**REIMAGINING THE GOOD CITY FROM ENNORE CREEK**

Interview Transcription

**Interview Information**

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 (AJ,GV,MS, RK)

Place of interview: Mugathuvara Kuppam village (net storing place)

Date of interview: 11.06.2023

Transcription by: RK

**Interviewee Information**

Pseudonym: R1, R2 & R3

**Interview Notes**: Here the respondent is mostly speaking about the old village on the other side (Easter) side of the River mouth by sitting on the Southern bank of the River mouth where the current Mugathuvaram village has been displaced. This respondents talks about toxicity, fishing, about the extreme climate events and also about the RIver

**Transcription Notes: -**

**00:00:00**

R2: Recently crabs in the River, climb on the River banks and lie there as if dizzy.

R1: You what happened to the crabs in the River; At present all the crabs that are caught in the nets, while we are taking out from the net with our hand, crabs are like they have given anesthesia; that’s the situation on the River now. There is nothing in the River, there is no income; I don’t know where this white prawn (vellera) went from the River; we can’t find it anywhere in the River. Only the Valichera (a kind of backwater prawn), which are alive longer outside the water, are caught in our nets; even those prawns that are caught in nets only weigh 4 or 5 kgs. It would be alive for a longer time outside the water.

R2: Other prawns die once they are caught from the River.

R3: Even that prawn (valichera) is alive for 4 to 5 days after being caught from the River.

R1: If that prawns stays in the wet nets, it would be alive longer.

R2: For that prawn, moisture is more than enough.

R1: Even it can hold its life for 10 days after it’s caught from the River. But at present that (Valichera) is doing soon after it’s caught in the nets. The River is completely ruined.

R2: When this company water (industrial effluents) and the Buckingham canal stinking water (sewage water); the wastewater from hospitals were started to drain in the River, the River got ruined.

R1: You know the Cooum River; the sticking River, from that a part was partitioned as this (Buckingham canal); you can also check this on the map; it comes via Kodungaiyur. You also see when you come via Manali.

GV: Are you talking about the Buckingham canal?

R1: Yes. the CPCL canal; earlier this was a transportation channel. In the canal people used to travel till Adyar, even till Kovalam. I haven’t seen that, but I have heard that.

R2: 40-45 years before, all the goods were only moving this canal; all the food goods were only transported in the canal.

R1: The goods would be taken in larger wooden boats.

R2: You know how much capacity those boats had? They were with 40 to 50 tons capacity; the boats were much larger.

R1: Even the salt was taken in that. You know how long the boats used to be?

R2: It would be in length of this building (50 ft to 60 ft)

R1: You know how they would hold the boat; two persons would be holding the longer wooden log by hitting the bed of the River/canal and walking over the boat from front to back, by then the boat would be moving.

R3: 4 people would be riding the boat (might be 4 at a time for some boat or 2 at a time in rotational turns)

R1: In the back there would be a ‘chukkan’ which is used to turn the boat.

R2: From Andra, the boat would only come this way, it would run till Moolakothalam (Basin bridge).

GV: Does the sewage water come via that canal?

R1: Sewer water is drained into it.

R3: the sewer water is mixed in that canal.

R1: It was not mixed; they (government) wantedly let the sewer water drain into this canal; later this whole canal became sewer water.

R2: See, how has the River changed?

R3: You go and stand next to the River, you can only see dark-black water flowing in the River (thanniye katta karel nu irukum).

R1: I told you about the collector meeting the day after tomorrow, I am going to take this water to the Collector and also a good fresh water. I am only going to speak about this.

GV: Then, don’t you want employment?

R1: We should not say that we don’t want employment; what if the next generation is facing too many struggles? So we have get that employment for our next generations.

R3: If we throw a coin in hip deep water; we could see the coin in the River; now if we throw a coin in even half feet level water in the River, we couldn’t see the coin. Our livelihood is completely ruined.

GV: Mugathuvarakuppam village earlier existed across the sea, can you share more about that?

GV: (explaining about the REC project and getting consent for the interview)

**-00:05:20**

R1: I will share what I know from our old village. Now I am 62 years old. Earlier when we were in our old village, I was a child at that time. I just used to go along with the elders for fishing, at that time they would be giving me a stock of the whole catch. Once we came back home from fishing, we used to have food and then immediately again we would go fishing, because the wealth was so much; the fishes growth, prawns growth and all the things were abundant and had good growth (nalla valarachi). Then, we can’t see any dirty water anywhere in the River;; we can find the coin flipped into the River, the River was so much cleaner then. In the fishing work, we would not have any rest. We would go to catch fishes, we used to catch ‘Madava’ fish. Then we would go to catch prawns; for each kind of fishing work we would used each kind of nets (ov-ovoru thozhil ku ov-ovoru vala vechi iurpom), now all that have got destroyed; our livelihood has got destroyed. Because of this situation, we can’t even catch any prawns using prawn nets at present. 45 years before we were so independent, now we don’t have that independence. Because, the government is not bothering our concerns; we have petitioned several times to the government, we have petitioned the collector, RDO, Tahsilda; we have given to all the concerned government authorities, but none of them are bothering much about that. The bureaucrats are so lethargic towards our petitions and just dumping the petitions in the corner; that’s it. Since this company (NCTPS) has come here, the other companies in the surrounding CPCL, MRL and many other companies are there; all those companies are discharging all their effluents, waste water to this River.

Once we took a sub-Collector in a boat and we went till Korukkupet, Chennai (in Buckingham canal); she came with us and stood on the field; she was running before us, she was more energetic; she was also young. She wanted to know where this water is coming from and how this water comes in the River. Fishes are dying, prawns are dying at that time. Some people came to know about here inspection in the boat via Buckingham canal and they just dumped sand in the Buckingham canal, in the channel where that effluents were running. We were riding the boat in the Buckingham canal with the sub Collector, but somehow that message was known to some people and then the sand was dumped on its way. The sand dumped in a way that stopped the effluents coming from the south, those all were fresh white sand. She went inside CPCL, MRL and all such companies in the surrounding area. She also questioned why these effluents are discharged in the canal which is affecting so many families; the company persons responded,”here in after, we wouldn’t let the effluents in the canal”. This would be some 35 years back. After that the effluents were coming into the River for 2 days; after that automatically those effluents started coming in the River, that never stopped till date. All the companies are discharging their effluents in the River.

GV: In Mugathuvara Kuppam village how many families were living?

R1: In our old village, approximately 250 families were receding. If we account for the children there would be 300 people living in our village (counts are not different). But in our old place, there were 4 villages. They used to do agriculture, then Reddiyar and Mudhaliyar lived on one side. And there were 2 Kuppam (fisher’s villages). One village is next to our village at present, that is Ennore Kuppam; they are closer to sea, they used to catch fish in the sea; they are sea fishers. We are fishing in the village (4th village).

GV: Where did the mugathuvara kuppam exist?

R1: You see the building there, it existed just beside that. How we are receding next to the River bank, in the same way, we lived next to the River bank on the other bank on the opposite side. But little inside than the current village. Now that village exists inside the NCTPS compound wall. The village existed adjacent to the water. For me it’s hard to see today's sufferings. On that day (when displaced) some of us were given employment and some went to that work; but at present it’s hard to see unemployed youngsters; fishers who are dependent on fishing, nothing could be done by them, it’s hard for them to even run the family for one day by fishing.

**00:10:08**

V: When the Mugathuvara Kuppam village existed in that village, how did this River exist?

R1: That is what I am saying, if I see the water in the River; it used to look like how glasses would be. If we throw the 1 rupees coin in a 2 person height deep water in the River, we would be able to see that coin; the water would be so clear, we can submerge and get that coin from the River bed. Today if we throw the coin just in half feet of water, we can’t see that coin. The reason is the effluent discharged from the several companies, all that drains into the River directly. Because of that there is no growth of the species, all the species are dying in the River. In the River, for every 6 hour there is change in the flow of the River, for 6 hours the water from the sea enters into the River and for next 6 six hours the water drains into the sea from the River. That's nature, there would be change in water flow for every 6 hours; by this way the River would be clean. Now we can't see that clear water.

Every day fishing work is like survival for the fishers fishing in the River; the water is so much dirt. Can't be able to eat that fish, we can't consume the fish that are caught by us.

R2: The reason is oil smell in the fishes in the River. For the people using the cast net, health is so much; if you look at their hands, it would be different because of the allergies caused by the effluents from the companies. Even that water was sent to the labs; but no steps were taken from the government. I don’t know what the government is doing? Life is so hard. The freedom we had before 45 years is not available at present.

GV: What was the depth of the River when you were in your old village?

R1: The depth was approximately 2 ½ people height. In particular places next to our village (old), the depth would be 3 ½ people height; it’s about 15 feet deep. Now you can’t find it anywhere.

R3: Now all that have become flat floor (tharai aadiuchu)

R1: Now you can see water till here (high tide), but after some time you can’t see water here, at 2 pm there would be no water in the place where the tree stands. In the low tide, there would be no water, you can see all the oyster beds (full ah aazhi tittu thaan). If the water is drained in the sea, you see the Aazhi (oysters).

GV: Does that even exist now?

R1: You can even see that today. If you can come today you can see it from the boat.

R3: In the low tide you see the ridges (oyster beds) in the water. Similar thing happened inside the River (charru mussels invasion); even the boats can’t travel over that place.

R1: This oyster came and completely destroyed our livelihood.

GV: What mussels is that?

R1: That Aazhi is not found here.

R3: It’s called as Kaaka Aahi (charru mussels)

R1: Even you can see that in the nets down here; some of it would get stuck in the nets. Many government officials came to sample the Aazhi.

R3: They told, they would dredge that place and create space for free movement boats. I was informed that the work would be done in May (2023), but till now it was not done.

R1: Now it's the 6th month (June). No steps are taken by the government.

GV: I was told that other good oysters can be used.

R1: Those oysters existed, some 45 years before. Those oysters used to have a much sharper body; it would tear our feet if we lay our feet over it. It is good for ‘hemorrhoids’ disease. Now that oyster is completely lost in the River. Since the waste water and whatever effluents from the industries are being drained into the RIver, that species has died in the River.

GV: Now, is this (Charru mussels) species growing in this water?

R1: Nothing would survive in this River; it would als die.

GV: You said that Kaaka Aazhi (charru mussels) are spreading in the River.

R1: That is in the Northern part of the River. It’s where we used to catch prawns recently.

GV: But you told that you can witness here (estuary part of the River)

R1: If water is drained (high tide water), you can see that clearly.

GV: But that oyster (charru mussels) is growing in this River.

R1: That’s growing in the RiverThat is the only oyster that is growing in this River. The larger oyster that was used in the past is completely destroyed here. Its growth is not found with the water.

GV: In the old village, were there any such species?

R1: In that old era, all were existing.

GV: What are they?

R1: The green oyster that used to grow very large then. It is found in the sea and also in the River; in the railway bridge it would live as a cluster, people would be getting that green oyster (in fact it’s a mussels) from that railway bridge pillars. Currently, we can’t see that oyster anywhere. When all the waste water mixes in the River; all are dying and there is growth of all the species in the River.

**00:15:03**

GV: You talked about low tide and high tide. How this low tide and high tide would be in the past.

R1: While the high tide is rising, the River would look more clearer. It would be like a glass to spectate; even during the low tide, the water would be clearer. Then the dirty water was not mixed in the River. In the canal where the boats would be moving, even there the water would be looking like the clear water in the River. No waste water/effluents were discharged into the River. 40-45 years before, the wastewater was not coming in the Buckingham canal, the wastewater was only moving only drained in the Cooum River, the River which drinks next to the Marina beach; Anna memorial. Since when the Buckingham canal got blocked in the Central (Chennai Central); since then the wastewater has stopped draining in the Cooum and coming to our Kosasthalai River via Buckingham canal. Even the sewage water is also drained into our River.

R3: In the past, one person couldn't stand in the water, because the water flow speed would be higher (during low tide).

R1: The speed of the water flow was higher.

R3: we can’t even cast our nets to catch fishes/prawns. Now we can’t see such water flow.

R1: Now the water level is so low that even the boats can’t travel easily.

GV: Were you able to cast nets and fish in such places?

R1: Yes, we would be fishing based on the speed of the water flow. Even when the prawn rate was so low, we were able to earn good money. Today if the price the prawn or any fish is 1000 rupees, at the time (old village) it was not even 200 rupees. At that time we couldn't sell a basket of prawn for even 20 rupees. Today, one basket of prawn is 3000 rupees; it would be around 10 kgs. But we can’t find 10 kgs of prawns in the River; they have all got destroyed.

GV: Is that the logs you used to fix in the River bet to catch the prawns?

R1: ues, we would submerge into the water and fix the log into the river bed mud; in the fast flowing River water. The river speed would be much higher, if we got stuck in nets casted and we can’t get back again. You the nets there.

R2: Yes, we can’t get back, the River would be very much forced. We can’t easily submerge into the water and press the log

R1: If the person left his hands on the logs, the person would be done (dead), even if he knew how to swim well; if he once gets into the net, he can’t escape. He would be dead.

R3: In such a way, 2 to 3 people have died in the River.

GV: Would you only use that green color net?

R1: At this speed of the River flow, we would only have nets. The nets would be like launch boat (mechanized) nets.

R2: It’s the same model net.

R1: we call it ‘Adappu valai’ (blocking nets). If we cast that net here, the net would be extending the person sitting there (due to the flow of the River).

GV: Are you talking about the nets?

R1: Yes, the nets. At the end we would tie knots with the nets.

R2: We would be using 3 logs to one net.

R1: We would have folded and kept the end. Because if the catch weighs more, even 4 or 5 people cannot be lifted (carried); sometimes, it would even weigh more than half a ton. Once we lift the net and lose the folded net, the prawns would be shredded into the boat. Again, we would fold and tie the net and cast in the water to catch the prawns.

GV: Then you have caught half a ton prawns.

R1: We would have caught more than half a ton.

R3: We have caught a boat full of prawns.

**00:20:00**

R1: All this was in the past, but after the companies (industries) were established, all that got destroyed. Even the place where we are sitting were of River water; you see that house there, till there water flowing in the past. Day by day, the River got shrinked. In all these places, River water was flowing.

R2: The River was very deep; it would have 2 1⁄2 to 3 people height of depth. Sometimes even the log used to push the boat would not reach the River bed. Then we had wooden boats.

R1: Only now we are having fiber boats, then we used boats made of ‘teak’ wood. Those boats would be made in Pazhaverkadu; the muslims used to make those boats.

R2: Boats were made in Thonirevu village in Pazhaverkadu.

R1: Now, you see the Light house in Pazhaverkadu. Opposite to that there is a village called Thoniruvu village, there boats would be built and one more place where the boats are built are Aarambakkam.

R2: Only in these two places boats were built.

R1: Only these two places are famous for boat building.

R3: Only the Bhaii (muslim men) would be building the boats.

R1: It would take one or two months to build a boat. We would pull the boat by tying it to our hips with ropes and come to our village.

R3: Earlier we could easily pull the boat by our hands with ropes along the Buckingham canal.

R2: Now it can’t be done.

MS: Is anyone building boats anywhere there?

R1: No, now all have become fiber boats; there are no country boats existing now.

R2: Country boats exist, it’s on that side. Not in this region.

R1: Even those boats were built in those time (at least 30 years back); now no one is building new country boats.

R2: Now it’s next to Maangadu side.

R1: People are using the country boats that were prepared 30 years ago; they are repairing those boats and using the boats.

R2: The rate of country (wooden) boats are very much higher at present.

GV: How would the River be during full moon day and new moon days?

R2: During full moon day and new moon day, in the high tides times 10 ft high tide water (not factual) would be flowing in the River. The River would be back with normal flow after some 5 or 6 days.

GV: Do high water levels are observed on the new moon day or full moon day?

R1: I would be observed on the day times. If the full moon day is 2 days forth, we can observe the high water level. During full moon day, the water level rises before the day (mundhana thanni) and during the new moon day, the high water level rise is still observed after the new moon day (pindhana thanni); after the new moon the higher water level is observed for 2 days.

GV: You have said that when you were in your old village the River would be deeper. During these higher tide levels, would the River be deeper?

R1: Yes, the water level would increase. If the River is 10ft deeper, during the new and full moon days, the the depth would be 5 ft.

R2: Because of this reason we would have a oar (thuduppu) with us, if the log used to push the boats don’t reach the River bed due the high tides, we would use the oar to ride the boat.

R1: sometimes would get floods; the lake's locks are opened to drain the excess water. At those times, if we need to come from the other bank to this bank; we would push the boats with logs along the bank to the far western side of the bank; from that point we would be rowing the boat with oar, due the fast movement of water we would be driven far eastwards from the starting point.

GV: What boat was it?

R1: The country boats (wooden ones). 7 to 8 people has to row the boat with oar; we can’t use the logs to push. We only have to use the oar; there would be 5 people on each side of the boat, all the 5 people have to push the boat using oars. In the same way, if we wanted to move from this side of the River to the opposite bank; we would take the boat, far west side and start rowing.

R2: People would be running when they were near the River bank; they would hold the boat in hand and run towards the banks.

R1: As the water flow would be much faster, we have to stop the boat from washing along the flood flow. So 2 people from the boat, would take a rope to the bank and they would be drawing the boat and docking it.

R2: at that instance you don’t have to worry about the trashes, thorns in the River.

R1: There would be nothing hindering you; you can close your eyes and run.

R3: Nothing would hurt your feet.

R2:Even after attempting to pull the boat towards the River bank by hands, if the boats are moving along the flood water towards the sea, then people would take the ropes from the boat and run towards the banks; there would be at least 6 people in the River, then we would hold that rope and we would be drawn to the bank.

GV: Have you been to the sea in such situations?

R1: yes, we have. But we would not leave the rope, we would reach the bank.

R2: The people in the boat would be always ready; there would be 10 to 15 people, ready to hold the boat. As the boat ran along the River, we would also run along the boat to draw the boat to the bank. If we know the boat is going to entre the sea, we would take the rope from the boat to the bank and we pull the boat with that rope.

**00:25:05**

GV: Then while crossing the River, the people on the bank would have seen it.

R1; Yes, they could easily see it. The River flows very fast. In twitch time, if people fall, we would be washed away several meters.

GV: Who would be announcing about the flood surge in the villages?

R1: Government; now they are announcing. Earlier we had ‘Thalleri’: the ‘municip Thalleri’ would come and play drums (dhandoora) announcing this. They would be saying,”from this time the flood water is released from the lake, no should by the meantime” along with the drums (Dhanoora). Now, nothing like that. Now they are announcing; they are informing in the news, they are informing the Fisheries cooperative society’s President. The president would be informing the village people.

GV: Do you do any rituals (Poojai) during the new/full moon days?

R1: No nothing like that.

R2: Sometimes while fishing, we would do some ritual prayers.

R1: If we are using any new nets for fishing, we would be performing rituals (poojai) to that before starting the fishing. Even for new boats we would be performing rituals like that. It’s like how we would perform rituals for our new houses; it’s like that. Even today we are following that.

GV: So, you would be doing it if you buy new boats and nets.

R1: Not just new boats, if we are buying a boat from someone else; we would be looking for good days to get that; we would be buying the boats during the moon waxing period (valarpirai). It would be done for old boats and for new boats. It’s a usual thing for us.

GV: Have you experienced any cyclones/
R1: Yes, we have faced severe cyclones in the year 1984. When we were residing on the other side of the River, we weren't able to see our village because of the rains during the cyclones.

R3: At that time we were drying our nets on the empty places over the white sand. At those places , even 50,000 or more than 1 lakh people can lie there (mention about the scale of the land).

R1: Yes, the place was very vast.

R3: Then there was no prosofis (thorn forest: mullu kaadu); there won’t be any of that species. Now it’s completely covered with the prosofis canopy.

R1: It’s called ‘velikaatha maram’.

R3: more than 1 lakh people can lie there; that much of space was empty. Then children used to run here and there in that space; we had no issues (health). Only now all this region is having the prosofis (mullu chedi). This place is bad only after the company (NCTPS) has come here.

GV: Is that a larger boat (seeing a large boat and asking)?

R1: yes, that boat belongs to the next village; the boat is used to fish with seine nets (surukku vala). If the good amount of fishes caught in their seine nets, those fishes/prawns could be sold for 10 lakh rupees or 15 lakh rupees or even for 20 lakh rupees; the nets is that kind of net.

GV: Can you share about the 1984 cyclone?

R1: That time, we were informed about the cyclone names; now the cyclones are named. In television news they are mentioning names: Vardha cyclone, Gaja cyclone, etc. Then, there were no names for the cyclones.

R3: The wind from the sky was moving towards the land, the wind started to swirl the sand. The swirl current is getting larger and larger swirl; we were uncertain about the River; then went near to to spectate it. The sand came and fully clogged the person who went closer. The whirl current went towards the school and all the roof tiles of the school were flown away. The entire village got worse by that cyclone (naasthi); our village turned different. Then we had rains for some 10 days.

R1: There are some 50 years ,100 years older trees in the old village. Tamarind tree, banyan tree; all those massive trees that were there even before I was born. All those trees were uprooted in the cyclone; palm trees were falling by 2 pieces, 3 pieces; the wind was very strong. This wind was blowing in a 1990s cyclone.

R3: Only now we are buying the fruits with money, earlier we used to get the fruits from the trees grown in the forest. Those fruits would grow on its own, no one were maintaining those trees, the trees were growing in nature; there was no security for those trees.

**00:30:10**

AM: What were the trees that were present at that place?

R3: Cashew fruits, guava fruit, Jamun fruit, ‘Kalaakka palam’.

R1: Today we can’t see the ‘kalakka’

GV: What is ‘Kalaakka palam’

R1: It would have a sour taste; it would be good taste.

R3: There would be ‘eesam palam’ (a kind of palm fruit); this would be sweeter.

R1: There were many fruits and things growing there. When companies started coming here, the forest was dead.

R3: There would be another fruit called ‘seetha palam (custard apples)’, it would be matured and be in the tree. We can go and have it. Now I am buying with money.

R1: So many fruits were there.

R3: If we consume the fruits directly from the tree; you know how tastier it would be. Those had excellent tastes. It was all natural.

R1: It was not growing out of any fertilizers; it was on its own. We would get fruits based on the season.

GV: How would the River be during the cyclone times?

R1: It would be more turbulent ; it would be in whitish color; you can’t see the River like this as you are seeing now; it would be boiling (kondhalaikkum). The sea and River would be looking the same. The River would be terrible; boats can’t travel in that. No one could go.

GV: But you told, you would be traveling with oars during that time?

R1: No, it was only during the time when the dam was opened and flood water flowed. During cyclones we would not even do fishing on the River bank. Why we would not go fishing at that time is, even after we were noticed by the government and if we went fishing, if any of us are dead by accident; the government would not provide us compensation.

GV: Then where would be boats during the cyclone's time?

R1: we would rise to the elevated space. When our village was in the opposite bank; we would use logs to lift the boats and move to safer place; we would be tying a boat to two wooden logs; two person would be lifting a log, 4 people would be carrying a boat to the empty space where the brother was saying that even 1 lakh people can lie; we would be shifting all the boats to that place. We would be safetying the boats once we know the news about the cyclone. The places there would be very much cleaner.

R3: The water would be much cleaner.

R1: You see the sand there. It would be the same sand present in our old village; this place is so dirty (asingama iruku); but in our early village we lived independently, it was 45 years before. But from the government, officials would be coming through the society and they would be seeing the damages and they would be providing the compensation for the damages; Inspector, AD would be coming and seeing the damages.

R2: Once we lost one boat like that; later we couldn't find the boat anywhere. For that boat we didn’t even get compensation money, even though I wandered many times, I didn’t get that boat.

GV: What was the color of the RIver during the flood time?

R1: It would be like chemman (red soil) color; you can’t see this type of color. Because the water is coming washing out the lake beds; it would have that chemman (red soil) colour.

R3: But it's good water; it also looks good.

R1: We can even drink that water; it would not be salty. If the flood water comes; for two months, the salt water would go under the River because of its weight; that flood water would float over salt water, we can drink that water. For 2 months, even in the sea to some extent (from the River mouth), the sea would have fresh water on the surface during that period.

R2: It would have fresh water to a certain extent.

R1: Only after that 2 or 1.5 months, the River would change to saltwater.

**00:35:31**

GV: In a year, how many times, flood occur in the River?

R1: It happens only once in a year.

GV: How would it happen during the rainy season?

R1: It happens in Purattasi month (mid-Sept to mid-Oct), Aipassi month (mid-Oct to mid-Nov) and Karthi month (mid-Nov. To mid-Dec).

R2: That’s the time flood would be flowing in the River.

R1: Mostly it would happen in Aipassi month (mid-Oct to mid-Nov) and Karthi month (mid-Nov. To mid-Oct).

R2: In Aipassi month mid-Oct to mid-Nov), floods would definitely happen.

GV: During raining hours would you be able to do fishing?

R1: No, no one would do fishing then. Sometimes 1 or 2 fishers go fishing. Even if there are restrictions some fishers would go bravely for fishing; but if any accidents happen, who would save them? No, most people would not go fishing.

GV: During the rainy season, how is the water level in the River?

R1: if the River is supposed to have 10 feet depth, during flood it would even rise to 15 feet and sometimes it might even elevate to 20 feet.

GV: But, do we have 10 feet depth in the River?

R1: No, we can’t find 10 feet depth in the RIver at present.

R2: In some places, we can’t even see 3 feet depthness in the River.

R1: The depthness we had before 40 years or 45 years is no more; now the River is completely inundated with sludge (/mud).

R3: Minimum 60 people used to go fishing from our village.

R1: There would be no rest in our fishing work; At 4 AM in the morning we would go fishing, that’s one session per day. Once we are back from that, in the afternoon we would go to catch ‘madava’ fish, that is another session in the day. Again by 6 pm in the evening we would go fishing, that third session in a day. Now all that has got destroyed, nothing is available now. We are only doing one mode of catch; that is only the prawn catching. Even that has got destroyed.

GV: During the monsoon season; the rainy season in the Aypasi (mid-Oct to mid-Nov) and Karthigai (mid-Nov to mid-Dec). Do the vegetation grow during that season or if the vegetation growth is observed before or after monsoon, do any species migrate here? Are there any changes during the rainy season with the species observed or caught?

R2: During the rainy season, prawns breed and prawns production is higher. Very good prawn production is observed. The water flow is higher during the rainy season, because of that the white sand from the upstream runs down the River (creek part), this attracts the prawns to lay eggs on the white sand and the offsprings are grown.

GV: Do white sand come at that time?

R1: Yes, the water flow would drive the white sand.

R2: During the rainy season, the water flow would be very high; the flow of the stinky water would be distributive and lesser compared to the flood flow.

R3: the prawns production is not observed here (estuary part)

R2: Only in the particular part of the River, the prawns are produced.

GV: This is River mouth, where in the River the species reproduce?

R1: from here (Mugathuvara Kuppam), we go 1 km (north) this way, the prawns are produced there and it would spread to this region (river mouth).

R3: Earlier there were many Ganjeri (spread of backwater: the section of salt pans that been encroached by NTECL, BPCL and HPCL)
R1: There would be several canals in here; only in those canals the prawns would be produced and run down the larger River portion.

R3: There were large canals which were intersecting one another and running into the salt pans. But as the industries came here, all those canals were closed.

R2: Here the NTECL was established; at that place there were some 40 acres of water would be stagnating; that is called Ganjeri, which is also part of the Kosasthalai RIver. In that places, we can only see plenty of prawn production. After production, in a term of 3 months, the prawns would grow to this size (medium); to the size which can get caught in the nets. It would only grow there and come back to the River. The growth only happens there (valarchi ye adhan).

GV: Do the prawns grow inside the Thilaichedi (mangroves)?

R1: Yes, it’s the same. Prawns grow in the banks where the mangroves are present; if we move in the boat, we can identify that. We can’t see those here (near the village).

R3: All those places got blocked by the industries, it’s no more. Only people who have witnessed ‘Ganjeri’ would know about that. People who have not spectated those, would not even believe if we even say that.

**00:40:00**

GV: What is Ganjeri?

R1: It would also be like River. It would be very widely extended.

R3: We would be traveling via boat and reach the ‘Ganjeri’. Only in that, the prawn production would be very much higher.

R1: No one would go there and no one would be disturbing that.

R3: People would not even walk over that.

GV: Are you talking about the ‘paraval (flood plains)’?

R1: Yes, it’s the ‘paraval’.

R2: The canal would go there and it forms the praval/s.

R1: In the entrance, we can see some 20 ft, 15 ft and 10 ft wide canals. But when we enter the canal and reach the other end, it would also look like River.

R2: No one would walk in that; even people would not do fishing/catching prawn in that. Because of that, the prawns would be produced and get into the River.

R1: Yes, the production is in the Ganjeri and the offspring would crawl down to the River.

R2: Now all that has become flat. Because of that there is no income for us.

GV: Then, if the River has to be restored, we should also restore that, you could have good income.

R1: Yes. Only from there, the prawns would produce, grow there and get into the River. But no one would go there and do fishing (adhula yaarum poitu vizhave maatanga) or catching prawns. We would do all those things only in the larger River. Only tere the prawns would grow to a particular size and crawl down to the River; we would also know if the prawns started coming from the ‘Ganjeri’.

GV: How many days would it take for the prawns to grow?

R1: It would take 3 months for the prawns to grow to a considerable size; in 90 days.

GV: Would the flood water bring more sand into the RIver?

R1: The water in the River would change.

R2: If the water flow is higher, the water would take sand with it.

R1: At that time, when the flow is faster, we can’t see the mud in the sediment. The water would take all the mud/sludge to the River.

GV: Then what would be remaining there?

R1: Only sand would be there in the bottom of the River (sediment). If there were ½ ft of mud/sludge in the sediment; after the flood flow, there would be no mud in the River bed.

R2: Yes, there would be no muds/

R1: The water would completely rupture the mud/sludge in the River.

GV: But I have heard that prawns grow only in the muds.

R1: Yes, its growth is in the mud.

R2: It would be produced only in ‘vandal man’ (alluvium); only after that it would come down to the River. If the flow is higher, we cannot see prawn movements in the River.

R1: Once in a while, we would catch the prawns on our village banks.

R2: While we used to return after the ‘matinee show’ (from cinema theaters). We would see people casting nets by 6 pm and by 7 pm, some 4 to 5 fishers would be taking 4 to 5 baskets full of prawns each.

R1: In the same place where we are sitting, people would be catching prawns.

R2: The price of the prawn was very much lower then; the rate of one basket full of prawns was just 10 or 15 rupees. Each one would catch 3 or 4 or 5 baskets by 7 pm if they start at 6 pm in the evening.

R1: They would catch fishes/prawns only for one or 1.5 hours.

GV: In your old village, how would the rain (season) impact people? How has life in Muthuvara Kuppam impacted?

R2: We would not do fishing work for those 3 months. If we go then, we might face any risks.

R1: Most of them would not be fishing at that time.

GV: What kind of risks would you be facing?

R2: We might lose our life.

R1: Some would not listen and go fishing thinking it’s just rain.

R2: But if some are going like that, elders would shout at them asking no to go fishing during unusual times. Elders would go and pick them from the boat by stopping their journey.

R1: people pull them to the shore (valichinu vandhuduvaanga).

GV: What you folks would be during that time (monsoon) and how would you make your expenses?

R1: We would get loans from wealthy people with interests. In a village everyone can’t be wealthier, people would ask money to the wealthier people saying to them, “we would repay the loan when they earn money.” That’s how people used to make their expenses; there would be no other earnings for them.

GV: Do you celebrate temple festivals during your rainy seasons?

R1: No, we would not celebrate festivals during the rainy seasons. We, as individual families, catch fishes/prawns daily. From that catch, a small portion would be taken for the village (like tax) and the money earned from that would be saved in a ‘Undiyal’ (piggy bank). The money would be saved in that, once the more required money is collected; we would celebrate the temple festival.

MS: Did you use ‘undi’?

R1: yes, now we can see that in steel. But earlier we used to have in any metal sheet (thagadu). There were experts who would make it. Only in that all the villagers' contribution would be saved.

**00:45:04**

MS: Would only fishermen contribute to the ‘undiyal’?

R1: It’s common, everyone in the village would be contributing. The money would be from the daily income of the people. During the Puratasi month (mid-Sept to mid-Oct) we celebrate the festival of ‘Perumal’ (an avatar of Vishnu); it would be much simpler; just for the flowers, we need to spend 90,000 to 1,00,000 rupees; for speaker sets, they are asking for 1 to 1.5 lakh rupees; for sky crackers, they are asking for 2 lakh rupees. it would take 7 lakh rupees, that’s the minimum amount.

If we are doing it for ‘Amman (goddesses) at present’, it would cost 50 lakh rupees. It’s the costliest. It’s been 3 years since we have done the festival to the ‘Amman (goddess). We need at least 40 lakh rupees for that festival; that’s the largest festival.

GV: How was the River mouth during the 2015 flood times?

R2: you can’t see the sand that is on both sides of the River.

GV: In 2005?

R1: We were here only; we settled here by 6th month (June), 1990. But during the 1984-1985 cyclone we were in our old village. In the 6th month (June), 61 families were provided employment and sent to this place. Other people were residing in the same place by that time. It was decided that, only if we (61 families) go first and join the works allotted, others would get their order notice (for employment); so we (61 families) came first and built houses. Houses means, not brick houses, just we made huts and we were residing. By the time we went to our work and back to our house (hut house), the house wasn’t existing; a May month cyclone (Chithirai puyal) took our house in the 1990 (may be wrong; he said they resettled only in June).

GV: In the 1990s, was there a cyclone?

R1: That’s a severe cyclone.

GV: Chithrai month (mid-April to mid-May) means it’s summer time.

R1: Yes, during Chithirai month, there would be severe cyclones.

R3: In that wind, the huts would fly away.

R1: That cyclone surge would last for 4 to 5 hours; but it would take everything on the way. It would uproot all the trees and other things on its way.

GV: Would it rain during that cyclone?

R1: Rain would be lesser; only the breeze would be very heavy. Rains’ time is Purattasi month (mid-Sept to mid-Oct), Aipassi month (mid-Oct to mid-Nov) and Karthi month (mid-Nov to mid0-Dec); only then we would receive rains. There would be cyclones apart from that. But during Chithirai month (mid-April to mid-May), there would be severe windy cyclones and it would devastate things.

GV: During that time, would you go fishing?

R1: NO! All those cyclones would happen suddenly; while we are fishing in the River, we would get its sign from the pattern of the clouds. Once we know about the cyclone, we would go to safer banks, fix the logs in the ground and tie boats to it; we would safety the boat. It would happen instantaneously in the Chithirai month (mid-April to mid-May). The cyclone that comes during the north east monsoon, can be observed naturally; by then no one would go fishing. But the cyclone that comes in the Chithirai month can't be determined by us; we can’t be aware of its timing. During the cyclone time, we would sense it. Oh mad, this wind has come (Ada paavingoo, Kaathu eduthu pochu). But this cyclone surge is weightier (intensity) than the cyclone that comes during the north west monsoon. It would knock out everything in just two or three hours.

GV: It’s just wind.

R1: Yes, it’s only wind.

R2: But it would hit us severely and go.

GV: Are there any incidents of such events?

R1: That is what I'm saying. While we were staying here in the year 1990, 61 families were here. He (R2) also came with me that time in that 61 families. Then our salary was 500 rupees (per month). World allotted in different places; some were given work in Kachipuram, some Thiruthani, Thiruvallur. In the south, Vandalore, Guduvanchery. They have to throw us in different places (for employment); while we are back, nothing exists in the village. Our children and family members were in the Government school; in the high school. When I came to the village, I was looking and thinking,”what is this? There is no house, even the children are not there.” The wind took the house to sea. All the 61 houses did not exist then.

R2: At that time, houses were only built with huts.

**00:50:05**

R1: While we are moving from our village, we should not build houses immediately. Only after everyone resettled here, we can start building houses; we had just built huts then. Then we used only palm leaves. Even the coconut leaves existed, but people mostly used palm leaves to build huts.

R2: Then the price of coconuts leaves were very much low, now it’s very high.

R1: Now the bricks and coconut leaves (keethu) cost the same.

GV: Why did you use palm leaves?

R1: Palm leaves are long lasting; if the coconut leaves only last for 2 years, palm leaves last for 5 years; it’s durable.

R2: Even, it (palm leaves) would last for 10 years. Then, there are paddy hays; paddy hay harvested with hands.

R1: the length of the hay would span our hand length. But those can’t be used now.

R2: It would last for 15 years; some houses (huts)might last for even 20 years.

R1: If we remove the hay that’s installed over the palm leaves for 2 or 3 years, then the palm leaves inside the hay would be as such, it would not degrade.

GV: Then did you have more palm trees?

R1: Yes, the region is full of palm trees; if you just spectate anywhere, you can only see palm trees.

R2: Now we can’t find any palm trees.

R1: In the 1991 summer cyclone, all the trees broke down and fell.

R2: Then there was Reddiyar house; they had many coconut trees that were also gone in the cyclone.

R1: The house in the center, they were living separately; the only family. They lived in our village security. There are from Kaspa, it’s in Andhra
R2: They lived with our security, they had 9 girl children. They all got married from here, there was no disturbance in their presence.

R1: One person from their family had 85 acres of land on the other bank of the River; they were wealthy in Andra, they sold all their land and bought land here; it happened before.

GV: What were they cultivating in that 85 acres?

R1: In that 85 acres, they have been farming paddy crops for some 25 acres; they had 4 pump sets (water motors).

R2: They used to bring people from other villages to work in their farms.

R1: There was a residence called Melur in our old village, they would bring people from there to harvest crops.

GV: Did women from your village used to work on the farm?

R1: No! No one would go from our village.

GV: Melur means, which place?

R1: That the colony (residence of lower class: SC/ST); they would only work during harvesting, for planting paddy samlings; they would be doing all the farm work.

R2: People from here would not go thinking, some might be joking about them.

R1: Our people would not go.

R1: Few from our village go for that work; but they would come back if people were joking about that; not in the farm field, but the people here.

GV: What else have they been planting?

R1: All other land was with coconut trees, palm trees.

R2: Palm was very plentiful here.

GV: Were there coconut trees?

R2: There would be some 100 coconut trees.

R1: Our place was full of palm trees; only when the company (NCTPS), the palm trees on the land were taken off. The palms would be close to one another, very much closer. If we go during the summer season; they (farm owner) would get us ice apples (nungu) from the farm tree. We ask them and get the palm; we would not take it without asking them.

GV: Then, this VGP (amusement park) came here, whom did they get the land from?

R1: A retired DSP (police officer) got the land from them and from the police officer VGP got that land.

R2: People from our village would not get things without their consent from theri farm.

R1: even if someone does that, the concerned people would be fined for their action. If any child does that, the person would know all the people in our village, they would complain to us that,”his son has done that”; then the village panchayat would fine them.

R2: It’s the village restrain; no one should take the farm things. People in the village would only help them, they would not disturb them.

GV: What was the extent of land owned by VGP?

R1: It was very vast. The land was spanning for 4 to 5 kilometers.

**00:55:05**

GV: Did you village exist when VGP was coming here to buy land?

R1: Yes, we existed in the same village (old village). VGP and we had several arguments, he told us our village did not exist before. Then officials from the government came and witnessed our village and said to him,”the village is present here, how can you say that village doesn't exist”.

GV: When did this happen?

R1: This happened in 1988 -1989. Then government officials came and surveyed our land by then. The VGP owner got the land by the year 1984 or 1985; during the 1984 cyclone, the person VGP was present here. In 1984, one entrance of the VGP (amusement park) was built.

GV: Is the compound there, was it built by VGP?

R1; Yes. You can see a globe-like statue at the entrance (on the opposite bank), even though it was built by VGP. The globe is enclosed by 2 hands, it’s like the globe is in his hand.

R2: When government officials came here, asked for the meaning of the globe statue. Then they commented, "Is that whole world in your hand? Could anyone do anything to you? Then a case was filed over him.

GV: Who was questioning the VGP owner?

R1: He was an IAS officer. We just thought he was installing something.

R2: But only after the officer told the meaning of the statue, we were able to understand what he had installed and its meaning.

GV: Then, those entrance is left as it is?

R1: Yes.

R2: A case filed over the VGP and he was only allowed to take the ‘moveable assets’; should not touch any immovable assets. He has even cut the grass and taken it.

GV: Why did he have to take the grass?

R2: He took it from here so that he can install that in the new VGP (in ECR)

AJ: You talked about ‘Madava’, ‘prawns’ and all those. Do any large fishes come into the River?

R1: Yes, Koduva. Each fish would weigh 10 to 12 kgs.

AJ: Other than that, are there any other big fishes that come to the River?

R1: The shark (surah). Earlier, the nets that are used in the sea should not be used in rivers. If anyone cast such nets in the River, we would capture the nets from them and then, we would have it in our village. After 2 days we would take it and give it to the police station; at that time village restrain (oooru kattupadu) was higher. Sea fishers also know about that. When they (maine fishers) can cast such nets is, during the Aipasi- Karthi months (mid-Oct to mid-Dec: NE monsoon season), the marine fishers can’t go to the sea as the government would notice the fisher not to travel to the sea for fishing. So, then the sea fisher had discussion with our elders from our village and they has been availed to to fish/catch prawns in the River for in Puratasi Aypasi and Karthigai (mid-Sept to mid-Dec) months; in this 3 months, they are allowed only to do fishing for 15 days in a month. Why because they were allowed for the food substance they need for their life and not for trade. They can catch and they can consume it; they have got the permissions in writing from our elders.

GV: Did they get that by writing?

R1: Yes, they got it from our Chettiyar *(the dominant male, mostly wealthy family in the fishers community who heads the village; the family receives the same privilege called ‘Chettiyar family’ and mostly descendants being the successor of that position).*

R2: It’s the contract between the two village heads; their village would have ‘village restrains’ and our village would have our own ‘village restrains’ (ooru kattupaadu). The system was so good then.

R2: No people would act against the ‘village restrain’. People were so genuine to it.

R1: We would not get into their village and they would not come to our village.

GV: Why did the VGP owner say that ‘this village didn't exist’?

R1: To acquire the remaining land that we were living in; that was his idea. He is a bloody criminal.

GV: What did you do?

R1: We filed a case over him stating,”how can he say that?’; he wanted to encroach on our land. Through the government, we 4 villages jointly filed a case over him.

GV: Who is your head?

R1: ‘Aarumugam Chettiyar’, he is dead by now. He was the village head and he was also the Panchayath head (local governance in the State). Our 4 villages were part of one Panchayat, he was the heading then.

**01:00:00**

AJ: Can you share about the sharks coming to the River?

R1: Shark would come from the sea, no one could get near the shark. If it bites anyone, they would become into pieces. Sharks were very much larger. Then people don’t cast nets; so, naturally the sharks would come to the creek; it would rise to the creek during the high tide. During the low tide, it would again get into the sea. Once we were casting our nets in the River, then the shark came into the creek. Sharks have 3 fins on their body; it would be like wings. Two on the sides and one on the top. While we are casting the nets in 4 ft. deep water next to the River bank, we could clearly see the shark coming from the sea. Once we saw that, we immediately climbed to our boat. But if we hadn't witnessed the shark, it would have killed us; it's a very large fish, it would definitely weigh more than 1 ton.

GV: When did this happen?

R1: It would have been 45 years before.

AJ: Have seen the sharks after coming to this village (new settlement)?

R1: No, after coming here I haven’t seen the shark. There I have seen; in the old village we should not cast nets then. The River was deep.

R2: The River was very deep.

R1: The River was very much wider than, it was wider than the current width of the River. We can see the sea from here. Now we can see the sea from here. Are you able to see the sea?

GV: No.

R1: Naturally the River very much wider, from River you can see the sea and from the sea you can see the River. If the flood comes, it would automatically rupture the sand deposited in the River mouth and River mouth opens then.

R2: The River becomes wider at that time and it would also become deeper.

R1: The flood flow in the River would wash out everything in the River; I was 10 or 12 year older by then.

AJ: Are you able to catch Koduva fish now?

R1: many species have gone extinct. When this wastewater, the effluents from the companies, wastes from the hospitals drained in the RIver, we can’t see the natural fishes in the River; many species has gone extinct.

RK: What species have gone extinct?

R1: We can’t see ‘Koduva’ fish. Then a fish called ‘Pacha kutti’, this fish has completely disappeared. Then Pasuva, eerkaa, mottachi, nethili, all this has been extinct.

R3: Thooradi fish, mattuvaan, kelanga, all that have gone after the wastewater being drained into the River. Even the sea fishers would love to consume the River fishes more than the sea fishes.

R1: Now people are afraid of consuming the River fishes.

R3: It's hard to eat this fish.

R1: Because, any fish consumed from the River has the oil smell.

RK: Do people love River fish more than sea fish?

R3: Yes, they love the River fish so much. You can also check with other village people about their preference of fishes in the past.

R1: River fishes are that much tastier.

R3: They would love it so much.

R1: They would catch the sea fishes; but they would buy our fishes to eat; the fishes used to be very much tastier.

R3: The river used to be very good; it would be very beautiful to visit the RIver. There would be plenty of fishes in the River.

R1: Now it’s all lost.

GV: You said in the past, the sand blocking the RIver mouth would be ruptured and taken by flood. Why do such things happen?

R1: The force of the water flow would be much higher, so River would rupture the sand deposited in the River mouth.

GV: When was the last time this happened?

R1: In 1984, there was a severe cyclone.

GV: Then, River not need to be dredged.

R1: Yes; there is no need for that, if the lake shutter gates are opened; if it is opened today in the day, the water would arrive at night time. The water force would clear the sand heaps in the sides of River mouth; once the water flow ruptures a part of the sand ridge, that would continue to widen and clear the sand deposited; that would happen naturally.

**01:05:02**

GV: Then, Is dredging required today?

R1: You see there, the dredging is happening today.

GV: Why do you think River is pushed to such a situation?

R1: When all these companies in the surrounding region are established, the RIver is deposited with sludge; because of that there is no sand in the River. In particular places, if you get 3 ft beneath the River bed, you find the sand; in that 3 ft it’s completely mud/sludge is present. If you take that sludge in your hand, you can sense an oily smell. Even now if you can, we see experiment. If we smell that, it would be awkward for us. Then where would be the (organisms) growth in that sludges; how the prawns and fishes would grow? And how can we consume that?

GV: Then you think, the sludge/mud and the River flow has connections?

R1: Yes. the River (/sediment) is getting encroached (adaipattu-pochu); the places which had 10 ft depth are not having even 1 ft depth. Earlier, we couldn’t cross the River due to the it’s depth; now it’s shallower.

GV: I have a doubt; earlier, the River was deeper, the flood water gets into the sea; now it’s shallower, does the water enter the Village?

R1: Yes, water level would elevate.

GV: Did water flood the village in 2015?

R1: not in 2015, but it happened in Gaja cyclone (2018). Water surged to that level (showing the extension) on the bank.

GV: Earlier, had such things happened?

R1: No, the water would not enter the River; the water would flush into the sea directly.

R3: We were safe because of the RIver, if there were no RIver, we would be done by the flood; the village would vanish.

R1: During the Tsunami, the sea water entered the land for 15 to 20 kms (might be through River).

R3: Here that wasn’t impacting so much.

RK: Wasn’t the water entering the village?

R1: It came into the village.

R3: See that place, there I was holding my boat that was washing in the water. At that, we were only 7 or 8 people; to safety the boats; we were catching the boats one by one and gettin it to safer places.

R1: During the Tsunami, the water elevated higher than that pillar (VNC bridge).

R3: It was a fascinating thing to witness.

R1: People witnessed some and ran away from the village.

R3: It crosses the River across the Railway track; After some the water would be returning in the River. Again the water was rising into the River from the sea.

R1: exactly it was 8:15 am here during the 2004 Tsunami.

R3: We only 7 people stayed in the village to safeguard the boats. Everyone from the village ran away. We were even safetying the boats of the fishers who were not present with us. Even then, we could catch and hold some boats.

R1: We came back after fishing (in the River) and we were cleaning our nets. We are seeing then, the water from the sea is surging into River, we got astonished seeing the level of water surge happening from the sea. The water is washing the boats, dredgers that’s on the way. Then we got frightened about it and we started running from here.

GV: You escaped because of the River mouth.

R1: Yes. Not just our village, the people in the whole surrounding region of 15 km were safer because of the River mouth.

R3: If not, the region would have vanished, if the River wasn’t existing.

R1: you know how people died on Marina beach because of the Tsunami. If there was no River, not sure how many people would have died in the surrounding 15 km region (might be on the shore)

GV: After the Tsunami, did the characteristics of the River change?

R1: No, it didn’t change.

GV: Did the River get cleaner?

R1: The River looked in the red soil (chemman) color.

R3: Yes, River was a darker color. We were here catching and holding the boats while the Tsunami was approaching, we saw the dark colored water, I didn’t understand how this color change happened with the water. The sea used to be green in color, but the water from such sea was darker in color.

R1: Within, one - one and half hour the water got returned from the River to the sea.

R2: I remained with that fear of Tsunami for at least for 2 to 3 months; while the water flows, it thinks as if the Tsunami is arriving.

**01:09:57**

RK: I have a doubt; you told me that you escaped because of the River mouth. In the same way, Marina beach has the Cooum River, but did the people were impacted in Marina beach?

R1: Many people came for walking; most of the people who died were people who came for walking; they didn't know about the Tsunami. We ran from here by boarding Trains to Thiruvallur, Arakkonam. Everyone left the village after the Tsunami.

GV: You said that hot water is discharged into the River; what are the impacts of the hot water in the River?

R1: Because of the hot water; we can’t get into the River and do fishing. This hot water would flow to 6 km from here; the fishes, prawns are dying in the River. Even us humans cannot withstand the hot water, then how the naturally surviving organisms in the River would survive in the hot water.

R2: the living being in the River gets completely destroyed.

R1: Even if we do fishing in that hot water, all our body hair would be dead, it would not be growing; sometimes being in the hot water would change the hairs’ color.

RK: Can you share about the ‘Paambu oodi’ (the snake canal);

R1: ‘Pambu’ canal is on the opposite bank; the hot water is discharged via the ‘pambu oodai’ and gets into the River.

R2: Water discharged here is traveling several kms.

R1: Even after people fishing 2 or 3 km away from here are experiencing the impacts of the hot water; the heat is felt there. Because during the h9ight tide, this water would be traveling upstream of the RIver.

GV: What is the importance of the River mouth? Good things about the River mouth?

R1: The things to state about the natural characteristics of River mouth are: because of the River mouth the sea water enters the River every hour 6 hours and River water drains in the sea for 6 hours. This cycle happens naturally; this happens all the time.

GV: What are the benefits of the high tide and low tide?

R1: During high tide, the fishes would crawl up into the River; then the fish production in the River increases; the Fishes would also get more water spread during the high tide and it’s good for fishes production in the River. When this company effluents were started to discharge in the River; since then there is no chances for the fishes to Enter into the River. They are returning to the sea. Because when the fishes come into the River, they die. The fishes don’t like the water stinkiness. So I chose to live in the sea.

GV: Then, this means the sea fishes were found in this River.

R1: Yes, it sea fishes were found in the River 45 years before.

GV: I have heard that sea fishes and River fishes are different. What are the River fishes and what are the sea fishes?

R1: In the River we cans see Kodava; this is a very large fish, than we have ‘madava’, ‘Kelanga’, ‘madhi-kenda meen’; that is also called ‘pachakutti’. Then ‘Paara’, it’s also found in the River and also in the sea. ‘Koora kathala’ is a very large fish; those species have been extinct in the River for 40 years.

GV: Why did it go extinct?

R1: When the company effluent was discharged in the River; the fish went extinct; its production in the River was completely stopped. Even now we can’t find it in the River, we can only find it in the sea.

R2: Earlier, if we just cast the nets, we could catch a group of fish (koora kathala)

R1: We would catch plenty. Even if the fish size would be very large, there won’t be any small ‘koora kathala’ fish in the nets.

GV: Can’t you find such large fishes in the River?

R2: No, it doesn't exist.

R1: that species is extinct. 45 years ago; during my childhood, I was very much afraid of the River. Because, large-sized fishes would crawl up. I am so afraid of the River thinking,”the large fishes might bite us if we get into the River”. Now that is no more as such fishes are no more rising from the sea.

R2: There were many fishes in the past, ‘Kelangyaan’, ‘pachakutti’, ‘pasuva’; such kinds of fishes were existing in the River, those fishes were produced from the sea; that don’t exist here any more; they are vanished, we can’t see that any where.

GV: Now what fishes are you caught in the River?
R2: There are no fishes, we can only catch prawns.

**01:14:58**

GV: Do you only get the prawns in the River?

R1: Prawns and ‘madava’ fish are only caught in the River and a fish called ‘Thullal’, only those are also found in the River. We can’t see any other fishes in the River.

R2: More than 10 species have been completely lost in the River; there is no production of those species in the River.

R1: ‘Nethili’ fishes are completely gone from this River. In the past we used to catch the ‘Nethili’ fish even during the day time. We could clearly see the fishes movement in the River; during low tide, the fishes would be moving to the sea, then we would be casting our nets in the daytime. We would cast the nets across the River, from that bank to this bank. We would catch 4 to 5 baskets of ‘Nethili’ fishes at that time; when there weren’t any nets like the one we have now.

R2: When this water (waste water) came into the River, the species (Nethili fish) vanished from the River. Even sometimes we see the whole prawns in the River would be dead.

R1: If the hot water is discharged in the River, how will the species in the RIver would sustain? It all would die. Today, if it’s stated that we are having good income from the River, out of 70 boats in the village, at least 40 boats would be in the River to catch prawns. Today, only 2 or 3 boats ride for fishing; even they have to travel some 8 kms from here to fish/catch prawns.

GV: Only there, the species are caught?

R1: Yes, only there they were able to catch. Others are going for contract jobs.

GV: To restore the River, what should be done to the River?

R1: The RIver should be completely cleaned; this water (waste water from teh Buckingham canal should be stopped.

R2: More than cleaning the River, that water (waste water) should be stopped.

R1: Yes, stopping the waste water (from the Buckingham) is the priority. Even if the government desilt the RIver, without stopping the waste water, there is no use; the companies effluents should not enter the River. There would be good growth (of the species) only if the water is clean. If the waste water comes, the fishes and prawns in the RIver would die;

R2: The fishes can’t survive in that water.

R1: The companies (industries) effluents and the waste from the hospitals in the city are discharged to the River.

GV: You are saying that ‘Kazhivu thanni’ (waste water) should be stopped

R1: Yes, that’s the priority.

GV: You told about a place, where the canals runs to

R1: Yes, that’s the ‘Paraval’ (flood plans)

GV: You were mentioning it by another name

R2: Ganjeri

R1: Yes, Ganjeri.

GV: You said that Ganjeri like places are destroyed. Is it possible to create such places again?

R2: Factories has been built (Vallur TTP)

R1: Now, a complete factory has been built over it. When this company (Vallur TTP) was built over, 25 acres of salt pan was filled with sand; that place was destroyed.

GV: Was the Ganjeri destroyed?

R1: Yes it’s no more; that place was blocked (reclaimed) and the company was built over it.

R2: The water was land filled (reclaimed) and only the company (Vallur TTP) was built over. Then it was ‘Kaluppu man boomi’ (a kind of soil)

R1: Before that company salt was produced in that region; it was all salt pans. People were working in the salt pans.

R2: It was completely salt pan land; to which the canals run.

GV: Are you saying the salt pans as ‘Ganjeri’?

R1: No! No! No! It’s completely different. Salt production place is different; no one would get into that place (Ganjeri).

R2: No one should go there.

GV: Is that a restriction?

R1: Yes, it’s our village’s restriction. No one would get into that. Because only from there the prawns would grow and get into the larger River. So no one would go there. There would be plenty of prawns, but we would not go there to catch them. That’s the village restriction.

GV: Then you would only catch the prawns, when the prawns come to the River

R1: Yes, we would catch only then.

GV: You would not catch the prawns in the River.

R1: Yes, no one would even get near that (Ganjeri).

RK: Where do the prawns produce?
R1: Now those places have been destroyed completely by building factories over it. Now sand is dumped over that place.

R2: Several places, where water was existing, all those have been filled with sand.

GV: Were there any ‘Ganjeri’ here?

R1: Yes, there was one here. You see a tower there, back side of that Tower it was completely Ganjeri. The place where the company (Vallur TTP) is full of ‘Ganjeri’.

R2: It's a very large space.

R1: It just stated the boundary; it would be more than 25 acres.

R2: It would look like River.

R1: It’s the same extent as the River we see now. At the entrance, we could only see a canal. If we enter the canal and travel 2 kilometers inside, we could see the huge Ganjeri; it’s very vast. Only from there lots of prawns would come to the River, which we would be catching. Now that place is lost. Government came and took all the places they wanted.

GV: Now such places (Ganjeri) has been destroyed; if you need good prawn production, what should be done?

R1: The factories should not be built in such places (Ganjeri).

GV: Now it’s been built here. What about such an existing place?

R1: Now in one such place (Ganjeri), one more company is being started. We can see that place from here.

R2 (to R1): Is that Oornamedu?

R1: It’s next to Oornamedu village.

R2: I think the company is built over that place (Ennore SEZ TPP)

R1: Yes, it’s almost done. From here it would be around 6 kms. There exists another ‘paraval (flood plains)’ like the one that existed here before; even now it exists, If required even that ‘Paraval’ would be filled and used by the government (reclaimed); you see one head stack over there; that tree is blocking you, come here from you can see that.

**01:20:30**

**R1:** While fishing, we would be on the east side. Those ‘praval’ would be on our west side. If the company is built, even that water body would also be completely lost.

**01:21:25**

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