**REIMAGINING THE GOOD CITY FROM ENNORE CREEK**

Interview Transcription

**Interview Information**

Interviewer/s: Gajendran V

Place of interview: Kattupalli Village - Woman and Man - Dalit Settlement - VG

Date of interview: 20 October 2023

Transcription by: RP

**Interviewee Information**

Name: (if consented to)

Pseudonym: Interviewee Male, Interviewee Femail, Male Voice.

[Note: Other than the interviewer and the two interviewees – one male and one female, another male was also present for the interview. His transcript is marked here as ‘Male voice’]

**(AUDIO BEGINS)**

**Interviewer:** *Amma,* I will just tell you about the research. I am a post-doctoral researcher at IIT-Hyderabad. We are doing a research on ‘how a good city should be’. So, talking about a good city; there is Ennore region, right? We took Ennore region for the study.

Ennore region used to be a resource-rich region. So, river, ocean and lot of other resources – like cashewnut plantations were there.

**[00:30]**

So, people’s livelihoods were also based on these things. After that, many things like -industries and ports started developing here. While these kinds of developments; industrial development happen, people’s livelihoods also change.

So, what we thought was.. when we were thinking about ‘how a good city should be’ – many people say that a good city should be like this or like that; but we are looking at - how does the people want a good city to be?

**[01:00]**

We are looking at the history.

Particularly, we are starting this from A.R. Nagar – it comes before Ennore, right?

**Interviewee (Female)**: Yes.

**Interviewer:** So, we are starting from there – from Ernavoor to Kattupalli Kuppam – we are moving. We are interviewing these things.

Particularly in this – we would like to know how people used to be, how they are now, and how they want to be in the future.

I was talking to *anna* also.

**[01:30]**

He was telling me how things used to be here, how they are now, and how he wants them to be in the future.

Also – how this place used to be? How the people are living? New people are coming in.. And how people have made efforts to change the place here – people here would have made lot of efforts. You would have made lot of efforts. People here had made efforts.

For job opportunities – *anna* was telling me that people had gone to many places to give request letters (*manu)* for getting jobs.

**[02:00]**

So, like that – what efforts had people made; how are things now, and how you wish things should be tomorrow – that is what we would like to know.

Particularly we would like to know how these houses, this place, and this village should be.

So, I would be asking questions relating to that.

So, I will ask questions, and it is enough if you could answer them.

We are recording this because – we would go back and write notes on this interview.

**[02:30]**

We will not share this with anyone. We will use it only for our research.

**Interviewee (Female)**: You share it.

**Interviewer:** No. No. I mean, we will tell the details of the interview; we will write about the details that you share; but we will not use the personal name or any other details of the interviewee.

Because, we only need the details of what is happening; and how things used to be. We do not need to show that this particular individual told this.

Therefore, without sharing your name, we will document how the changes happened in this area.

**[3:00]**

**Interviewee (Male):** How you got the job at harbour. All those things – like who came and asked you to come to the job; who came and brought you with them? Which village people helped you; how you found the job; after that – how have you been living all these years? Did you live on the fish resources, prawn resources, clam and oyster resources – you tell all these things.

I mean – how we have been tackling many things. Like, when the Tsunami came.. Tell them about the Tsunami too. I have not told them about those things.

I am giving the responsibility to you – to tell about how Tsunami came and other related things. I have not told them.

**[03:30]**

How the Tsunami came. Who came after that? Why did they come? How to use it? I will tell her and go, *ayya.* For 1 hour or 1.5 hours, tell them patiently. He will ask questions, and tell him everything patiently. Let everything you tell be good. But, do not tell the bad things. Let’s not have that.

**Interviewee (Female)**: Why do we need that?

**Interviewee (Male)**: Even if someone is an enemy, they should be well.

**Interviewee (Female)**: They should be well.

**Interviewee (Male)**: So, do not tell in a negative way. So, use your resources and tell him everything patiently. That is it.

**[04:00]**

Why I searched for you and brought them here is this – because I know that she talks well. Julie *akka* talks well. My wife also told me before, and we had come here. That is it. There are not many here to talk. Now, we went to this person’s house. Who was that?

**Male voice**: We went to Kalai’s house.

**Interviewee (Male)**: We went to Kalai’s house, but she is not there. They wanted to first interview Kalai and then come to your house. Kalai is not there. So, we came directly to your house. Right, this is the truth. I had given interview earlier. There is no reason to be afraid. Just talk honestly and justly. Do not talk like blaming someone. That is it.

**[4:30]**

**Interviewee (Female)**: Ok.

**Interviewer:** Ok. We will start it. It is recording.

**Interviewee (Male)**: While you are talking, you might have to change what you say sometimes. That is why I am saying – talk patiently. Even for this job – in the very beginning, it was I who found all these people and kept them there. She knows everything.

Nobody came. After that the president, everyone else came – but I ran away afar. This is the truth.

**[5:00]**

**Interviewer:** Ok. For how many years you are staying in this village, *ma?*

**Interviewee (Female)**: I have been staying in this village for about 35 years.

**Interviewer:** About 35 years?

**Interviewee (Female)**: More than 35 years.

**Interviewer:** You came here after marriage?

**Interviewee (Female)**: Yes. I am from Madras. I was given as a bride to Ennore. We had vacated from there, and came here. It has been more than 40 years since we came here.

**Interviewer:** Ok, more than 40 years. How old are you?

**Interviewee (Female)**: I am now 58 years old.

**Interviewer:** 58 years old. Oh, at 18 years of age, you went to Ennore, and then came here? Ok.

**Interviewee (Female)**: Yes.

**Interviewer:** Why did you choose to come here?

**[05:30]**

**Interviewee (Female)**: We decided because – here it was open and airy space. My husband’s house was here. Only now the brick houses had come here. Back then, there were no jobs as such. Cashewnut trees, Casuarina trees.. After that, prawns, fish – some people will go to fetch that. After that… They would cut down some wood, and go to set up fences. If they go in the morning, they would get back home by 6PM.

If the season was to pick cashewnuts, we would go to pick cashewnuts. If we had to pick conch shells (*sangu)*, we would go for that.

**[06:00]**

Like that, there were different works, and we would go for that and come back. We passed the years in those things for some time. While we were passing the years, they were making arrangements to build these houses. Brick-houses for everyone; and for everyone at the Kuppam, they built brick-houses with many floors, and gave it to them. But they said they would not give for us. One day, we stopped them on their way and asked them – ‘we are just living in thatched roof huts, so construct a brick-house for us too.’

**[06:30]**

They said – ‘Brick-houses are all over. If you like, we can build tiled roof houses for you.’ It got delayed for about 2 years. After that, they started building – right from Puspha’s house over there. After that – we were trying to arrange for work. At that time, we did not have any jobs. For jobs, we did not know what to do. We went to the harbour side, and the men here broke the compound walls there, and did a blockade (*mariyal),* and made a ruckus – and those people from there came.

**[07:00]**

They came and asked what was happening and everything. They questioned us at that time, and we said – ‘we do not have any jobs. For how many years we should scavenge for fish, prawns and nuts? We are going there all the time. Can’t you give us a job?’.

They said – ‘No jobs for men here, *ma.* We can give jobs for the ladies here*’.*

**[07:30]**

They said that, and we went to many places. We went to Thiruvallur, we went to BDO office. Wherever the offices were, we went. Then we joined as a *sangam* (union – possibly self-help groups). After we joined as a *sangam…* At first, we joined together as 5 *sangams.* In that – each had 20 members, so totally 100 people joined together. We joined together, and we were pooling money together, and like that – we were just sitting. We took that and went to the BDO office.

At the BDO office, to correct things, they gave \_\_\_\_\_ (unclear).

**[8:00]**

They corrected it, and after we gave everything – I got some 68 marks, and she got 70 marks. Like that – some marks were given. We gave those things to them and left. Then it got delayed for another year or so.

After that, at last, when we went to Thiruvallur, we called all the leaders. Our village president – we called them all. They all came. Kalanji Kumar – he came. My husband’s sister’s (*nathanaar)* son – Arulmani – he came.

**[8:30]**

Secondly, Gajendran is there, right? He came. We called him only at the very end. We just asked him to show that place. We did not call him for the other places. We went and showed all those documents. After showing only – they gave one certificate. They gave it under the name of Jananaayagan. In that name only – it came. They gave jobs to 50 people and another 50 people.

**[9:00]**

At first, I took 50 people and joined them there. My name is Julie. KM Julie.

**Interviewer:** KM Julie.

**Interviewee (Female)**: Yes. KM Julie. I took 50 people and joined them there. After that 50 jobs got over, next month – there were another 50. They were given jobs like this, and things were going on. At that time only, on the 11th year – they gave jobs directly to all the 100 of us. They gave it like that.

We were all suffering a lot. There were times when we did not even have rice to eat. All the people.

**[9:30]**

If I had not obtained those jobs for them – many men would have died; many women would have died. We were suffering that much. After they built us these houses and other things had happened – the ladies started going to the harbour for work. The gents also started going to work at the company that had come up here nearby.

**[10:00]**

**Interviewer:** You had told earlier about – the oysters and clams work, after that cashewnut plantation work, after that – you had told different works right? Were they for different seasons?

**Interviewee (Female)**: No. If we take our baskets (*annakoodai)* and go to the seashore, the clams would stay near the shore there. If we go there by 4 o clock, work will take us till 5 o clock. We would shovel a lot of them to one side there. We would shovel it. At that time, if a bullock cart comes – it would be Rs.50.

**Interviewer:** 50 rupees.

**[10:30]**

**Interviewee (Female)**: If it fills a bullock cart, it would be 50 rupees. Like that, I… and I would take my daughter. Like that, people would come. Here and there, they would shovel them and keep it like a mound. After we had sieved it and dropped it there – we would get some 500 or 600 rupees. When? After so many days of shoveling and pouring, after the cart had left – we would get 500 or 600 rupees.

During the cashewnut season, everyone would go. Even the children would go.

**[11:00]**

If we go in the morning, we would come back before 5 or 6PM. Because, some men might come there. Those CF’s and all would come and be there. They might do something. So, we would go like men and come back like men. He would be afraid on looking at me. Like that – we could come back. Like that, we would go for firewood. If there was no firewood at home, we would ask for a day’s leave, and go there. We would cut it and get it back. Near the *Mudaliar’s* house – at those plantations, we would cut it, and get it back to our house.

**[11:30]**

To tie up a fence, and for other uses – we would get that. If not, if we had to go for fish – if we sit at the auction there, we can get two fishes from there. That is it.

**Interviewer:** So, you had told that you worked at the cashewnut plantation, right? Was it for a lease or for wages – how was it like?

**Interviewee (Female)**: If the place was from here.. till about there – it would be in thousands. Let’s say 10,000; or 20,000 or 30,000 or 40,000. Like that, they would give.

**[12:00]**

They would be there as a group. As a big group. After they had finished harvesting for 3 months or so, then we would go. After they had bundled up everything and left, we would go. If we go around the plantation, we would get half a bag or a full bag. If we don’t get that, we would go to the harbour. If we go there, we would pick and bring back in bountiful.

**[12:30]**

At that side, no one else would be allowed. We had given our land. All the land that we had had – we had given it. They had built the company. Therefore, we would go to that side and pluck and pick those up.

**Interviewer:** You had land here?

**Interviewee (Female)**: Yes. I had.

**Interviewer:** What land did you have?

**Interviewee (Female)**: We used to grow paddy. A little bit of paddy. A little bit of *kevuru* (finger millet / ragi). We were growing like that.

**Interviewer:** Paddy crop needs lot of water, right?

**[13:00]**

**Interviewee (Female)**: Yes.

**Interviewer:** So, from where would you get the water, *ma?* On that side – there is the ocean, and this side..

**Interviewee (Female)**: Ditch. We would carve out a pond. If we carve a pond, there would be water there. If we take the water out today, when we go the next day, there would be some water there.

**Interviewer:** Some water would be there.

**Interviewee (Female)**: Yes.

**Interviewer:** Like a spring, it would keep coming.

**Interviewee (Female)**: Yes, like a spring it would come.

**Interviewer:** So, you were growing the crops with that spring water.

**Interviewee (Female)**: Yes, we were growing the crops like that.

**Interviewer:** How good it would have been for you, *ma?*

**[13:30]**

**Interviewee (Female)**: At that time, price levels were quite low. It would be enough to just buy rice and pulses. If we go for a day, harvest it, dry it and all – it would be only for that day’s expense and the next day’s expenses. It would be enough. That was how everyone here used to be.

**Interviewer:** No, what I am asking is – 1 acre, 2 acres – like that, how much land did you have?

**Interviewee (Female)**: Ours was… We had 2 acres of land.

**Interviewer:** 2 acres of land. Was everything *nanjai* land (wet-land)?

**Interviewee (Female)**: Yes, *nanjai* land.

**Interviewer:** But if you grow *kevuru,* it would have been *punjai* (dry-land) land only, right?

**[14:00]**

**Interviewee (Female)**: Yes. Yes.

**Interviewer:** How was the soil like there?

**Interviewee (Female)**: The soil. It would grow in all soils. We would sow the *kevuru* there, after preparing the soil..

**Male voice**: Would the soil be like really fine or like clay soil?

**Interviewee (Female)**: Like clay soil.

**Interviewer:** Clay soil.

**Interviewee (Female)**: Yes, clay soil. We would flatten the soil well, and we would water the soil, then we would sow over it.

**Interviewer:** So you would just sow it by hands like that.

**Interviewee (Female)**: Yes.

**[14:30]**

**Interviewee (Male)**: We would go for lot of wage-labour (*coolie* work). Cutting Casuarina (*savukku)* trees. Picking up firewood. If we go for *coolie* work, we get 50 rupees per day. If we work for the whole day, it was 50 rupees. If we work a bit extra – there would be big trees, right? If we cut those, they would give wages for that. People would stay overnight there. They would make a hut, and stay – where pigs would come. Foxes would come. Lot of things like that. People would be afraid – staying with their children. They would stay there, and only on the next day…. If we had to buy rice or something, we had to go to Thirumullaivoyal (name unclear).

**[15:00]**

**Interviewee (Female)**: There used to be a shop here. He used to be a bit abnormal, and he died after a while. If we start from here in the morning, we had to buy everything and come along the river. While coming along the river, the fishes would come and fall in plenty. We had to walk like that.

See, like this, we had to walk. If one person goes in front, we have to walk right behind them. If not, if they have a bullock cart, we fall at their feet or hands (Tamil phrase: *kaal la kai la uzhunthu),* we keep everything on top of that, and we can come directly here.

**[15:30]**

**Interviewee (Male)**: The L&T gate is there, right? There used to be a single-foot path (*oththa adi paathai)* there. If we go by that side, the water level would be till this level. What the ladies would do was – they would just keep their saree and cloth above, and they cross to the other side and wear it. It would be about half a kilometre. If they walk that way, it would be 2 kilometers – Thirumullaivoyal (name unclear). After going to Thirumullaivoyal (name unclear), they would buy rice, pulses, chilli powder and everything for a week, and return the next day.

Like that, they would take the produce growing at this place – like firewood, and sell it at a wood-shop (*katta-thotti).* Their income was only this. At that time, what the difference was – no one went for jobs.

**Interviewer:** No one went for jobs.

**Interviewee (Male)**: This was the job.

**[16:00]**

**Interviewee (Female)**: If water levels rise too much that way, we would go this way – just walking on the sand; we would keep walking on the sand. If we go to the mouth of the river at Ennore, if there were any lorry or something, they would take us directly and drop us at Minjur.

**Interviewer:** To Minjur.

**Interviewee (Female)**: Yes. While bringing the goods back, we cannot do that – that is why we had to come that way.

**Interviewer:** At that time, the bridge was not built, right?

**Interviewee (Male)**: There was no pathway then, sir.

**Interviewee (Female)**: That is..

**Interviewee (Male)**: Now, the oil plant is there, right?

**Interviewer:** Yes.

**[16:30]**

**Interviewee (Male)**: There is a bus stand there. A hole-ridden bus would stop there. Once in a while only.

**Interviewee (Female)**: There was a leader (*thalaivar)* then. Munusamy *thalaivar.* After he come only, he laid a red-soil road (*sem-mann road)*.

**Interviewer:** Oh, red-soil road. Where?

**Interviewee (Female)**: From harbour till here.

**Male voice**: From harbour’s southern gate.

**Interviewee (Female)**: He had laid it there. After that only, as the companies came, they had laid the roads.

**Interviewee (Male)**: How it used to be was – no one could come here after 6 PM.

**Interviewer:** No one could come.

**[17:00]**

**Interviewee (Male)**: After 6PM – there used to be Athipattu Puthunagar railway station – it was full of sand. Only now, they have built a station. Back then, you bundle up everything and sleep – you can come only in the morning. We come back early in the morning. If we take all our baskets and leave at 5 o clock. We could come – you see the railway tracks coming here, right? There used to be a single-foot path along that. That path would come through that, and it would come this way – inside L&T. There is no road this way. It would come through L&T, through Anna Nagar – it is closed now; if we come through that way, one can come to the school and then only come home.

**Interviewee (Female)**: Yes.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Like that…

**Interviewee (Female)**: At 6 PM, everyone would come back and settle at their home.

**Interviewee (Male)**: No one can go out after 6 PM.

**[17:30]**

**Interviewee (Female)**: If they had to come after 6 PM, they would just lie down and sleep around the harbour or at some temple or around Pudhunagar or somewhere, and then they would come.

In the night, there is no light or anything. So, there is a fear.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Back then, there were foxes. The pigs would be grazing. They would bite. They bite the women, and when they take them to the hospital, they would die on the way. They would take the women at the time of child-birth, and some die on the way.

**Interviewee (Female)**: They would take the women for child-birth, and the child would be born on the way itself. If they had to take them to a doctor…

(overlapping voices)

**[18:00]**

**Interviewee (Male)**: In the night time..

**Interviewee (Female)**: For some patient, if there is some issue;

**Interviewee (Male)**: If a snake bites..

**Interviewee (Female)**: If they get a heart attack or something, they would die on the way itself.

**Interviewee (Male)**: There would be lot of snakes. If a snake bites, they would carry them; and on the way – there is a *Madha* temple there right? They would die around there.

Then they bring them back in the bullock cart.

Like that, during the night time, most men won’t be at home. They would be at the sea shore. Only at the night time, the clams come ashore. It is like a season. When the season arrives, for 3 months, they would bundle up some tiffin; and get down into the water and keep watch – if the clams are coming.

**[18:30]**

If it arrives, then a basket is about 12 rupees. One basket. If 4-5 people work some 25 baskets, only then I would get some 100 rupees. What they would do is – they would not look at the difficulties. As they come, they would just pull them up and drop them in the basket. After that, bullock carts would come. For one bullock cart, it would be some 350 rupees. Like that, in a bullock cart – there would be 10 or more baskets. They would take like that.

**Interviewee (Female)**: When I used to do that – it was 50 rupees.

**Interviewer:** 50 rupees.

**[19:00]**

**Interviewee (Female)**: 50 rupees. One bullock cart.

**Interviewee (Male)**: In our times, the prices increased step by step.

**Interviewee (Female)**: In their times, it became 350 rupees.

**Interviewee (Male)**: I would be at the seashore – day and night. Back then, my job was – I was in the plumbing work at Ashok Leyland. It did not set well for me. What if I fall from the top of the building – who would ask? After that, as a master, I learned everything – and in the whole surrounding areas, I was the first one to open a fast food restaurant at Pudhunagar.

**Interviewer:** Fast food.

**[19:30]**

**Interviewee (Male)**: Back then, at that village… They would ask me which village I was from. I would say Kattupalli. They would ask – ‘Kattupalli *ah?* Where is it?’. Now people from many villages are working at Kattupalli only. Yes, in this L&T company, when I was working – I gave my life and saved 400 people.

**Male voice**: He was a security.

**Interviewee (Male)**: I was a security officer there. Look at this – they stabbed, and they took my intestines out, and then only kept them back in. They did something like that.

**Interviewer:** What happened?

**Male voice**: He was a security. A theft happened.

**Interviewee (Male):** Theft. They stole the mobiles and ran away – kids from the outside. I was on duty, it was double shift for me. I had my dinner and went there..

**[20:00]**

Camp was like – abnormal. It is L&T institution. We fought a lot, and at last – we went and gave letters and all. It is all still inside there. That RDO died. He said that he would get 10 lakh rupees. The councillor is there, right? I went and asked him and I said - ‘A different RDO had come. So, come, we would go and bring this to their attention.’ But he was afraid, as he was in politics. He spoke like something – but he left it at that.

**[20:30]**

So, what I did was – I realized that there was no one there to help us. So, I went to Naresh. He is there in the *sangam,* right? I went to him and went to Ponneri and he said – I will see, *pa.* I said – ‘please see, sir. I would get 10 lakh rupees.’ My family needs something to survive. At last, no one believed me. I know a job at my hand, right? I had closed my shop for 3 months – as I was not well.

In this village, things are like this – they would help; but only within their boundaries.

**[21:00]**

If this village had changed, it would have changed a long time back. Now, contractors are here. Company’s support is here. They built brick-houses there at the Kuppam. All these folks fought a lot, just to build a tiled-roof house. They had to keep going to different offices. At last, they said – they would build a tiled-roof. But, if you go and see at Kuppam, they have a job for every house. Brick-houses, with attached bathroom.

**[21:30]**

Their houses would be great. Here, things are not well. The L&T people saw here and said – don’t do anything to this village. They made a boundary and just raised a compound wall. Like a slave (*koth-adimai).* But, many people are coming and working, but no one at this village is working at L&T. Everything is contract. How? – like 1 week. Like that, this village youngsters would be joined only like that. They would give work for 1 week or 2 weeks. Or 1 month or 2 months; then they would say – ‘this work is finished. That is it’. They would have kept PF for 3 months, right? They would give back that alone, and send them back outside.

**[22:00]**

What would the youngsters do? They would be roaming and circling – they would be sitting around at the temple; here and there. Without a job. No job at harbour.

**Interviewee (Female)**: They would be sitting. They would drink and sleep there. These things would happen. Only because they got a job somewhere, they had been able to build a brick-house and everything. Let them be good. We used to look at that land. Now, let everyone be good.

**[22:30]**

**Interviewee (Male)**: We want everyone to be good. But, mainly, even after L&T, Kamarajar Port and Adani had come, good times have not been born yet for this village.

**Interviewee (Female)**: Now, everyone are working their own jobs, and developing themselves. If they give anything or the other – at Madras, or at Minjur – they would not give it here.

**Interviewer:** You told us that you would pick clams, right? After the port and other institutions had come, had they told you not to go inside there?

**[23:00]**

**Interviewee (Male)**: Considering the harbour, sir. If it is Kattupalli; the CISF (Central Industrial Security Force) would ask which village we are from. If we say we are from Kattupalli, they let us go. We would go wherever we want to go. Because we would not steal or anything. Mainly for that. They have trust in us - that Kattupalli people would not steal. So we would go inside. When we go inside – there would be lot of cattle there; the village cattle would be there. They are there now too – inside the harbour. Cattle would be there. People would graze their cattle there.

Like that, we would go to the shore there – where lot of conch shells would wash ashore. So, a conch shell might go for 50 rupees. So we would get into the water of this level, and get the conches.

**[23:30]**

That was our income – we did not have any jobs back then.

**Male voice**: While dredging..

**Interviewee (Male)**: While dredging – they dump it into the ocean right. As they dump it, these things get washed ashore in the waves. So, we would go in the morning; sit for a long time, and get them – our eyes would become red. If we take it for a full day, then we would get around Rs.300 per person.

**Interviewer:** So, how long was it going on? Do people take that now?

**Interviewee (Female)**: Not now.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Now, they have dumped rocks all over there.

**Interviewee (Female)**: Now they have dumped rocks. And they have raised the compound walls there.

**[24:00]**

No one goes now. Many companies have come now, right?

**Interviewer:** Yes. So, no one of you can go inside now.

**Interviewee (Female)**: Yes.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Now, if we have to go… There is a water plant there, right? If we go to the other side of the water plant; to pick clams and for fishing only – we go. Things do not wash ashore like earlier as they have dumped rocks there. Everything gets caught in the rocks and gets stopped there.

People would fish using fishing poles. Now, there is no business in the river either. Earlier, in the Ennore river, lots of *aali* would come and get down. Now, we cannot get into the river. Mainly, it was prawns.

Our main business was – river business only.

**[24:30]**

Prawns. And *jilebi* fish – we used to catch that. We would get 50 or 100 rupees from that – people would bundle it up and sell it. Now, that also have disappeared. The river has become lethargic. It had become so muddy now, sir. If ladies go now, they would get caught now. So now, no one goes for the river business.

Like that – if we go this way, they would drop fishing poles (*thoondil).* (unclear) – they would get fish.

**Interviewee (Female)**: In the ocean.

**Interviewee (Male)**: If not, during the month of *chiththirai (*Mid-April to mid-May); only for 3 months a year, the clams would come. When that season arrives, no one would be at home. People would be going and coming back – every day and night.

**[25:00]**

24 hours, someone or other would always be at the seashore. From here till Pazhaverkadu, people would be there. They would take the clams – they had to store it safely; they had to properly identify which was their clams. If not, people might take it mistakenly. If I ask for some 10 extra baskets, someone might steal from others’ clams. Such kinds of acts would happen a lot. So, people would be there all the time – night and day. If we do not sell the clams, and bring the money home – our story would be over (*Tamil phrase – namma katha mudinjiduchu).* There would be no food, sometimes.

**[25:30]**

If someone comes there, right – people would bring food. They would give it to my son-in-law. Sometimes someone would drop it along the way, eat the food, and disturb what we had saved and leave (meaning unclear).

So, it would not be continuous. Only 3 months per year. 3 or 4 months. Like that – with both river business (*aaththu thozhil)* and ocean business (*kadal thozhil)*… We can do the river business anytime. But sometimes, suddenly, the Government would say that no one should go into the ocean. They would ban it. So, what would people do is – they would sell their boats and other things, and they would go and stand there..

**[26:00]**

To get pass for one day, for a single job – they would get 10,000 rupees per month. To get that 10,000 rupees, one has to stand for 3 days there – at the gate. Aadhaar card, police verification, Covid test – if we take all these, they would give pass after 3 days. After 3 days, do you know what job they would give you inside? To pick up garbage. There would be garbage in the forest, right?

**Male voice**: Housekeeping work. Housekeeping work.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Housekeeping, yes. Everyone would be taken to the forest (*kaadu)*  to pick up garbage. Cleaning toilets – mainly, these things only. These things that needs to be said.

**[26:30]**

People would go from here well-dressed – like tip-top. If we go there and see – they would give a black plastic bag. You have to carry it behind, pick up all the garbage, and pool it together at one place. Then, the tractor would come. Then you have to put it in the tractor. There would be no rest. If you sit, there would be a fine for that. You should not sit. They would give a color dress – for the top – like a jacket. You have to wear it, and you should always be in their sight. During lunch time – 1 hour. If you sit for 1 hour, then you have to go pick up garbage again.

**[27:00]**

Picking up garbage, cutting grass, maintaining the garden – maximum – people from Kattupalli – both ladies and gents, they are all only picking garbage only. Picking up garbage; like a house-boy – to give tea to people inside; cleaning the toilets – people working now are doing this only. No one has a permanent job.

**Interviewee (Female)**: That is how they are surviving.

**Interviewer:** You had said, right – that 3 months would be spent on collecting clams. And then, catching prawns and fish at the river. So, that was what your livelihood used to be?

**[27:30]**

**Interviewee (Male)**: That used to be our livelihood. That had gone now.

**Interviewer:** It had gone, right? Why did it disappear?

**Interviewee (Male)**: It went away because,.. You see – you see this road, right? From here till the mound there at L&T, it is half-way there.

**Interviewee (Female)**: Yes, it is fully walled.

**Interviewee (Male)**: On the other side of the compound.

**Interviewee (Female)**: They had built a compound.

**Interviewee (Male)**: For everyone – they had taken half of the lands. They did not give even 1 rupee to anyone. And they have this thinking like – ‘how can you build houses in my land?’. But everyone has *patta* land here.

**Interviewer:** Everyone has *patta* here?

**Interviewee (Male)**: That was why they could not do anything to Kattupalli.

**[28:00]**

Even during the times of MGR and Jayalalitha; and during the times of Kalaignar *ayya* also – everyone got a quotation that (unclear) - ‘That village has patta – no one can do anything.’ That is why – what they did was – with this compound, we have this (unclear).

**Male voice**: This is L&T compound.

**Interviewer:** This is L&T compound?

(overlapping voices)

**Interviewee (Female)**: Yes, near our house itself.

**Interviewee (Male)**: That \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (unclear) is there, right?

**Interviewer:** Yes.

**Interviewee (Male)**: I requested them a lot. I asked them to leave some space. They shifted it 6 meter by 6 meter, and as they went on – it went all the way there. Since it was taken away, now, we have our land on the other side.

**[28:30]**

Like that, they said they would build a toilet for the ladies here – L&T said that. There is nothing like that. Now the *hindikaaran* (Hindi-people) have all come here. Within the village, many have rented out to them. For the ladies to even go outside for the toilet, they have to go to a dark place somewhere only. It is open space only. You can go to the other side and see. It would be open. And wherever the ladies would be squatting, the men can see. It is like that. There are no facilities.

The gents can go anywhere like that. But the ladies mainly need a toilet. They had built a toilet in this house only. If you come and see, you can see (unclear).

**[29:00]**

See at which place they had kept the toilet in this house? Look at the corner, where the light is there, right? We have to go this way, and go to the backside, and then only we can go to the toilet. Near the next person’s house. Their toilet is on the other side. Now, when they go – we develop a problem with them. We cannot go frequently. So, some have built a bathroom and locked it. And some have built it with bricks, and they have barricaded it like a room. No one would use that. No one likes to go to the toilet within their house. Everyone goes outside only.

**[29:30]**

They would go to the other side of the compound. And you see the thorny plants there, right? They would go squat there and come back. There is no privacy and protection for the ladies there. Mainly, that is an issue. They said they would build. In the beginning, they said a lot. They said that they would do this and that – there is a Dakshinamoorthy at L&T. He only made lot of efforts. At last, no one respected him. People talked badly about him. He did lot of good things. Based on him – many people took contracts, like that, and they had settled. That is not a problem. They had settled. Though they had settled, a good way had not been born for this village.

**[30:00]**

Till now, she worked at the harbour. From the small saplings – you see the plants in harbour now, right? They would plant it, and water it – back then they had a salary of about 12 rupees. When we got married.

**Interviewee (Female)**: *Coolie (*wages) of 50 rupees.

**Interviewee (Male)**: 50 rupees of *coolie.* And then, once a month – they would just give the cash in their hands. It was only contract work right? In the beginning. Back then, ladies would all go there. And they would come here to get the cash. They are the supervisors. They would give the salary. As they give salary, there would be lot of 10 rupee notes. Back then.

**[30:30]**

If the ladies \_\_\_\_ (unclear), they would give 5 rupees per person. That 5 rupees was a big thing. That 5 rupees share was for another person. Like that, they had suffered, given their lands.. and..

**Interviewee (Female)**: I went to all the places (offices). I have also studied. At that time, Pushpa’s younger brother Kesavan only wrote everything for us. He only wrote everything. Wherever we go, he would write accordingly. We would start at the morning itself.

**[31:00]**

Like that, we had roamed and roamed and roamed. And we got it.

**Interviewee (Male)**: He was a good support. I mean, he would do things that they would not know. And they would do things that he would not know. Therefore… Ask her what she had studied.

**Interviewer:** What have you studied?

**Interviewee (Male)**: Now people study diploma and B.com and all. Just look at her handwriting alone.

**Interviewee (Female)**: 8th standard.

**Interviewer:** 8th standard.

**Interviewee (Male)**: 8th standard.

**Interviewer:** 8th standard, back then itself.

**Interviewee (Male)**: 8th standard back then was a big education.

**Interviewer:** Yes.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Now, if we look at her writing and all – we would say ‘You would not have studied till that only. You would have studied more.’ Like that..

**[31:30]**

**Interviewer:** Back then, it was a big achievement to study till 8th standard.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Big achievement, yes. Similarly, school students would struggle a lot back then.

**Interviewee (Female)**: Back then, school here was only till 5th standard.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Here. Now only, they have increased it to 10th standard.

**Interviewee (Female)**: It used to be only till 5th standard. Back then, they would not send adolescent kids outside and all. They would say – someone would catch or kidnap them – so they would not send them. Now, it is there till 10th standard.

**Interviewer:** Till 10th standard.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Some people from Ashok Leyland sponsor for the kids here.

**[32:00]**

That kind of help they are doing. Back then also, she walked and studied only. Our leader is there, now right? Sethuraman *thalaivar*. She and him would compete with each other – on who studies better. Back then it was a competition. Like – “you? Or me?” (Tamil phrase: *neeya naana, neeya naana).* And now too, it is a competition.

**Interviewee (Female)**: Yes, it is a competition now also.

**Interviewer:** (laughs)

**Interviewee (Female)**: Because of the competition only – I could not do anything to the people.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Now, why did we – all the people, elect someone? So that they would do something good for us. Munusamy leader (*thalaivar)* was there. He was at Athipattu. He supported this village and did a lot of things.

**[32:30]**

No one can blame him. If we go to their house, it would be like our own house – I can go eat something, and I can make my own tea there. We said no to him, and we elected a councillor. All the people here. He… Aaru passed away. He was in good terms with all of us (Tamil phrase: *Namma ellarukkum venum).*

**Male voice**: We are going to see Gajendran, right? His younger brother.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Yes, Gajendran’s younger brother. He… I should not say. He was a good person. He would…

**Male voice**: He would not look at the person’s community.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Yes, whoever goes there.

**[33:00]**

**Male voice**: I am not acquainted with him well, but from whatever I know – he would not be biased based on the person’s community.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Even if the ladies go, he would make them sit and eat. His house is *Mudaliar* house only. But he would give them food.

**Interviewee (Female)**: He would always give some cash as we leave.

**Interviewee (Male)**: She would call him as *mama* only. No caste or religious bias there. They would give food, and just get something from their purse and say – ‘take this. Buy something, eat and go. Buy something for the kids.’ He is a good character like that. Similarly, he appointed ladies throughout the company. According to him…. Even now, he has a good name here. Even if he had passed away, there is good respect for the name of ‘Aaru’.

**[33:30]**

If anyone goes asking for a job, he would say – ‘wait, I would ask that contractor’. He would call them and say – ‘Some 4-5 people in our village need some work. I will send them tomorrow – join them for the work.’ But now, if we go and ask them here, there is no consideration here. They would say ‘Let us see. You go.’. These things are there at heart.

**Interviewee (Female)**: When youngsters go and ask for work, he would just say – ‘Come today. Come tomorrow. Go away’ (Tamil phrase: *Innikku vaa, naalaikku vaa).* And he would give some 50 or 100 rupees to them. Then he would just leave them like that. Only if he wishes for something, he would take someone for a job.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Therefore… Don’t tell to the people who you are going to next (in a low voice).

**[34:00]**

Half of the people working there are ladies. But half the time, he would be home drunk. If we have to correct him, then we have to be correct.

**[Phone rings]**

**Interviewee (Female)**: Wait pa.. Now, you ask..

**Interviewer:** So, you used to go to the river right? And then, there was nothing in the river. Why has the river changed like that?

**Interviewee (Female)**: In that…

**Interviewee (Male)**: Wastewater gets mixed in that, sir.

**Interviewer:** Wastewater.

**Interviewee (Male)**: By wastewater..

**Interviewee (Female)**: Water from bathrooms and toilets are dumped there.

**[34:30]**

**Interviewee (Male)**: No no.

**Interviewer:** Waste from bathrooms and toilets – from where?

**Interviewee (Male)**: From inside the city…

**Interviewee (Female)**: Water from here itself..

**Interviewee (Male)**: From inside the L&T. They have a septic tank inside, sir.

**Interviewee (Female)**: Yes, inside the company only. Inside the company.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Wait. Wait.

They have a septic tank inside. Inside this small canal itself, there would be very big prawns here. Just like that, we could catch it.

**Interviewee (Female)**: We could catch it easitly.

**Interviewee (Male)**: We could catch it easily. Ladies would easily catch Rs400 – Rs500 worth prawns. Back then. Now, those 400-500 rupees worth prawns sell for Rs2000 – Rs3000.

**[35:00]**

So what they did was – they took all the wastewater from inside L&T, and they would dump it into the river – from the corner of the road. As they dump it into the river…

**Interviewee (Female)**: The company’s bathroom and toilet waste also goes in there.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Everything goes in there, and they dump it. It gets mixed with the water. Like that – there is phenyl.. and lot of chemicals, right? They are all chemicals. As the chemicals are dumped there – what happens is – the prawns would come for the smell, right? They would eat that and they all die. From fish – everything dies.

Like that, there is Ennore EB, right?

**[35:30]**

Not this EB here. The Ennore EB. The Ennore EB’s wastewater also completely mixes here. Like that, there is a bridge on the way to Manali, right? Napalayam. The water that comes from Napalayam – Manali’s MRL and all the wastewater from there mixes with the water here. Therefore what happens is – as we climb up the Ennore bridge, water mixes with oil. Particularly as the water is mixed with oil – prawns, crabs and fish – all die.

I went today. There is a smell of diesel. From the mud.

**[36:00]**

**Interviewee (Female)**: Smelling like oil there.

**Interviewee (Male)**: As the water comes this way – only the places where that water does not mix, the water would be somewhat okay. If we catch the fish there and eat it – we get sick.

**Interviewer:** You get sick.

**Interviewee (Male)**: The fish’s curry itself smells of kerosene.

**Interviewee (Female)**: Back then, if we just add couple of onions and couple of chillies, and fry them – we would be so looking forward to eating it.

**Interviewee (Male)**: The fish would be smelling really good.

**Interviewee (Female)**: It used to be so good. Now, if we put everything on it also, we do not feel like eating it.

**[36:30]**

**Interviewee (Male)**: Like a bad oil-smell we get from it.

**Interviewee (Female)**: We buy the ocean-fish, and eat it. We do not eat the river fish anymore.

**Interviewer:** Generally speaking, in those times, would you buy things for your home? Like – fish and prawns. For food – would you buy them, or would you just use produce from here only.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Not like that, sir.

**Interviewee (Female)**: We would buy things from Thirumullaivoyal (name unclear) only and come back.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Kattupalli Kuppam is there. If they catch crabs and fish at the Kuppam, one cannot take by any vehicle.

**[37:00]**

You have to go along Kamarajar port, and if you go beyond that – that is Ennore river-mouth (*muga-thuvaram)*. If we go there, there would be boats there. We would go by boat to the other side..

**Interviewee (Female)**: You have to pay 4-*annas.*

**Interviewee (Male)**: At that time – if we give them 25 paise; if we give them 4-*annas,* they would take us to the other side.

**Interviewee (Female)**: They would drop us at the other side.

**Interviewee (Male)**: There, we have to bundle up our fish and sell it at the fish market there. You have to shout and sell it. It would all be sold by 3PM or 4 PM. Then, we would go to the Ennore market – and there would be 4 *Chettiar* shops there. Back then, there was no Ashok Leyland or anything. It was just thorny forest. Back then.

**[37:30]**

If we go sell it there, then we would buy and bundle up all the rice, pulses, oil, chilli powder into a basket. If we give 50 paise, the boat would drop us back this side.

**Interviewee (Female)**: Here, we would take a tractor.. Or..

**Interviewee (Male)**: Some people would come by the tractor.

**Interviewee (Female)**: Some would just carry it and walk.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Others would take everything – like salted groundnuts, and everything else – for the kids. If they walk from there, they would come home by 8 or 9PM. Back then, there was only foot-path. If we had to go to Ennore, we had to walk this way.

**Interviewer:** You came to this village, right? When you came here – how was the village like?

**[38:00]**

**Interviewee (Female)**: When I came here…

**Interviewee (Male)**: Only thatched-roof huts.

**Interviewee (Female)**: There were some 50 houses here. 50 houses were here. Then it became 80 houses. After that, it became like 500 houses.

**Interviewer:** How did these 500 houses come about? From the village people itself, population would have increased – is it because of that? Or people from outside came here?

**Interviewee (Female)**: No one from outside. Only people from inside – they gave away brides and grooms, they married each other.

**Interviewer:** Oh.. Like that..

**Interviewee (Female)**: Yes, they married like that.

**Interviewer:** So, the next generation..

**Interviewee (Female)**: Yes, like that.

**Interviewer:** Has anyone from outside had come here and stayed?

**[38:30]**

You came here some 40 years ago. Since that time, has anyone moved here?

**Interviewee (Female)**: Some 5 people only would have come from outside.

**Interviewer:** Only 5 people.

**Interviewee (Female)**: Yes.

**Interviewer:** Other than that, everyone is from this village only.

**Interviewee (Female)**: Everyone else from here only. Giving and taking brides into family. Like that, they were passing the years (Tamil phrase – *kaalam thallittu vanthanga)*.

**Interviewer:** You came back then, right? Do you like the village that was back then? Or you like the village now?

**Interviewee (Female)**: I like the village now only.

**Interviewer:** Why is it like that?

**Interviewee (Female)**: Now, there are lot of people living here.

**[39:00]**

Earlier, very few houses only had power supply. Here and there, there would be only one or two houses with power. Around 6 or 7PM, people would eat and just sleep. Now, till about 10 or 11 PM, one can walk in the streets happily and roam around. There are lot of people here. There is a village here, and also at Anna Nagar. Anna Nagar is a small distance away from here.

**Interviewer:** As far as you know – when did Anna Nagar start to originate?

**Interviewee (Female)**: What?

**Interviewer:** Do you know for how long Anna Nagar has existed?

**Interviewee (Female)**: Anna Nagar used to exist for a very long time.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Since when? Anna Nagar formed only after the school came here.

**[39:30]**

**Interviewee (Female)**: After the school was built only, Anna Nagar developed. Back then, there were only about 10 or 12 houses there. Back then, there were only 10-12 houses. After that, it increased.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Many people from here went there.

**Interviewee (Female)**: Yes, many people went from here. Since there was inadequate space here, they would get brides from there, and they would move there. They would get grooms from there, and they would get brides from here, like that.

**Interviewer:** Like that, they would exchange.

**Interviewee (Female)**: Yes.

**Interviewer:** So, you had said that – the village now is good. But…

**[40:00]**

**Interviewee (Male)**: Village back then only was good. It was a peaceful place. Even if we drank porridge for only quarter of our stomach (Tamil phrase: *kaal vaith-thu kanji kudich-chaalum),* we were peaceful here.

**Interviewee (Female)**: Yes.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Now, there is no peace.

**Interviewee (Female)**: Now, we do not have peace. Back then…

**Interviewee (Male)**: Back then, if there was a light..

**Male voice**: One light service. It would burn very dimly.

(overlapping voices).

**Interviewee (Male)**: If we see from here, we would see \_\_\_ (unclear – starts with va) – we would see something yellowish. In that light only – there would be insects, worms and snakes; we would be in a thatched roof hut. Centipedes would fall from the roof. Scorpions would sting. Back then.

Like that, there were lot of palm trees here. We did not have to buy anything with money.

**[40:30]**

There were palm trees, mango trees, coconut trees – the L&T destroyed all the farmland here. There is a pond now inside. She was telling, right? – she might have forgotten about it. In that pond, if we draw water and drink it – one don’t have to drink for a day, sir. It would be like tender coconut water.

**Interviewee (Female)**: It would be like tender coconut water.

**Interviewee (Male)**: It is the nooru-kannu kulam (hundred-eyes pond - name unclear) there. It is still there.

**Interviewee (Female)**: We would wash our clothes there, bathe – we would do all that.

**Interviewee (Male)**: It is still there.

**Male voice**: The pond near the temple – is it that one?

**Interviewee (Male)**: huh?

**Male voice**: Near the temple.

**Interviewee (Female)**: Not near the temple.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Beyond that. There is *Vannan-kulam (*Washermen pond), *Vella-kulam* (White pond), *nooru-kannu kulam* (hundred-eyes pond - name unclear).

**[41:00]**

Beyond that there is *ooththu-kulam* (Spring pond). It was used for farming. In that well, there would be a motor. Every pond would have fish.

In that *nooru-kannu kulam,* there would be a big Banyan tree. Ladies would bath there. And if they draw and get some water from there; only two buckets of water. We would cook in that water, and if we drink a tumbler of that water – it would be like tender coconut water. The pond is still there inside L&T.

(overlapping voices)

**Interviewee (Female)**: There would be wells there. Like round-and-round, there would be wells there. If we had gone somewhere, we would just go and fall into that. We would fall into that water, and swim for a while.

**[41:30]**

**Interviewee (Male)**: And shepherds and cattle-grazers there – they would not take water with them there. If they go and dig a 6 foot deep ditch there, they would filter the water with cloth and drink that.

The L&T folks (L&T-*kaaran)* came. As soon as he came, he used diggers there. They took the sea water and left it over the land. The wealth of the water itself had changed.

**Interviewer:** Why did they leave the sea water over the land?

**Interviewee (Male)**: It is a *pallam* (low-lying area), sir.

**Male voice**: The ocean..

**Interviewee (Male)**: They deepened it.

**Male voice**: Only if they dredge it for 40 feet, the ship can come in.

**[42:00]**

So, the dredge would be a mix of sand and water.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Mud too.

**Male voice**: They would take it and spread it out. What they do now is – they take the dredged sand, store it in the ship itself, and spread it in the middle of the ocean.

**Interviewee (Male)**: They dump it in the middle of the ocean.

**Male voice**: Earlier, it was not like that. They would take it to the shore only.

**Interviewee (Male)**: How it was like…

**Male voice**: As it comes to the shore only, along with the sand and sea-water, the conch-shells will also fall.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Earlier, it was a low-lying area, right? If they had to fill it up and raise it – they had to buy sand from outside. So, in the name of deepening the ocean, they take the sand out, and… there is \_\_\_\_\_ (name unclear) temple is there, right?

**[42:30]**

Till there – it used to be farmlands right? They did not cut those thorny trees. They did lot of the digging and just buried it with sand.

**Interviewer:** It got buried in the sand.

**Interviewee (Male)**: They pushed the sand with dozer (bull-dozer) and just buried it. As they did the flooring like that, with the sand mixed with salt-water, the good water became salt water.

**Interviewer:** So they spread the sand over the farmlands there.

**Interviewee (Female)**: Yes.  
  
**Interviewee (Male)**: Yes.

**Male voice**: Not like that.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Burial ground also gone.

**Male voice**: Listen to what I say, right?

**[43:00]**

**Male voice**: If you dig up the water here this side, the water there would rise up.

**Interviewee (Male)**: That water came up here like that.

**Male voice**: It was not because, they poured salt water over there. Our depth is about… 15 meter, sir.

They would dig it for 15 meters. Only then the ship can come ashore without grounding itself.

When they dig it up; as the density of the soil reduces, the saline water would automatically rise up.

**Interviewee (Male)**: We cannot say it like that. What I am telling is – they filled the ditches with sand.

(overlapping voices)

**Interviewer:** What you are saying is right; what he is saying is also right.

**[43:30]**

(overlapping voices)

**Male voice**: Wait a minute, *ma.* Only if the sand is pressing well, the salt water would not come out. As they dig it too deep, the salt water would come in, and it would rise up. The salt water would rise up.

**Interviewee (Male)**: I am telling about that. As they did the digging again and again, the water in that would get soaked right? As it soaks, the water down there would turn into salt water.

**Interviewer:** I mean.. That is correct. But..

**[44:00]**

**Interviewee (Male)**: Even in this place, the water has changed only now. If we dig a borewell for only 10 feet, we would get water.

**Interviewee (Female)**: The water is not good now, *pa.*

**Interviewee (Male)**: By water…

**Interviewee (Female)**: Bring it in a water can and give it, *pa.*

**Interviewee (Male)**: From Kuppam, we had built a pipe – and you see the tank there, right? It came to the tank. We would take the water very nearby. Nearby the tank itself, we dug a borewell and it would rise up to the tank. After the water changed, we stopped this, and dug one near the ocean. Only the water near the ocean is good now – coming here.

**Interviewer:** So, they poured and filled up over the farmland?

**Interviewee (Male)**: Yes, they filled it up with sand.

**Interviewer:** Back then..

**[44:30]**

**Interviewee (Male)**: Casuarina forest, Casuarina plantation, coconut trees, mango trees – what they did to all them was – even the palm trees; they just pulled them down, and closed them with sand. They did not send anything outside. Everything is under the sand now.

**Interviewer:** It is within the sand now.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Yes. The ditch was as deep as the height of this house. They filled up soil as deep as this house and raised the level there. It was that low-lying there.

**Interviewer:** Would this be some 10 feet?

**Interviewee (Male)**: 10 feet?

**Interviewer:** 15 feet?

**Interviewee (Male)**: It would be some 15 feet.

**Male voice**: Which one? The building?

**Interviewee (Male)**: Yes, this building.

**Male voice**: Yes, it would be.

**Interviewer:** So, they filled sand for 15 feet.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Yes, they took lot of sand from the ocean and filled it up. After that, they filed it up – to build the buildings there. Inside L&T.

**[45:00]**

**Interviewer:** So, they covered the farmlands with sand from the ocean.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Yes, sand from the ocean.

**Male voice**: Here, the sand is less. At Kamarajar port, they had raised it as high as 25 feet.

**Interviewee (Male)**: It is further low-lying there.

**Male voice**: It is still there. The mound (*medu)* is still there. In-between.. I mean, the plant would be extended, right? As a contract, there would be different sites inside. Back then, LNG came – Indian Oil – LNG came. Liquid and Natural Gas plant.

**[45:30]**

They took that sand only and filled it fully.

**Interviewer:** Filled it fully.

**Male voice**: Yes, for the filling work. Now, a yard – an additional yard is also coming up. For that too – the filling work – they did only with that sand.

**Interviewer:** Tea for you?

**Interviewee (Male)**: It is there, you drink.

**Interviewee (Female)**: I had. You please have.

**Male voice**: Give him water.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Give him water.

**Male voice**: Another thing is – they first poured the dredged sand outside.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Using lorries.

**Male voice**: EB roundtana (roundabout) is there, right?

**Interviewer:** Hmmm..

**Male voice**: They poured it at the roundtana low-lying area (*down)*, and they poured it this side too. After that, a case was filed with the National Green Tribunal (*pasumai theerppayam).*

**[46:00]**

The order was - ‘You have to remove the soil immediately from here. Because of this – mangrove forests (*alai-yaaththi kaadugal)* are getting destroyed’. After the case was won only, they recovered the sand there.

**Interviewer:** Who filed the case, do you know?

**Male voice**: An environmental activist there.. It could be.. At Ennore – *Meenava makkal* did that.

**Interviewer:** *Meenava makkal.*

**[46:30]**

**Male voice**: Yes, they did that. But the sand that is on that side – it is still there like that.

That Athipattu camp is there, right?

**Interviewer:** Yes.

**Male voice**: The sand that is on that side – it still lays there – just like that. After that, what they have been doing was – only now… They are building two new berths. They call it as car-yards. They call it as general cargo berth. The berth where they lift the cars into the ship. Whatever dredging they are doing right now – they took it and spread it in the middle of the ocean. This also negatively affects the fishermen.

**[47:00]**

**Male voice**: I mean – the floor that already exists.. How it would be like along the beachside?

**Interviewer:** Yes.

**Male voice**: On the edge of the beach, they would dig for 15 meters.

**Interviewer:** They dig.

**Male voice**: Yes. It would come to about 40 feet at least. For the ship.

**Interviewee (Male)**: It is a benefit that they used to drop the sand in shore itself. Now, as they drop the sand directly into the sea – all the fish and all…

(overlapping voices)

You know the *chippi* (Oysters) that are there, right?

**Interviewer:** Yes.

The fish’s food is mostly that oyster’s meat only.

**Male voice**: They would call it as *pavala paarai, pa (*coral rocks). That also had disappeared.

**[47:30]**

**Interviewee (Male)**: That coral rocks would be destroyed. Similarly, the fish that lays eggs there – it would feed on it and spit it out. They would also die. If they drop it only near the shore right, we would get \_\_\_\_\_ (unclear). Like that they used to do. Now, they drop it in the middle of the ocean.

**Interviewer:** You said, right? There was *Mudaliar* here. Many community people were here. How many communities are here?

**Interviewee (Female)**: At that time – people here would work for *coolie* wages for the *Mudaliar.* For cutting trees..

**[48:00]**

**Male voice**: So, how many types of communities are here?

**Interviewee (Female)**: There are about 20 Mudaliars here. That is it.

**Interviewee (Male)**: That is it. Fully SC (Scheduled Communities) only. SC. After that – there are *Vannars* – some 10 families. At the Mudaliar area, there are Mudaliars, and then *Vannan-medu* (Washermen mound). At that time.. We should not say this. At that time, they would come to every house to ask for food. Now, they had developed a lot and they are well. That group is there.

In this area, it is fully SC only.

**[48:30]**

**Interviewer:** In SC, there are *Pallars, Parayars –* like that..

**Interviewee (Female)**: Yes, that only.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Only Parayars here. Parayars only more in numbers here. We are all Parayars only. By Parayars, I mean – we are pure Parayars. See – there was no caste conversion and all. Like that – if you see things there, they are Mudaliars. At Deva Mudaliar’s surrounding area – there are some 10 families there.

**Interviewee (Female)**: Like that, there are some 5 *Telungu-kaaranga* (Telugu people) are there. In our caste itself, there are *Telungu-kaaranga.*

**Interviewee (Male)**: They are from Andhra. *Telung-kaaranga* means *Andhra-kaaranga* (Andhra people). You should tell like that – then only it would be understood.

**[49:00]**

**Male voice**: Where?

**Interviewee (Female)**: They are there, *pa.* At Anna Nagar. Jerayan (name unclear). His relatives are all there.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Jerayan is there, right? They are all Telugu people.

**Male voice**: He said – we could also meet Jerayan.

**Interviewee (Male)**: His family and 10 other families are over there.

**Interviewee (Female)**: Yes, they are there.

**Interviewee (Male)**: And the people surround them are…. What would they be called? We call them as *Vettu-kaaranga (*People who cut).

**Interviewee (Female)**: Yes, *Vettu-kaaranga.* People who cut trees and all, right? They live there. They are all there at Anna Nagar. People here are all SC.

**Interviewee (Male)**: There are some 20 families of them there.

**Interviewee (Female)**: Only SC’s this way.

**[49:30]**

**Interviewee (Male)**: There are some 20 of their families there. On this side, everyone is SC only.

**Interviewee (Female)**: Now, people who are here are SC – did they have land before?

**Interviewee (Male)**: Their lands are the main here…

**Interviewee (Female)**: Only their lands were taken by harbour and the other companies.

**Interviewee (Male)**: If you look now…

(overlapping voices)

**Interviewee (Female)**: They had taken at Harbour and also this side.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Here, half of the lands were with the Mudaliar’s family. At L&T itself, half of the lands belonged to the Mudaliar. If ours were like 3 acres or 5 acres of land, they had like 100 acres of 200 acres.

**[50:00]**

Similarly, there was Hemanth Kumar – who was an estate owner. His land is inside L&T and Adani now. Whichever way you see it – he had given about 120 acres of his land.

**Interviewer:** 120 acres.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Half of it went to the ocean. Near the water plant, his lands are still there.

**Interviewer:** Now, you told that you had 3 acres, right? 3 or 2 acres, *ma?*

**Interviewee (Female)**: 3 acres.

**Interviewer:** 3 acres, right. Did they give any compensation for that? They took land right? For Kamarajar port – or for what purpose did they take?

**Interviewee (Female)**: They took land from the village.

**[50:30]**

**Interviewer:** Yes, I am asking about – who took the farmland?

**Interviewee (Male)**: Kamarajar port only. Inside there.

**Interviewee (Female)**: Kamarajar port, yes.

**Interviewer:** Did they give any money – for taking your land?

**Interviewee (Female)**: They did not give anything.

**Interviewer:** They did not give anything?

**Interviewee (Female)**: They did not give anything?

**Interviewer:** Why they did not give anything?

**Interviewee (Female)**: They did not give for anyone.

**Interviewee (Male)**: They said that they would give, and that was how they build this compound wall here. They said that they would do everything for us.

**Interviewee (Female)**: They said that they would give everything. That they would give jobs.

**Interviewee (Male)**: At last, what they gave the people here was – after a long struggle – was the jobs to water the plants inside. On contract.

**Interviewer:** But they did not give anything for taking the lands?

**Interviewee (Male)**: Nothing like that.

**Interviewer:** Are they patta land or?

**[51:00]**

**Interviewee (Male)**: They are patta only.

**Interviewee (Female)**: They are all porombokke land only.

**Interviewee (Male)**: They are all *maanaa-vari (*Rain-fed).

**Interviewer:** *maanaa-vari.*

**Interviewee (Male)**: We grow rain-fed crops, right?

**Interviewer:** Yes, yes.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Yearly once only – we would grow that.

(overlapping voices)

**Interviewee (Male)**: Yes, *maana-vari* means – yearly once only. That was my land. I used to keep a thorny-plant fence around it. And I used to maintain it since my childhood.

Suddenly they come and say – ‘This is our land. You are growing crops in my land.’.

We say – ‘We have been seeing for many days. Please do something for us.’

They say – ‘I will give. But first leave from here.’

Because if you see – they did not have these things back then. Many people have only converted *porombokke* to *patta* land.

**[51:30]**

For so many acres. But they have been maintaining it. They had kept fences around each land, and grew crops by themselves. Paddy, *ellu (*sesame), *kevuru* (ragi/finger millet) and *valli-kezhangu* (sweet potato). Back then, they would grow easily in the soil.

Now too – inside Kamarajar port – there is an *Ellai-amman* temple. Next to that, the wells are still there. They would take water from there.

**Interviewee (Female)**: The wells are still there.

**Interviewee (Male)**: They are there till now. Inside there, there used to be a hostel there. Hostel.

**Interviewer:** Hostel. Okay.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Mainly the village’s name – by Kattupalli it means; as there was a school (*palli)* inside the forest (*kaadu) –* that was how the name ‘Kattupalli’ (forest-school) originated.

**[52:00]**

**Interviewer:** Ohh. Is the hostel still there now?

**Interviewee (Male)**: That is what – now, military folks stay inside there right?

**Interviewer:** It used to be there before?

**Interviewee (Female)**: We would take our kids and keep them there. For 1 week or 2 weeks.

(overlapping voices)

**Male voice**: Now, it is the CSIF barracks there.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Do you know exactly where it is..

**Male voice**: It is inside the harbour now.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Yes, it is inside the harbour. There is the *Madha-temple* (Mother Mary’s church).

**Male voice**: It was a Christian-temple. It was a church only, right *ma?*

**Interviewee (Male)**: At the church, (overlapping voices), there used to an Augustine father. Augustine father only – he wanted to give some livelihood to the people here. ‘There are no facilities inside Kattupalli. Poor children should be taught to study.’ He though – so Augustine father initiated that.

**[52:30]**

When he was there, my wife and others – they would be dropped off at the church during the day. Around 6PM alone, the ladies would get back home and come back. The boy-children would stay there. The next day – a vehicle would come back from there. They would bring them in the vehicle. The children would go there to study.

Back then, this was the way to the *Madha*-temple. It was a big hostel. After the harbour had come, they had raised a compound wall around it. Even now – statue of Jesus, the sheep – they are all there among the plants. All the toys.

**[53:00]**

Now, that hostel is repurposed as rooms for the military folks to stay there. It is still there now.

**Interviewer:** It is still there.

**Interviewee (Female)**: There is a *Madha-temple* there, right. It is straight from there.

**Interviewee (Male)**: It is straight from there – inside.

**Interviewer:** So, how long has the ‘Kattupalli’ name was here, *ma?* Only after the school came here or before that?

**Interviewee (Male)**: The name was there earlier itself.

**Interviewee (Female)**: Earlier itself, how many of our people had ruled there; since back then – it was ‘Kattupalli’ only.

**Interviewer:** Kattupalli only. Okay. So, the name…

**Interviewee (Male)**: The hostel was there before itself.

**Interviewer:** Is it? For how long has the hostel been there?

**Interviewee (Male)**: It was there before we were born itself.

**Interviewee (Female)**: Before we were born.

**Interviewer:** Oh, before you were born.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Yes.

**[53:30]**

We would not have even born back then – it was there before that.

**Interviewer:** So, for many years..

**Interviewee (Male)**: For many years.. He grew really old, and he only named my wife as – Augustina.

**Interviewer:** Oh, is it? Okay.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Yes. After marriage – they were Christians.

After I got married, I said – ‘I would not convert to a Christian. *Parayan* means *Parayan* only. Parayan blood is… (unclear).’

They came here and made a ruckus. After that – what they did was… My mother-in-law would never give me up. Always.

For 2 years, I was in the hospital – if not for her, I would not be here now.

**[54:00]**

Like that – the name came before we were born. We would not even have existed back then. He used to do all that – now, the company has encroached it, and it had become a harbour.

**Interviewee (Female)**: That is it.

**Interviewer:** You said earlier, right – that village is good only now; that you could go anywhere and at any time. People are here now. It used to be lonely. But, those things have changed now. ‘Even at night, we could go out.’ Road is there now. All these things you had said earlier, right?

**[54:30]**

But how are things now? You have lost few things, you have gained few things. What do you think about this?

**Interviewee (Female)**: Back then, there were no vehicles or transportation. Right now, people have bike and scooter; this and that – they have cars too. Back then, if someone gets hurt – they die half way while going out from here. If someone had to go for child birth – it was very difficult to take them outside. One could not go to hospital at all. Back then.

Now, cars and other vehicles are there.

**[55:00]**

**Interviewee (Male)**: Both are there.

**Interviewee (Female)**: We can take them out of the village in that.

(overlapping voices)

**Interviewee (Male)**: If you take my generation, the time that they grew up in – was dark times. Only now they had come to light. In case they fall sick, there are vehicles in each house now – to take them outside. It was not there back then. One bike…

**Interviewee (Female)**: Back then, only the people at the Mudaliar’s house had tractor. We have to go and ask for that tractor. ‘Please give *pa.’* – like that, we had to plead. As we start to leave after taking the patient, they die half way.

**[55:30]**

For some people, we could take to the hospital and admit them there. Then the vehicle would come only the next day morning.

**Interviewer:** You had said earlier that, you worked at the Mudaliar’s house, right? How did they treat you? How was the relationship between you and them?

**Interviewee (Female)**: They treated us well.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Interviewee (Female)**: They would give us food.

**Interviewee (Male)**: The ladies would go for rice transplantation (*nadavu)* work. For transplantation and weeding work; they would come in the morning, right? In the morning – they give porridge (*kanji).* They would give *kanji* with pickles and all, and they would give it to them.

**[56:00]**

After that, once it becomes noontime; they would all be tired after transplantation work, right? At that time – they would give them rice (*saappaadu).* With rasam or sambar, they would take it there.

**Interviewee (Female)**: With *koottu* (vegetables sidedish) also.

**Interviewee (Male)**: They would give. Back then… Only now, we have plates. Back then, they would make a *Dhonnai* (plate) out of palm leaves (*o-lai).*

**Interviewee (Female)**: We would stitch the leaves together.

**Interviewee (Male)**: They would stitch the leaves. Some people would just get food in their own hands. Maximum – in our customs – if you are a Parayan, they would keep you separately and give food only in your hands. As far as I know – from my childhood. I had experienced it like that.

I had got the food, and threw it on the floor, and had come. ‘Who are you to give me food in my hands?’ – like that, I had fought and had come back.

**[56:30]**

In their times, they had eaten like that. Similarly, they would take tiffin from their homes. They would have some left-over food after they had eaten right? Maybe they would not have eaten fully too – but, they would think ‘I have two kids at home.’. The left-over in the utensil would be there, right? If they give that to them – they would bring it back home to feed their kids. That is one kind of happiness. For the kids have something to eat too.

So, back then, the Mudaliars would not scrunch their faces (Tamil phrase: *Moonji suzhichikka maattaanga –* would not frown*).* They would say – ‘What do you want? What do you need?’. Wages would be 2 rupees. They would say – ‘Here is 3 rupees. Go now.’ Because, they had to get something from us, right?

Like that, if they have some small work at their home, they would call us. ‘Cut some of these wood. Cut those thorny-plants.’. Like that.

**[57:00]**

**Interviewee (Female)**: Similarly, during the time of *Pongal,* we have to clean the cobwebs (*ottarai)* at their home. We have to clean the cobwebs, then paint, then wash their cows and other things – they would buy new clothes for everyone; and they would feed everyone to the full, and send them back.

**Interviewer:** Back then, you were dependant on them. There was a caste-based relationship.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Yes.

**Interviewer:** Has that relationship broken now or not? You are separate now.

**Interviewee (Male)**: That is confirmed, sir. Back then, it was like – ‘If we do not go to their house, we would not have money’. Things were like that. They were dependent on them.

**[57:30]**

Now, things are not like that. Now, they call us for their help for 10 times. ‘Hey. We cannot come.’ – we say. Now. Now, we are at a situation to give jobs for 4 people. Back then, things were not like that. They have to call us for work at their homes for any job.

We would want them to call us – to cut wood at their homes, to go to the cashewnut plantation. If they grow cashewnuts, I would take the auction; As the season gets over, they would not come. I would hire someone, and separate the cashew fruit from the nuts – and sell the fruit and nuts.

**[58:00]**

If I take the plantation for – let’s say 1 lakh rupees. I would finish the job within 3 months. As I would leave – there would be left-over nuts (*uthiri).* By *uthiri* – I would harvest and leave.

(**Interviewee (Female)** speaks).

**Interviewee (Male)**: Wait, he does not understand what you said. I will tell. After harvesting, there would be left over nuts that parrots had bitten, and they would be on the ground, right? We would go and sit there; the ladies would tie up a cloth like this – and they would scramble here and there, and pick up those nuts.

After picking up, it would amount to about 10 kilograms. In that, 1 kg was 5 rupees. About 100 nuts was for 5 rupees.

**[58:30]**

100 nuts.

**Interviewer:** 100 nuts.

**Interviewee (Male)**: 5 rupees. If we drop it off at the Mudaliar’s store – they would give half kg of rice. If we drop it at *Nadar* store – they would give half a kg of rice.

**Interviewee (Female)**: Groundnut and other things also – they would give. We would get that and..

**Interviewee (Male)**: Rice, chilli powder, oil and everything – we would buy for 5 rupees, and they would give remaining 2 rupees to us. We would take it back and – we would fire up some firewood back then. Now we have gas.

Back then, if we have some firewood, we could cook and eat food wherever we want. Even if we do not go for jobs – there would always be some rice. We would add some vegetables, and give food for 4 kids. They can eat stomach-full.

**[59:00]**

In that thatched roof hut, it would rain and the water would be dripping from above. That was how we used to be. Today, to some extent – we have been able to come up in life. The reason is – the company. After Kamarajar port, the company came. The company said that it would do everything for us, but it had not done so.

**Interviewer:** It had not done.

**Interviewee (Male)**: One good thing it had done is – they built us Tsunami house. From the thatched roof huts. Tsunami came then, right? Back then, they built for us differently, and built for them differently. They said ‘I would give you tiled roof. You build the house’.

**Male voice**: Tsunami houses – these people only built it right?

**Interviewer:** Yes, Sheelu – them.

**Interviewee (Male)**: That is what I am talking about. Sheela madam.

**Interviewee (Female)**: Yes, Sheela madam.

**[59:30]**

**Male voice**: Yes. But, you were telling that the company built those houses.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Not the company. Sheela madam.

**Interviewee (Female)**: It was the charitable organization (*Thondu niruvanam)*

(overlapping voices)

**Interviewee (Male)**: Sheela madam only said – ‘I would do everything for you.’ She was part of a private company. After much struggle, she came and built these houses for them. In 20 or so papers…

After that – Kesavan. And the person who came and left now, right? – (name unclear). They all cooperated and communicated that – ‘ Do these things for these people.’ Like that – they took sand from here only. They did not buy sand from outside.

**Interviewer:** Did not get sand from outside.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Only the bricks and cement came from outside. The sand is from here only.

**[01:00:00]**

She built these houses with good space. And by God’s grace – she did good things. Sheela madam. She would be good.

**Interviewee (Female)**: Now, we want to take that away, and want to build with floors – we have told them. We do not know when that would come.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Now they say that something had been sanctioned at the harbour. I know that they will build the houses. Let’s see – for how many people they would build.

**Interviewer:** As you were saying.. Based on what you said – you said that things were good earlier.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Mainly.. Compared to now, earlier was better.

**[01:00:30]**

**Interviewer:** But – back then, you had to be dependent on another community, right? Now – things are not like that.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Everyone is equal now.

**Interviewer:** Everything is equal. So, in this regard, how do you see these changes?

**Interviewee (Male)**: By changes.. Now, everyone.. Back then.. They would consider their own kind of prestige. Now, things are not like that. Now – ‘Only if you are good…. If you reduce in status, there are people around you to lift you up.’ They would think that – ‘they are struggling’.

Things were not like that back then.

**[01:01:00]**

Even if we are sick and lying down on this side – they would say ‘Hey, they are sick.’ And they would just leave, back then. But now, it is not like that. They would say ‘Hey. He is sick. Lift him up; we would take him to the hospital.’ Because, facilities are available now.

The main matter was – there were no facilities back then to go and come. Now we have the facilities. If I get sick now, there is a bike to come here within 5 seconds. It was not there back then.

The difference between back then and now is.. Back then, things were the best.. Now, we are only going backwards – not going forward. We are still like how we used to be.

**[01:01:30]**

Because – using us only – the company is moving upwards; the village is just there and going downwards. There is no livelihood for the kids here.

**Interviewee (Female)**: Yes.

**Interviewee (Male)**: The youngsters are \_\_\_\_\_\_ (unclear), sir. As far as I am considered…. If there is a big company, (unclear). See, there are two youngsters in our house itself. He had finished his studies. When he went to L&T – the job that they gave him was – to take water cans inside.

He studied. Many have studied. He has to pick up the water cans, and take them upstairs. He should not take the lift. He takes 50 cans per day. He would be complaining here at night that his body is paining.

**[01:02:00]**

So, for someone who had studied, they should give a job suitable for their education level. Like a house boy – they ask to bring papers and all. To bring tea to them there. They would give housekeeping work and say ‘Pour tea. Clean the toilets.’ The youngsters see this and say ‘We do not want this kind of job at all. We do not want this L&T job.’

If we say – Adani. They say – ‘Adani? We don’t want that company at all’, and they come back. So, the people here are being stamped down, and only the Hindi people are moving upwards now. That is the main thing.

We are like this only. But, people from Assam, Orissa – and Bengalis and all. There were some 15,000 people.

**[01:02:30]**

There is a camp behind the petrol bunk. There would be some 15,000 people, and about 10 shops there; there would be so many people there – like combining people from 15 of our villages. So, there is business happening there.

The company fully employs Hindi-people only. They have arranged for 15 buses for the company – for the zero-gate (unclear).

**Interviewee (Female)**: We do not have any buses for the company.

**Interviewer:** No buses for you.

**Interviewee (Female)**: We have personally arranged for a van, saying that we would give 700 rupees per month; and we go to the company like that.

**[01:03:00]**

**Interviewer:** You are going like that.

**Interviewer:** Yes, we are going and coming back like that.

**Male voice**: You are not an employee there at all, right? There is no relationship like – between the employer and the employee.

**Interviewee (Female)**: (laughs)

**Male voice**: There is no relationship like that. ‘We have given jobs to you because you were suffering. We gave jobs to you through the self-help groups. That is it.’

**Interviewee (Female)**: That is it.

**Male voice**: Piece rate. That was how they did it at the beginning.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Earlier..

**Male voice**: Only now – through Central Government minimum wages – they were brought under the Labour Act. It was brought through the union.

**[01:03:30]**

**Interviewer:** So, basically – your livelihoods have changed; but there has been no development in your lives.

**Interviewee (Female)**: No development, yes.

**Interviewee (Male)**: No development.

**Interviewer:** So, earlier there was – ‘scavenging for oysters’; that has gone. Now, roads and some light had come. But – ‘type of jobs suitable for the education level’ and…

**Interviewee (Male)**: All those things.. We are living now, as we used to live. Earlier, we used to have porridge (*kanji);* now, we are having rice with gravy, that is it. (Tamil phrase: *appo kanji kudichchom. Ippo kozhambu ooththi saappudrom. Avlo than).* Back then, we fried some fish and drank porridge, or fried some prawns and drank porridge. Truly, sir. We would fry some prawns.

**Interviewee (Female)**: We had porridge.

**[01:04:00]**

**Interviewee (Male)**: Now, we have facilities and money to buy food from outside – like chicken rice or egg rice. That was not there, back then. We would just make some porridge in a big vessel; we would catch some prawns; we would grill them over fire; and we ate it – sharing between four of us. Back then. The only difference is; back then – porridge. Today – rice. (Tamil phrase: *Annikku kanji. Innikku saappaadu).*

Back then we had ration rice (rice from Public Distribution System – PDS). Now, we eat store bought rice (*kada arisi).*

**Interviewee (Female)**: Back then, we had ration rice only. As soon as they give, we would get a bag of it and keep it with us. Only after it gets over, we would go back and get more.

**[01:04:30]**

**Male voice**: Where did you have to go; to get ration back then?

**Interviewee (Male)**: Here, nearby only. Here, this radio-set (unclear) is there, right?

**Interviewee (Female)**: Near the radio-set (unclear). No, at the building there.

**Male voice**: They would give it at Kattupalli itself?

**Interviewee (Male)**: Yes. Rice would come to Kattupalli. It would come..

**Interviewee (Female)**: Back then, when we had then, it felt like our stomachs were full. Now, if we eat this rice – we do not feel like our stomachs are full. That food felt like it filled our stomachs.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Back then, our body was good. There was no illness.

**Interviewee (Female)**: There was no illness.

**Interviewee (Male)**: We had rice, and *kevuru kanji* (Ragi porridge). Since we ate food like that, our body was healthy. Now, everything has become a medicine. Every object. If I farm something and eat that – there would be no chemical in that.

**[01:05:00]**

But if I go and buy some vegetables – everything is medicine only now. Everything has become like that now. For us – the food we ate back then, and the food we eat now feels very different. Back then, if we boil that ration rice; and just fry a dry-fish (*karuvaadu)* with it, and eat that – that would be it. We need not eat for a whole day.

Now, how much ever we eat; then and there…. Back then, we bought for 50 rupees. Now we buy for 1000 rupees. For a day.

**[01:05:30]**

For the kids education expenses, for food – if you see all that; only if you go for 500 rupees per day wages work; we can get some 5000 rupees; and use 5000 for household expenses. And use 5000 for school fees. We can do everything. It was not like that back then.

Back then, people did not give that much priority to education. Now many people are going out and renting houses – so that their kids would study well. So that they would be able to study and become a doctor or an engineer. Many people have gone out like that. At Minjur. They take a house for rent and stay there.

Back then – it was not like this. It was only within these 4 walls here. If it was profit or loss, if we drink *kanji (*rice porridge) or *koozh* (ragi porridge), if we eat or starve – everything we did it here only.

**[01:06:00]**

Similarly, another thing was – the Tsunami came. We were here only; we did not run anywhere. Near the shore itself. When the Tsunami came; the water did not even come to our level here. So, people elsewhere came to our village saying that ‘Tsunami would not come to Kattupalli.’

At that time, L&T was building that bridge. Everyone came and stood on the bridge then. We went and looked at the shore – there was no water at the shore; water had gone inside half-way. There were conch-shells everywhere. We picked it up, and got ashore before the water came back.

**[01:06:30]**

We were like that. Now, water comes and stagnates here. Now, L&T water comes and stands here; back then, water would not stagnate. How many people (unclear). You would not be able to see standing water anywhere here. But if you are thirsty – take a stick and dig a small ditch; and we would wait – the water would swell up like a spring.

We would take a coconut shell, fill up a water bottle and we can drink that. Now that facility is not there.

**Interviewer:** Now that facility is not there.

**[01:07:00]**

**Interviewee (Male)**: Now, if the motor gets repaired, water would not come for 2 days. So, there is a ward member here – called Rajan. So he would get water in tractor and give it to every house.

**Interviewer:** So, you said earlier about contractors, right? That many people here became contractors. How does that work? Is it in your village itself? They are from your community or…? Who are the contractors?

**Interviewee (Male)**: Everyone is from our community only. Not outside people.

**Interviewer:** All the contractors.

**[01:07:30]**

**Interviewee (Male)**: The contract works like – L&T people would come. We think ‘You have taken half of our village lands..’ There are lot of things in that. That we should not tell outside. So, if you go to the L&T people… you would get a contract. One – you would get a contract. Two – you would get another contract. And 15 contracts for the president (*thalaivar).* Everything is at the company.

**Interviewee (Female)**: Sethuraman.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Sethuraman *thalaivar* is there. He has got some contracts. Through his contract – monthly salary is 11,000 rupees. 11,000 rupees salary.

**Interviewer:** 11,000 rupees salary.

**[01:08:00]**

**Interviewee (Male)**: He is like – more than people from our village, more number of people from outside our village are working with him. ‘Because people won’t work here. They talk about the law and all’ – he would think like that, and they would not employ any of our people. Even if they employ, they would employ their relatives as – supervisors. That kind of work they would give.

Like that – we would not be able to go and do those jobs. Even if we do that… There are lot of things in that (Tamil phrase: *Athula neraya vishayam irukku)*. ‘He is talking about the law’ – like that. The village president has some contracts; some 4 or 5 people have contracts like that. If they have those contracts, work is only for them.

**[01:08:30]**

Because, from our village and all…

**Interviewee (Female)**: If the salary is 15,000 rupees; they would take 2,500 rupees and give us only 12,500 rupees. If the salary is 10,000 rupees, they would take 2,000 rupees and give us only 8,000.

**Interviewee (Male)**: They would give 8,000 only.

**Interviewee (Female)**: The work that they do is like that only.

**Interviewer:** Like that only.

**Interviewee (Female)**: Yes.

**Interviewer:** So- like this, how many people would have benefitted? Because of the contract.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Because of the contracts – these people only.

**Interviewer:** 4 people..

**Interviewee (Male)**: 4 or 5 people. There was a youngster from Kuppam who used to take – he had left it. He said ‘I do not want this contract at all.’

**[01:09:00]**

He earned a lot; and built a house on his own. At BDO office (unclear). He slipped and came backwards just like that.

**Interviewer:** Ohh..

**Interviewee (Male)**: Someone would be watching over him; saying ‘Should not dance too much’; and he had left that, and he is going for a job at his village now. Through the contract itself. Others here – they do standing (unclear). In the beginning, there would be lot of work; they would employ about 30 people for the work. Now, maximum – there is only the housekeeping work and other kinds of work.

**Interviewee (Female)**: If we go and ask the president once or twice; the third time we go, he would give a job.

**Interviewer:** He would give a job.

**[01:09:32]**

**Interviewee (Female)**: As I have walked and walked, my foot had died. I took my grandson and kept on going there.

**Interviewee (Male)**: For the son here, sir. The did not give work for him till now.

(overlapping voices)

**Interviewee (Female)**: I asked – instead of work for my son-in-law, give it to my grandson.

**Interviewee (Male)**: He is a driver, sir.

**Interviewer:** Driver.

**Interviewee (Male)**: But he is not going to drive now. If he goes to drive, they ask lot of questions at the company.

**Interviewee (Female)**: When I asked him to give job to my grandson, he refused.

**Interviewee (Male)**: I took him and joined him at the work. Joined him at work at the main gate. Should they not appreciate who joined them for work? I joined my son at the job and his salary is Rs. 13,000. No – 15,000 rupees salary. He joined through another youngster – he did not ask anyone.

**[01:10:00]**

So, he is assigned to a lorry – like a cleaner. Instead of a driver, he is doing a cleaner’s job. While he was doing that – they enquired who got that job for him. And they stopped my son. Like that – they have stopped the jobs of 5 people, and employed someone else. Those 5 people are simply roaming around now.

**Interviewer:** So, this village only.

**Interviewee (Male)**: People in the same village – try to do bad things for the youngsters in this village.

**Interviewee (Female)**: For the same village kids, they do it like that.

**Interviewee (Male)**: They remove the youngsters from this village and hire someone from outside the village.

**Interviewer:** Why are they hiring like that?

**Interviewee (Male)**: They get profit from them; they do not get any profits from us.

(overlapping voices)

**[01:10:30]**

**Interviewee (Female)**: unclear.

**Interviewee (Male)**: If they hire people from outside, they give some commission to them. Our people do not do that. We would be frank; we would go and do our job – and we would get our wages. Like that. As they have stopped people from here, and hired outsiders, they get extra 1000 rupees per person from them.

**Interviewer:** So, when he joined; he joined directly.

**Interviewee (Male)**: He joined directly. He did not ask anyone; he did not ask anyone’s help. I too didn’t know. He said ‘*appa,* I am going to job. I got a job as a cleaner with a *thatha* (grandfather/older person).’ He had to check the vehicle while it is reversing; and check things when they were loading and unloading. He had that kind of work only. He had to clean the vehicle. While he was doing all that – someone came through another supervisor, they got my son’s pass, and they sent him home within 5 minutes.

**[01:11:00]**

**Interviewer:** five?

**Interviewee (Male)**: In 5 minutes, they snatched away his pass, and asked him to get out. ‘Tell some excuse and send him out’ – like that. The next day - I go near the gate there, the other guy tells me ‘I am going to the same job that your son used to do’. That guy was informing me before going to the job. I asked him – ‘They stopped my son; and how did they hire you?’. He said – ‘I asked the president. I was asking him for a long time. He was telling me that he would let me know. At last, they stopped your son.’

I said – ‘He is a super president’ (super *thalaivar).*

**Interviewer:** The person who joined newly is also from this village?

**[01:11:30]**

**Interviewee (Male)**: He is from this very same village.

**Interviewer:** So, whoever is close to them gets a job.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Only they get a job. Similarly – if I think that I do not want this person, and I want the other person; I would give the job to them. There are so many things at play, sir. Now, people who are there are remaining there only.

**Interviewee (Female)**: When the Munusamy *thalaivar* was there, people would be able to go and ask things from him. With these two people, no one can ask them anything.

**Interviewee (Male)**: They came.. In this harbour…

**Interviewee (Female)**: By walking to their houses continuously, in search of them – only our legs are paining a lot.

**[01:12:00]**

**Interviewee (Male)**: When they were there, for some houses, women would not go for jobs. Maximum…

**Interviewee (Female)**: Many people would have died.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Many people would have died.

**Interviewee (Female)**: If I go in the morning, it would be 8 or 9 PM when I come back home. When I come back, my husband would beat me.

**Interviewer:** After going to work at harbour?

**Interviewee (Female)**: No. I would be trying to join people for work at harbour, right?

(overlapping voices)

When we come back from there – he would ask – ‘Why you are doing this..’

**Interviewee (Male)**: ‘What are you doing for so long?’ – he would ask. My father-in-law will chase her and beat her – we would be here.

**[01:12:30]**

**Interviewee (Female)**: He would hit me. On the head. He would hit me on the face and all.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Blood would be dripping. But after getting all these beatings, these ladies have helped the village.

**Interviewee (Female)**: We saved the village, and we also saved the ladies then.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Would people tell about all these things now? About all those beatings? She would come back in the night, sir. He would take very big stones and hit her. Asking her – ‘Where are you coming back from – at this time?’. He would chase her and hit her. He would chase her to the thorny-plants. My father-in-law. They suffered like this.

**Interviewee (Female)**: He would say – ‘You have to come back before 6PM’; and then only he would allow me to go out. If it becomes 11 or 12 o clock, I would get kicks.

**[01:13:00]**

**Interviewee (Male)**: They suffered a lot. Even now – Vyas (name unclear) would say that – ‘without your mother-in-law, there would be no jobs for all the ladies.’ They had suffered like that. Even when she came out – she raised them well. She raised them well (unclear). Because, you are standing at that space, right? You are standing first. Even that day – while talking to Naresh and all (unclear).

**Interviewee (Female)**: Naresh was not there. I took chocolate and gave it to them there. Naresh was not there.

**[01:13:30]**

(overlapping voices)

**Male voice**: I won’t go the office (unclear).

**Interviewee (Male)**: They all spoke together and became very close.

**Interviewee (Male)**: What they said was … In her times, they would not have done that. But we know about the current times. (unclear). These things here – radio set, and *panthal (*temporary cloth shed). ‘If you are working for contract or whatever – I should fulfil your wishes.’ So what I did was – for 100 people, I arranged for biriyani and everything. We did lot of expenses and got them home. (meaning unclear).

**Interviewer:** Now, this house is here right, *ma?*

**Interviewee (Female)**: Yes.

**Interviewer:** You came 40 years back, right? You are staying at the same place?

**Interviewee (Female)**: Yes, I am staying at this place only.

**[01:14:00]**

**Interviewer:** Or have you changed anywhere?

**Interviewee (Male)**: Here only.

**Interviewee (Female)**: Only here.

**Interviewer:** So, it used to be 50 houses. Then 100, then 120; and now there are 500 houses. So, how did they get patta for this? How was patta issued? Does everyone have patta?

**Interviewee (Female)**: Everyone has patta.

**Interviewee (Male)**: They got it long back.

**Interviewee (Female)**: Since long back.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Every generation, we would do a renewal. After my dad, in my name. After me, in my son’s name.

**Interviewee (Female)**: He had renewed everything and kept.

**Interviewer:** What patta is it?

**Interviewee (Male)**: How?

**Interviewer:** Natham porombokke.. Is it Natham patta or how is it?

**[01:14:30]**

**Interviewee (Male)**: It is not Natham patta and all. It is purely agriculture patta.

**Interviewee (Female)**: Original patta.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Original agricultural patta is this. Original. People came and stayed here, right?

**Interviewer:** Yes.

**Interviewee (Male)**: For the agricultural patta (*vivasaya patta),* no one can do anything. That is why, the L&T people had given a petition and all. To vacate this village. He knows the biodata of this village. When they opened the water plant, *Kalaignar ayya (*Karunanidhi) came here. Back then. He said – we cannot do anything to this village.

**[01:15:00]**

They gave alternate land at a place called ‘*Kokku medu’* *(*Egret mound or crane mound); they proposed shifting us there. If we go there, there would be no livelihood for us. They said that they would give a different alternate land. We did not accept it. In this neighbourhood, there is a place called *Amma Nagar.* It is a porombokke land. In that place, how you built brick-houses for the Kuppam people - build us houses like that. Give a job for every house. We would vacate from here.

They were preparing this land for new tracks – for the yard. Now that arch (unclear), they are trying to get it there at the corner – where the road comes inside, right?

**Interviewer:** Yes.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Therefore, only when they vacate this village, the arch would go there, and the gate would change there.

**[01:15:30]**

Therefore, they have stopped that. They had gone to so many places. The issue had gone to Modi also. For Adani. Adani says – ‘I would not go near that village. I would take till Pazhaverkadu this side’ – for Adani port. (unclear) We have come out of the ocean now.

L&T only maintaining these things. He had fought a lot in many places; but he cannot do anything to this village.

**[01:16:00]**

So, in budget, it is just standing there – not moving.

They came and shot these things from the helicopter. I keep a shop outside the gate there. They came to me for an interview. Earlier it was bad; now we have to go and only clean toilets inside. Earlier if we go near the ocean, we would get only about 100 rupees. If we put (unclear), we would get 100 rupees. We would not go for any jobs. If we cut (unclear), and put it that side of that river, we would get 50 rupees. For 50 rupees, we would get rice, pulses, chilli powder and everything.

**[01:16:30]**

Things were like that. Now, things are not like that, sir. Things have changed upside down.

**Interviewer:** They took land right, *ma?* When they took the land, did you say that they should not take the land?

**Interviewee (Male)**: They protested. After protests what they said was – they took some land here right? It would be about 8 cents.

**Interviewee (Female)**: They built it in such a way that we would not be able to go that way. We only broke it saying that we will go that way. We had broken it.

**[01:17:00]**

**Interviewee (Male)**: Now, on the other side – everyone’s land is there. I mean – from here till there, it would be about 10 cents.

**Interviewee (Female)**: It would be straight like this from here till there.

**Interviewee (Male)**: That mound (*mode’u)* is there, right? Every house would have a mound like that.

**Interviewer:** When did you protest? Do you remember?

**Interviewee (Male)**: That – when they started L&T.

**Interviewee (Female)**: We protested in 2005.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Before this bridge was constructed.

**Interviewer:** Do you have any photo or newspaper clippings of that?

**Interviewee (Male)**: Back then – these camera and newspapers were not there.

**Interviewee (Female)**: Back then, there was no cellphone itself. We did not have it.

**[01:17:30]**

**Interviewee (Male)**: Back then, someone would have a cell phone. When I was working at Madras, I had a cell. Nokia cell phone. Fat cell is there, right?

**Interviewer:** Yes, yes.

**Interviewee (Male)**: I used to have that. Back then, while working, I would go out. I would stay outside for 1 week or 2 weeks, and then only return back here. I would come back after 2 weeks or so. Because we could not come and go every day. I would work at the hotel there every month. Weekly once – they would give salary. Saturday night – if I leave from there…

Saturday night – I would be lying down at \_\_\_\_\_ (name unclear). At the Railway station. The next day at 5 AM, I have to get ready and come here. Back then, they used to conduct meetings and all. That Dakshinamoorthy *thalaivar* would conduct meetings and say – ‘I would do this and that for your village’.

**[01:18:00]**

He took lot of efforts. We were in contact with him. They said that he should not come in (meaning unclear). He had gone out now. After a new officer had come, things with Kattupalli had come to a standstill. No good way has been born for this village. People who are here – are saving some little money here..

**Interviewee (Female)**: To build a bit more of our house; to build something on top. People are building on their own.

**Interviewee (Male)**: People are building their own brick houses now.

**Interviewer:** Now, how do you want Kattupalli village to be like, tomorrow?

**[01:18:30]**

**Interviewee (Female)**: That is what I am telling no. If they remove these things, and if they give floored houses to everyone.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Now… As far as this village is considered, harbour is doing good things for us. We do not get anything from L&T.

**Interviewer:** Nothing from L&T.

**Interviewee (Male)**: I am telling you frankly. Only for this thing.. I had worked at the harbour before. That car berth is there, right? I worked for 3 years at the car berth there. I thought I would get some work confirmed there at the harbour. A submersible motor fell, and my heart stopped.

**Interviewer:** Oh.

**[01:19:00]**

**Interviewee (Male)**: After that, they took me to the hospital; and that contract guy spent 15 lakhs to give me life again. Whichever company I go to, I suffer, you see. After 5-10 months, I joined for work again at the same company. Back then, I got 10,000 rupees as salary. When I came back, they gave me 25,000 rupees salary and made me sit in an AC room. But the contract got over. The contract got over. They would come to pick me up in a car. I stopped.

**[01:19:30]**

Back then, they would not come inside. While working the car berth, I would be there (meaning unclear). Back then, I would go and sit at the office room there. I did not have any educational facilities and all. Only the talent of speech. I would get work from a lot of people. I would give food for everyone. I would use my money to buy them food. Everyone would work well. If they are paid 5,000 rupees, right? They would work for 25,000 rupees worth. Things were like that; and they saved me there at the harbour. So, good things happen to this village only because of the harbour. There is no use from L&T or Adani for anyone here. People who came there are not people from here – but, Hindi people only.

**[01:20:00]**

**Interviewer:** Hindi people only.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Only people coming here from another country can work here. Only the Hindi people are the managers. Only the Hindi people are the supervisors. Hindi people are everything there. Our Tamil people are only for cleaning toilets, collecting garbage, and for cutting gardens. Like that – for L&T…

Through Harbour, houses have been sanctioned now. 4.5 lakh rupees per house. 4.5 lakhs. How the house would be like – columns raised on 4 sides, and floors over there.

**Interviewer:** Is it through the CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility)?

**Interviewee (Male)**: It is CSR only, right?

**Male voice**: CSR only. CSR only.

**[01:20:30]**

**Male voice**: When did they say?

**Interviewee (Male)**: They took a list now.

**Male voice**: When?

**Interviewee (Male)**: They took it today. For this, they asked for details 1 week back itself.

**Male voice**: Okay.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Aadhaar card, ration card…

**Male voice**: Kamarjar port are doing this?

**Interviewee (Male)**: What? Yes, Kamarajar port. Sethuraman *thalaivar* was telling \_\_\_\_ (name unclear). As they said it, I did not believe them. They said ‘Houses are coming here.’

We are living here like how we used to live here before. There has been no exchange.

**[01:21:00]**

But if they build a house for us for 4.5 lakhs, it is a pride for us, right? Through the company, some good things are happening to us. Therefore, people do not give any trouble to Kamarajar port; they used to strike and protest at the very beginning. After that, they do not do – because they do good things for the village. That is why.

Mainly, if 4 people want to strike tomorrow – police would know today itself. They would bring lot of police cars and bring people here. They come directly here and do a *bandh* saying ‘No one should go out of the village’. The company people have the police support.

**[01:21:30]**

There is no police support for the village. Mainly, if there arises some issue for the company…

Something happened was – one of the youngster from Kuppam went to work. They fired him from the work saying that he drinks. He stopped drinking. And then he went to work again. He went continuously for a week. So, at that time – a manager said ‘Do not come to work. Go die somewhere in the ocean.’ So he went directly to the ocean, took a boat, and jumped in the water – he died.

**Interviewer:** Oh.

**[01:22:00]**

**Interviewee (Male)**: ‘The words you said – they were different.’ Thinking about all that, he died at the ocean, and his body was not found at all. Even for his funeral, they did only with his clothes.

**Interviewer:** But.. He fell into the ocean..

**Interviewee (Male)**: 3 people had gone back then. They had caught onto the boat, and got to the shore. That place is a swirl place (*suzhal idam).* There would be lot of rocks there. He wore a t-shirt and a shorts.

**Male voice**: Was he from Kattupalli? He was from Pazhavarkedu only, right?

**Interviewee (Male)**: No no.

**Interviewee (Female)**: No. Kuppam.

**Interviewee (Male)**: He was talking to his wife as he went. He was talking saying ‘This is the last. Hear my voice once.’ He kept the phone on his ears, and he fell into the ocean.

**[1:22:30]**

The youngsters tried – they put some nets inside the ocean and searched; but he was gone. The body was not found.

**Male voice**: The ocean would have swirls (*suzhal)*?

**Interviewee (Male)**: huh?

**Male voice**: The ocean has swirls?

**Interviewee (Male)**: Yes. The ocean is like – see, water flows in the river, right? When there is less water in the ocean, the river would flow more.

**Male voice**: I know that.

**Interviewee (Male)**: See, as the ocean water reduces, the river water flow increases. So, the ocean water would not be stagnant at a single place.

**[1:23:00]**

So, at the Pazhaverkadu side, the river water would flow fast. If we use a net here, the net would flow all the way to Pazhaverkadu. The current (*karasal - unclear)* would flow like that. Some time, if the wind flows this way – *karasal* would flow this way. It would keep flowing like that. It would run this way. And that way. If we pour some water on the ground, it flows right? Like that, it would keep flowing – that is *suzhal* (swirl). If one gets stuck in the *suzhal,* they cannot come out.

**Interviewee (Female)**: They cannot come out.

**[1:23:30]**

**Interviewee (Male)**: When *Aali’s* used to be there, and if there is a swirl, and our shirt gets stuck? It will pull you in. It will not let you go. It would decompose over time; the fishes would eat, and that would be it. It will finish it. Like that, that young guy was gone. At that time, they kept his photo and did a small strike.

You know how many police came? 2000 police came. To beat and chase us away. People from all the villages went and sat there at that time. They said – ‘He died at the ocean and why are you sitting here?. ‘Send that manager alone outside and we would go away.’ That was what we said. Why did he tell him to die in the ocean?

**[1:24:00]**

He used to go around and tell people that this manager had told such things to him. He told everyone that he was going to die. He went and saw all the people, who he had not seen for a while.

If you are an officer, and you do not like someone – fire him from the job and that should be it.

These unnecessary words. He should not say like – ‘You go die.’ Like that.

**Interviewer:** This labour colony is there, right? Where the North Indians are staying. Have you gone inside and seen it?

**Interviewee (Male)**: I had worked there, sir. I got into this situation only after working there.

**Interviewer:** Is it..

**Interviewee (Male)**: I went for security work there – for North Indians.

**[1:24:30]**

At last, at Adani port only - \_\_\_\_\_ (unclear) was at harbour then.

**Male voice**: No no. He is Angamuthu – he goes for night shift. He is different.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Angamuthu.

**Interviewer:** Tomorrow..?

**Male voice**: We can meet him; that is not a problem. We can meet him at the harbour gate, too; it should not be an issue. We will take you there.

**Interviewee (Male)**: I worked there. While coming back from shop, my wife met with an accident with a lorry. Her hip broke. The car company. They helped her there (unclear).

**[01:25:00]**

At that time only, Naresh only had a sangam – near the gate; there would be flags and all there. Near there only, a car company vehicle hit a standing vehicle there. My wife broke her hip there. After that, I packed up my shop, I was roaming around a bit. I would catch prawns and fishes. For 300-400 rupees. I had a business at my hand. She had 10,000 rupees salary.

They called me for 10,000 rupees salary. I then joined together 5 people. Then I made that 5 people into 20 people. I then was working at Kamarajar port – like a supervisor. Back then, there were about 5000 people in the camp alone.

**[01:25:30]**

Some of them went to their native places. During Sundays – compulsorily there would be some theft. They would steal the motor or something. I had to look after everything safely. I had the responsibility, and I would be a bit strict. While I was doing all this, on that particular night – few things collapsed. It was a 5 year contract. I picked up (unclear) for all those 5 years. It was the last year. There was only 3 or 4 months left.

At that time, someone stole something and were running away; I caught 2 of them and tied them up.

**[01:26:00]**

The people of the village were also hitting. People going in the bus were also hitting. As I was chasing after someone here, on the other side, 4-5 people were stealing something else and running away. All were very small kids. Kids from Tondiarpettai, Korukkupettai, Royapuram and Kasimedu were doing that – not kids from here. I was looking after them, and I came back – there was a small fence there. I bent down, and through the trees, some people came and stabbed me.

As they stabbed me, my intestines burst.

**Interviewer:** Ohh.

**Interviewee (Male)**: I fell down there itself, and then what happened..

**[01:26:30]**

**Interviewee (Female)**: They cut off parts of his intestines away.

**Male voice**: It got decomposed.

**Interviewee (Male)**: It was not decomposed. It tore a bit – like the thatched roof.

**Male voice**: Oh, it tore?

**Interviewee (Male)**: Yes. It was not decomposed and all. Because, it was all same only, right..

**Male voice**: I thought, it swelled up.. So..

**Interviewee (Male)**: No. At that time, I was going there after eating, right? And as I was bending down, they stabbed me and I heard the ‘pop’ sound. As I fell down there – it was a ditch there.

I had already caught a rowdy, who was fleeing after stabbing someone. At night 12 o clock.

**[01:27:00]**

So, a policeman was there – he was a constable, who got promoted to S.I. (Sub-inspector). Palani S.I. While he was investigating, my name did not come out. They did not want my name to come out. One should be brave – even if there are 10-20 people out there in the night time. At that time, they pulled my leg and hit me – they hit me in my testicles, and I lost one of my testicles. My life was gone. And the next day morning – around 3 or 3 30, I gained consciousness again.

**Interviewer:** Who hit you?

**Interviewee (Male)**: Those kids. Who came to steal.

**[01:27:30]**

**Interviewee (Female)**: From Kodaikkanal (unclear) – from nearby and other area kids came. In that – I caught one bike; 1.5 lakh worth bike. I did all that. My contractor’s name was Jeevanandham. I called him. I called the police at 100 also. No one came for 3 days. After that – someone came and I told them; his name was Bala – he was a \_\_\_\_ (unclear) officer. ‘Bala, save me, Bala; I will die.’ I told him. Water was not going inside me. If I drink a bit of water, it came out again.

**[01:28:00]**

But, if I had drunk some water, and if I had to go to the bathroom, I would have died. It was a relief. They took me from there, and took me to National hospital – Ernavoor. ‘Your intestines are torn, *pa.* If an operation is not done within 24 hours, you would die.’ They said that. But I walked then – with bravery. Even in that pain. I said ‘I will come by walking’; and they took me and they were moving around and roaming, and they made an idea to just dump me somewhere in the Cooum river.

There is a hospital at Thiruvottriyur, right? What hospital is that?

**Male voice**: Aakash.   
  
**Interviewee (Male)**: Another hospital near the Aakash hospital.

**Male voice**: Sugam?

**[01:28:30]**

**Interviewee (Male)**: They took me to Sugam hospital; and I was standing there near the vehicle. The owner came and grabbed my neck and said ‘Sit down. There are no doctors here.’ They took me further in the beach road, and there is MGR memorial there, right? There was no need to take me that far. I saw. I took out my phone. I had 15,000 rupees in my pocket – my salary money. I took my phone, and put it on speaker and called my elder brother. I told him ‘They are going to throw me somewhere, come soon.’ And he was crying.

**[01:29:00]**

He was panicking, and what I did was – I gave the phone to Bala. So that they would have some fear. They took me, and the hospital that *Kalaignar* built, right? Dental hospital.

**Male voice**: Multi-speciality hospital.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Yes, that one. They took me around 2 30 in the morning, and they went to the hospital only by 7 30. So, they were roaming around like that for so long. After that, someone like Naresh had come. I called him. As time passed, my consciousness was returning.

**[01:29:30]**

I realized ‘If I go unconscious again, I am done.’ I told him ‘Sir, save me. I have two kids. I am doing this security work.’ That owner said – ‘come here!’. He probably was a ‘city person’ (*city aalu).* He said – ‘He is hurt so much, and you have taken him to the dental hospital?’; and exactly at 8:50, they admit me at the GH (Government hospital). My stomach was like a pregnant lady, and my intestines were hanging out. But by God’s grace, if that guy was not there, I am not here today.

**[01:30:00]**

I do not know who that person is. They took me and admitted there. And in some time, my brother and my *sagalai* (Usually wife’s sister’s husband – Brother in law) had come. They came and held my hand, and I lost consciousness. That was it. I held on till 9 o clock. Nothing happened while I slept. Like that, we struggled a lot. At the RDO office, they laid me outside like a corpse. They said ‘We have operated him and brought him here’. Everyone outside cried. The media covered all that.

**[01:30:30]**

Naresh and all – they did not come back then. Do you know how many media came? All the media came. But they made sure that the news did not come out. ‘Do not let this news out. This is a matter relating to the company’ they said. The RDO, who had passed away, right, he gave money to them and made the media not release the news.

We did all that, and we went 2-3 times. We went to Thiruvallur collector and gave him a letter. I have all of that in my file. I have everything with me. I gave it to Naresh; he said ‘I will do everything for you.’

**[01:31:00]**

And then I asked with them here. They are all *chappa (*waste). They asked me to just leave everything.

**Male voice**: No. Since the RDO changed, the new RDO said that he cannot take responsibility.

**Interviewee (Male)**: As he said like that, I thought like ‘Ok. I had died and come back alive again. I can earn money again. I should not torture others’, and I said ‘leave it, *pa.* I will take care of things.’ I said like that. By God’s grace, I have bought an auto and I have it with me now. I have a hotel. I give food to 4 people. I give *anna thaanam* (food donation)to at least 5 people every day.

**[01:31:30]**

Even if I am going in my vehicle, I would stop and buy food for someone. Even if I do not have anything to eat. Even if we are hungry, we should give food to someone. If everyone thought like that, we would live well.

**Interviewer:** So, that labour colony is there, right? Is there a good relationship between them and your village?

**Interviewee (Male)**: The camp – it is not our land. Mudaliar is there, right? They lease each camp for so many lakh rupees. If they take it for lease, they would give rent for the floor alone.

**Male voice**: Floor rent (*thara vaadagai).*

**[1:32:00]**

**Interviewee (Male)**: Floor rent. They would give floor rent; and they would take some power from their service. The labour colony that I was at – it was worth 80 lakh rupees. 80 lakh rupees for 5 years. For 5 years, 80 lakh rupees of floor rent. If they give, then the power bill would be separate. How much ever power they use, they have to pay it separately. The company people have to pay.

Like that – step by step; they would give only the land. They would change everything – it is all a setup. They do decoration like that – and there would be 10 Hindi people in a single room.

**[01:32:30]**

There would be 12 rooms on the ground floor. And this side – 12. 12 at the top, and 12 more on the other side. Each room would house 10 people. Like that, there are 20 sheds. That is only for one camp – Cauvery camp. Then, there is L&T camp. On that side, there is Cauvery camp. On the other side, there is PGR.

**Interviewer:** PGR?

**Interviewee (Male)**: Yes, PGR.

**Interviewer:** Who is PGR?

**Interviewee (Male)**: PGR is – they are building this one, right?

**Male voice**: Building chimney.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Yes, they are building the chimney (*simli)* right? For the Thermal power plant.

**[01:33:00]**

For the 3-stage.

**Male voice**: That was – Thiruthani ex-MLA’s relative.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Yes, it is related to that only. They would work there, and stay here. 2 buses would come from there.

**Interviewer:** So, in this labor camp – employees from many companies are there. L&T and port, and other companies.

**Male voice**: No, no. It is fully L&T only.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Fully – there is very little people from the port. Maybe some 50 people or so.

**Male voice**: No. By port – there is no relationship between Kamarajar port and this.

**[01:33:30]**

**Interviewee (Male)**: But, people from there are also staying here, right?

**Male voice**: Employees from Kamarajar port are also staying there?

**Interviewee (Male)**: Yes.

**Male voice**: They bring them, and make them stay there?

**Interviewee (Male)**: Yes. Like, there is Apollo here right?

**Interviewee (Female)**: (unclear) (overlapping voices)

**Interviewee (Male)**: Wait. Apollo camp is there, right? Nearby Apollo.

**Male voice**: Yes. Yes.

**Interviewee (Male)**: That is fully with people from Kamarajar port.

**Male voice**: Which people of Kamarajar port?

**Interviewee (Male)**: I do not know. Some of their branch is there.

**Male voice**: ITT?

**Interviewee (Male)**: ITT only I think.

**Interviewee (Female)**: Yes, they are working there, *pa.*

**Male voice**: ITT – they are all temporary officers there.

**Interviewee (Male)**: They are there.

**Male voice**: ITT are all temporary workers only there. They would build the berth, and they would leave – that’s it.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Yes, they would be here till that work is completed. But next time, step-by-step, it will change.

**Male voice**: But fully.. L&T.. (overlapping voices)

**Interviewee (Male)**: People who are there are Adani and L&T. Fully – they are there. Now, some 8000 people have gone back to their native places. 8000 people have gone home and only 3000 people are here.

**Interviewer:** Totally how many people are there?

**Interviewee (Male)**: It is less now, sir; difficult to calculate now. They would take a survey. The Government would take it.

**[01:34:30]**

There would be a big book at the camp. One has to sign in that, and then only go inside. When you get out, you have to show your pass and get out. Therefore, when you go, there is evidence that you have come out or not come out. Therefore, with that book – you can figure out how many people are there. You can enumerate how many people are there in one camp.

If you go by each shed, there would be 6000 people in a camp. So there are 5-6 camps there. If people are there fully (unclear) for 6 camps, then there would be lot of people. Besides this, when it is not enough – he would build extra sheds.

**[01:35:00]**

**Interviewer:** So, in-between times, they would also let the construction workers stay there.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Yes. For L&T, the permanent workers are less – whoever are there now only are the permanent workers. Remaining people are for construction work. If they finish the work in so many years, they would go to their native place for 3 months. After that, when he comes back, he will bring all the relatives and acquaintances from there. The number of people would increase. Then they would come and ask for houses to stay for rent at our village.

Yes. They would say ‘we are so many people here, we need a place.’ So people who usually rent out their place for 300-400 rupees, would say that the rent is 5000 rupees.

**[01:35:30]**

Because they get like double the money right? So, then it becomes like a scheme. Now – the camp is spread till Kuppam, sir.

**Interviewer:** Till Kuppam.

**Interviewee (Male)**: The camp is there till Kuppam. The Apollo tyre company came there – using old tyres and all. Now, what they are doing is – at night time, they burn the tyres. They burn the tyres and remove the metal wire from that. I was working…

**Male voice**: They are burning that there?

**Interviewee (Male)**: Yes.

**Male voice**: They usually tear it apart and remove the wire separately, right?

**[1:36:00]**

**Interviewee (Male)**: They are burning it. They make a big bowl-like thing, and they drop iron into it. They would light it up inside. And they would throw the tyre into it, and it would keep burning. At last, what they do is – they would take the wire out as bulk; and they would keep throwing in the tyre there.

**Male voice**: The smoke from there?

**Interviewee (Male)**: Since they burn it in the night, it is not visible. It is surrounded by cashewnut plantation. The cashewnut would take in the medicine, and over time, it would start smelling like tyre. They were burning it near Kuppam. After we made a ruckus, they have changed it from there.

**[01:36:30]**

They have come here now. Where I worked – where I got hurt.

**Interviewer:** The people who came to steal, right? Are they Chennai people or people from outside?

**Interviewee (Male)**: Chennai only. From Tondiarpet, Korukkupet, Royapuram, Kasimedu – those areas.

**Interviewer:** Oh, they would come to steal from there?

**Interviewee (Male)**: Yes. Very small kids. At night, this is their work. They would smoke ganja. They would go to the cashew plantation.. Police..

**Interviewer:** So, there is no problem because of the North Indians.

**Interviewee (Male)**: No problem because of them. Only to protect them, local people were hired.

**Male voice**: To protect them, these people were hired.

**[1:37:00]**

**Interviewee (Male)**: Yes. Because, where the Hindi people are staying, the Tamil people would \_\_\_\_ (unclear) and go. Because, the person who comes – will note where the Hindi people are. They would walk down the road talking on the phones. These people would target them, snatch their phones, and I would go running after them. Just outside the camp itself. They would feel differently (unclear).

That they had born somewhere else and are coming here, right? Even though we are born here, we should not say it like that; we would support the Hindi people. For just one meal (Tamil phrase: *Oru jaan vayuthukku),* they are coming here and suffering. They get hit by people. How many messages he would have in that phone? How many phone numbers he would have? What would the other guy do with that? He would throw away the SIM, sell it for 100 or 150 rupees, and eat outside.

**[01:37:30]**

He would sit and cry, holding my feet and crying ‘*anna’.* I would ask him ‘Who asked you to go out?’ If someone comes down the road, I would stand at the road correctly – with my *lathi* (baton). Correctly, if someone does some cheating there, I would catch them here. They would be caught and beat – and if we call the police station, the police would not come. If they come, then things might turn against us. They might ask – ‘Are you police? What rules do you have? Why did you do like this?’ But, what would you do to someone who was caught stealing? Only the people can ask about these things. What you do is – you come only after I die; to see if I am alive or dead.

**[01:38:00]**

So, let me save myself before that.

**Interviewer:** So, like this – what other problems are there?

**Interviewee (Male)**: There would be lot of.. problems will come. Inside the camp. At the road.

**Interviewer:** What kind of problems come within the camp?

**Interviewee (Male)**: They would drink and beat each other up inside. I would not understand the language that they speak. If they see me – they show some respect. Two Hindi-people started fighting against each other once. They hit each other, and blood was flowing from their heads. I was not on duty back then. I was at home, and they called me.

**[01:38:30]**

‘Only you can do it. Start and come here.’ I would keep my uniform at home. In my mind – I think of myself as the police. Really. When I wear that dress – I would go there bravely. Even at 12 in the night. At my home, they would say ‘Do not go *pa.’* . I would say ‘I will come back in 5 minutes.’ I will start my bike and would go and make my entry at the gate, and if I stand inside the gate with my *lathi,* and say ‘*hey – kya hua bhaiya?’ (*In Hindi – what happened brother?). They would say ‘*Anna. Nahi anna.’ (*Brother. Nothing brother.) and they would go to their respective rooms. I would take the two guys who were fighting and bring them outside the gate. And tell them ‘fight now’.

**[01:39:00]**

‘Do not make a problem inside the camp. Fight with each other outside.’ They would be sitting like that till the morning. They would say ‘*Anna. Sorry anna. Sorry anna.’.* I would say ‘Will you make this mistake? Hold each other’s ears and do *thoppu-karanam (*sit-ups)’. The next day, I would get that respect. If I had let them fight, they would have fought and died there.

Similarly, the Hindi people have suffered a lot after coming here. They would come here – and just in front of my eyes – they roamed around without any food for a week. During the time of Corona, I gave food for about 20 people every day. At morning 4 AM. There was no food.

**[01:39:30]**

**Interviewer:** Would the company not give?

**Interviewee (Male)**: They did not have a job. No job. Only if they go inside the company, they would get free food. They would stay inside the company and work also. For 1 month or 2 months. They would earn 2000 rupees per day. (unclear). Hindi people do not have that work.

We both would be at our shop. He would stand like this near the shop.

If I ask ‘*kya bhaiya?’* (In Hindi – what brother?). He would say *‘paani’ (*In Hindi – water). That one guy would drink one jug of water. I would get teary-eyed, I would say ‘Come here’, and make him sit and give him food.

**[01:40:00]**

He would say ‘*ek aadmi nahi. 5 aadmi’* (In Hindi – not one person. 5 people.) I would say ‘Come all 5 of you and sit. Eat.’ Once he eats and if I give him some chocolate or something, right? He would come and fall at my feet. I would say ‘You should not fall at my feet. I should only fall at yours. You go.’ Like that – for 4 months I fed them. At last, without any salary, they were beaten near the gate. They walked from here till their native place. Taking their bags and everything. They were getting into the river and all, and were running – without any food.

Similarly, during the lockdown, there was one \_\_\_\_ (unclear). For 3 months… It had been 6 months since he came. They did not give him the salary.

**[01:40:30]**

He kept coming to that gate and was asking for that. They beat him and pushed him near the store. I got angry. I said ‘You do not have rules to beat him. You do not give him work. What is it for him? He does not have any food. Help him for some food.’ Near the store, I gave him food and all. He ate well. He was there for 3 days. On the 4th day, he went to the camp, and in the middle of the hall, he hanged himself and died.

**Interviewer:** Ohh.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Really sir.

**Interviewer:** At the camp itself?

**Interviewee (Male)**: At the camp itself, at the neem tree.

**Interviewee (Female)**: Without any clothes.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Without any clothes. With a *lungi,* he tied it around the tree, and..

**[01:41:00]**

**Male voice**: Why? Because he had no way for food?

**Interviewee (Female)**: Because they did not give him his money.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Someone died at his native place. If someone die at our native place, what would we do? Would not our minds be disturbed? He was roaming around and around with that feeling, and he became *loose* (mentally ill). Two to three people were drunk and were passed out on the road itself. I poured them water and took them on an ambulance. At that time, the police asked me – ‘We are there to do all these things; who are you?’. I took them in our village ambulance only. He was lying on the floor, with foam forming around his mouth. People were walking around them. Some ladies poured some water on them – no one came back then.

**[01:41:30]**

So, when we called the L&T people, they came and just saw them – and they placed stones around them and left. They did not lift him up or anything. After that, we saw; called my *mama* and we called ambulance. We put him in the ambulance. After that, the police stopped us, and we were stalled for 2 hours. For the Government ambulance to come. They lifted them in and they were asking us ‘anyone of you coming?’ We said that we would not come. We already had him in our ambulance. From our ambulance – we shifted to theirs. After that we said ‘we cannot take care anymore’ and we just returned back silently.

**[01:42:00]**

**Interviewer:** But they let them stay at the labour camp?

**Interviewee (Male)**: Yes.

**Interviewer:** Even though they did not have a job, they let them stay there.

**Interviewee (Male)**: Though they did not have a job, they let them stay there. And they would come to every house to get ration rice. And they would offer us money – but what would we do? We would not get their money. Because we get free ration rice, right? Some people sell them for 1 rupee, 2 rupees or 5 rupees. Not like that for us. Ration rice might go waste for us. They would bring a sack. They would say ‘*amma, rice, rice.’* They would ask for pulses and oil. We would give it to them. Using that rice only – they ate during the Covid times.

**[01:42:30]**

They changed to store bought rice after that only. They are not eating ration rice now – they have all shifted to store bought rice. Ration rice means – if he eats it once – it would be perfect for him. Back then – there was only ration rice. Right now, there is store bought rice. Fish – they are not eating ocean-caught fish. Now the *kadala* fish (Catla fish? Unclear) is coming right – those fish. They would eat that. Now, only few people are there. Many who were struggling a lot left saying ‘We do not need all this. We can go somewhere, do some farming and survive.’

**[01:43:00]**

Because without food – do you know how far they walked? I would get water cans and stack them here. 130 rupees per box. People who were walking by in line – everyone would get a water can. ‘Hey *bhaiya. Thanni kudi (*Hey brother. Drink water)’ Everyone gets a fruit. Water. He would fold his hands and bow down (Tamil phrase: *Kai eduththu kumbittu povan)* to me. Only because of those karma (*punniyam),* I had died and been reborn again. The Hindi-people suffered so much.

**Interviewer:** One minute. The charge is going to empty now. I will switch this off and switch it on again.

**(AUDIO ENDS)**