**Interview Information**

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

Place of interview: Ennore Kuppam, Ennore.

Date of interview: 08.06.2023

Transcription by: RK

Audios: [230608\_Housing\_EnnoreKuppam\_Int\_Aud\_1\_AJ,GV,MS](https://drive.google.com/file/d/14WvQWjAYXeHQdpF3QzaFQ2z7nkpfO_vk/view?usp=sharing)

(01.07.04 Hrs)

**Interviewee Information**

Pseudonym: R

**Interview note:**

Interview is made in the Riverbank next to the resettled Ennorekuppam village.

**Transcription note:**

Here mussels, oyster; both are referred as Aazhi, which means oyster in Tamil.

**- 00:00:00**

* Getting consent from the respondent and explaining about the project

**-00:01:20**

R1: From here there were two canals, prawns and fishes would come from those canals and get to our River during the Aipasi (mid Oct-mid Nov) month and Karthikai (mid Nov - mid Dec) month. All the prawns would get into this River (creek); we would cast ‘Suthu valai’ (round nets) and catch the prawns. We would catch prawns, fishes and crabs; all that would be caught from the River.

GV: If the government wants to do restoration? How should the government be doing the restoration ?

R2: This place was completely ruined; how do you (to R1) want this place to be good for fishing?

R1: For that the government is installing stones (training walls) in the River mouth; the bridge-like structure: the piling stones would be removed. Once the River is deepened it would be good for us to do fishing. If that is done, the sea won't be blocked; it would be easy for our boat movements.

R2: They are asking about the River.

R1: All the places in the River has become flattened; only during the high tide all these become hidden; but those places could be seen during the low tide.

GV: To your knowledge, how deeper was the River used to be?

R1: The River was 3 to 4 Paagam (paagam is length of stretched arms).

R2: It was about 10 to 12 ft. This place would only look good if the River is 10 to 12 ft deep; that would be good for transportation of the boats. During the time when the boat was transporting the people across the creek it was 3 to 4 meters deep.

R1: When we were living in our older village, we had to commute to this place to sell fishes.

R3: Between the both the banks of River, if the River is dredged for 12 ft. from the River mouth to the bridge (VNC bridge).

R1: It would be fine for us if the River is dredged from here to the bridge (VNC bridge).

R2: Not just here, River has to be fully dredged.

R3: Yes, but just saying our comment on this; If the River is dredged till bridge it would be good for us. The good water takes away the stinky bad water. MFL is discharging the effluents.

R2: Fishes, prawns and all the living things are dying because of those effluents. Though the effluents are released only occasionally, the living things are getting affected. If the water in the River gets dried, fishes, prawns die as they can't sustain the heat in the River; the chemical is so powerful that it is discharged into the River. If the chemical (effluent) is stopped, the River will get cleaner.

R1: What are you expecting?

GV: How was the River in the past and how is the River now?

R1: 30 years ago this was a fantastic place; even before 25 years the River place was good.

R2: At that time, the River used to get blocked often (in the River mouth). There was no dredger at that time; I am saying this in the 1990s.

R1: Dredger existed!

R2: But the River mouth would not drain this much water in.

R3: The River was pure; there was no pollution mixed in the River. River existed just as a River; the Sea water and river water mixed together because of the good flow; the mud (seru:sediment) was so clean. The muds were abt for fishes to breed; oyster (aazhi) existed at that time. Oyster production were abundant; fishers used to collect those oysters. Oysters very much helped in fishers livelihood; all those were edible oysters. Now, all those oyster are destroyed, the reason is pollution in the River because of the large-large industries like MFL, TPL and many such union government companies, state government companies and private industries are discharging more effluents into the Kosasthalai River via the canal. The vigor of the effluent discharged into the River at that time was minimal; but due to the constant discharge in the river, the vigor of the effluents hiked and the river became sterile. In the early time when the River was good, if you just stood next to the River bank, clusters of prawns would be grazing towards the banks as lugworms (Poochi) existed at that time; prawns would crawl there to eat lugworms. During our childhood, we used to catch those prawns by chasing them and we would take those prawns to our home to cook. Now if we just look, we can see only the trash and chemicals on the River bank.

At this time (in a day), at least 50 children would be bathing/playing in the River when the River was good. During sunny time, we used to bath in the River most of the time; we would always be bathing.

R2: But once the discharge of the effluents started in the River, nothing could be found in the River.

R3: No, there is no habit of children bathing in the River. We learned swimming in this River; no one taught us how to swim. We ourselves got into the River and learned swimming; the River was that kind. But we don't have such an environment now, but the children are ready to play and swim in the River. But if the children bath in the River, they getting skin diseases and related issues in the body. As the children were facing many health issues, the parents stopped allowing the children to bath in the River. The River got completely polluted. Earlier, this was a clean River, this was an apt River for the fishers; the fishes were so clean. People would rush to buy the fishes from here, but there are no people to buy fishes from the Ennore village. The oil smell just emerges from the fishes that are caught. Fishes are the clean, unadulterated and safe food, but there is a threatening situation that fishes in this River smells oil because of the effluents mixed in the River water. It is such a worsening situation that people here are at the edge of destruction in this era.

GV: I have two questions from what you said. One is about the Oyster beds that are collected and used by the people. Where did all these Oyster beds exist?

R1: From where this boat is docked till that boat, the oyster bed existed in this place;

R3: It was completely oysters; it would scratch our legs.

R1: You the bridge there; before that bridge it was completely oyster.

R3: We can’t keep our legs in the River because of scratching oyster shells, the oysters would slice your feet; it would cause severe injuries to you.

R1: It’s called as white oyster.

GV: You told that there is white oyster. Like that, what kinds of oysters (aazhi) exists in our River?

R1: There are green oysters (pacha aazhi), white oyster (vella aazhi); these are most abundant on our side of the River.

R3: Predominantly green oysters existed in this place.

R1: We can consume the green oysters.

R3: It was exported to other regions from here. The oysters from here were collected and steamed and from it was exported; you see there, that is the place where the oysters used to be steamed. This place had such wealth that oysters were exported from here. But if you search for any oysters, you can’t find any; you can’t pick on in your hand. There is no oyster.

GV: What are the benefits of consuming oysters?

R3: The oysters have good medicinal values, it’s hard to get oyster anywhere.

R1: If you have a hot body, the oyster would cool your body.

R3: Oyster is also said to be natural viagra. It has many medicinal characteristics, consuming the oysters, the person can reduce bad fat in their body. Oysters have good protein in them, it’s one healthy food; it would make our body strong. It has more calcium nutrients, people consuming it would not face any bone related illness. Oysters prices are much higher in the foreign nations. To our India’s value one small platel of oyster is sold for 3000-4000 rupees in he foreign.

**-00:10:17**

GV: But, you were getting those oysters simply from the River.

R3: Yes, we were getting simply from the River. The oyster which was bought for 50 - 100 rupees at the time, now costs thousands of rupees in the market. But there are no oysters in the River.

R2: Now we can find some oyster clustering on the pillars of that bridge (VNC bridge).

R3: I am not sure if we can find those oysters at present.

R2: It’s available there; but not that much.

R3: This was an oyster exporting place, but now we can’t find any oyster in this place. Especially to stream the oysters, a separate building existed in this place; that’s been demolished. Oysters would be streamed here, shells would be peeled here and loaded from here for export.

R2: Now we can find those oysters in the pillars of the bridges in the River next to the port in the north region. There you can find the clusters of oyster (here the response is stating about the Charru mussels; Kaaka Aazhi). One boat from the Kattukuppam for collecting those oysters, the people would submerge into the River to collect the oyster attached to the River bed and sell it.

GV: Do you catch the oysters?

R2: We used to catch oysters in the past; 10 boats used to collect oysters from our village. They would collect oyster like 10 sacks or 20 socks in one go; they used the rice gunny sacks. Now no one is going to catch oysters.

R3: There is no source for that. Because of the pollution in this River; there is no livelihood in the River; it is getting completely eradicated. People are pushed into poverty.

R2: People are suffering so much.

R3: As for the Ennore region, fishers livelihoods are a question mark; a large question mark. The River pollution is in several ways; one is the ash is being discharged into the River; in a research it was found and stated that some 13 metric ton of ashes are in the River. Then, coal dust is found in the air, and you can find the coal dust in our terrace, even now if you walk on our terrace, you can find the black stain in your feet. The coal dust particles spread into the air; because of that from children to the elders, people are facing weezing issues. On this side, Kothari fertilizer company exists, they release sulphurs in the air from this direction; that is the air pollution from this side. All these companies in this region are using the excess underground water, because of that the underground fresh water is depleting and the salt water has inundated the underground water; the underground water completely got polluted, then our Air, Land and Water; all these completely got disabled for us and Ennore is changing into a unlivable place (Ennore vaazla thagudhi attra edamame maarite iruku); it has changed.

GV: During rainy times, how is this River used to be?

R2: During rainy time, more water would be flowing down the River. Even we would get water till here; on this platform.

GV: Will the water rise beyond this?

R2: No; this is ridge place (medu pagudhi); the water run into the Mugadwaram (river mouth); however the water might be, it would get into the River mouth.

R3: Here the water flows well (neer vandhu oottam); water would not stay here. Either the water would get into the sea or it would fill the river (flood plains). This kosasthalai river is larger one, this side, it runs till the Pazhavekadu (pulicat) and on this side, it’s very long, many part of the River is in the Chennai region; the live flow (uyir ootam) is higher. As there is good flow here (neer oottam), the water would not get stagnated and the Water in the River would not get elevated.

R2: The River continues till Arambakkam, Thada, Soolurpettai. There the River is very large, compared to that River, this is very small, it’s just a pool for that River. That River used to look like a sea.

GV: Are you talking about the Ennore River?  
R2: No, I am talking about the Arambakkam River.

R3: He is stating about the Pazhaverkadu lake; it’s all interconnected one another. This is a canal created to do trade. This canal existed naturally, it was also used to do the trade.

GV: Are you talking about the Buckingham canal?

R3: yes, the Buckingham canal. It has many branches, which had gates in the past. Even a gate existed next to Kattukuppam.

R2: To get educated from there (?), people have to travel to Adambakkam. They would be traveling in larger boats, where 30 to 40 people were able to travel. They have to get to the other bank to get educated.

GV: This place used to look in the past during the high tide and low tide?

R2: During the low tide, the water level would be completely low. Only during the high tide the water would be rising to that level (showing the marks).

R3: In those days, the boat would be moving in both the time, during the high tide and also in the low tide. But the current situation is that the boats can only move during the high tide; the boats can’t move during low tide. Because the sludge has increased and River has become flattened; there is not enough water in the river for the movement of the boats. During the low tide, some part of the River becomes ground (tharai); during that time fishers can’t do fishing.

GV: Then during low tide, you can’t be fishing ?

R3: Yes, that is the present situation.

R2: That is why boats are getting pulled (ullah izhukkudhu) along the low tide.

R3: Before 30 years, fishing could also be done during the low tide; the River flow was good, there was no ground (flattened surface). Even during the low tide, there won’t be any ground (flattened surface). But that environment is completely gone. Now, the VNC bridge, transmission towers are constructed in the River. Construction debris/wastes are dumped in the River for the construction of the transmission tower; those debris are not disposed of after the construction. Ridges are formed in those places; the prawn breeding places are getting destroyed.

GV: Are there any relationships between the oysters (aazhi) and other living things in the River?

R3: Yes, definitely they have relationships. Oysters breed in their own place, crabs would feed on oysters and they would be breeding over that. Prawns would also consume prey in the oysters (-beds). When the Oysters died, the crabs also died. As the crabs died there is no reproduction of crabs. In the River the Poochi (lugworm) existed, but people from here: anti-socials have been catching the lugworm from the River and made this River sterile. This River is completely changed into a sterile one; the River has become as sewage water and the effluents running River.

GV: Then you are saying that earlier there was an opportunity for crabs/prawns breeding in the River and now it doesn’t exist here.

R3: Yes, completely there is no breeding. Recently, a new oyster (Charru mussel) has invaded our River from America. Its name is Kaaka Aazhi. Kaaka Aazhi would kill every species in the River. The Kaaka Aazhi breeding and growing vertically in the River; it is destroying the fishes, crabs and prawns breeding. The River is ruined and now the situation is getting worse and the fishers can’t do fishing. We are working to protect this space; we are taking steps to save this River. This is a recurring issue in the Ennore. Any things that are happening Ennore are against the fishers life and there is action supporting fishers life. Government is also not providing any attention to our concerns. There would be at least 10,000 to 15,000 fishers in this region. As the income from the River has been reduced, fishers from here started working for daily wages.

GV: Where are they working?  
R3: They work in the companies in this region, the companies in the Kurivumedu region, in Manali region; people working the surrounding companies on contract basis. Earlier, in contract employment PF, ESCand all such beneficiaries were available. But today, people work for only daily wages. They would only have employment for some 10 days and for the next 10 days they would have any employment. There is no action on the permanent employment for the fishers from the government. The River is also destroyed. All the options for our livelihood have been completely disabled for us; all the doors have been shut for us.

GV: How does the River look during the cyclone presence?

R2: The water surge would be high during the storm wind; some time even the water would surge till that building; till the stage of that building.

GV: Would there be any changes in the River as the storm approaches?

R3: During the cyclone times, the water flow in the River would be faster. Because of th faster water flow, all the muds and many things in the water would be washed away. After the cyclone the River would have fresh water; then the more prawns and fishes can be found. Then the fishing catches (fishes/prawns/crabs) would be increasing. After the cyclone, there would be a larger replacement (periya suzharchi) of water in the River; then we would get more income from the fishes and prawns. At present, any number of cyclones doesn’t provide such change to the River. There is no income in the River after the storm surge. We only stay at home during the storm surge.

**00:20:33**

If we go to the River for fishing, we would be getting 50 rupees that would be used for daily food (kanjoo Koozl-o kudippom). But if the cyclone arrives, we don’t even have that income; we would be locked in our houses.

GV: How was this River during 2015 Chennai flood?

R3: As we have the River, we didn’t face issues in the 2015 flood; all the water drained into the River; rain water wasn’t stagnating here. There was some water stagnation in the encroached places; but we weren’t impacted in large. But we fishers, completely helped the people impacted by flood in Chennai with our boats.

R2: But the drainage water couldn't flush into the River during the 2015 flood. All that waste water stayed in some houses.

R3: As the canals were not dredged and people who built their houses in the low lying area, were inundated with flood water. But there was not much impact; the flood was not much impacting in a way that it didn't stop our livelihood completely. We fishers helped the flood-hit people in Adyar, Velachery and a place next to Manali; all those areas are low lying areas; we took our boats there and helped the people.

GV: Is it possible to ride the boat in the flood?  
R3: yes, we have small boats; we can’t use the larger boats. The smaller boats can easily be shipped to the flood-hit places; even in calf high water we can ride this boat.

GV: Does it require a motor?

R3: We can also use a motor(-engine) or we can just pull it manually by getting into the water.

GV: But the flood water would be flowing faster.

R2: In such fast flowing water, we could only use larger boats

R3: Then the motor can be used; if the motor is used in the small boats, it would move with great speed.

R2: Here the water would be flowing with very high speed as all the water is drained in the River; the water from the Ponneri River also comes only in this River.

R3: We are fishing in the River, we would ride the boats against the water (tides); so we are experienced with boats; we aren't afraid of that.

GV: Are there any changes in the River characteristics post (2004-) tsunami?

R3: No, we didn’t see any changes.

R2: Tsunami, went to that bridge, hit the bridge and the water returned.

R3: We all were staying here at that time and witnessing the tsunami.

R2: As the River mouth exists, we were not impacted by the tsunami.

R2: During the tsunami, we were here. This place used to be quite elevated then; this building was not existing here; some black stones on the bank between the River water and the sand bank. We all were staging on that ridge and spectating the tsunami. The water speed was so high that we haven’t seen any such rapid water flow. The River had so many tides like ses, it looked like the sea. The sea water entered the village on the other side (from Thalankuppam market); but there were no impacts because of the water flow. It was just flowing inside the village from Nettukuppam side and drained in the river. It was only knee high water level. As we have the River mouth, we were not impacted; but we don't know how many people would have been dead if the River mouth was not existing.

GV: Then the River mouth also saves people from such disasters.

R3: Yes! River mouth is most important, we have to protect the River mouth; not just this one, we have to protect the Cooum and Adyar River mouths. Only those River mouths would save people from disasters like tsunami. Thus, the River mouth has to be dredged and maintained well. Only by that our city can be saved from any big disaster from the sea.

GV: Then, in cities River mouths are important aspects.

R3: Yes, it’s an important part of the city.

R2: If we don’t have the River mouth, all these villages would have been cleared long before.

R3: The coastal habitation (human) of the City would have been destroyed long before. How the nerves (narambu) are important for the human body; likewise, for these villages, River mouths are more important; it’s like the blood vessels to the body. If we destroy this, our life itself is a question during the time of natural disasters; It can be River flood or sea disaster; both would bring very great impacts to people's livelihood.

**00:25:13**

GV: How do you see the River in your life?

R3: River is our life. We cannot separate the River from our life. You are saying it as different things. Like that, we cannot see the River as a different entity; the River is our life. Because our life is in the River. Our lives, our plays, our survival, our earning to educate our children and all that by the River; we know only River and Sea, we don’t know any other things (with a prideful laughter).

R1: We don’t have any other income.

R3: We live depending on our labor; we don’t have to go to building works or do any other work. We work hard in the River; with the income from the fishing, we live with our family. We would also save money from that income for our next generation. The Sea and the River is entirely one with our livelihood; we don’t see those by sectioning them from our life. That is our livelihood and that is our life.

R2: If we don’t find anything in the Sea while fishing, we would go to the sea and earn some 100 or 200 rupees per day.

GV: Do you fish in the sea in general?

R2: Yes, we would go to the sea. Our village fishers won’t go the River

R3: only a small number of individuals go for River fishing; most we fish in the Sea.

R2: River fishes live in the next village (Mugadwarakuppam); they only do River fishing, they wouldn’t do fishing in the sea.

GV: What are the birds found by the River?

R2: Many birds are found here, we can’t say particularly about them.

GV: Do you know the names of any such bird?

R2: Bondha, Kutti (kotti?) kaaka. Here plenty of birds would come; birds would be visiting in thousands and lakhs in numbers sometimes.

R3: Now, we are seeing one or two birds in the River, but in the past we could only see less water here and there would be more birds covering the River surface. There would be Kokku (crane), Naarai (stork), such birds would be more in the River. Many birds would look like giant birds; they would be visiting here to eat the fishes. But at present, because of the transmission towers and air pollution, these birds' arrival completely stopped here. There is no clean air here and if you sit here for some more time, your nostrils will start irritating because of the pollution. Everywhere the region is surrounded by the industries and polluting smoke. Because of these things, River’s wealth has completely vanished. While the birds arrive here, their poops are food for the fishes here; it’s all a cyclic process; when this kind of every cyclic process stops one by one, the River wealth has reduced here.

GV: Then, aren’t the birds visiting here?

R3: As not many birds are visiting here, the leftover food consumed by the birds was creating new trees on the banks. That cycle was also stopped as the birds are not visiting here; the seeds thrown by the birds also got stopped. The floral growth also stopped in this region.

GV: When have you seen so many birds in this region?

R3: 15 to 20 years ago, this River was so wealthier. It was so good. It’s been 33 years since the establishment of the NCTPS company. Only by then, these companies' wastes were being mixed in the River; while the wastes were mixing in the River at that time, its vigor was not impacting that much; even we didn’t feel the vigor of wastes that much. But what happens after 33 years of waste (effluents, ash) discharge in the River, the toxicity of the waste has hiked; the Riverness (aaththoda thanmai) has reduced. If something is done recurrently it’s characteristics are intense. Now they are discarging the boiled water (koedhi neer) here, it’s been discharged continuously; only there most prawns were caught; it was big Paadu (fishing ground). The large-village (Mugadwarakuppam?) would get large catches (fishes, prawns) there. But because of the hot water, whole regions (River’s) have lost its wealth. How fishes would be produced in the places, where we (humans) can’t even bathe?

GV: Prawns can only be caught in the deeper part of the River. Am I right?

R3: Yes.

**00:30:10**

GV: But if the River is deepened, how could prawns be caught?

R3: We are asking to dredge deeper only in one part; in the center region. Not for the full river.

R2: You see the building there, from there till there (?), River would be 4 to 5 meters deep.

R3: What you are saying is correct, if we dredge full, prawns can’t be caught. We are not asking for dredging the full River; only one portion of the River for the free boat movement. If we completely dredged the River, the fishing (thozil) would completely vanish.

GV: Which portion can be deepened and which place should not be deepened?

R2: From here, the River can be deepend; there is nothing wrong in it.

R3: As a first step, the River can dredged from here to deepen it; maximum the other bank (NCTPS side) of the River will have the water flow

R2: Other side of the River (NCTPS side) is deeper (pallam)

R3: Still (somewhere west of NCTPS side) we do fishing on the other side. If the River along the bank is dredged, the River flow would be good in this place too. We would not face any impacts when water flows during low tide.

R2: If the River is deeper, that (waste) water shall not be seen, it would easily move into the sea. As the depth is lesser; those waste water is seen here and fishes are dying.

GV: What I am asking is, if we need to catch prawns, the River should be less deep. Only if the River is less deep, the nets can be casted to catch the prawn.

R2: It’s enough if the River is deepened to a man’s height; that’s on the side where the canal (Buckingham canal) runs.

GV: I am asking for this place (from VNC bridge to River mouth).

R3: You can’t catch the prawns here. As hot water is discharged in this part of the River, you can’t be catching prawns here. You see there; is there anyone catching the prawns in there? But there (beyond the VNC bridge) fishers used to catch the prawns as there are more trees there; they would be casting small-small ‘Visuru valai’ (cast nets). As the hot water is discharged, there is prawns breeding in this region; this place has lost it’s value.

GV: Then, if we need to catch prawns, it can only be caught beyond the (VNC-) bridge.

R2: Yes.

R3: Earlier, even they had Paadu (paadu katti irukaang) in this place (next to Ennore Kuppam). But that practice doesn't exist here.

GV: While casting the ‘Suthu valai’ (a type of net for catching prawns), the River depth was lesser. Am I right?

R3: Yes, the depthness was only till this (neck height); that too the depthness is during the low tide, during the high tide, the River’s depth would be higher than a person. Even if the depth is more than one person’s height; the fishers would submerge in the River and cast the net.

GV: Is there any name for the Paadi?

R3: Only they know the Paadu name; we didn’t know that; because they are one who does the River fishing; only the Mugadwarakuppam and Nettukuppam fishers would be fishing in the River.

GV: Then, even if the River is deeper the prawns can be caught; nets can be casted.

R2: Yes, the prawns would be getting caught (iral aappadum); It can be caught in the ‘Suthu valai’

GV: You are marine fishers; how should this River be to help you for sea fishing?

R3: The River flow should be good; dredgers have to be kept here anytime, only then the water flow would be good here; the sand blocks the River, we cannot get into the sea; the River mouth would become flattened (tharai thattidum); this place has to be constantly dredged. Earlier, EB (Electricity Board) had installed dredgers for their requirements; they were required to have good water flow to draw water from the River.

R2: If there is no water, the power house would not function.

R3: You see the submerged dredger there, that belongs to EB. They had their own dredger and they were dredging the River. As now the ETPS has been stopped, they gave up the dredger and the work. The government was working for our gains, they were only working for their own gain. Now the River mouth has been blocked by the River; we fought with the government and now funds have been allocated for these issues; though the government is not doing things precisely. There is a lot of political intervention in that; that is implemented with corruption. When the EPTS was functioning, the dredger was functioning for 24 hours. The sand that is deposited in the River mouth from the sea, was constantly dredged; the water was always flowing in the River, we wouldn’t not face issues. As there is no dredger, the sand has blocked the River and it’s hard for us to take our boats from here to the sea. If the RIver mouth had become a flat floor, our boats would flip in the tides (vellappu).

R2: If the River mouth is deeper, the boats would not flip and tides can't arrive in the River mouth. Only to stop the sand and the tides, the River mouth is deepened and stones are installed.

R3: Now the training wall is being installed; corruption is involved in this project. But the government has not heard any of the fisher’s concerns; the government is working anonymously with IIT institutes. But the IITians do not know that we are working (fishing) here. The project is implemented with 150 croces; they have only designed the training wall just with the water flow, we don’t how years the structure would sustain; as there is corruption involved in this project, we have doubts on the credibility of the structure; they are not installing the stones as per the work order. There are limitations in the projects.

00:35:00

GV: As for sea fishers, the River in here has to be deeper, only then the boats can move freely without hitting and flipping due to the sands and the tides.

R3: If the River mouth is flattened (tharai aaiduchuna), the tides there (front of River mouth) would increase. If the Rivermouth is deepened, the tides would not arrive in that region; the tides speed will reduce in that place.

GV: Other than this, if this River has to be restored, what’s your thought on things that can be done to the River?

R3: On both the banks of this River (in the Estuary region; East of the VNC bridge) platform like structure has to be built on both the sides; the River has to be desilted in a manner that good water flow should be maintained. One side the River has to be deepened well; the central government and the state government has to look in the sewage/waste water left in the River, all that water has to be processed before released in the River. The vigor of the chemical effluents released in the water has to be reduced in a way that those effluents discharge would not impact the fishes in any sort; the government has to release these statements. Anyhow the government would have any plant for the effluents discharged by the companies in the Pollution Control Board; they would have given the consents. The companies/industries should not violate the control made; it might be the smoke or the effluents. The process has to nullify the chemical’s vigor before letting it in the River; the government has to make sure, no impacts arise because of the effluents discharge. We can’t demand an industry to stop any effluents discharged; because those industries would be established based on this source they have in that place. But the company has to make sure they nullify the chemcal’s vigor at the time of the discharge; it should be coming to the River only as a water not as a chemical. Only if the company discharge things as water, this River would live for long period.

GV: You think that River has a life.

R3: Yes, we think of the River as a life; that life is saving us.

R2: There are 8 villages here, we all are commuting in the River. We would start our boats from the River and then we would do fishing in the sea. First, the River should have liveliness; second, it should have good wealth. Now the River is becoming sterile. Now I am saying the reasons for the sterileness of the River, there is no Poochi (slugworm) in the River, there are no Oysters and because of the polluted water. We are seeing the River as a woman, we worship the River as our mother. If I am a woman, only if I eat good food, I can be healthier, I shall be able to give birth to infants, I can become a mother and only then the family can develop. But I am eating any polluted foods and if I become disabled; I would not give birth and my family would not cherish; we can’t move forward; my generation will get lost by that time.

We are seeing the River in the same way, only if the River is wealthier, we can live and survive. The River would be done with our generation, it would not be useful for the next generation.

GV: Then the relationship with you, River and your generation would get lost.

R3: Yes. The River would change into a canal; it would be portrayed as the same. It would be a bad example. How we (generation) spectated the River when our fathers lived, I also wanted to provide the same river to our children and wanted them to see the same River we have seen in our childhood; that is our desire.

GV: Then this is our desire.

R3: Not just desire; this is our demand, aim and all our thoughts are in this. We want our life to be united with the River.

GV: Are there any stories related to the River?  
R2: That is what we are sharing now.

GV: Like any interesting incidents; good incidents and things like that.

R3: He is asking about things like getting stuck in the River during cyclones, rains, etc.

GV: How would you get back, if you got stuck in any rain in the river?

R2: That we can come, the rain would only pour on us; nothing much. But during the heavy wind, if we are in a small boat, it would easily flip in the River.

R3: Are there any deaths because of the accident?

R2: Yes, many were dead.

R3: When the River was lively, the water flow was faster. At that time we were not able to face that though natural disaster; because of that many accidents have happened, many deaths have happened. Other than deaths, many people had issues with their hands and legs. But then nature was lively.

R2: One person from our village died in the River; later we retrieved his body.

GV: What happened to him?

R2: He went fishing during rainy hours; someone else cast the ‘Suthu valai’. The person hit the boat on that ‘Suthu valai’, the boat got stuck in that net and died in that accident.

**00:40:20**

GV: I heard that earlier the River mouth was a little away from the current position. Is that so?

R3: You see the sand dunes (North of current River mouth), the Rivermouth existed there, the River was running on that way. You see the piling there, earlier we can easily walk on the piling structure via the sand deposited over there; from the south, till that piling it was full of sand. The sand existed till the piling structure, we can walk on the sand and then walk till the end of the piling. You could have seen that in many cinemas. In Suriya’s kaaka kaaka movie, the final climax scene was shot here. Vijay’s bagavathi movie, all that were shooted here, many such films were shooted here; we can clearly see piling structure, River mouth in its North in the movies ; that the place the Rivermouth existed in the past.

MS: The reason for the sand dunes next to the River mouth is dredging.

R3: Yes, the sand would be dredged in the River mouth and it was dumped there. But even before that place had sand dunes; that place has been sand dunes in the past; now it’s even more elevated.

GV: You said that the River mouth existed at that place where the sand dunes are existing.

R3: Yes, only the old River mouth is again dredged now. See the dredgers there, they are dredging pits and moving on; that is where the old River mouth existed. As the River mouth continuously changed in the past, the boats moving from here started to hit in the piling structure. If the sea tides hit the boat, we are getting hit on the piling structure and getting stuck. Earlier, If we fell from a boat we could easily escape by swimming to shore; but at present if we fall, we would get hit by the piling structure.

R2: many people have been killed by hitting the piling structure. They are getting hit along with the boat.

R3: Boats have hit the structure and have become pieces. Even two months before Similar incidents have happened here; the boat got hit and broken.

GV: Do you think that construction of the piling structure is wrong?

R3: No, it was wrong; it was built by the Englishmen (may not factual). But the government failed to maintain the River mouth, that is the issue.

R2: It (piling) should have been built by 1985; the foundation was laid by then. When I was here, I would come here from our village (old Ennore Kuppam) for fishing.

GV: Can you share where the River mouth existed before?

R2: Earlier, the RIver mouth was running North of the piling structure.

R3: You see the machine (dredger) standing there, that is the old River mouth; only the River water used to flow. That is that place is dredged again (as part of the training wall installation). You could see that if you can stand. You see the piling, all that places had sand before, now the water (from the sea) have come inwards; then the sea was far before where the sea is now (erosion). See there, they are restoring the old way for the River mouth.

R2: If the River runs into the sea to the North of the piling structure, there is no impact for us. Now the River mouth is running south of the piling structure. At present what is happening is, if the boat flips in the River mouth, because of water flow the boat is getting stuck in the piling structure.

R3: Earlier we had to cross the piling structure to get into the sea, but at present we can directly get into the sea.

R2: Now those places have already been deepened.

GV: Why did this happen?

R1: The River is not maintained well. Enough dredging was not done by the dredger. As the government’s Thermal Power Plants (NCTPS) has been stopped, the dredging work was also stopped. They (government) stopped dredging once they were done with their own needs; the government wasn’t looking at fishers' requirements. Automatically the River is getting blocked by the sand.

GV: As the dredging was stopped, the sand accumulated and River mouth was blocked.

R3: The River mouth is blocked and drifted this side (South side).

GV: Then, if the River mouth is dredged, it would have been in the same place.

R3: Yes, that is what they are doing now like before.

**-00:45:00**

GV: Can you share about the old village (old Ennore Kuppam)?

R2: In that time, we used to swim from the other bank to this bank.

GV: Would you swim to this bank?

R2: Yes, some time we would be swimming. We would be going for movies; while returning from the movie, that village (Mugadwarakuppam) people would dock their boat by 10 PM and they would be sleeping. Our people, some 8 -10 people from here, would tie the towels in the waist and we would swim to our home.

MS: Is it Geetha theater?

R2: yes, only one theater existed then in Ennore. It was Geetha theater.

MS: Then, if there is no boat service, people would go by swimming for the theater and they would return by swimming?

R2: Yes. It was during our young age; but we can’t do that now at this age.

GV: Has any swimming competition organized here?

R2: Yes, swimming competition, sail competition (paai potti), boat competition (padagu pootti)

GV: Can you share more about that?

R1: In our village, during the festival times. We would conduct such competitions to encourage the youngsters. As these things are united with our life; these competitions are not just seen as competitions; we would just assume it as plays. From here we have to swim to the other bank and we should return back. Swimming competitions would be conducted in the same and as well as the boat competition. Wait! In the swimming competition, we would install a pole flag in the center of the River, the participants had to swim around the flag and they had to come back.

GV: Aren’t these competitions conducted at present?

R1: No, at present we are not conducting the competitions. As the River is completely polluted, no one is ready to get into the River.

R2: We have to commute only by boat.

GV: Then, people are concerned about getting into the River.

R2,R3: yes, they are concerned.

R2: Because, the waste water mixes in the River.

R3: Even if we get into the River, we are much impacted by the River; diseased with skin related issues.

GV: What is ‘Paai maram’ competition? Where would it happen?

R2: It would be conducted here only, our village, next village and other villages would also organize.

R3: In the sail competition, there would be no engines in the boats; it won’t be allowed. They have to row the boat with their hands. For one boat some 10 or 5 rowers would be assigned in the competition; they would be using the ‘thuduppu’ (rows) for the competition; people segregated as teams. Nearly 50 - 60 boats would be there in the competition, then we only had Catamarans (kattumaram). The competition would be starting from here.

GV: How would the River be in the nights while you were swimming in the night at those days?

R2: It would be the same River; during high tide, the water level would be high and during the low tide the water level would be low.

R3: We would be swimming based on that. If it’s low tide, we would reach there (right side) on the opposite bank; if we start here. During the high tide, we would be reaching this side (left side) of the River on the opposite bank. Based on the water flow they would be choosing the place to start swimming.

GV: How would you know the water flow in the night times?  
R3: We know that.

R2: - that is our livelihood.

R3: They are living with that, wouldn’t they know that? Then, there was no electricity, all these places were forest. Then it was all casuarina farm (savukku thoppu); the place would be completely surrounded by the darkness.

R2: IN 1990’s there were no lights; only after 1995 we had lights.

R3: Then we only have ‘vaalmiki’ lamps. But, we lived a healthy life even though we had some limitations in those times. In the Modernisation era we have lost our health.

GV: How many families existed in the Ennore kuppam?

R2: In the old village, more than 150 families were there.

MS: Who else was there in that village?

R2: There were 4 villages in that place. A colony (a lower caste settlement of a village; mostly Dalit people would be settled there; here it was Scheduled Tribes); Ennre kuppam and one Reddiar village.

R3: All the villages were part of Ennore kuppam. Ennorekuppam colony existed, another village was called ‘Ennore Kuppam Rediyaar theru’ (street) or something.

R2: yes Reddiyar existed separately.

R3: And then Mugadwarakuppam; in total 4 villages existed.

R2: Agriculture was done in that place; people in the west (meela) were farming; Colony people were doing farming.

R3: Even many people from Mugadarakuppam were farming at that place.

MS: Why are the people from particular places called Colony people?

R2: It was culturally followed from previous eras.

R3: Those people it self named their village as ‘Ennore kuppam colony’; if they had named their village with a different name, we would be calling with that name. As the name of the village was given by their own people, we are calling with the same name.Even here there is a village called, ‘Thalankuppam colony’; the next village.

R2: Those villages have to be called a colony.

R3: We would not be concerned about the caste of the people; we all are practicing brotherhood; those names are chosen by them. We can’t go and insist on names for us. We can only call what they have named.

**-00:50:04**

AJ: Have you seen any big fishes in the River during your childhood?

R2: Sharks used to come in the River; those shark’s current rate would be 1 lakh rupees.

GV: What’s the size of the shark?  
R2: I had this net length and this much height (showing) with his hands.

MS: When was the last time you did see such sharks?

R2: We have not seen that shark, after coming here from there (old village); we have seen before; now the River is not like before, so the sharks are not found.

R3: Earlier, this place was a breeding place.

R2: Earlier, more sharks were present.

R3: Alathi (mangroves) were present then; on the banks of that River mangroves forest existed.

R2: While we were residing in our old village plenty of sharks were found in the River; we used to catch the sharks with baits; the sharks would take the bait by leaping; it would tear the strings and it would escape.

GV: What fish are you talking about?

R2,R3: The sharks.

R3: Here one River (canal) was running; inside the village (the Paambu canal). The sharks had arrived in that canal.

MS: Was it deeper?  
R2: It was deeper.

R3: It was a large River. But it’s now……

R2: Even now it exists.

R3: It doesn’t exist as a River, it’s been changed into a canal.

R2: It would be around 4 to 5 meter depth; we lived next to it. Now sand might be deposited in that River;

R3: Most of the RIver (/canal) was closed.

GV: What was the depth before?  
R2: It would be more than 4 meters deep.

GV: At present?

R2: Now I have not been to that village.

R3: Now there is no access to that place as the company (NCTPS) was established.

R2: We would be let into the River.

GV: Then, in that River (pambu canal), sharks had come?

R3: Sharks have come, Whales have come.

R2: Once a large whale had set aside; it was stinking, the village people dug pits and buried the whale.

GV: Which year was it?  
R2: It would be around the 1990s.

R3: It would be even before that.; It would be around 1970’s or 1980’s.

GV: Other than sharks and Whales, what other large fishes would be coming in the River?  
R3: Here, only the sharks and whales are large things in the sea; they are large fishes.

AJ: Are there any ghost stories from the sea?

R2: We don't do all those ghost stories; people used to say that kadal-kanni (mermaid) used to come in the sea. Mermaid; sometimes it’s shown on TV. But we haven’t seen anything. But the ghosts have come and are Intimidated.

R3: I have heard people saying that ghosts would ask for fish, if we provide fish once, the ghost would continuously ask for the fish. I have heard such stories. Sometimes, the ghost would consume all the fishes; if we don’t provide fishes, the ghost would be crying. If the fish are given it would consume all the fish, so people used to say we should not provide fish even if we ask.

R2: There were 5 fishers; one fisher was dead while they were casting the nets. Once the other 4 of them were returning after consuming ‘toddy’, they were talking,”we can spread the net at 2 AM in the night, many fishes could be caught then”. The ghost was listening to their talks. They 4 went and casted the net and caught large fishes and put the fishes in the Pari. But at last no fish were found on the Pari. Think what would be their feelings at night time. They would have felt, we caught “so many fishes in the nets, but nothing was found in the Pari.”

MS: In the village festival in the past year; how would the festivals be without speaker, lights that we see in the current time?

R3: Then, there would be the village ‘Koothu’ (village folk art).

R2: Street play (theru koothu) would be organized.

R3: For the ‘Theru koothu’, no person would come from outside villages. Village people themselves would disguise and play (vesham katti aaduvaanga). My father played.

GV: What plays would be played?

R3: ‘Dhrowdhi amman koothu’ (a deity’s play).

MS: When was the last time the play was played?

R3: Even after coming it was played.

R2: After coming here, two plays were performed.

R3: It was in 1994 and 1995.

MS: After that?

R2: After the play was not organized. Only songs now, at present who is playing plays?

R3: Later ‘Karakattam’ (a type of traditional dance) was presented; from ‘Karakattam’, it was changed to ‘Katchery’ and from ‘katchery’, it all became advanced.

R2: People are not liking the plays as they liked in the past.

MS: Did you like the plays?

R2: We have played a ‘Koothu’ (plays)

R3: They have also played a play.

GV: What play was it?

R2: ‘Vilyaadum paruvam’ (playing age)

GV: What play was that? What is the story?

R2: It’s a play; it’s a street play.

GV: What is the story of the play?

R2: In that play, the characters are Beeman, Nagulan, Sagadhevan and many characters are there; Arjunan, Dhuriyodharan and many other characters. Around 16-17 people would be acting in that play.

**00:55:03**

GV: Like sharks and whales; are there any dangerous species in the River

R2: I have seen in the sea, during my young age, I have seen very large-sized fishes; I have seen fishes spanning the length of that boat; once there was a fish that spans length from that stick (mentioned at that place) to here.

GV: Would it not do anything to you?  
R2: No, it would not bother us. If it was on its way, we were on our way.

GV: Is there an incident like large fishes hitting your boat?

R2: No, fishes would not hit us. But it would tear the nets casted in the sea.

GV: I have heard about ‘Panavaai’. What is the fish about?

R2: ‘Panavaai’ (a fish) would also not bother us, but only the people would be afraid of it. The fish’s head would be this much longer and the fish would be spanning this net length.

MS: Will it poke or bite people?

R2: It would not poke nor bite people. Once it got caught in our ‘Yeda valai’ (a net); while lifting the net, we found the fish in the center of the net. It tore the net and got into the sea.

GV: The fish can’t be caught, right?

R2: Why can’t we catch that fish? We can catch; but what are we gonna do with tha?

R3: No one would buy the fish. Our people got frightened by seeing the water splashed by the Whale in the sea; it’s the fish’s breathing by inhale and exhale.

R2: It’s the ‘sogu’ fish that would splash water from its back; like buuuuussssss, buusssssss; the sound would be 4 times bigger than this in the sea.

R2: The water would rise to a ‘palm tree’ height; sound would be much intense.

GV: Can you share about that village where you used to come by the swimming ?

R2: Which village ?

R3: It’s the Ennore village

R2: oh, our village. All these places are forest; this was entirely forest (Kaadi)

R3: Even there, it was forest (kaadu); To reach the Ennore Kuppam village we have cross 2 kms casuarina farm (Savukku thoppu);

R2: This place also had plants and shrubs.

GV: Can you share about the Old Ennore?

R2: In Ennore, there was a River; only in that River we survived and did all the things.

R3: Initially it was said that Ennore village existed in the Puzhuthivakkam village; people from the Ennore village told that they lived there and only 16 families in the villages existed before that time.

R2: Yes, I was told in my childhood.

R3: 16 families existed in the Puzhidhivakkam village, where there is a temple now; the Puzhidhivakkam ‘Ellaiamman temple’. The people said that they were in incharge of that temple. From there 16 families moved to the shore side as Cholera disease was spreading across the region; these 16 families multiplied to 150 villages and now we have 300 families living. We lived there; that side was completely forest (kaadu) surrounding our village; the casuarina farm (savukku thoppu) existed. Around our villages there would be more Foxes; many wild pigs would be roaming there. There was no transportation; no hospitals. There we lived like people living on an isolated island. We were fulfilling our own requirements.

R3: We were suffering so much, if we catch too much fishes, we were not able to sell the fishes (while living in the old Ennorekuppam); we have to request the people having boats; we have please them to ship the fishes from that side to this side of the River and we have to keep the fishes in the ices.

GV: Was it a very thought process?

R3: We have to walk on the white sand by lifting the fishes on our head; we have to enter and walk via the casuarina farm and cross that farm. Only if we cross the farm, we would reach the Mugadwarakuppam village which is on the River bank; we lived on the sea shore. It was a hard life for the women at that time; if we ask our mother, she would be sharing those stories as she was carrying the fishes. While crossing that casuarina farm, many animals would be found. It’s the general fear; even at that time, people used to share many ghost stories of the casuarina farm.

MS: What was your drinking water?

R3: It was only the groundwater; anywhere we would get the underground water; We have hand pumps installed; it’s common for our village.

R2: The pumps would be installed by the village panchayat.

R3 (to R2): Were there any wells in our village?

R2: yes, there were 2 or 3 wells at that place.

R3: see next to the seashore, there were wells at that time. The water resources were very clean; we were getting clear water. Once such industries started to come in here, our groundwater has been changed to saline in nature.

GV: Where were you able to get good water?

R3: Yes, we have been drawing good water; but in some parts are changing into saline water; As the underground water table is depleting, the saline water intrusion is increasing slowly to one by one area.

**01:00:00**

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

R3: Everything is out of our hands; so and so industries have come; all the industries are controlled by the state and union government. Those industries are acting beyond their limitations. We; people demand that we don’t want the government to destroy people in the name of development. We, people can’t say to stop the industries or we cannot destroy the industries; this is assured one. But the companies have to recycle their wastes and they have to discharge their waste in a manner that's not impacting anything; that is my request. The pollution control board have certain objectives like they would work on certain things to make sure that people are not impacted by the pollutants released. Our request is that the state pollution control board should act as per the governance they have; companies have to function within their limitations, that’s our predominant demand. Only if the company is exceeding their limits, the River becomes toxic.

GV: you that there mangroves existed in that region, what is the use of the mangroves?

R3: Mangroves forests are the River’ lifeline. During the flood times, it would stop the sand erosion; only in that mangrove forest, most reproduction/breeding would happen; prawns, fishes, crabs, turtles would search for such places and lay eggs in there. Mangroves are the lifeline of the River.

GV: Were there plenty of mangroves in this Ennore region?

R3: There were more mangroves forest; if you cross that bridge you can see more mangroves trees there; even there the mangroves were planned and destroyed; we did many protests to save those mangroves in that place. Like that there were plenty of mangroves in here; now all that places are having prosopis.

GV: Then there were mangrove forests?  
R3: All those places had mangovers; all were forests (kaadu thaan).

GV: Has the River’s width been reduced because of the industries?

R2: yes.

R3: Definitely, the River’s width has been reduced; As the companies have built compounds. The River’s span has been bounded by that (compound); before that the River was very much wider; as the River flows it would spread on both the sides.

R2: It spread wider on that side (NCTPS side).

R4: The wonder land owner has made a building construction in that place and also built a compound and narrowed the River.

MS: In this generation most children are going to school; do you think that future generations should come to the River and also go for school? What is your stand?

R2: Fathers want their children to get educated.

MS: Then, you don’t want the children to come to the River for fishing?

R2: In our childhood we were fishing

MS: As you were fishing the River from your childhood, you are much connected to the River. Now all the children have schools; they are not finding time to spend time in the River and also for fishing. They only have time in their leave days. In future, how do you expect the children to have a relationship with River? How about a school existing next to the River? How would you tell the children about the importance of the River? If children are away from the River; how would the children know about the River?

R3: I am saying why that is not because culture does not exist here. The River does not exist as a River. During this time, we would be bathing in the River as a family. Women were enthusiastic to bath in the River. In such a situation, we don’t have to get them connected with the River, they would easily get connected to the River themselves. The impact of I am stopping to use this River; my descendants are moving away from this River. In this Summer time, at least 50 families would have come here and they would be bathing (/playing) here; they would come here as family including women. By that way they are automatically connected to the River. The River’s characteristic is getting completely polluted; because of this the connection between the people is getting apart. Only because of the pollution, our relationship with River is getting worse; it’s only because of the Pollution. Our descendants are very far away from the River because of the River; we are so afraid of it; if I make my child bathe in this River; my child may get diseased in body, and I can’t sit and watch that.

**01:05:46**

GV: You told about the oyster beds; in which you need the oyster beds, where these oysters need to be created.

R3: Oysters existed in the deeper part of the River.

R2: Now the oysters are not existing in the place. Oysters are not in the pits (deeper bed); it would exists only the flattened places (tharai pagudhi); all these places have oysters; you see that plant (floral) there, there you can find these much of oyster; the bed is only this height but the oyster is this much height, it’s completely surrounded by oyster. It's a different oyster, not the green mussels (pacha Aazhi), it’s the white oyster.

R3: It is the Kaaka Aazhi (charru mussels).

R2: Those oysters are consumed; with that oyster that is used to make lime.

R3: He doesn't know the current situation; now Kaaka Aazhi (charru mussels) have infested this place completely.

GV: Is white oyster (vella aazhi) used to make lime?  
R3: Kilijal (shells on sea shore) are used to make lime; oyster shells won’t be used to make lime; Oyster shells won’t be forming lime. Only kilinjal would be used to make lime.

GV: You said the green mussels (pacha Aazhi) would be consumed; Is white oyster (vella Aazhi) also consumed?

R2: I have needed its flesh any time.

1:07:04

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