, that too only twice or thrice in a week. I would take fishes for many days; even if 50 fishes are fried, I only eat one. What I am requesting from god is not any bungalow or palace; I need a house to sleep and get up; a healthy body, a peaceful porridge. I am not even asking for rice, I am only asking for food from lord shiva; even today I had porridge in the morning. Even in rainy times, I would only consume porridge (kanji). During the rainy hours, the climate would be cold, the porridge would be icy. At that instance, I would heat the water, pour it in the porridge and consume it.

MJ: Earlier you had good air, clean water and all that were clean; all that have become hazardous, can you find the differences?

W1: Yes, I can sense lots of differences. In that village, our body was healthy and it was good for us. After coming to this village, there were a lot of skin infections for us; there were inflammation, irritations in our skin. In that village there were no such occurrences, we never know what irritation is. Now we are experiencing irritation, if people are aged their eye sights are getting dismissed. If we get on to our terrace, the ETS (NCTPS) smokes/dusts would fall and the whole terrace would be black in color, you can also go and check on that; I have not yet been to the terrace, If I go their my feet would be in your phats (black) color. If walk from theri directly, the entire house would be black; because of the many ETS (thermal Power Plant) companies.

MS: I hope it’s been 30 years since the company (NCTPS) started. How did this place exist before the company (NCTPS) was established?

W1: It was completely a ground; the place was spread with white sand; it’s a playing area. Men/boys would come here. This village is a big village (Nettukuppam) and that (Thalankuppam) is also a large village; men from those villages would drink liquor as with their groups. These places are used for that. The government is saying that this place belongs to them and other two villagers are also claiming that this place belongs to them. Now we are facing larger issues with this land (resettled Ennorekuppam land). People are claiming with one other that these places belong to their own villages and in people also restricting other villagers. We said to the government,”we are fish catchers, we need to be displaced next to any community who do fishing and only that would be good for us. If we fishers are resettled with cattlemen, how would that synergise? As we asked we should be resettled along with other fishing communities, so we were resettled here.

GV: But did they ask you before resettling here?

W1: Yes, we were asked where we wanted to resettle. We responded where our race exists, only there it would suit us; we demanded the government and we were resettled here; but we were not expecting that we would be resettled in this place; we thought they would be providing lands, anywhere else. But the government said that,“this place is free and it’s our (governments) land’. Sand was deposited here; earlier this place used to be a dump site and there would be a lot of ridges and pits in this place. Those 4th street and 5th street all were earlier dumped with trash by both the villagers. All those villagers' trash would be collected and dumped here.

MS: Was it next to the River?

W1: Not next to the water, is dumped in one corner; even some trash would be dumped next to the water. Even if you go there you could see trash. Have you seen that or not?

MS: No.

GV: No.

W1: See the trash collected in that corner; that was earlier dumped next to the river bank. Then the staff from the government came here and cleared the trashes, leveled and covered the place with sand. Then it’s been changed to plots and provided to people. But people whole built houses in that places were suffering so much; because while dredging the sand to built concrete columns, all the dumped trash was coming up. But our places only had white sand, so we escaped, some of them were facing trouble.

MS: Do you know how to swim?

W1: Yes.

MS: How did you learn?

W1: In my childhood, since I was 5 years older I used to always be in the sea; I would only bath in the sea, most of the time I would be bathing in the sea. I would take my friends along with me and I would be bathing in the sea. Boys would scold me,”this is not dying, even if the sea is turbulent (kodhalikkudhu), it (W1) is bathing in the sea”. turbulence sea (kadal Kondhalippu) means, if we swim into the sea for some distance, the tides would suddenly swirl us and get out of the sea; then, full of sands would be sticking to our body and we would be rolled out to shore by the sea. Have you bathed (played) in the sea?

MS: Yes.

W1: You would have bathed only when there were less waves.

MS: yes. But we bathed during the tidal surge and men would be scolding like anything. Once, I was taken into the sea, but no one came to (with laughter) save me. At that time I was floating and swimming, during the summer days there is a sea characteristic called ‘Vaangal’, all that you folks would not know, only the fishers know about it. It’s some kind of whirl that would take us into the sea (melah izhuthuttu poidum); I got stuck in that whirl (suzhal) and it took me into the sea, I went far into the sea which is beyond the tidal region. If we crossed beyond the sea, how could we come again to the shore? In such instances it’s hard to come to the shore, only people who greatly swim would be able to reach the shore, I was such a little child; I was only 5 or 6 years old. If I swim and get there, what would I know? I would be more courageous in these things. At that instance I swimmed and went in there, I was swimming again and again and I couldn't come forward, then one brother came there, I asked him just push me with the float (a floating material) into the tides; asked not required to pull and take me till the sure, just push me slowly into the tides, If I am left on the tides, I would swim along the tides. In 6 the siblings at my house, my father used to plead with me,”rather you were born as a girl, if you were born as a boy, you would be useful for me in fishing”. Even then I would be saying my father that I would come fishing with you, but he would deny saying that girl children should not be taken to the sea.

00:46:07

GV: What would happen if a girl is taken to the sea?
W1: Generally, girls would not take to fishing. In the deep sea the boat would be wobbling on the water; my father told,”women seeing that experience dizziness”. Men have practiced that as they are always in the sea swimming and playing; But even during the initial times, men also would be facing that dizziness. After ages and getting practiced they would be used to it, anywhere people have faced hardships. Men can do that, how can women do that? As we grow as women, all the problems would also grow along with us; we can’t share all the things with you. So, women would not be taken to the sea.

MS: Have you chased any dogs or foxes in your old village?

W1: If a fox comes, we can see the fox having a very long tail, having sharp eyes and it would be hawling ‘woooooooo’; we would shout as ‘Koravaa, koravaaa’. Why we shout ‘Koravaa’ is because the foxes would be afraid of the ‘Koravan’ (hunter community).

MS: What story is that?

W1: koravan would hunt for the fox’s teeth

AJ: Kurivikaaran; the gipsy community.

W1: Yes the Kurivikaaran, they would be called as Koravan.

GV: What would they be doing using those teeth?

W1: That is used as ornament along with gold; it would look like tiger teeth; that is fox teeth. If that is worn to children, any bad spirit (kaathu karuppu) would not bother the child. Earlier, ‘Koravan’ (community) would hunt and join it with jewels and sell it. In the olden days, the bad spirit (pei, kaathu) was more, those bad spirits won’t touch people if the fox teeth are with them as an ornament; for that we used to tie it (in next). There is a seed called ‘Kakkuvaan kottai’, we would shape it by taking out the seed and scratching it and we would tie it to the children's hand; this would stop children getting diarrhea. People also used to say that this seed (kottaI) would stop the Cholera. The things (herbs/seeds) that have immunity would be tied to children as any ornaments. In that era people has superstitious beliefs and lived in their ways; I think that can’t be said as superstitious, that the natural way of living, is the life now you are living is the natural way of life? No, nothing natural.

If the children just sneezed, everyone wanted to go to the hospital, visit a doctor, get an injection and get some tablets. But we won’t do that, since the infant is 3 months older, we would be feeding the baby sesame oil (velekkenna). We would get the mother’s milk, no other milk would be added, we would add the tablespoon of sesame oil to it in a glass, we would shake it well by covering our hand till both mixes well; then the milk and oil would mix together. If the infants are facing constipation, only now people are taking the infants to the hospital; we would feed this mixture. We would feed them by morning 8 AM, by 9 AM the bowle would be free and the infant would defecate freely. The infant would start playing; that is how we used to find remedy for infants sickness.

**00:50:07**

There is a herbal medicine called ‘vasambu’, if we take the infants anywhere, we would apply that on the infant’s head by making it as a paste and we would make that as small pellets by soaking in water and scratching it and then we would tie it to the infant's leg as an ornament; that is how the bad spirit would not bother the infants; we believed in that rituals, but if I tie to my grandchildren, my son would be saying that as a superstitious things.

AM: Are there any ghost stories in the old village?

W1: In our village there was a young boy, he had good height, more curly hair and his name is Paramsiva. At nights, along with other boy would be going to the cinema as a group and would be buying a Briyani home; this incident happened during 1982 or 1983, 3 years after I got married in 1979. He is my relative only, he would call ‘Annai’ (Tamil for elder brother’s wife); but father-in-law would not let him into our house saying,”why are you coming to our house”, that era was like that. If the boy comes, my father-in-law would chase him away. Only that boy would help me to draw water from the well saying,”you are pregnant, it is difficult for you to draw the water from the well:. But during my pregnancy only we had to fetch the water from the well, we had to carry it to our house; it was not less difficult, it’s like tearing blood from our eyes; it’s hard to explain all that to you. He was a good friend by helping in this way; after 3 years he has become an adolescent boy, he used to visit theaters and wander like that. One day he has bought Briyani, he has to come via the Mugadwarakuppam burial ground; we have to come only that way. While coming that way he lost a biryani parcel, he was having 2 biryani parcels; if it’s lost he should have left it and he should have come home. It’s also a bad choice to get biryani at that time, in that way; but he was carrying that. In his house, there was not much care for him; he ate the other biryani parcel on that day. After consuming he was fine for some days. He would be sleeping in the house; but later he would go to ‘Thaala thooppu’ (screw pine forest) and while waking up he would be present in the ‘Thaala thoopou’; we were not sure how he would get that long at night times. That ‘Thaala thooppu’ existed next out village gravel yard; you know the Thaalan plant? You don’t know about the Thaalan plant? Or Thaalanpooo (the flower)?

MS: I have heard about the ‘Thaalan Poo’

W1: You could have learned about the Thaalpoo, but you have to see the plant. It would have flat branches, it would be filled with thorns; It’s leaves are very much larger, those leaves would be spread on all the sides; just the leaves would be looking like a large bush.

GV: Did that plant existed in abundance?

W1: There were lots of ‘Thaalam’ plants. If the plant is flowering, snakes would enter and stay in that bush. You can investigate anyone, if you find the ‘Thaalampoo’ (screw pine flower), larger snakes would be there in those bushes. It was told that Mohini (a spirit) possessed him and it was one that takes him to the ‘Thaalam thoopu’; it was also that they both the brother and the spirit would be having fun like husband and wife; while coming back his clothes would be clumsy. That Mohini spirit have taken his there and as he couldn’t able to bear the torture by th spirit he consumed poison and died; that spirit has killed him. His brothers are staying in his home. Many such ghost stories exist. But I would not get outside so much.

During nights he would take Mohini to that place. He was with that Mohini like we see in cinemas, you could have only seen such movies, but while seeing such movies I would be thinking,”this brother would have suffered like this”; I would get remembered of that brother. Mohini (a female spirit) in that era is all true.

C1: Would the Mohini hit people?

W1: You all would not know that; because Mohini had taken him and torchured him, that brother bought brandy, mixed it with poison, drank it and slept. As he was laying down, I went next to him and asked him,”why are you lying like this?”. He responded,”Nothing Anni (brother’s wife), tomorrow you come with a garland”. I again asked,”why are you talking like this?”. He said,”nothing Anni, I was simply saying”. I saw him at 4 PM and people were carrying him and running to make him survive. By that time, he was foaming in his mouth. By the time people were carrying him on a bed and they were running to the hospital via that casuarina farm, he died half way; there were no facilities in that village to save him. We might have lived in natural luxury because of the natural environment and the breeze, but we in the domain of disease, disaster, health accesiblity during women's pregnancy times and our place was a bad place. So many people had given birth to infants in the casuarina farm; many infants have died in this village, we have all faced such sufferings in our village.

**00:55:43**

AJ: Don’t you know any other ghost stories?

W1: I could only know when I got out; I would not get out of that village.

AJ: You said there were ghosts in that village.

W1: The stories of the ghosts in the casuarina farm is if you are the person traveling in that Savukku (casuarina) farm, the ghost would travelin along with you like a person is conversing next to you. In some households, if we two people are having a conversation like,”hey buddy, come we can go fishing, because if we go fishing tonight we could get some good fishes' '. Hearing such conversation, one day, a ghost came to a person's house and gave a call from the outside of the person's house saying,”hey buddy, I have come here for fishing, come! Let's go fishing". The ghost took him fishing and they both casted net; they went to the long sea and they caught a good number of fishes. While the fisher was talking, the ghost (in the human character) didn’t respond to anything. The person was dispatching the fishes from the net and was throwing it in the boat; but by the time, when the person was returning shore he found no fish in the boat that was caught and the person (ghost) was also missing. Then the person got trembled, threw away his nets and he started to run and paddle towards the shore; he got sick and laid in a fever for the next 3 days. This happened in our village.

C1: Can you share the Perumal stories with them?

W1: I lived for 11 years in that old village and then we moved to this side of the River.

MS: What kind of Trees were there in your old village?

W1: Trees means, casuarina (savukku) trees were there; plenty of that tree were present there. As it used to be sold at that time. If the casuarina tree has grown to a larger size, it would be uprooted. After uprooting, small casuarina sapling would be bought and planted in the same place; again that would be grown and then it would be cultivated. Such farming is done by the people in the Melur.

MS: Who would be working in that farms?

W1: There were SC (scheduled Caste) people who used to stay in separate settlements; they would safeguard the farm and they would be watering the trees.

W2: Even today casuarina farms exist in the Kattupalli Region.

GV: Do Casuarina trees exist today?

W2: Yes, you can see a full Casuarina farm, in that farm you can see only one house. In that house only one family would live, they belong to the SC or ST community.

GV: Can you share where exactly these farms exist?

W2: After crossing the L&T port.

GV: Yes, Kattupalli village exists.

W2: Yes, from kattupalli village till Pazhaverkaadu, we can see the casuarina farms; exactly till Korakuppam.

C1: It’s a larger farm, every trees would be aligning straight to each other in a line; then two huts would be there and no one else would be found in that place.

GV: You said that in 1984, a cyclone hit the shore and your husband went to the other side of the, then he couldn’t return back for 2 days during the cyclone surge. Then he has to come crossing the River, how did the River exist at that time?

W1: It would be turbulent; how the sea is turbulent, in the same way the River would also be turbulent in nature. It was not easy to cross the River; dams in the water reservoirs would be opened, the water would be flowing this RIver to reach the sea. Pooni lake and 5 other lakes would be opened and water would be drained into this RIver. If that flood water flows in this River and if any person falls in this River, the person can’t survive. Such a flood would be flowing in the River. Even

Chettiyar: They are the first inhabited family of the village; they hold the position of being the village head and also have good wealth compared to others from the community; only few such families exist in fishers village other are general fishers. I got married in 1979 and by 1976 or 1977, I had attained puberty and I was just in my home. The whole village was flooding at that time.

GV: Where?

W1: In Chinna Kuppam, all the villages were sinking in that flood. In that cyclone, In that flood, boxes, beeros (cupboards) from nowhere were floating and flushing into the sea. Many houses got submerged in that flood. In that flood, a large hay-stock was floating and flushing to the sea, my father-in-law (also grandfather) saw that hay-stack and he thought, there is a Uravukaaranga (relative) in the Melur (Reddiyar village), so this hay-stock would be useful for them; To help them, he went into the River to pull that hay-stack. By that time, a large rat snake was resting on the hay-stack; by the time my father-in-law extended his hand towards the hay-stack to pull it, the snake had bitten him. He got unconscious in that same place and then, he was taken somewhere and treated with country medicine (Naattu veithiyam; traditional medicine).Then he was made to survive.

W2: He went to pull the hay-stack without the knowledge of the snake’s presence, the snake had bitten him.

W1: No, the snake was not biting him. It just made the ‘hisss’ sound with the action of hitting him, that’s when my father-in-law got unconscious and fell down. While the water is released from the dam during the cyclone times, it would wash the thinks on it’s; beds, cupboards and all such things would be flushing via the River, my father-in-law went to pull the hay-stack to help the uravukaranga (relative) in the Melur, as they would be feeding their cows. He would possess any things for himself, he would ask the family members to give the things to childrens, babies or any other known or unknown person; even if someone is walking on the road, he would ask home members to provide them. In that humanity, he was about to catch the washing hay-stack for the uravukaranga (Reddiyar); felt down with breath-stopping as he was frightened of the snake. If the snake had bitten him, he would have died on the spot. But it didn’t hit him, just hissed while he was about to pull the hay-stack, he also shouted and asked people to join him to get the hay-stack to the bank. But they carried him rather. This is a story that happened to our father-in-law.

GV: When did this happen?

W1: this happened approximately in 1978.

AJ: Aren’t there any ghost stories in this village?

W1: In this village there is no talk about ghosts; the ghost would be shouting at nights outside of our houses; anyhow we would not get out of the houses or village. In that old village, it would be like a ghost walking with us (the sense of ghost). There was no light in that village; if we walked, the ghost would be walking with us. A story that has happened to me is, my son was 1 ½ years older than an infant; he was so sick, so we stayed in my mother’s house as the Ennore Bazar (market) is closer to get medications. But the old village is too far, it is not easy to travel from that village. I took him to my mother’s house (in Chinnakuppam), I stayed there for 1 week and I cured him from the sickness; we were returning to our village (old village), it was 4 PM in the evening by the time I reached the this side of the bank to travel to the other side of the bank; there were no boats to cross the River, I was waiting till 6 PM. Then a boat came after 6 PM, I was about to board the boat, then 3 people from our village were also joining me to cross the River; they went to sell the fish in the market and came with me. I was thinking that, “I should cook rice, make curry; we can get home sooner along with each other”. I was carrying my 1. 1⁄2 year old child in my arms, my arm was in pain (kodaithal) and how can I walk two kilometers to reach the village? While I was carrying him, to relax my arm I tried to make him stand on the ground, he was not at all standing. It was evening time, so all the sparrows were shouting; sometimes even the foxes used to hauls during the dusk hours ,any living things at that place would be shouting, only that way dusk would be happening. At that instance, the crows were all shouting ‘Kaa, kaaa’, this boy was not at all, getting down from my hand. All the people who were accompanying me had flown away (reached the village) sooner. I was making him stand for some time, sit for some time on the way to my village and the time had reached 7 PM, maybe more than 6:30 PM. My husband was walking in the same route behind me; this happened, but no one is believing, if I share this story. My husband was coming in another boat that crossed the River along with the boat I was commuting. I was asking my husband to carry my son and take him home sooner, and also told my husband that I would come slowly behind you. He responded,”I have work” and he left me on that farm and went home; I have such a wild animal. In this era, no women would live with men. We went home leaving me and others coming with me also went to the village. Then what shall I do? (crying…..); that farm was extending for more than 1 km and in the place while nearing my village, there exists a 10 cents of vacant land. At that place, we used to keep the statue and pray to the ‘Muneeshwaran thatha’, he is called as ‘Rettakolathu thatha’ (two pond’s grandfather); he is the same Muneeswaran god, we call him by a different name. We used to worship him in that place.

01:05:18

I was crying thinking that ‘thatha’ (god),”all have left, what shall I do now. This boy (son) is not at all getting down from me. He is grabbing my arms and body by hearing the sounds of the sparrow and crows”. I was carrying him and slowly walking towards the village; that ‘thatha’ (deity), he always used to wear only white clothes. At that instance, I am seeing 10 men walking across me wearing that ‘thatha’s’ white cloth; I am seeing like 10 persons conversing and moving in front of my way, It’s like I was hearing the sound of their conversations. I was saying (to son),”dei Vennkadesha, some are going there. Come let’s go along with them; come let us go!”. I was talking to my son, I laid him on my shoulder and I walked; running; walking; running and I reached the edge of that farm. If the village is on one side and the farm is on the opposite sides, between these two, that stone stands(deity). He existed as a statue, he existed as a stone. Their only one tree existed, on one would touch that tree; it was a 50 year old tree, it was an old tree. It was also a casuarina tree (savukku maram); its trunk was so large. It existed as such, no one would be touching that tree. In front of that tree, we used to keep that stone and we worshiped. By the time I entered the vacant land from the edge of the farm, all those white figures disappeared. Would you believe it or not? The village is quite distant from that place, it was existing next to the canal; how can those 10 people disappear immediately. If they are walking, at least we could have seen some of them. But by the time I got next to that stone, no one was seen.

By the time my husband reached home, my mother-in-law was asking my husband,”Where is she? She informed me that she would be coming here today”. My husband replied that,”she is coming on the way”. My mother-in-law responded in the same way I am saying now,”What a sin, are you a killer. You left a woman and an infant alone in the farm; are you a stone”. Then my mother-in-law was coming running to get us home. She was crying, I was also going home crying and I said to my mother-in-law,”Better I would not live this life. Hereafter, definitely I would not go anywhere with your son.” If I have to say about my life, I have to say only about the tears and blood (crying…). What else do you need? Do you need ghost stories?

W1 (to W2): Are there any ghost stories?

W2: not sure about that.

W1: We have all seen the ghosts in our village. When I was newly married, there was a elderly man; he had no relatives. For him, I would cook rice and serve him. He would get rice and give it to me. If no one is there in the school, it seems some in-charge would be providing rice to him from the school when people are not present; the rice is kept to serve the children in the government schools. He would bring the rice in a pitcher and give that to me; I would wash that rice and boil it secretly without knowing my mother-in-law and serve him rice. He would also get some curry from any house, take the food to the hut and have that food. In the elderly age, people used to wander like that in the village, now the people admit elder in the old age homes. Then it was not like that, elderly people used to stay and sleep under any tree or any temple. If we give any curry (kolambu) or rice to that grandpa, he would not be cooking anything; if not he would be pleased to get the rice cooked; then I would cook rice, give him some rice and let him go. I had this practice with him, he died one day. But even after his death, he used to wear the same black bed sheet, come behind the back door and he was shouting,”Amma! Ammaaa! Amaaaaaa!” That I have seen with my naked eyes, but he would come only as a shadow not as a human; it would come as some wind. Ghosts would not appear as something that is shown in the movie; it’s nothing like that, it only comes as a breeze.

W2: Some used to say that it would be calling people by their name.

W1: Even while lighting lamps in my house, I used to sing some songs or take people along with me. Only after seeing those ghosts, I started losing my fear. After my father-in-law died, a person to my father-in-law came home that day; he came on the 7th day after death, we only have mourning gathering on the 8th day of the death. She is my father-in-law’s uncle’s wife (mama ooda pondaati), she would not visit him anytime, but she came one day earlier to the mourning. At that time, my second child was an infant; he was just 1 year old when my father-in-law died. He saw a grandson and a granddaughter before he died; after he died, she came on the 7th day. While sleeping, she was rolling and rolling, then I was aware of many things and I didn’t know anything; it’s like he was bothering her,”why did she come here.” It was a small house. I was sleeping on the floor, my infant was next to me and another cot was there, she refused to lie on that side and she moved to the cupboard side. At night she told me that she wanted to defecate. At that time my son woke up, I asked him to sleep in the house and I took her to the backyard; it would such intense dark, in that darkness there would be a coconut tree; in the wind, the coconut tree would be sounding ‘oohhzzuuu’, ‘oohhzzzzu’. As she was scared, I took her along and asked her to defecate; I went little far from her, she left sooner leaving me and she didn’t even inform me. I generally used to be scared and know that she isn’t here, I got shocked and ran from there and I reached my home. By the time I reached home my son was crying out. So, I laid on the floor and I was feeding him, then she was shouting,”Aiyyaioo, someone is watching out! Someone is watching out!” When we woke up, we heard someone tapping their feet. But it was my father-in-law who came to our house, but she started shouting like that.

**01:11:50**

W2: If a person is dead, people here used to say, the dead person's feet impression would happen in front of the house. As a ritual, sand would shedded in front of their house.

W1: It would only happen during the mourning day (karumati).

W2: No, on that day of death, people used to shed sand in front of their house at the same night and camphor would lighten, then they would be sleeping in their home at that night. In that sand, the dead person’s feet impression would; even that kind of ritual happened during the last death in Kasi Kovil.
W1: That’s the ghost; but only after such incidents happen, my fear of the ghosts has cleared. As I have seen many such incidents, I have lost fear in me. Even if you call me to the burial ground at 1 AM in the night, I can come. That fear was taken away from me by my father-in-law.

GV: How does this Kosasthalai River look during the rain, how does this river mouth look during rainy hours?

W1: If it rains in that village, no one would come out of their house. Even if it's a dangerous situation, we have to beg, plead them to help us at that time. If the boat transportation is charging 10 Rupees, the boat owner/rider would tell us that they can come only if we provide 20 rupees at that time and they would also warn that,”we are responsible for you life, you have to take care of your life.” We lived in such a bad situation in our old village.

GV: Have you crossed the River during rain times?

W1: Yes, I have traveled. That would be wobbling (thaththallikkum) like any thing, we have to hold our life safe while traveling to and fro in the River at that time.

GV: Will such an amount of flood be flowing in the River?

W1: Yes, more water would be flowing. Only people who have experienced those suffering would know that.

W2: We have also suffered, not like them (W1). But only now the bridge has been constructed, before that we have to cross the River only by boat; often the boat would submerge in the River while commuting to school. If the boat get submerged in the center of the RIver, all the children are done.

W1: Their River is a smaller one, it’s in the Pazhaverkadu (Pulicat). River is flatter (tharai) and not much deeper. Thus, even if the boat sinks, people are not drowned.

W2: But in the center, it’s not flatter, the River is deeper.

W1: Yes, only in the center, the River is not deeper; most of the River is flatter. I have lived there since childhood, my mother's house was in Konankuppam. We used to visit the cinema theater on the other side of the River, while coming back a large canal like river would be running there. In that canal salt caring boats would be moving, it’s also called ‘Large boats (periya padagu)’. Even today such boats are used in Pompugar regions. It used to be like a ship, it would be a lengthier one. Within that people have tents, they would be cooking within that boat and they would also sleeping in the boat; it would be a safer place even during the rain and also in the sun; it’s like boat like a ship; only after seeing this kind of boat, ships are being built; that’s a fact. It would carry salts and casuarina firewood; only that path would be very much deeper, because the bottom of the boat is lengthier inside the water; those boats have larger space; over that planks would be placed and people would be staying and doing their daily activities. There would be an entrance kind of thing in the top center of the boat, they would get inside and cook food in that for their 10 days travel in the boat. Even my mother was commuting in those boats while she was getting married; to visit any village, people have to only commute through those boats.

**01:15:35**

W2: Pazhaverkadu is this way.

W1: Not Just Pazhaverkadu, even the vegetable stocks were transported in the boats to Koyambedu market. Now, all that places has been encroached and houses were built; all that we see in our televisions. Some place called K.K. nagar, all those places have been built over the water bodies where boats were commuting; by blocking the River, larger and larger palaces have been over that. Even recently the city was flooded, it’s because there is no way for the water to flow; it happened in 2015. How many people died because of that? That River run throughout the Madras; it also extends to Pondicherry, even far behind that the River is extending (Buckingham canal). But as the time passes, people have built houses over the River by encroaching it.

During the rainy days, we can run our day in our old village. We can’t have firewood; no oil; no rice. Maximum we can manage is 3 or 4 days, but if it rains are extending for 10 days it was be hard for us; it’s like nearing death and surviving back for children (sethu thaaan polaikkudhunga).

W2: Many children have died after their birth. Only now do we see parents having only 1 or 2 children. But then, couples used to have many children. My grandmother gave birth to 16 children, in which only 6 children survived. Many children would die, at least half the children would be dead.

W1: Children would be dying because of Rain, hunger and cholera.

W2: In that surrounding region, people were impacted by Cholera. Even my grandmother was diseased with Cholera and she was currently treated in hospital at present. It’s the Renuka hospital.

W1: It’s the Cholera hospital in Tondiarpet. This hospital exists in Tondiarpet, opposite to the Apollo. That hospital was just 4 times larger than our house, only now it’s been extended larger and larger. To get treated for the for pox (ammai), people would be visiting here; any intense fever or cholera, people would only be visiting that hospital.

GV : Has Cholera spread during your childhood in that region?

W2: Yes, my grandmother was diseased with cholera

GV: I am asking about Ennore?

W2: No, we didn’t face anything like that in Ennore.

GV: The Kattupalli kuppam village is beyond your village. Right?

W1: Yes, they are behind us. They told us that they also have to come to the Mugadwaram to cross the River to access the market. If they (kattupali kuppam) come from their village, they would get their fish baskets from their heads in the place where I told 50 coconut trees existed; they would be relaxing in that place. They would be coming very long from that place; while sitting there, we used to provide them some water, some old porridge water. If they are so tired and couldn’t make it to the Ennore market across the River; they would trade their fishes to the traders in our village. In the auctioning place, you saw a person auctioning. That person used to buy fishes from the fisherwomen from kattupalli kuppam. His name is Chinna durai, he used to be a very young boy at that time. He and his wife would buy fish from the fisherwomen from Kattupallikuppam and employ people to sell those fishes for daily wages; they were only trading fishes in our old village. He doesn’t know fishing in the sea; from his childhood his grandmother used to get fishes and were asking him to sell those fishes. So, he didn’t learn fishing and he continued fish trading till date. After he got married to his wife, his wife would only buy fishes from the fisherwomen from Kattupallikuppam and she would employ some 4 to 5 other people to sell those fishes. They would be buying the fishes daily, they would pay them for fishes, they would also serve food to fisherwomen if anything required. The other workers would carry those fishes from this side to the other side of the River to sell it. In our lives, we have suffered much. There is no chance that others would have experienced such sufferings. I would say that no one should be experiencing such sufferings that we have gone through.

GV: You said during cyclones, in high floods the boats would be wobbling.

W1: Yes, many children have died because of that. In VGP (an amusement park that existed in the past) Mugadwarakuppam, children used to travel across the River in boats for their schools. Some 40 children visited the VGP amusement park during their summer holidays in Chithirai month (mid April- mid May). These 40 children took a boat from the other side of the River to VGP; all were teenagers, not younger than that; they all would be studying standard 7 and 8. While they were traveling in the boat, they were witnessing fishes jumping above the surface. ‘Saala’ fishes came as a cluster and fishes were jumping. The boat was moving over a deeper place, if the boat have traveled in a path that’s approaching our village, the place would have been less deeper and the children could be saved to some extent. But he (the Rider) was rowing the boat in line with Mugadwarakuppam village and he also belonged to Mugadwarakuppam. While the fishes were jumping in the River, the children got amused, started shouting,”hey see the fishes are jumping”. When some children shouted from one end of the boat, the children from the other end of the boat moved to the opposite end. That’s it, the boat flipped and submerged. Once the boat submerged, the rider was shouting. People in the banks went to the incident site with boats and rescued some 30 children. But some 10 to 12 children were dead; nothing can be done after drowning. That case was running for a long time, I am not sure about the case as I was not from that village.

GV: Is he alive?

W1: That person would have died by now. Even at that time he was in his middle age. Now he would have died.

GV: Which year has that happened?
W1: It was in the year 1982 or 1983; wait, it would be 1981 or 1982. A case was filed over him stating how he can board those many numbers of children in a boat; the parents were filing a case over him. From then, boats were not used for tourists travel; it’s because of those children. The boat rider was continuously insisting the children not to get along to one side of the boat; while he was insisting the children went to one side and the accident happened. I am not sure about the number of children dead in this River, but many have died.

GV: What would be the color of the River during the flood times?

W1: It would be like muddy (Kaliman) color; the same like how the color would be if we mix the mud with the water.

GV: Does the color of the River change from time to time?

W1: Yes, during cyclones it would change its color.

GV: What color does the River change to?

W1: During a cyclone the River would be somewhat yellowish. Normally the River would be black blue in color. How did it look when you were seeing it today?

GV: It was blue.

W2: Where can we see that the River so much ruined now?

W1: It’s been a long time since we have been to the River side. As people from here are going to the sea for fishing, we are also not going to the RIver, it’s been a very long time.

**01:25:00**

W2: The RIver is not as clear as we used to see it in the past as the sewage water is being led into the River.

GV: You have not gone to the RIver since you came here.

W1: Yes.

GV: In which year did you come here?

W1: We came here in the year 1990.

W2: But we don’t have any patta for our land.

W1: That is why my son is constantly roving to the government offices to get Patta. Only individuals who were born native to the village would have that sense. People settling here would not have that sense those feel.

Earlier it was my husband, who was running this Panchayat. He was the one who stood strongly in all these works (resettlement, employment), and got signatures from the government officials. Along with him, another person called Aarumugam chettiyar was doing this job. He is the Ceittyuar, if you are giving him 10,000 rupees he would speak supporting you and if I am giving him 10,000 rupees he would be speaking supporting me. Some kind of Chettiyar existed in our village.

GV: You said that you learned swimming in the sea, have you ever crossed this RIver by swimming?

W1: No, people would not let us (women) do that. If I accidentally fall into the River, I have the capacity to do that. Any learned job would not let us down; I have to think if I could make it up in this age. But during my young age, when the blood was good, I had that capacity. Now I am aged, but I know swimming, I can do it in the sea. But in the RIver, mud might pull us in. If we are swimming in the River, we have to swim on the surface; if you lay your leg on the River bed, the mud in the bed you pull you in. Like that 1000s of people have died in the River, many children in the RIver.

W2: River is something that has mud in it. But the sea is not like that, it has sand filled in its bottom. I am a short person. If I got drowned in the Sea and I couldn’t swim at that time, I would get into the sea bed, then kick the sea bed with my leg and push myself up to the surface. I know that tactic even if I am a woman. If people don't know to submerge (muzhugaradhu) and get back, those people have to drown in the sea; I would know that and I have done that.

Do you know Veeraraagavar kovil (a temple)? It’s in Thiruvallur. There exists a large pond and the pond is filled with water as there was good rain in that region. At that time, we visited that temple, and by then I had given birth to all my children. We decided to bathe in that pond, so I asked a girl who came with us to join us to bathe in the pond. While she was coming towards me, she stepped on the algaes present on the pond steps, she slipped and flipped crossing me into the deeper part of the pond directly. She was bigger in height than me, I am very much shorter. When I got lower into the pond, I could only sense steps under my feet. So, I kicked on the steps, pushed myself towards her, caught her hair and drew her towards the bank. Her husband was standing on the bank, he was shouting like anything from there. Not just her husband, all men were bathing on one side, we women were bathing separately on the other side of the pond. She was drowning like she was about to die, somewhere shouting asking me to save her; but no one came to save her. So, I got into the pond, kicked the steps, pulled her by her hair, raised up to shore and saved her. As I did know swimming, I was able to save her. But like that I can’t kick the sediment in the River, if you kick the River bed, then your leg would get stuck in the River bed, after that you can’t swim and rise again. River is different and the sea is different; if you are swimming in the sea tides, even if you're washed into the sea as you couldn’t swim any longer, if you get stuck in some fury tides from the sea, it would push, roll and get you into the shore. So, the sea can’t be more dangerous than River; only if you cross the Tidal part of the sea, it’s dangerous for you. The tides are ferocious, but no one has died in that. But if you crossed the tidal part and went into the long sea (meelah) and if you can’t swim the whirl and winds, you are done. If you got stuck in the whirl, you can’t escape that. How long would you swim on the surface, you can’t even get submerged and push the sea bed. If you are continuously swimming on the sea surface; then once your legs, arms get tired, you have to drown in the sea.

**01:30:25**

W1: In the Barathiyar nagar junction in Ennore, because of the whirl many children are dying. At Least 2 or 3 children are dead because of whirl in that region.

W1: Even adults are dying at that place.

W2: It’s happening weekly. It’s happening there like a mandatory thing.

GV: Why is it happening like that?

W2: In that place, more whirl currents are happening. Even fisher’s children are drowned in that place.

W1: I told you that, Once I got stuck in the sea. Like that whirl current would kill the people; such threats are there in the sea.

GV: Then in the River, you can kick the River bed and rise back to surface, you need stamina to swim in the sea.

W1: Yes. At the same time, our feet should not touch the River bed. If a person can swim on the surface and reach the banks, he can survive. But if you try submerging and kicking the RIver bed, it’s impossible to do that.

W2: While fishing in the sea, fishers used to jump into the sea, they would easily rise up on the surface. In the same way, my husband’s friend went to the River and he was diving from the boat into the RIver, his head got stuck in the mud (/sludge) in the River bed and he was dead on the spot.

W1: There is a difference between the River and sea. In the sea, only when you get into the deeper region, one has more chances to get drowned into the sea; but if you are in the tidal sides, you don’t have to lose your life because the tides would spin you, in any way it would wash to the shore. But the River is not like that, if you go and fall into it, the mud would possess you.

W2: For many people, they would want to dive into the River once they see the water. But they were not aware of the place and its impacts.

GV: Does this River have a lot of mud?

W1: Yes, it has a lot of mud.

GV: How was it earlier? What kind of mud was there?

W1: Earlier there was not much mud in the River. Now, as there is a lot of sewage/waste water coming into the River, the mud(/sludge) has increased in the River. In olden days during the summer time, the ‘Kathri’ time (hottest summer day); in the Chithirai month (tamil during summer: mid-April to mid-may); while we were residing in the other side of the River, at that time, half the RIver would be dried; only where the pits exits in the River, only there we can see the water stagnated. Boats would be driven via the other way.

What we would be doing at that time was, as the River dried up, if we walked on the sea shore side, we would cross half the River by walking; sometimes we even crossed the River by walking carrying fishes in the baskets. But during Rain floods, you can’t walk like that in low tide; at that time there might be muds in the River bed, then nothing can be done. But if the sea water is flowing in the River (high tide), then sands from the sea would come into the River and cover the River bed, then it would be easier for us to walk in the shallow water. But River seems to be greener, but the danger in the River is higher. If anyone wants to get into the River or have to just get into the River, they have known swimming. People who don't know swimming can’t get into it. Because the mut would pull them into it. But the sea is not like that, even if one has no knowledge of the sea and if they are getting into it, the sea would swipe them to the shore.

GV: Have you done fishing?

W1: (Laughing…) No, I have not done fishing. That I have asked my father. He said,”we shouldn’t take girls to the sea”.

GV: Are there any fisherwomen who went to the sea for fishing?

W2: Yes, there is a fisherwoman: her name is Vennila \_\_\_\_\_.

W1: I am not sure about that.

GV: What’s her age?

W2: She is young; it was said that she went fishing. But I am not sure about it.

W1: Men would take women only to the River, no one would take women to the sea.

W2: But women who do fishing in the sea exist in the south.

W1: Yes, women in Nagapattinam, Nagoor were fishing in the sea. But on our side, despite how much people suffer, we (community) should not take women to the sea for fishing.

W2: But I remember Vennila was going to sea for fishing.

GV: What kind of fishes are caught?

W1: All the kinds of the fishes are caught. Vanjaram, vallaalu, in small fishes, we would get ‘maththi’, ‘kavala’, ‘navara sekke’

W2: she would not cook any small fishes.

W1: We would only cook larger fishes. We would get, ‘kaala’,‘moulaasi’; it’s lager fish, one kilo costs 1000 rupees. I am not sure if you have consumed ‘moulaasi’, it costs 1000 rupees per kg. Earlier, when my husband was fishing it was only 100 or 200 rupees per kilogram. Once my husband, caught a large ‘Moulaasi’ and gave it to my mother-in-law; even at that time, that fish could be have been sold for some 5000 or 6000 rupees; but my mother-in-law immediately took the fish to sell (kabakaba-nu), but by the she reached the Mugadwarakuppam, the women in that village had a talk, bargained to my mother-in-law and they bought the fish for just 250 rupees and they fooled my mother-in-law. Then husband was scolding her severely,”why did you sell the fish to lower price that costs 400 or 500”

**01:36:34**

‘Muoulaasi’ fish would even grow for 10 kilograms or 20 kilograms; ‘Vanjaram’ would not grow after a certain extent. ‘Vanjaram’ would have the same body as ‘moulaasi’. ‘Moulaasi’ would be black in color and ‘vanjaaram’ is white - blue running color and it would be smoother. In both fishes there would be no thorn (fish bone). Then ‘Vavvaal’, it would be black and flatter.

W2: It would have thorns, but it would be softer.

W1: All these fishes are healthy things for the human body. As we have all consumed all that, today I am about to be 60 years older; now I am 58 years older, even we two can also have running race and check who is winning the race; now I am aged and I am not much healthier as my husband was fishing (paadu eduthu) for last two years and I was assisting him. I can’t run now, but earlier I used to jump and run; I don’t walk casually in my life. In my childhood, if an edelman (thatha) ask’s BD (local convention cigarette) I would get him the BD, which was a fraction of time; by the time he blinked his eyes.

He would ask,”what, have you bought that? (enna maa, vaanginu vantiya)”

I would respond,”Yes, I did (aama thatha)”

He was saying,”I just gave money, you came within turning around (ennama, ipppo thana dhuddu kuduthan, thirubaradhu kulla vaanginu vantiyae maa)”

Like that, I would never walk, I would always be running.

W2: Like that, my grandfather exists, his walking would look like running. We couldn’t walk like him even if we are younger.

W1: In that older age, if a beggar came, we would see them with some love and affection; now no one is looking at them like that.

GV: In your old village you said that you suffered a lot and at the same time you also said that you didn’t buy most things with money; you got all the required things. But here you said that we don’t suffer like before, but we are buying everything with money. For you, which life do you like the most, life in an old village or the life in the current village?

W1: If you think of hard working labor (uzhaippu), I like the lifestyle in my old village, I have to only choose that. Because we had a natural breeze, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (1:38:03 - not clear), there were no issues with others. There was no tea or coffee at that time, if anyone had a headache or neck pain, we would take some ‘sukku’, we would have palm jaggery, we would boil that and have that drink; it’s called ‘karuppu kaaruppatti’. We would drink that once in a while; That too, the drink would be served while we are very sick on our bed; we would be served ‘sukku coffee’, some bread or roti or bun to eat. Now it’s not like that, if any person has a fever, they are asking whatever they want. Then the tablet medicine was not used much, we would get the 1 rupees tablet or 50 paise tablet from the groceries store.

W2: Their sickness would get automatically cured. Earlier people had natural immunity and characteristics.

W1: As I lived in a natural environment, even today, I would not take many tablets.

W2: Now we are informed about the cyclones on television, but for them the cyclone arrival would be known earlier, seeing the wind directions and other environments.

W1: It’s hard to speak about my other sufferings now. I got periods and I was about to get aborted with twins in my womb; my mother was not there and even my mother-in-law was not there at that time. I have to walk 2 kms in that casuarina farm. At that time, an relative was there in my neighbor; she is my small mother-in-law (mother-in-law’s younger sister), I went to her home and called her,”grandmother please come with me, something wrong might happen with in the farm, I can’t do anything (aaya aaya kooda vaa aayaa, thoppula edhadhu aaidaah, ennala onnu seiya mudiyaadhu)”. You know what her reply was? (crying…..)

Women who were carrying fishes in the basket would not go slower and how would they come along with me at that time. They would be walking faster or trying to run to catch the boat to cross the River; (- oru kuthu nadayaa povanga). She (small mother-in-law) replied,”you take an old torn saree, if something wrong happens tie that cloth (-between her legs). I suffered from all these things. (crying…)

 01:40:36

W2: In that time, there were more restrictions to the women; there was more moral policing to the women. it was the male chauvinistic.

W1: After that, I walked 2 kms from my old village and visited a doctor in Ennore. There was only one doctor in this region; there were not many health facilities here. I said to the doctor,”I am experiencing this (abortion like thing)”. That doctor said,”please don't be distressed” and she is not a professional doctor, she used to help fetus delivery manually with her hand, her name is ‘Thangamma’. She said,”I cannot help you now, I just now completed a fetus delivery which started last night”. She was just coming out of the labor room by washing her hands. She responded, “dear, I can’t help you now (ennala panna mudiyaadhu di)”. She is a good person, she used to talk with love. She asked me to visit other hospital (nee vena reenne(?) ku poo ma). Even if I was pregnant, my husband or my mother-in-law would care for me, even for buying medicines, tablets, and taking me to the hospital; It was a big cruelty. By that time, I gave birth to an infant and I was having two fetuses in my stomach. I was asked to leave the farm; my mother-in-law was saying,”why are you just sitting at home, people are going to fetch firewood, why can't you go with them?” When the sea is turbulent, men would not go fishing in the sea, they would in houses. Then women would be asked to leave to farm (/ forest: kaadu) to fetch the fire wood. By then we have to walk for 2 kms or 3 kms to get the firewood, we would even have to walk till Kattupalli Kuppam distance from our village. By that time I had two children.

GV: Why do you have to walk that distance?

W1: To fetch firewood (viragu).

W2: At that time, there were only firewood stoves. All have to cook in the firewood stoves.

W1: We were asked to fetch the firewood. By the time I was pregnant for the 3rd time, it’s been 6 months of my pregnancy. I was saying to my mother-in-law that,”I am feeling unusual movements in my womb while lying on either side, I couldn’t walk and I couldn’t visit the hospital alone”. My mother-in-law was scolding me for that. I said the same to my husband, the person I got married to; he was also scolding me stating,”have you given birth to any miracle baby?”. What can I do at that time (crying..)? I needed support at least from one side, but I was not having support from any side. It was about 4 am in the morning, all were going to farm (thoattam) ; I also went to the farm. I didn’t have food last night as both of them were scolding me. We were traveling far far from our village, near to Kattupalli. From that place, we can see the Kattupalli kuppam village with our eyes. It would be around 1 km between the farm and the Kattupalli kuppam village. The farm was very large next to that village. We broke the wood, stigs from the trees, gathered the firewoods, tied the woods and lifted the woods and started walking from there by 7 am in the morning. When we started walking from the farm the watchman came catching us. We would be walking in a line, back to back one another. He caught us and got all the firewood (casuarina) from us and kept it in his place. What can we do then? Again we went to another farm, there were many farms at that time. From there we again got the firewoods, carried to our village. It was 11 or 12 am by the time we started from that place; we had to walk via the sea shore; on the sea sand. If we are walking on the sand, the sand would be hot and it’s hard to walk. How can we walk then? So we stopped by sea shore; All the women ran home carrying the weight. It was 11 am, I didn’t eat last night, I didn’t eat in the morning; I had giddiness and fell down on the shore where the ‘Thalampoo chedi’ (a flora bush) was there; it’s the same ‘Thalampoo’ bushes that I already shared about where ‘Mohini’ (a bad spirit) existed. The place I fell down had water there; It seems I was lying there unconsciously. By then, people from Kattupalli were running carrying their fish baskets in the sea shore; it was about 12 or 1 pm by then. They saw me and saying,”you sin women (adi paavi manishi)”, usually men used to talk like that. They were saying,”you sin women, why are you lying here”; they were all shouting. As they were shouting, I felt like somewhere long people were talking. By then I woke up and saw; then realized that I was lying on the shore. All were men, some 3 or 4 men used to carry fish from Kattupalli Kuppam to Ennore market (on the other side of River); some lesser number of women used to carry the fish baskets and more men would be carrying the fishes. I told them,”Brother, I am feeling dizzy”. They told me that they would inform people in our village and said to me,”dear, please stay here and move anywhere (raajathi, ingaye iru, engayu poogadha; naa poi soldran). They went to my village and shouted at my mother-in-law like anything when they saw her. Those people who shouted at my mother-in-law were transgender (trans woman:aravaani); at that time, we would not use that term and not tag them; but they (men) would speak like women. They shouted like anything,”you sin women(paavi munda), are you a woman? Pregnant woman is lying on the seashore”. My mother-in-law was washing clothes, she left the clothes and took some porridge; the old porridge, she grinded that, took that porridge water in a jar (jorthale) and came running to me. She came and she cried when she saw me. She said,”I would not send you to the farm’. Then she gave me that porridge and took me home. She was there with me in the home for 2 or 3 days and after that she left for her daughter’s house; but it was that time that my fetus was about to get aborted; I was not aware of that. Only then I called my other grandmother (small mother-in-law: chinna maamiyaar). She said,”I can’t come, I'm not feeling well”. Then I went to the doctor and that doctor told me to go to Renee (other healthcare somewhere) as she could help me now. Then we (couples) went to the doctor by 5 pm in the evening; only after when my husband had completed his net-works (works related to nets repair: vala adachittu vandhu). When we reached by 5 pm in the evening, the doctor told us that they would update about the status of pregnancy by tomorrow morning. They gave me some material and asked me to report once it got wet; it got wet immediately once they gave me. Then they took to the first floor; they were checking my stomach with their hand, at that time, there were no scanning devices. They have tools that look like top toys; something like a funnel. That tool was made of Aluminium; they were pressing and using the tool on me and they were inspecting me for more than 1 hour. After inspecting, they told me that nothing can be done to me and asked me to get injected on both sides. After they told me, they injected both \_\_\_\_\_\_ (?). They killed both the boy babies and gave it to my hand; Does anyone would have experienced such cruelty? But I suffered from it. People have to shed blood tears about our (women) lives in the old village (old Ennore Kuppam). Even after abortion, there were no people to support me at that place; not even a single person was there by me. There was a ‘sister’ (nurse), but she was pregnant. She asked,”Is there no one to accompany you?” (crying…). No one was there for me, my husband had just kept 5 Rupees under the pillow I was lying on and he went; what could we buy with 5 rupees? That sister (nurse) supported me with money?(crying….).

At that time, the sister (nurse) told me that I have to drink coffee at that time. There were no jar (sommbu) or any vessels to buy coffee. She (nurse) washed the glucose bottle, with that she asked someone to buy coffee; she was pregnant, she was the one worrying for me then; she was the god for me that day. He asked the other ‘sister’ (nurse) not to let me do anything and asked the other sister (nurse) to serve coffee to me. I had eaten nothing that night, also the next morning and afternoon; then how would that coffee get into my stomach? The coffee stirred my intestine and I was vomiting suddenly. The other sister (nurse) was severely scolding me, the pregnant sister (nurse) said to the other sister,”what is your duty? You have only to clean here. Clean her, take her to the ward. That’s it! If you again scold her”. At that time she was the god to me. My husband wasn’t there, my mother wasn’t there, my father wasn’t there and my mother-in-law was also not there with me; she was the god there with me.

They called my husband; they severely scolded my husband, gave the dead babies to my husband and said,”take it where you wanna bury them, bury them; we don’t want the babies to be kept in our hospital”. They he took it and they were buried in the Kasimedu burial ground by taking it in a bag.

**01:51:03**

All these have happened in our life; this is not any ‘just stories’. All this happened in our life in that village. Even then we lived in that village and we are now here as a human. You can have some food; if you hear our sad story, you can write a big script. If you write my family stories, then you can run a film. Have you heard any such stories? It’s not about any stories of ghosts coming, fox coming. These are real stories of our life.

W2: Their lives are like early human lives; they are traditions. But the government is not giving importance to the fishers. How are farmers celebrated? In the same way, fishers. Fishers suffered log in their early era and now they are here.

W1: There were no schools in my old village. But during my childhood (in Chinna Kuppam village), there existed a small school. So, I was able to learn (till standard 3). But in the old village where I lived, there were no schools. I was finding it hard as I couldn’t educate my children. There would be people coming from ‘Jesus churches’ and serving children in our village. Earlier I told you about the village where Reddies (caste based community) lived. There the christians bought some land, they built a hut for Jesus; it’s like a temple for Jesus. The ‘Jesus temple people’ would come there and provide milk powder, biscuits; they were also teaching tuitions for the children and then they would be providing the eatables. It (Jesus temple) existed between two villages. In the evenings, we would go there and get those provisions served by them.

GV: Between which two villages?

W1: Between the Melur, where the Reddiars lived and our village. There would be a straight pathway between these two villages; from our village we have to cross our village temple and reach the other village. Behind our temple there were many casuarina farm; in that farms, one farm was brought by the people of ‘Jesus Temple’ (some missionaries); then huts was built, they served all the children; Reddiar children, Colony children (children of oppressed caste: belong to scheduled tribe and Scheduled caste) and fisher’s children. Mostly the Reddiyars would not send their children to the ‘Jesus temple’; mostly colony children, other village children, fishres children and children from Ennore would be coming there. If the children go there, they would be teaching A,B,C,D,.... English and other things would be taught; then biscuits, milk powders and such things would be provided by them.

GV: At present, How is the River?

W1: In our sight, River is polluted.

W2: River is not River anymore.

W1: That River (old River), there won't be much mud (/sludge) like now. Only where the River is temperance, there would be more mud (/sludge). Now all the places would be muddy (/sludgier).

GV: Then, while you are traveling in the River; what would be found in the River? And in which place those things would be found? Like Where would be muds? Where would it be sandy?

W1: Only when the River dries up, we would know that. While the River is filled with water, women can’t find what is there in between the River; but men would know what exists beneath water.

W2: Because they can swim under water next to the Riverbed; we won’t do that.

W1: You should ask all these things with the Other village people (Mugadwarakuppam); because they are fishing in the River. We are fishing in the Sea. If you ask about the sea, we can answer that. The micro-prawns caught in the River are caught by them (Mugadwarakuppam fishers); we would catch larger prawns; that would cost 400 to 500 rupees per kilogram. Earlier it was only 50 or 60 rupees per kilogram.

**01:55:25**

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**Audio 2 - *00:19:20 hours***

***230608\_Housing\_EnnoreKuppam\_Interview\_2.2\_AJ,GV,MS.mp3***

**00:00:00**

W1: Now men are partying with friends (koothadikaradhu); but earlier, they would only govern their business.

GV: Would the men not consume liquor while they were in the old village?

W1: No, most of them were not consuming liquor. Hardly some 10 old elderly men would be consuming liquor.

GV: How is the situation now?

W1: Now! It’s a head ache. Very young boys are consuming liquor; even children aged 15 years old are drinking liquor.

GV: I have another question, if this River has to be ready, What should be done?

W2: The pollution from the companies should be controlled; the industries should not let the effluents in the River.

GV: Do you think that’s enough?

W2: Yes, any effluents should be let into the River; nothing should be let into the River. Before one month, yellow colored oil has been flowing down the River.

W1: It was coming from a company.

W2: But people didn’t know which company was releasing the effluents in the River.

AJ: Now, people are saying that fishes, prawns are getting oil smell?

W2: Yes, the fishes that are caught in the sea shore next to the Creek would have that smell.

W1: We would not consume River fishes any more.

W2: Earlier the River fishes, prawns and crabs used to be very tastier.

W1: As the industries are letting pollution in the River, no is consuming any thing that is from the River. But before that, we love the River fishes so much; it’s our life (aathu meen naa enga uyir), because that would be a kind of taste and sea fishes would have a different taste.

GV: Are you saying that River fishes would be tastier than the sea fishes?

W1: Yes, It was in the past. But now, it’s nothing. If we make a curry with the crabs that were caught from the River; while frying, 7 neighboring houses would sense that smell (7 veettukum vaasana varum). Smelling that they would be asking,”are making crab curry”. How the smell of the dry-fish curry (karuvottukolambu), like that River crab curry taste would smell spreading. Now all that taste can‘t be found anywhere. It’s all because of the effluents discharge, oil discharge.

GV: Then you would buy River fishes in the past?

W1: It’s not like that, we don’t have to buy fish. If there is a friend in the Mugadwarakuppam, we exchange things, we would give anything that is caught in our nets and they would exchange it.

W2: There is no practice of buying the fishes, prawns with money.

W1: Yes, it never existed in the past.

W2: Only now we are practicing it. Even I used to consume fresh fish before marriage. After coming here, I couldn’t get any fresh fish. I started eating different fishes that I have not consumed before; earlier, I used to consume only specific fishes. Even our life term got worsen.

W1: There is a one friend in the Mugadwarakuppam village, if we catch the sea fishes we would provide them as they would not get any sea fishes. We won’t be getting any River fishes, if we giver our sea fishes, they would be providing micro-prawns (podi-era) that are caught by them in the River. The prawns we catch in the sea would be larger, but what they get in River is very small. We can make curry (kulambu) along with any lady’s finger, board beans vegetables; that would be tastier in that way of cooking. To fry prawns, the prawns that are caught in sea would be the right one to fry as those are larger. Those micro-prawns (small pranws) would be provided by them. And they also would be providing ‘saala’ fishes; it’s also called ‘kenda’, that can’t be found in the sea. That fishes can only be caught by the River fishers, not by us. Rarely if any of that fishes, escapes from the River and gets in the sea, the fish with bigger size could be seen in our nets; that can’t be found in the sea everywhere; it’s a tastier fish and it’s excellent fish. But we are not opting for those fishes, even if we see that fish on sale.

**00:06:17**

GV: What are the fishes that can be found in the sea?

W1: In River, there is a fish called ‘Oraah’; that can be found. Then ‘pacha kutti’, ‘saala’ fish, ‘Kenda’ fish, ‘thullal’ fish, ‘kola’ fish; that would be looking like fish, that would be very much tastier.

MS: Would it be flatter?

W1: No, it is round; it would be like snakes.

W2: It would be very much tastier.

GV: There is a toxic fish called,’irunkeluthi’.

W2: That's different.

W1: That is also found in the River; that also in the sea. There are many ‘Keluthi’ fishes. There is a ‘Keluthi’ called, ‘thoopakeluthi’, that is sold for a high rate; but don't know why that is costlier. We would not cook any ‘keluthi’ fishes.

W2: Then there is fish called ’Jelebi’, even though we would not be consuming it and other fish called ‘maada-pithala’, that would also not be cooked.

W1: No one would touch that (from our community).

MS: Are these famous fishes?

W2: Those are not famous fishes. It might be famous for other, but not for us

GV: Then you would not be liking that taste.

W2: Yes.

GV: Have you seen mangroves?

W1: I am not sure about it. There is a plant called ‘poodu chedi’. They would take the ‘Poondu chedi’ leaves, add turmeric, grind it together and apply on any body cuts. Any cuts/wounds would be cured in just 10 days. But I was not much aware of the plants. Earlier wherever we go, we can see the plants, we would be always walking on the grasses. On the banks of the River, it would be full of plants, trees and bushes, but we haven't given importance to it.

GV: Have you seen the largest fish in the River?

W1: In the River, ‘kenda’ is the largest fish. At present, the eggs of those fishes are asked for 100 or 200 rupees, but earlier it was not like, simply we can go to the River, we can take it and we can have it. (summa eduthukka vendiyaadu thaan, thunna vendiyaadhu thaan poo vendiyathu than).

**00:09:55**

MS: What about the Koduva fishes?

W1: All those are sea fishes, Koduva, Moulaasi, Vanjaram, Paaram, Sem-Paara, there are different ‘Paara fishes’, all those are sea fishes. Most things would not be produced in the River, The larger fishes with which we draw oils are in the sea, the healthiest Soora (Tuna) fish are in the sea; only from the Tuna fish, the oil would be given as medicine for the people who are malnutritioned.

GV: How do you want this place to be in future?

W1: In my youth I used to buy 1 kg of rice for 2 rupees 75 paise; now it’s 65 rupees.

W2: Earlier Drinking water was drawn from a common pump or there would be a common well; the water would be much tastier than the ‘Canned water’ that we are consuming now. Even more diseases are received with this water. In Chinnakuppam, next to the Kothari Fertiliser company, if anyone draws water from the underground oil would be floating over the water drawn. This place had a great environment, many companies came to this village and spoiled this land. Even though so many companies came here, people here haven’t received any permanent jobs.

W1: We are creating more suffering for the future generations; in the future it’s hard to even get rice. Even in my life term, the per kilogram of rice would become 100 rupees. We have reached that era, where the people are not bothered about rice’s production. Now more hoarder and theft has increased in the world; only because of that our country has become like this. Earlier, politicians worked to provide for people; Kamarajar was not educated, but he bought schemes for the people.

W2: Now the politicians want a pen monument in the sea; does the pen have any life? Pen has no life. But many living organisms are in the sea; depending on that organisms fishers are living. The government wants to destroy these many lives and install that pen monument. Now no one is even questioning this.

W1: It’s not just enough to do research in the sea. The government has to create a good society. Did he (Kalaignar) invent the pen or did he correct the country in the wrong path? Only he came and taught the politicians how to steal the country's wealth. Before him no chief Minister of the state has taken money from the government. Only Karunanidhi came and taught people to steal. With this character he used to sing progressive songs, one is

ஏற்றப்பட்ட விலைகள் இன்னும் குறையவே இல்லை

ஏலை மக்கள் வறுமை இன்னூம் ஓழியவே இல்லை

தமிழ் நாட்டில் கள்ளு கடைகள் திறந்து வெச்சாங்க

மக்களை குடிக்கவேய்து கண்டபடி ஆடவெய்த்தார்கள்

குடிப்பவர் குடும்பத்தியே வாட விட்டான்

That is what his son (Stalin) is also doing. He would sing such super songs.

GV: Are there any songs like this on sea, River or for fishing?

W1: Yes, there are songs. Older people used to sing those songs. We don’t know that.

GV: Do you remember any of those songs?

W1: No, we used to sing MGR’s songs. As he has acted in many movies and songs related to fishers. Even if any baby is crying, I used to sing MGT songs.

GV: While going to sell fish, to fetch the firewoods or while you are travelling along when you were in that village, won’t you sing any songs to avoid the fear of loneliness.

W1: That I used to sing MGR, Sivaji songs or we would just sing god muruga songs.

**00:15:00**

You know what MGR songs I would be singing? See

என்னதான் நடக்கும் நடக்கட்டுமே

இருட்டின் மீது மறையட்டுமே

தன்னால தெய்வம் தயங்காதே

ஒரு தலைவன் இருக்கிறான் மரவாதே

I would sing such meaningful MGR songs, I don’t know other random songs. Even during sufferings in my life, I used to sing songs that helped in my life. Wherever I go I would only sing MGR songs; but he didn’t sing, I only came to know that later. It was Kannadhasan who sang the songs. I was thinking and singing that MGR did sing all those songs which he acted on the screen. Once I went to the Cinema theater, then a MGR song is played ‘நான் ஆனையிட்டால் அது நடந்து விட்டால்’. Then I thought,”however we should get to MGR’. Thinking that I went behind the theater screen and I could only see speakers. If I was educated in my childhood I would have joined the army; factly, I am more patriotic towards the nation. Even now I will help others; whatever I can, I will make it. If I have 10 rupees and if anyone asks for help, I will give 5 rupees to them and I will have the other 5 rupees.

I had the desire to join the army; but my father was not educated, so nothing could be done. But he would teach us about the world; he would state,”you people are women children, you should steal, you should not lie, you should not cheat anyone, if anyone asks for help, help them with what you have in your have”. That's how my father has grown us, that is how I am now. I would ask my father, "What do you mean by ‘Wrong”. He responded,”you would not know now, you will not know that in the future”. I would inquire about everything in detail. I am so patriotic towards the nation; I wanted to serve my country, but if I studied a lot, my father thought I would be arrogant. So father didn’t make me study; he did let any of my sisters get educated beyond standard 5.

W2: Women should not ask questions and should not talk

W1: Yes, it was like that in the past.

W2: Not before, it’s the same for me too. I completed standard 10 schooling, I got good marks and I have taken my mother to apply for standard 11 and I filled my form. There was not much support.

W1: My husband doesn't know where to sign. I made my daughter complete her Masters of Art Degree.

W2: But she (W1) sent her male children to only government schools. But she made children strictly complete their studies, because she didn't want her children to suffer as she was suffering as a fisherwomen.

W1: Even if the weather is so windy we have no other option other than getting into the sea for fishing; it might be any situation, it might be wind, it might be a cyclone. We have a stomach to feed. In that era, there were no savings; only now we have the sense of saving money, then there were no such opportunities.

W2: Though she (W1) was suffering she made sure that her children got a good education. My husband was made to complete his Engineering degree; another son is taking contract jobs nearby.

W1: If you hear the fishers story here; rather than getting tears, you would get blood from your eyes.

W2: ST and SC communities have their community reservation; if the fisher community also have such reservations, it would be helpful for them to get government jobs. But such reservations are not for the fishers' community.

00:19:20

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