**REIMAGINING THE GOOD CITY FROM ENNORE CREEK**

Interview Transcription

**Interview Information**

Interviewer/s: Antony Jude, Gajendran V., Mohammed Sakib, Raju K. Sangeetha R

 (AJ,GV,MS,RK, SR)

Place of interview: Athipattu village

Date of interview: 28.05.2023

Transcription by: RK

Respondents: R1 (former salt labor),

 R3 (former salt pan tenant)

 R2

**Interview Notes**: In this interview he recollects his memory from the British era, he was a salt laborer to a dominant caste family. He shares about salt pans, salt commissionerate, Jawas, his work, salt laborers, their employment rights with the government. Another respondent from the salt pans tenants family shares her memory of childhood and happening in the salt pans and her house.

**Transcription Notes:** R1 is the laborers in their salt pans since British time and used to visit their house daily as a routine. They would feed him daily (but they practice discrimination even in feeding) and the R3 is the mother she speaks from a upper caste tone and R2 is the daughter, he is helping the laborers to get their employment rights after laborers their losing their livelihood after the acquisition of the salt pans land.

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**00:00:00**

GV: In these salt pans, can you share about that place?

R1: All that were salt pans; here Central government’s javan’s were residing; they are security to the salt pans; they would make sure if the salts are not robbed from this palace. Then white men were ruling. There were 30 Javan’s here; salt should not get out of this place, if anyone has to come inside, they have to get orders (/permissions) to get into the salt pans.

GV: Where were the Javan’s place?

R1: It’s just nearby, all that have become shrubs; all the places were left abandoned; then it was used while the white men were ruling the state.

GV: Have you seen the British people?

R1: Yes, I have seen them. After we fought with the White men, slowly all that got cleared; the javan’s were taken from here. Later this place got completely from them. But when they were ruling, if anyone had to come inside, there would be an office in the Entrance, the person had to get signatures and permission to get in.

GV: For what the person has got permission? Is it to get into the Javan’s place or the Salt pans?

R1: Javan was the salt security.

GV: Would the salt be stored in one place?

R1: Yes. All these places are the Central government’s place. There were 3 supervisors for the Javans. When the Whitemen left the world, all became free.

GV: Can you share about the old ear?

R1: If we just take some salt from here, the Javan’s would arrest and take us to the Police station. The salt would not get out from here illegally. There would be petitions coming to Javans. The person who has to take the letter to all the Javans in their respective post (/place. If the person taking the letters to the Javans slept in between anywhere; The Javen would write a report about the person that he has slept in the way. Then that person has to do the sand work (mannu velai) as a punishment.

GV: Then during night time security, the Javan has to take the paper (/letter) from one post to another post, if any Javan didn’t reach by time they would be given punishments.

R1: Yes. The letter would start from here in the office, I have to take it to Javan, then the Javan has to take it to another person; it would continue in sequence, that is how it would work.

GV: What else happened in this region?

R1: It was only salt works; all these places were only salt. I did all the work in the salt pans. Then it was only 1.25 rupees per one sack of salt, now it’s 125 rupees per sack. I would harvest the salt from salt pans, pump water to the pans and I would do all the work.

GV: When the one sack of salt was 1.25 rupees?

R1: It was during the white men period (before independence). We were promised employment, but we didn’t get any; we survived only because of the salt pans.

GV: Did white men punish if the salt were stolen from here?

R1: Yes, if the salts are stolen; they would jail the person. If I had stolen the salt, the Javan would take me to the Jail; that is their duty, they are the security to the salts here; a case would be filed on the person who has stolen the salt.

GV: Have seen if any person was arrested like that?

R1: Yes. At night boats would be traveling in the River, but no one should catch fish in the River.

GV: How about in the morning?

R1: Even in the morning, no one should catch fishes in the River. It’s the law then.

GV: Then in the Ennore River, should no one catch fishes?

R1: It’s allowed only in some places.

GV: Then who would catch the fishes in the River?

R1: It would grow as it is. If any boat goes, the fishes would jump into the boat. As no would be catching the fishes, if the boat goes in the River, seeing the logs pushing the boats, the fishes would jump and get into the Boat; it the dharbar (?).

GV: When did the people start fishing in the River?

R1: Once the white men left.

GV: Then fish was not caught only after the British left India. Until then no fish was caught.

R1: Yes.

GV: Then all these places were securities were employed. If any one has to enter the salt pans, they have to sign and get in.

R1: Yes, there was an office here. There white men would be there; any person had to ask them and then Javan would accompany the person; the person could visit the salt pans.

GV: What about the laborers working in the salt pans? Do they have to sign the letter to get in?

R1: No. Then we had ‘Yetham’ (water fetching device); From the River, the water would come in canals; from that canal we would draw water at nights (yethi viduvoom); then the Javan’s would let us in, If not they would not let us in. Once the British left this place was free. Then we would drain the water into the salt pans and we would be back.

GV: Are Javan’s are Indians or White men?

R1: Javan are our people; they would be like how our police officers would be.

GV: Wouldn’t white men be Javans?

R1: No, white men would be positioned as higher officers. They would be coming here in cycles.

**00:10:24**

GV: Where the salts would be stored here?

R1: It would be stored as a heap on a ridge (modu mela pottu irupaanga), then it would be loaded in sacks and taken via boats in the canals. In boats the sacks were taken to the ‘Basin bridge’, from there the salt would be taken in trucks. Even the wooden logs would only be taken there.

GV: Were the salt pans owned by the local people or by the British?

R1: Incharge of the salt pans were British, but it was with only the local people. This is how we work in the farm fields. Salt traders would come and get the salts from here.

GV: I am asking about the British time?

R1: The tenant can sell the salts to anyone; but the British would get commissions (money) from them. For a one sack of salt; ¼ rupees (25 paise) would be given as commission. With that they would pay salaries to the Javans. For a Javan, the salary is 70 rupees per month.

W1: We two; Chandrika madam and I would walk and visit all the villages (regarding the salt workers employment rights); we walked and we fought for their rights in this place. We would not regularly go for shoppings; we monthly or once in three months get to Parrys’ and get the groceries from the godowns; we don’t have regular practice of going to shops; we would get it stored.

GV: Yes it’s time consuming.

W1: For us during Covid time, we didn’t struggle much as we had the basic necessities in our house.

R1: Being alone is no issue; there would be no quarrel or fights with neighbours.

GV: Then whoever can produce salt but they have to pay money to the Britishers.

R1: yes, they have to pay salaries to Javans.

GV: Were there any Javans from the local area or Athipattu?

R1; They were all Tamils but not from here.

GV: What are the works you were doing in the salt pans?

R1: I used to stamp the salt pans to get it ready for production; I used to harvest the salt by drawing with a ‘plank tool’ (katta pottu vazhippom), I would get the bunds of the salt pans ready and charge the water into the salt pans. I would also pick salts from salt pans and lift them to a storing place.

**00:15:00**

GV: Wouldn't salt be taken to the salt bungalow and stored there?

R1: Tenants would be storing in their own places, if we harvest our paddy, we would take it home and store it, likewise they would be storing in their own places.

GV: If the salts are sacked, would the British people come on that day?

R1: That’s different people, who would be employed to hold and fill the sacks with salts.

GV: Who are they?

R1: It’s only our people (locals).

GV: Would they be working for the British people?

R1: They (British) would not come here.

GV: Then, how would they get the commissions?

R1: That would be paid to the government, only if they (tenants) pay the commission, the British government would provide the order to sack the salts. They have to go to the office and get the order, if not they British would not let you get the salts.

GV: After the order has been given, how would the British calculate the number of the sacks taken from the salt pans?

R1: For that, they have an office to give the order.

GV: Would any officer come from that office?
R1: No.

GV: Then how would the British know about the quantity of salt taken by them?

R1: If we are getting orders for 30 sacks, we have to fill only 30 sacks. If we fill more sacks, the boat man would not load the extra sacks. We have to produce the order receipt to the boatman. The boat would take the salt to Basin bridge. From there, it would be loaded to lorries. There merchants would be present. Even the casuarina logs would be taken there. Even the rice from Andhra would be taken there.

GV: What kind of work did you do during British times?

R1: I worked in salt pans.

GV: What kind of works?

R1: We have to stamp the salt pans, we have to pull the log (uppu medhikannum, katta podanum), and we have to store water in the salt pans. We have to let in water with 5 degrees ( a measure of salinity), after that that would be produced in 5 days. Then we have to fetch the salt and shed it in the banks of salt pans. There were more restrictions.

GV: Then you told about the Yetham and Yerakkam (up and down)

R1: That, we have to let the water in and out of the salt pans (thanni yeraikkanum).

GV: When would you let the water into the salt pans?
R1: The boats would be coming in the canals, then water would be filled in the canal (high tide); at that time we would be irrigating the water from the canal.

GV: When would the water come into the canal?

R1: When the water from the sea comes in the River; sea water arrives in the canal. At other times, water in the canal would be drained away. During the high tide time, we would fetch the water and irrigate the water (yetham pottu yeraippom). If the water reaches 5 degree (salinity), we would let the water into the Paathi (the salt pans where the salt is cultivated).

GV: Were you looking at the degree (salinity) at that time?

R1: Yes.

**00:20:01**

If the device shows zero measure, we would let the water into the salt pans, we would let the water only when the device measure is 5 degrees.

GV: Whom did you work for?

R1: I worked for them ( \_\_\_ R2), they only had, they only had raised me till now. She suffered a lot.

GV: After independence, could anyone get into the salt pans?
R1: Yes, it’s free. Anyone can get inside.

GV: Weren’t Javans existing at that time?

R1: Javans were there for some time and later they were taken away from here.

GV: Why were they taken away? Were they required even after british?

R1: Then, there was no control over the salt pans.

GV: After independence, do the tenants have to pay for talking salts?

R1: Yes, even today that has to be paid.

GV: To whom, that has to be paid?

R1: To the central government (to salt commissionerate).

GV: Till when the Yetham ( water fetching device) was used?

R1: That would be fixed. Have you not seen that?

GV: No, I haven’t seen it. Can you draw how ‘Yetham’ would look like?

**Sketches \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

R1: This side a person would be standing, he would be moving to and fro. This bucket would get into the canal and fetch the water. When the person stamps the log inbetween, the bucket would come up and water would be drained into the saltpans.

GV: Later, were the motors used in the salt pans?

R1: Yes.

GV: when was that?

R1: After independence.

R2: Oil engine motors were used then, not motors.

GV: Do you remember the year?

R2: It would be around 1968 or 1970.

R3: Tenants having one acre or two acres would be using the ‘Yetham’. But tenants having 5 or 10 acres would be using motors to fetch the water, the water from the ‘Yetham’ wouldn’t be enough for them.

GV: How many acres of salt land you had?

R2: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (not clear); we had 4 acres in one place and 12 acres in another place. But still now we haven’t received any compensation while acquiring our lands.

**00:25:02**

GV: Were all those lands belonging to the salt department and were you leasing all those lands?

R2: It’s not like agriculture to pay taxes (gisthi) yearly. The saltpans tendered thoroughly every year. Tenants have to pay taxes for the number of salt sacks produced from the salt pans. It’s not like agricultural land; for those lands sometimes we would pay taxes, sometimes we would not pay and sometimes we would pay taxes later. But it’s not like that for salt lands, we have to mandatorily pay taxes to access the salt pans; after auctioning the salt pan lands, for every sack of salt, the tenants have to pay commission money to the government.

GV: Then, do the government officials stand while filling the salts in the sacks?

R2: Yes, the government officials would be standing there. Earlier they used to be present, but later there would be no officials monitoring us.

GV: Then you have given the accounts of the number of salt sacks.

R2: Yes, we have to provide the accounts to the government. The government would be providing a form to fill, after filling the form the government would be commissioning the amount based on the number sacks of salt. Only after getting the receipt of the amount commissioned for the number of salt sacks, we would load the salt sacks from the salt pans. We also had two own boats for shipment of salts.

R1: Those eras are different from the current era. They (other workers unions) have taken all our jobs. They don’t know any jobs in the salt pans, but they got government jobs.

GV: What kind of work would you be doing in the salt pans?

R1: It’s somewhat similar to farming work. We have to plough the land, have to levelise the pans, have to irrigate (salt) water and dry the salt water and salt then the salt would be produced. Then we have to gather salt from the salt pans.

GV: One of the work is stamping the salt pans; who would do that work?

R1: It’s us, we would only be doing all that work.

GV: Who would be gathering and fetching salt from the pans?

R1: That work would be done by different people.

GV: Who would be doing that work?

R1: Even, we can also do that, but generally some other would be employed to fetch the salts.

GV: Who are they?

R1: It’s our people only, but separate people would be allotted for different work. If 5 people are working from my home, we 5 people would gather and remove the salt s from the salt pans, if others join we have to share the wages with them.

GV: When did the salt pan stop working?
R1: Only after the ETPS was commissioned here.

GV: Why what happened, the smoke came to the salt pans and salt became black. Even if the salts are produced, the salts are black in color; those salts are of no use. So the salt production was stopped. The salt was not good, no one was buying those salts.

GV: After independence, were the people allowed for fishing in the River?

R1: After independence, where are the restrictions? Our country belonged to us.

**00:30:14**

Fishers started people in the River. During white men (Britishers’) time, people can’t fish in the River.

GV: What would they do if people caught fish?

R1: Police would take the people catching fish and remand them in jails. Then it would become the case. Now it’s not an issue; after mahatma Gandhi got independence for India.

GV: Then people started fishing after independence.

R1: Yes.

AJ: You said that for Jawans, the salary is 70 Rupees (per month), what were the wages for the salt laborers?

R1: It would be one rupee or two rupees, it changes over time. To remove the salts from salt pans and store it at some distance, the tenant would be providing wages for 4 laborers, but 2 laborers would complete the 4 laborers' work (human power) and they would be getting wages for 4 laborers.

GV: Then, you get wages for the amount of work to be done and you share with yourselves.

R1: Yes.

GV: Then, what was the wages for a laborer?

R1: It would be 1.5 or 1 rupees.

GV: What are your children doing?

R1: All of them got married. There is one son, he would never give any of his salary to us.

MS: In this salt canal, what were all shipped earlier?

R1: Only the salt shipping boats. Salts would be filled in sacks and it would be loaded to the boats, which would be using the salt canals for their movements. Then the salts would be auctioned to the merchants.

GV: Other than salts, what else were shipped in those canals?

R1: It was only salts.

AJ: Weren’t the wooden logs shipped through those canals?

R1: All those things would be shipped in the Buckingham canal. There are separate offices for the boats to register to travel in the Buckingham canal. If not, the officials would get caught if the boats traveled without permission.

AJ: After the decommissioning of the salt pans, what kind of work the salt laborers chose to do?

R1: They worked in the farm fields for some time.

AJ: What other work people are doing after the decline of Agriculture in this region?

R1: Some do Agriculture; now there is no water to do Agriculture.

GV: What kind of crops are cultivated in this region?

R1: Paddy crops, green grams (pacha pairu)

00:35:00

GV: Where did the farm field exist?

R1: Those were existing in our village.

GV: Where do you get the water to irrigate farms?
R1: It would come from Poondi lake; at that time, lake water was supplied to us. Once the Poondi lake was commissioned to supply water to the city, the water supply to our region was stopped. Since then, farmers in this region have relied on the rainwater for farming. Later borewell was used. Later the company came and there was no agriculture.

GV: Do you remember what kind of paddy was cultivated?

R1: Paddy that would be harvested in 3 months, 4months and 6 months were grown here.

GV: Do you remember, what kind of paddy crops were cultivated?
R1: ‘Sirumani, vadasamba’, these 6 month crops were cultivated.

GV: How would ‘Sirumani’ paddy look?

R1: It would be reddish in color, it's a 6 month crop. In those times we wouldn’t use any fertilizers, we would only be using trash (wastes).

GV: What kind of waste would you be using?

R1: The waste we would get from our house (garden), the cow dung, the paddy straw and all that wastes. All these were used as manure for cultivation.

GV: Were fertilizers used in the fields?
R1: No, to my knowledge fertilizers were not used when I was working.

GV: Is farming done now?

R1: Where? All that agricultural fields have been changed into houses now.

GV: How many houses came in this village?

R1: The population has increased; at the time of independence to India, there were only 40 crore people. Now it has increased. Bharathiyar sang about this at that time. Now it has crossed 120 crores.

GV: Do people from outside come here to work and settle here?

R1: Yes, people from Andhra and other places come here. They are also working well.

RK: Were outsiders working in the salt pans?

R1: People from surrounding villages used to work in the salt pans.

GV: How did you get water for irrigating farm fields?

R1: It would come from Poondi lake via canals.

GV: What is the name of the canal?

R1: It would be like a small River. There would be a dam (anaicut) in the River, from there a canal would carry the water to the agricultural land in this region; later the canals would be closed in that region.

GV: What is the name of the River?

R1: The River that runs via Periyapalayam; the water would come from Poondi and it would reach us. The canal would be opened only during the agricultural season, during other times the water released in the canals would be closed. Now population has increased and their is no water, so there is no agriculture.

GV: Is there any well irrigation system (kenathu paasaanam)?

R1: There was no well then.

GV: Are there any borewell irrigations?

R1: Motor came after current came to this place, earlier only the oil (petro chemical) engines were used.

GV: When did the oil engine arrive?

R1: I am not sure about it, I was running the oil engines while I used to work. I used to do all the work.

RK: Why did you run the oil engineer?

R1: To irrigate the salt water to the salt pans from the canal. In the office, hydrometers would be present; with that we used to measure the salinity and then irrigate the salt pans.

**00:40:12**

Only after measuring the salinity we have to draw water from the canals. They (A, the tenant of salt pans) suffered a lot (to help the laborers).

GV: Who are ‘Kankaanis’?

R1: ‘Kankaanis’ are for 10 laborers; people who supervise (mestri work) for 10 laborers are called ‘Kankaanis’. They would arrive from Thoothukudi, they would bring salt laborers from there. A ‘Kankaani’ would do any work required for the tenants, he would make sure of the shelter, food for the salt laborers he brings in. If a tenant has some 4 acres of land, the Kankaani would employ and supervise the work in their salt pans with the salt laborers he brought from Thoothukudi.

GV: How do they identify the ‘Kankaanis’?

R1: There are there in Thoothukodi, we name such people as ‘maestri’, they would be termed such person as ‘Kankaani’; that’s the difference.

GV: Would people from here go to Thoothukudi and bring them here?

R1: They would be coming here looking for work in the salt works.

AJ: How would they come here?

R1: They would come to the transportation that was available then.

GV: What is the work of the Mesthri here?

R1: We are terming people as Mesthri, they are using the word ‘Kankaani’; that’s their language.

GV: What were the works of ‘Kankaani’?

R1: They would be doing the salt pan work.

GV: What are the different salt pan works?

R1: Drawing the salts from salt pans, stamping the salt pans, gathering the salts, storing the salt, all those works would be done by them. In those works, some would prefer some works, some workers would not prefer certain works; all those would be shared with peoples.

GV: Where would they be staying?

R1: They get the house rental amount from the employer. Additionally their travel expenses from and to Thoothukodi would be provided. And also the wages.

GV: Would women come from there?

R1: No, I have not seen it. Only men would be coming from there.

AJ: Where would they be staying?

R1: They would stay, wherever they can and they would pay the rent; tenants have to get the rental houses for them.

AJ: Are the tenants in incharge?

R1: Yes, they are only bringing the salt pan workers.

GV: Would they (laborers) not lay tents (kotttai) and stay next to the salt pans.

R1: Yes, but they would not stay next to salt pans. The water would come in salt pans.

GV: I heard that in salt pans, salts would be stolen. For that would any of the workers employed as security?

R1: For that Jawans would be there.

GV: That’s doing the Britisher time. I am asking about the post-British period.

R1: Yes, people would go for that.

GV: Have you worked in salt pans as night security?

R1: Yes, I have; I would go often for that.

GV: Who would get those?

R1: That some would take it and sell it for money.

**00:45:00**

GV: What would you do while staying there at Night?

R1: I would get to the salt pans just to run motor (to irrigate water)

GV: Would you only run the motor at night? Would you not run a motor in the daytime?

R1: We would also run the motor during the daytime.

R2: At night times, a theft current (thiruttu current) connection would be used.

R3: The government would cut the electricity services to the motor if we don’t pay money for the current charges. So, the motor is operated at nights with theft current connections. The officials would not know if we are using the theft current; he didn’t know much about electricity. But once he caught us and removed all the theft connections given. Sometimes, I would get up early in the morning at 5 AM and I would run both the motor and oil engines to irritate the water from canals. But we would only say to the government officials that we are running the oil engines to draw water, even if we use the motor using theft current. In the morning we would use only the oil engines and at night we would run the current motors. Last time I remember the current bill charge was four thousand rupees. Then we started using only the oil engines.

RK: From which year electricity exists in this region?

R1: I don’t remember that.

AJ: Would you not be frightened of being alone at nights in the salt pans?

R1: Once I ate food at 9 PM and went to the salt pan. Then someone came on my way, I followed them, and later they disappeared. It was strange to me.

GV: Have seen the goats?

R1: Yes, I have seen.

**00:50:06**

GV: At night times, while going to the irrigate water the salt pans; what if any come to rob the salts?

R1: I would let them take it. There would be 4 people, what can we do about them. We have to be silent, what if they beat us? They would only take 2 or 3 ‘marakka’ (unit of volume). They would sell those salts and get rice or some groceries for their houses.

GV: Are they local people or outsiders?

R1: they would be coming from the surrounding villages, they are locals only. Sometimes, some known people would come, sometimes some unknown people would come. I would be traveling alone at nights, so I would not bother about it concerning my safety.

GV: Have you leased any of the salt pans?

R1: No I haven’t leased any, I only worked in the salt pans.

RK: What are the salt pans (aalam) you worked with?

R1: No I don’t remember the names.

RK: Do you know the license numbers?

R1: No.

GV: How many years you are working for them ( \_\_\_\_\_R2’s family)

R1: When I was 9 years old, I started working for them ( \_\_\_\_\_R2’s family). They are only taking care of me.

MS: What is your age now?
R1: more than 85.

AJ: You said that you have worked in farm fields; What kind of animals hinder farming?

R1: Yes, some pigs would chase people to bite them, people used to hide from that.

R2: Pigs, snakes, rabbits were seen in the farm fields.,

RK: Would birds visit the salt pans?

R1: Yes, birds would come to the salt pans.

RK: What kind of bird, I don’t know all that. There is a bird called ‘Usthaan’, the Jawan’s bird. If that bird shouts, \_\_\_\_\_ (not so clear: 54:27) Jawan would come out. That6 bird even exists now.

GV: Did ‘Usthaan’ was raised by Jawan?

R1: No, it would shout if the bird sees people, it would shout sighting any cows. Hearing that bird's voice, Jawan would come out and see if someone or something had come to their place. Even those birds are found now, but not that much like before.

**00:55:00**

AJ: What is the color of that bird?

R1: It would look like grey chicken (aal kaatti Kurivi).

GV: What other birds would visit the salt pans?

R1: I don’t know all that.

GV: While drawing water from canals for the salt pans, would fishes and crabs enter along with the water?

R1: Yes, fishes would come into the salt pans.

GV: What would you do with that?

R1: We would catch those and we would take them to our home to make meals. Would you leave the fishes and crabs as it?

GV: Would you only catch all those fishes or do the village people also join to catch all those?

R1: How would the village people join us? We only work here, so we would catch all those (fishes, prawns, crabs). The senakuni (finesh prawns) would be present in the salt pans.

GV: Would you be able to find large fishes?

R1: No, only small fishes are found there, about the size of our fingers. To get large fishes we have to get into the River, not in the canal.

GV: What were you doing after the salt pan disappeared?

R1: I just stayed at home, I did nothing.

MS: After salt pans, where did people start working?

R1; They started working for daily wages in the surroundings.

MS: Were wages from salt pans works enough for you?

R1: No, we were just earning for our daily bread.

**01:00:00**

MS: How do people working in the salt pans get married?

R1: Only now do we have marriage halls; earlier people would get married in their home.

MS: What would be served in the feasts?

R1: They would do what is required.

MS: Would you consume only the food that was cultivated here or would you also get food from outside?

R1: We would get paddy from the land owners of the field we are working and we would also buy other things from shops.

MS: What were vegetables you would be using?
R1: To get vegetables, we would go to Kothanchavadi (an old famous vegetable market in Chennai City).

RK: Would you go to Kotanchavadi market to buy vegetables?

R1: No, people selling here would buy from there.

RK: Do you know the name of the 3 month paddy crops and 6 months paddy crops that were cultivated.

R3: He (R1) would not know about the 3 month paddy crops (cultivated using fertilizers), he would only know about 6 month crops.

R1: We were consuming ice that was cultivated without fertilizers; But in farming fertilizers are used, In our time, land owners only used urea. Even with Urea nutrition, the crops would bend down because of the weight of the paddy cereals on the top. Once a landowner was saying that all these crops are cultivated using fertilizers, so we would not use that. We are separately cultivating 2 acres of paddy without using fertilizers for our own consumption. The paddy that is cultivated with fertilizers would be sold.

RK: Where were they living?

R1: They lived on that side.

RK: Were you working in their fields?

R1: Yes, I used to work on their land.

RK: Do you know the canals that were used for salt pans?

R1: Yes.

RK: Are the canals existing or did the canals were lost?

R1: All those exist.

R3 (to R1): Where did the canals exist?

RK: Do the canals have names?

R1: No. Those canals are elevated and water is not flowing.

RK: Are you able to identify those channels?

R1: I would be able to do that. Earlier human height boats would be moving in those canals; now boats cannot enter the canals.

R3: You can see that canal, If you walk over that railway bridge line.

**01:05:00**

RK: How would salt be shipped?

R1: Boats would come, trucks would come.

RK: When trucks started coming to ship the salt sacks?

R3: From 1968 or 1969, trucks started coming to the salt pans.

**RK:** Was there any temple in the salt pans?

R2: It's near our house, Muthaaramman temple. You can see it near the canal. It was established by the Thoothukodi people who were working in the salt pans.

MS: Have any quarrels happened with Jawans?

R1: We would be doing our work and they would be doing their work.

AJ: Have you seen any Indian independence leader?

R1: No, I was doing my work.

MS: Did you go to school?

R1: I learnt till standard 3 school.

MS: Where was that school, it’s next to Baba temple. Earlier we had to go to 7 AM in the morning and we would be left only by 5 PM. But now, children are going only by 10 AM in the morning.

**01:10:00**

The teacher was not teaching us properly, they would only teach to the student who learned that he has asked to learn not to everyone.

RK: Why did you not study after standard 3 school?

R1: In our house, there were 3 buffalo, my brother was taking those to graze. Later he went to a driving job and then, there was no one to take care of those buffalo. I was thinking how can we stop going to school as the teacher would be beating us with a long stick. This situation was a chance for me to stop going to school. I used to take the buffalo to the unused farm fields for grazing in our same Athipattu village.

RK: There is a term used by the salt worker called ‘line’, what does that mean?

R1: Yes, salt line. It means government land. Uppalam means ‘salt line’. All the salt pans are central government land.

RK: How would salt pans be during the rainy season?

R1: During rains, salt pans would not exist. If it rains, the water would stagnate in the salt pans.

RK: How much water would be standing in the salt pans?

R1: It would be completely submerged. If it rains it would get submerged.

RK: Do any animals consume salts?
R1: No animals would consume, only we would be consuming salts.

RK: In how many degrees (salinity) salt would be formed?

R1: Salt would be formed at 5 degrees.

RK: What if salinity is more than that?

R1: Then it would be chemical salt.

RK: What is the degree (salinity) of such salts?

R1: It would be formed at 35 degrees. We would break the salt formed and add salt water to it, then such salts would be formed.

RK: What is the use of it?

R1: It would be used to produce medicines.

R2: All that would be the same price. Once the salt get to the salt Mandi in Madras, the salts would be segregated and sent to fireworks manufacturing companies, pharmaceutical companies and different industries. We also had one Mandi.

**01:15:09**

GV: We also had one Mandi.

R3: I was a small child then.

GV: Who was running the Mandi?

R3: My Chitapa (father’s younger brother) was having that Mandi.

GV: How would you serve wages to the salt workers?

R3: They would be getting their salaries on every Sunday.

RK: What is Mandi?

R3: It’s a shop that sells salts.

RK: Where was it that Mandi?

R3:Yaana Kalanai (Elephant gate), my Chitapa (father’s younger brother) was taking care of that Mandi. It’s no more now.

RK: You talked about trucks coming to the salt pans after 1968.

R3: Yes, trucks would not enter much into the salt pans. It would stand on the main (main means locally vehicle accessible places) place next a 4 acre salt pan.

RK: Main means, where is that?

R3: You see on the side of that road, where we had that salt pan; it’s next to that main road (current main road). Those trucks could not enter into the interior salt pans, all those places would be marshy.

RK: Would the trucks travel via villages or through the agricultural lands?

R3: The trucks would come via the agricultural lands. You can see the canals if you stand on the current railway track; through that canal boats would travel, it would have stops like how trains have stops.

RK: Before 1968, won’t the trucks come to load salt from the salt pans?

R3: No. There was no access road for the trucks, its wheels would get stuck into the marshy lands. Later the land was good for trucks to enter. From the salt pans, the salt sacks would be carried by the bullcarts to the trucks. Then the trucks would load the salt sacks. The trucks would carry the salt via the Manali route to Madras.

RK: Earlier, the salts were carried by the Buckingham canal. Why later trucks were used for shipment?

R3: Why because, it’s the demand to take the salt faster. If the salts are shipped by boats, it would take some days, roads are faster. People buying salts from Mandi would come directly here to purchase the salts. Earlier, salt would get to the hands of the boat owner, then to Mandi owner and then to the trucks who purchase it. If the purchaser is buying directly, they don’t have to pay all boat people, Mandi people. Because of that some would directly come here.

RK: Which regions do the boat owners belong to?

R3: They are from Marakkanam.

RK: Aren’t there any boat holders here?

R3: Yes, people from this region were owning the boats. But the workers riding the boat would be coming from Marakkanam.

RK: Were there any people in Ennore owning the salt shipment boats?
R3: There were people owning salt shipping boats, and there were two boats owned by our family. That boat is so large that, people used to cook food and consume that inside the boat.

RK: Won’t the boat catch fires while cooking?

R3: I am not sure about. I wasn’t allowed to enter those boats. They would be cooking inside the boat, they would be traveling for months in the boats. So, they would cook and eat in the boat. It’s how trucks travel for long distances for weeks time, similarly the boats would travel for months.

RK: Boat owners are different and the people used to ride boats are different.

R3: Yes. They would be paid. But I am not sure about the amount of salary. But to my knowledge, during 1965-66, laborers were paid Rs.30 per month and we would serve food for them. We would be taking care of good or bad for the people who work with us; if they are getting married, we would only take care of expenses. As we would take care of our parents, we also take care of him (R1)

**01:20:14**

RK: Are there any common health issues with the salt pans workers?

R3: Their eyesight gets poorer, their eyes would have irritation (/itching). The workers would use Kathala (Aloevera) in their eyes. They would use that and work.

RK: Are there any other remedies or medicines? And does Aloever grow here?

R3: Yes, it would grow here.

R2: In this place, there would be 18 tamarind trees that would be tendered by the salt department. We get the tender and we would sell those tamarind and earn. It belongs to the central government.

R3: If we take a tender, we have to pay Rs.2000 for a season (per year). We also have to pay the person who get the tamarind from the tree, then again to the people who would collect the tamarind and get it our home and again we have to pay other people, who would remove the shells of the tamarind. Totally we have to pay 3 sets of people (or might be individuals). Then we weighed those tamarind.

SR: When did this happen?

S3: This would happen in May month.

RK: Where are those trees now?

S3: Once the company was established here, the trees dried and died (pattu pochu)

RK: What are those companies?

R3: Zuari Cement company, Chettinad coal yard, all those companies.

SR: When was the last time you did that tamarind business.

R3: Last time we did that was 3 years ago.

RK: Whom do you have to pay to get the tender?

R3: We have to pay the central government.

RK: Do you have those payment slips?

R3: Yes, I have to search. It would have paid an amount running from 200 to 2000 rupees. Initially we paid 200 rupees, then year by year, the charges were raised.

RK: Would they be providing you a bill?

R3: We would be paying them a bank check.

RK: Then the trees don't belong to you.

R3: No, it doesn't belong to us. It belongs to the central government. But all the people in the village used to believe that these are our trees. Because for several years, we were only using the trees by getting the tender. Sometimes, tamarinds would be stolen from here. In the evening after 6 PM (dawn), tamarind would be stolen from trees by some individuals. So we have to sit there to watch if people are picking any tamarind. We have to be more careful as there are more snakes in this place. But it would not bother us, we would be on one side, the snakes would be wandering on their own without bothering us. Once my daughter (R2) and I were getting the tamarinds from the tree and coming home, a snake was falling from the tree in front of us. It was so big, she shouted ‘Ammaaaaa’. Then I said the would not bother us, we can go home on our way.

SR: Has any snakes bitten any of you?

R3: No. People coming to our home would be saying that we saw snakes on their way to our home. People would insist to others who come to our home to go carefully as snakes exist on the way to our home. There is a ‘Puthu kovil’ next to the pond (water stagnation) next to our house. Those lands also belong to the central government. Government has given land to them (thoothukudi people) to build a temple (Muthaaramman amman temple: Chady kovil). But the government did not give us any land (to build a temple), we are here for generations. It has existed since my childhood. It's a very powerful ‘Puthu’, our prayers would become reality.

**01:25:02**

RK: Have you been to the River any time?

R3: No, where we would go. We have been to the temple ponds, that’s it.

RK: Have you not been to Ennore via boats?

R3: We have been to Ennore, only via train. We can go by boat, but we don’t have any boats now. Earlier to cross the river, boatmen would charge the people. In Mugathuvaram region, people would cross via boat from EB (Electricity Board; NCTPS) to Ennore.

RK: Do you pray to any god in the salt pans?

R3: In salt pans, there has been a temple built. It is called Muthaaramman temple, and was built by the person from Thoothukudi. This ‘Puththu’ also belongs to the salt pans, but no land was given to build a temple for this ‘Puththu’. It’s our temple, we didn't get the land provision, but for outsiders (Thoothukudi people) the government has given land. But they started building a small temple, then it became larger and another temple was built next to it. Then the temple complex became larger and larger. In July, there would be big festival in that temple.

RK: Did you get compensation for acquisition of the salt pans?

R3: No, they haven’t given any compensation.

SR: Was that lease land or is it your land?

R3: It’s government land only, it becomes our land for a certain number of years if we get the tender. It’s ours till we use that land.

RK: Because of the acquisition, your livelihood has been affected. Weren’t you provided with any compensation?

R3: No, nothing. We collected details of the laborer and have given it to some to claim employment. But he has taken the document and used it for selfish motives; they are salt loaders (moota pidikiravanga). With other documents, he gained employment for some others. The salt manufacturing working are asking where the employment is for us.

RK: How many people got employment because of him?

R3: Seems like some 10 to 20 people gained employment (with EB), they are all salt loaders. They would hold the sacks and fill the salts into the sack and tie it.

RK: Is that a different domain of work?

R3: Yes, that’s different work in the salt pans. Stamping is one work, gathering (pulling) salts is another work, making the salt pans and irrigating salt water is another work, fetching salt from salt pans is another work. Then again, having to carry the salt to another storing place is another work. Sack filling and loading to trucks and boats is another work. In total, there are 5 different kinds of work done by the laborers. For every kind of work, a group of people would be assigned to do that work; a batch of people for sack filling, a batch would work on fetching salts from salt pans to nearby places. There is no batch for stamping the salt pans to level it; anyone would come and do that, for that we would pay wages. Another batch would work for gathering (pulling) salts to the edges of the salt pans. People working in one batch would not do work in another batch. People who find it hard to live (financially), would do 3 batches of work and they would get 3 wages. We would pay them for gathering (pulling) salts, then storing the salt by carrying it from salt pans and they would also make the salt sack and load it. If one person do all of this 3 jobs, we would pay them 3 wages.

RK: Does all the work have the same wages or different wages?

R3: Wages are different for different work.

**01:30:08**

RK: How much is the wage difference between different works?

R3: It’s like 50 paise, 1 rupees and 1.25 rupees.

RK: Which has the highest pay?

R3: people drawn (by pulling) and gathering it on the edges (elevated edges; banks of pans) of the salt pans would get the highest salary. It’s the hardest job.

RK: Which one would be least?

R3: People who stamp the salt pans receive the least wages among the other workers. The work is lesser in that. Some people even come for stamping 3 times a day. First, they would come by 6 Am and get their wages by then; again they would come by 11 AM and get their salary, then again they would come and do their job by 5 PM and get their salary. Suppose, if the wage is 2 rupees, that person would earn 6 rupees. It’s based on their talent (capacity).

RK: Would you pay them monthly or weekly?

R3: We would pay them weekly, not monthly.

RK: I heard that people, who used to lift salts from salt pans to the storage place (Amabaaram), would do it as competition. Can you share about that?

R3: It’s like gaming with co-workers. They would have competition among themselves who would complete the work or who would make a larger salt heap in the storage place.

RK: Would you celebrate ‘Ayudha pooja’ in salt pans?

R3: Yes, there are engineers in salt pans. We would be celebrating that. We would provide ‘Pori’ (a snack used in that pooja) to the laborers working in our pans. During ‘Maatu Pongal’ day, we would provide dresses for the workers. To women, we would give saree, to men we would provide Veshti. Only now we see different sarees, but earlier we would be providing only cotton sarees and Veshties. On that day, we would serve a stomach full of meals, we would provide dresses and some money to them.

RK: Would you ask them to choose the saree or would you give it?

R3: We would get the saree, along with the ‘Vethalai-paaku-pazham-poo’(betel leaves, betel nut, banana fruit, flowers) would be kept and give it to them.

RK: What food would you serve?

R3: They are like Karuvodu (dryed fishes), we would serve that. We would serve fish curry, Karuvadu curry and chicken curry. We would cook, but they would serve themselves and have food. If any food is left out, they would take it to their home.

RK: Where it would happen?

R3: This would happen in our house.

RK: Would you catch fish or would you buy fish?

R3: We would buy fish. Are you asking on the day of the Pongal festival?

RK: Yes.

R3: On that day, they would catch and bring the fish from the River. In the past, we would throw the fish, prawns, and crabs to dogs and cats. But now we are buying it for money. Every crab would be very large, now each crab costs 300 Rupees. In MRL (CPCL), people gave fish, crabs and prawns as bribes to get employment there instead of money. Some would ask to allot tender for compensation.

**01:35:00**

RK: Would you catch the prawns, fish and crabs?
R3: People who work for us would get all those for us from the River. On full moon day, chill water would be arriving in the River, then more prawns would also arrive to the aalam (salt pans) on that day. When the prawns come as a cluster, people get caught. Some workers would sell those prawns without letting us know; they would be afraid that they would get caught. Even then, they would bring some amount of prawns to give and say,”this is what we have caught”. But we would know that they are taking some prawns for sale, but we would not bother much about it. They has to tell us, but they would not tell us.

RK: Would they prove a basket full of prawns?

R3: It’s ours, how would they not provide us the prawns.

RK: I am asking, would such an amount of prawns get caught?

R3: They would get 4 to 5 baskets (annakoodai) full of prawns. Currently, that amount of prawns can be sold for 3000 Rupees.

RK: Do you know how they would catch the prawns?
R3: They would specifically catch during New moon day and full moon day, when the water rises in the canal (high tide). Only in the River, fishers use nets, here they would not use nets.

RK: Have you been to the River and played in the River?

R3: No, but we have been to River to cross the River. One of my father’s friends had that boat: His name is Subbah Rao, he also had salt pans on the other side. He had 100 acres of salt pans. We have crossed the River using that boat. Even for those salt pans we were in incharge. It had A block, C block and D block for salt production, it’s very large. In those salt pans, borewell water would be used. The water was very good then. He is here now. His family is in Vizag (Andhra) now. They have a steel industry. They were the only family who would bring in this place. Earlier this place was very much empty like a playground. None of the companies existed here. If the wind blows, we can see the dust everywhere. We can’t dry our clothes by then. But the breeze would give us a very good feel.

RK: What car was that?

R3: Ciat Ambassador car.

RK: Which you are speaking about?
R3: It would be around 1961 or 1962.

RK: His name is Subbah Rao.

R3: Yes, it was his salt pan; Suriya Prakash was his elder brother and Subbah Rao is the elder brother.

RK: He is coming from Vizag, did he know Tamil?

R3: If we give money to people who work, it’s enough for them. There would be a person who can get the job done, who can communicate with us. What else do we need? Here he doesn't need to know the Tamil language.

**01:40:05**

RK: It was told there would be many cashew trees here.

R3: We had 18 acres of farm on that side of the River, that was taken by the government and provided the harbor (port). In that we had cashew trees, casuarina trees. Because of that company we faced heavy losses. It was a loss for the people who had wealth; but it was a gain for the people who had no wealth, they were happy to get the better salary. We, who were providing employment to dozens of people, faced severe loss. There in that land, in Cashew farm, 10 people were working and in the casuarina farm some 10 people were working for us. It was all a loss for us. Each cashew fruit would be this much bigger.

RK: Would you sell the cashews?

R3: No, we would not sell the cashews. We would only use it in our home. Once we come back from the school in the evening, the workers who work for us would burn the cashew nuts and remove its skin and provide us folded in a paper.

RK: What about the fruits?

R3: People would take the fruits, we aren’t bothered about that. We would not merchandise the cashews, we would only make money from the casuarina tree logs.

RK: Would they liquor with the cashew fruits?

R3: I have heard, people would make liquor on that side. But I'm not much aware of it.

RK: Would the canals run in between the salt pans?

R3: No, it would be running on the side of the salt pans.

RK: Do the same canals carry rain water during the rain time?

R3: yes, if it’s low tide, the water from canals drains into the sea. During high tide sometimes, the salt pans would get flooded. Not during all full moon days. But during certain powerful full moon, salt pans would get flooded.

RK: During such a situation, would the salt cultivated get wasted?

R3: Yes, salt would form after that. All that would be taken into the sea (while draining).

RK: Is there any incident where salt got wasted like that?

R3: Yes; during flood times, the ‘Ambaaram’ (stocked salt) would fall into the flooding water and it would be lost. We would only make the ‘Ambaaram’, only after forming a high basement, even that, the flood water flow about that basement and would vanish the ‘Ambaaram’.

RK: Are you saying flood during the rainy season or powerful high time?

R3: That would happen only during the rainy season, the high tide (sorrappu) would be higher at that time. In our house, they would have a stick. They would install the stick in the flood next to our house and would identify if our ‘Ambaaram’ had broken or the salt pan had been impacted, citing the flood level. At the time the salts would break and fall (bothu bothu nu vizhlum).

RK: Couldn’t you do anything about it?

R3: What we can do then, we can only cry seeing the thing and come home. The ‘Ambaaram’ would be very large.

RK: How many months of work that would be?

R3: One ‘Ambaaram’ would be some 3 or 4 months work. Sometimes, it would also take 6 months to work. It’s also based on the size of the ‘Ambaaram’, the salts would be squeezed in ‘Ambaaram’. Sometimes, it would include 10 sacks or 20 sacks or 30 sacks or even 100 sacks.

RK: There is also small ‘Ambaaram’ and large ‘Ambaaram’

R3: Yes, large ‘Ambaaram’ include 1000 sacks or 1500 sacks or 2000 sacks. If tenants wanted to stock the salts, they would build ‘Ambaaram’ of 2000 or 3000 sacks. If they are only producing 10 or 20 sacks of salt, that would be loaded immediately to boat.

RK: Why would they stock the salts?

R3: During the rainy season, the salt price would see a hike. Then the tenants would sell the salt.

RK: Is it possible to get the salt from ‘Ambaaram’ during the rainy season?

R3: Yes, it's possible to take the salt.

RK: Wouldn’t be there any water flooded in the salt pans?

R3: People would take that using sacks.

SR: How would you store that?

R3: We would cover that with palm thatch, under that we would use ‘Vegile’ (a lengthier grass variety) and tie it together. It would come from Andhra. The small (handful) bunch of that grass was 15 Rupees, it would be plenty of that grass to cover the ‘Ambaaram’. A boat full of that grass would come, we would purchase that.

RK: Don’t have that ‘Vegile’ (grass) in our surroundings?

R3: No, we don't.

RK: Would the government come and check your work?

R3: yes, the government would check the quality of the salt produced in our salt pans. They have a device for that, they would check the degree (salinity). We would also check, that’s how we can also produce salts. We should not stock the salts in the ground, we have to build a basement and then only we could stock the salt over that. If not, would we be punished?

RK: What kind of punishment?

R3: Fines would be charged. Earlier, we couldn't claim any compensation for any disaster like people ask now. If it’s a loss, it’s only our loss.

RK: When the Jawans were here?

R3: They were here around 1960, 1961. There were 7 houses for the Jawans in this place. Among Jawans, there was one sub-inspector, one deputy. Superintendent is in the Shastri Bhavan, that’s the main office in the region. The overall main office in Jaipur.

**01:50:00**

RK: Do you know how the tender would be awarded?

R3: They would inform me about the tender, my father would only go then.

RK: Do you know any other salt pan tenants?

R3: They live so long from here, his name is Pattu Mudhaliyar. His son exists now, he is no more. We are one tenant living here, the others are living far away from here; they only come here to visit.

RK: Do you have any photos of the salt pans, workers or any old photos?

R3: I have photos of the workers, need to check on that. With that only we claimed employment for salt producers laborers, but that ( \_\_\_ R) salt lifter has gained the job. As salt producers, we couldn’t get any job. Then we also filed a case in the court claiming that our livelihood was impacted; I gave 20,000 rupees to the RA officer.

RK: Who is RA?

R3: He is from Tashildar officer

GV: He should be RI.

R3: We proceeded with all the documents, but he ( \_\_\_\_ R) cheated us by gaining all the employment. There is no employment for salt gatherers (uppu vaarunuvanga), salt loaders (uppu thookkunavanga), But the sack holders (moota pudikkiravanga) got employment. Former are the main jobs rather than sack holding.

**01:55:00**

RK: I heard till 2009, someone was producing salts here.

R3: No, once the thermal power plant came here, because of the dust and pollution, all the salt pans were closed.

RK: Were there only 18 tamarind trees or were there any other trees present here?

R3: Only 18 tamarind trees existed here. Nothing else existed here. Some prosopis (mullu maram) trees would exist, they would grow anywhere. This prosopis would get the moisture from the air, not like other trees.

R1: Only because of the prosopis tree, rain is reduced in a region. Do you know why?

RK: I didn’t know

R1: The prosopis tree would catch all the moisture in the wind, because of that there would be no rain in the region of prosopis. It would get all the moisture coming in rhe cloud-wind (meag kaathu)

**02:00:00**

RK: Were there any other plants, shrubs along the salt pans?

R3: Nothing, even if we go and stand in the salt pans, we might also melt because of the severe heat. But by the water is irrigated into salt pans, the wind would be cooler.

RK: How would salt pans be used during the rainy season?

R3: No, I would use the salt pans.

RK: Would people not fish in the salt pans?

R3: People who have the habit would fish.

RK: During flood times, would the fishes not raise to the salt pans?

R3: Yes, the fishes/prawns would come and settle in the pits (pallam) of the salt pans. It would not come in the ‘paathi (salt pan production field)’. Prawns would only stagnate in the pits of the salt pans, the fisher would come and get the salt pans.

RK: Would you not ask them,”why are you using the salt pans?

R3: What can I ask them, it’s their livelihood. They are catching that for their daily bread. What could we ask about that? We also don’t know how to catch anything. Then how can we ask them?

R1: I am the ‘mesthri’ (a person who gets the laborer to land owner) for paddy cultivation.

R3: For paddy cultivation we have to pay ‘Gisthi’ (a kind of tax) to the state government and for salt production, we have to pay taxes to the central government. Here the central government would be getting commission money for the number of sacks of salt procured in the salt pans.

RK: You also need to provide money to get the land tender and you also need to provide the money at the time of salt production.

R3: Yes.

RK: What is the tenure of every tender?

R3: It would happen once in 3 years or 4 years (but in another interview a respondent told that, the salt pans are licensed for every 20 years)

RK: When can we see those documents and photos?

R3: Many files got wet because of the Rain, half the documents I secured and another half has been taken away by that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (R) . These termites are also causing a great issue in our house, spoiling the documents.

**02:05:00**

RK(to R1): What you wife doing?

R3: She was working in the EB (Electricity Board) and his son is working on contract in the Indian Oil company here. He has 3 daughters and 1 son, but they are not taking care of them.

RK: Did she get employment in EB because she worked in salt pans?

R3: No, she got the job separately.

R1: I only worked hard to get her job in EB.

RK: You told, you had 2 boats.

R3: It’s no more.

RK: Did you get the boats by ordering it somewhere?

R3: It would be newly made, I think it was made somewhere in Madras. I am not sure about it.

RK: What’s the use of the boat?

R3: It was used for salt shipment; sometimes to get the groceries or things in Madras, elders in the house used the boats. If any marriages were happening, the boats were used for transportation of people.

RK: How many people can join in those boats?

R3: Some 50 people can travel in that; it's a very large boat.

GV: Were it used for general transportation of people?

R3: No, It wasn’t for general purpose. If anyone in our house requires it, then the boats would be used. Those boats are like a small house. Inside that boat, the boat riders would cook the meals and consume while traveling.

RK: What were the facilities that were available in the boat?

R3: We can climb the ladder and sit on the top of the boat; we have to sit on the bottom of the boat; on the top it would be closed.

RK: Then, there would be no issues while raining.

R3: Yes. Because I heard that it would take 3 months to 6 months for the boats to travel to the destination during the shipment of goods.
RK: There are no motos right?

R3: Yes, people have to ride it manually.

RK: How would they ride the boat?

R3: They would ride using a long wooden log; that log would be twice your height. They would also tie the sail to the boat, if they open the sail (paai) and push the boat with the logs, the boats would be moving easily.

RK: Would they use any plastic material or any cloth?

R3: Then only clothes were available. Only we are seeing plastic and all the things.

SM: Didn’t they work anywhere else other than salt pans?

R3: No, they were not working anywhere else.

SM: What about, after the industries were established here?

R3: After industries were established here, they started working in the industries. Even my husband helped 10 of our laborers to get employment in the EB. He (R1) always used to say that he was not helped to get employment in the EB. That 10 people were working with us, so we decided to send them to the EB work. We made certificates (for working in the salt pans) and sent them to the EB work.

RK: What are present/ established on the salt pan lands now?

R3: Indian Oil company exists there.

RK: What about salt pans you have licensed?

R3: The Indian Oil company on this side is all on the salt pans we used then, that was 18 acres of land. On the other side where the EB (Vallur TPP) has been established are also salt pan lands.

RK: Laborers would only work for 6 months in your salt pans, how would they earn in the other 6 months ?

R3: They would work in the paddy cultivation, they would plant the paddy saplings (nadavu nadudhal) and harvest the grown paddy (arappu araththal)

RK: Sometimes, if they don’t have any earning in agriculture. Would they ask you for help?

R3: We would not provide to everyone, we would provide to the laborers who worked for us we would give some paddy to them. My father always wanted people to live without hunger; it’s okay for him, if we are hungry. But he wanted people to be fed. He would say,”only because they are working we are getting things, if they are idle, we won’t get anything”.

RK: How would your previous house look like?

R3: Thoolakatta veedu (name the structure of house.

RK: Thoolakattu means?

R3: It did not exist here, it was quite far from here. It’s a hut house, but was a very large house; it would have a bedroom, a hall, a kitchen and it would also have ‘thinnai’. All the facilities would be there, but were made of thatches.

RK: How would that house be built?

R3: It would be built with sand (soil) only; It would have large tree barks as basements. Over that structure, logs would be placed and a large hut would be built using thatched roof. It would also not look like a hut house, it was a large structure.

**02:20:14**

RK: What thatches would be used?

R3: Palm thatches would be used.

RK: What kind of clothes did you use in your childhood?

R3: I was using only cotton. Even now I use only cotton, I only like cotton. During childhood, I used to wear frocks, to schools I wore green coloured ‘Thavanai’ (a type of traditional wear for mostly adolescent girls); the blouse would be in white in color and the skirt was also in green in color. The system has completely changed, earlier we used to be afraid of the teachers and now the teachers are afraid of the students.

RK: Now money being is used in many places….( not completed sentence)

R3: At that time, there were more money in the house, but my father were not using it for us. The hundred rupees note in the past used to be very large in size; my uncle (chithappa) would fold that note and give us ‘odachakadai’ (black gram snack). My father would shout at him, my uncle would say,”we are earning for our children, so we can spent that for our children” and would also say to us,”you can even tear and enjoy with the money, I am not worried about it”. Only now we are using bero (cupboards), then cash bundles would be kept on the table.

GV: Didn’t your father invest in land?

R3: Then we weren’t having much awareness and we also had more land. We had 18 acres of land that the port has taken and another 18 acres of salt pans, on which an Indian Oil company is built and then we had 8 acres of land on that side (couldn’t hear about the place). Like that we had a small - small patch of land; most of which the government has taken.

GV: Have you received any compensation for that?

R3: No, they haven’t provided us.

GV: Why they have not given any compensation.

R3: They have not given us, not sure why. If we ask politicians, they would say that they would help us, but in reality they would not.

GV: Have you not filed any case over that?

R3: No, because in our house all are women, there is on men. Should we look after filing a case or Should we run our family?

RK: I was about to ask if you have practiced any commodity exchange instead of using money?

R3: No, we didn’t have any such practice.

RK: Did you have any cows then?

R3: No. My grandparents had 100 cows.

R1: Her father had 200+ cows here.

**02:25:00**

RK: Where would that 200 cows graze?

R1: It would graze in the salt pans, no one would bother the cows.

RK: But would there be any vegetation in the salt pans.

R1: It would cross via salt pans, then it would go and graze. It would also cross the River and get to the other side for grazing (towards east).

RK: Who would take care of the grazing cattle?

R1: Even the white men (britishers) would get the milk from those cows. Those cows would get into the forest and it would not come back. Those cows would not even come back during rain times. Even during rainy hours, the cows would lie down on the mangroves (thillanchedi)

RK: What if the cows graze other agricultural land?

R1: No, it would only roam in the salt pans. No one would guard the salt pans.

RK: Who would take care of the grazing cattle? (asking again)

R1: It would be roaming there.

RK: Then how the owner would draw milk from the cows.

R1: The cows which provides milk would be tied in the house and it would not be sent out.

GV: Would nothing grow in the salt pans?

R3: No, nothing grows there.

R1: After the rainy season, the salt pans would be cleaned in the January month as it would be marshy and it would leveled because there would be more pits as the cows would have walked on the salt pans.

R3: Now, his (R1) community people say, my son would not eat certain things (caste based discrimination). Earlier they would long for some congee or porridge, but now they aren’t like that.

**02:28:50**

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