**REIMAGINING THE GOOD CITY FROM ENNORE CREEK**

Interview Transcription

**Interview Information**

**Interviewer**/s: Gajendran V

Place of interview: Ernavoor Dalit Settlement Interview 2

Date of interview: 01 October 2023

Transcription by: RP

**Interviewee Information**

Name:

Pseudonym: Interviewee, Male Voice

**(AUDIO BEGINS)**

**[00:00]**

**Interviewee:** We would steal some *Naaga-pazham* (Jamun fruit) and cashewnut fruit and run away. On this side was salt water; on that side – there is the canal there, right? – we would go there. It was salt water only; but if we dig it up a bit, spring water would come. If we drink that, it would be good (unclear).

**Male voice**: It was there during those days, right? If you look at our village..

**Interviewee**: In our village, as far as I know – it was only *maithanam (*open ground); *kaadu* (forest) here.

**[00:30]**

**Male voice**: They would do farming here.

**Interviewee**: They would not do farming on this side. On that side of (area name unclear), there is Girija Nagar, right? That was full of farmlands.

Girija Nagar. And around that there were 5-6 ponds (*kulam)*. One was *eri* (lake). Another one is – they built a Kamarajar *chaththram* (hall) there right? That used to be *Moonadiyar kulam* (Three-foot pond)*.* In that – through the whole night… There was land on this side, and on the other side for someone. They would do – manually lift and irrigate (*eththam pottu eraippaanga)*. Five *eththams –* throughout the night, they would do.

**[01:00]**

They would do that all night. In the morning, around 7 o clock, they would stop to have some porridge (*kanji)*.I have done manual irrigation (*eththam eraikkarthu).* Similarly, a person from (place name unclear) is also there – Atheesan. He had also done *ethttham eraikkarthu.* When they sit down, they would keep a stick there – on the mud and the water. There would be water for 3 feet. They would say that – if we take a plate of 1 feet of water away, we could catch some fish there. During the time of *Chiththirai* (Mid-April to Mid-May) itself.

**[01:30]**

After taking out 3 feet of water, if we go and see again in the evening, there would be 3 feet of water there again. We would fish there. The spring would give water there.

**Male voice**: The spring would keep giving water there.

**Interviewee**: In that spring, there would be (unclear). We had \_\_\_ (unclear) – right from \_\_\_\_ (unclear) till Sathyamoorthy Nagar.

**Male voice**: The bridge is there, right? You would come by Ernavoor bridge, right?

**Interviewer**: Yes.

**Interviewee**: From near the bridge itself. From this side of the bridge.

**Male voice**: From the ITC company, it used to be empty space. There was farming there.

**Interviewee**: Where the ITC company is now – only that is a mound (*medu),* and the Casuarina plantation (*savukku thoppu*) used to be there.

**[02:00]**

I had a *perippa* (father’s elder brother) – his name was Gangan. Near that spring water there, he would distil alcohol there.

**Male voice**: That place used to be like that.

**Interviewee**: That area was a forest. Now, the road goes this way, right? The bridge goes this way. Earlier - from Ennore to Ernavoor gate is there, right? If you get down at the gate – now, they are making *sunnambu quarters* there. If we get into that bridge, it would go to a corner there. In that – there was cashewnut plantation and date palm (*eecham)* plantation. It was a forest there.

**[02:30]**

What it means is – the radio office was there.

**Interviewer**: Radio office.

**Male voice**: All India Radio.

**Interviewer**: All India Radio.

**Interviewee**: Yes. From there, a little distant from there was the Casuarina plantation. Back then – from Kuppam, till there – the sea came inside. From where Kuppam is there now; from there till here, the sea came in (Tamil phrase: *kadal ulla vanthuruchu.)*

**Male voice**: The sea used to come in till there.

**Interviewee**: The sea went in till there.

**Male voice**: As far as I know, when the sea did like that, right.. Our beach is there, right?

**Interviewer**: Yes.

**Male voice**: Like that, two roads have gone inside.

**Interviewee**: Two roads have gone inside. The third one..

**[03:00]**

**Male voice**: That is.. Now, how do we walk to Marina now? Like that.. (overlapping voices)

**Interviewee**: .. they laid that road and all – the beach road. If we get down at Ernavoor gate and get down at that bridge there.. If we get down at around 7 in the morning, it would take us around 11 to reach. From here to reach the seashore. For this distance, we have to kick the sand and go. After I knew things around only, \_\_\_\_ (unclear – ITC?) built the company there.

**Male voice**: Tablet company.

**Interviewee**: Yes. Tablet company. The tablet company used to be so far away.

**[03:30]**

The distance was.. Our Ernavoor gate is there, right?

**Interviewer**: Yes.

**Interviewee**: If Kuppam was there, the tablet company was here.

**Male voice**: The distance.

**Interviewee**: He had built the tablet company at that much distance. The sea was here inside. Only after that, the Nagars came. All the Nagars came now. I know how they were built. I know how ETPS was built too. When they built the ETPS only… I do not know the times they built Leyland. But Leyland is there. WIMCO company was also there. (overlapping voices). How I know about ETPS was..

**[04:00]**

When they build the ETPS, they would keep a lion (unclear) there, right? They were building the arch back then. At that time, the Chief Minister was coming here. People were telling that Kamarajar or someone was coming there. I think, MGR’s period had arrived then. At that time, they were building. As they were building it, I went and poured \_\_\_\_\_ (unclear), without my family knowing about it. I took it over my head and poured it. After that, as ETPS was built and when all these people came – I had went and given them milk.

**[04:30]**

There were couple of others who was giving milk back then – they had their age. They were inside. At that time, there were couple of ladies from here who did housework there. For them also… Kuppan is there, right? From his family. And then – Kullan (unclear) is there, right? His mom too.

**Male voice**: When they were working there – there was nothing here in the surroundings. Only farming.

**Interviewee**: At that time, it was all open ground here (*maithanam)*.

**Male voice**: Another doubt that I have here.

**[05:00]**

They did farming here, right?

**Interviewee**: Yes.

**Male voice**: What jobs did they have after that?

**Interviewee**: They did not have any jobs at our village.

**Male voice**: That corner?

**Interviewee**: Where? Those areas are all at the edge of the village. Near ETPS. They would go for harvesting work (*aruppu velai)* there. Farming. They would go for weeding work. As far as I know, during the morning time, they would sit by the road and just see things around. That was it. People who were a bit more poor would scavenge for *chippi* (oysters). Two-three families would bring that and break and..

**[05:30]**

**Male voice**: He is telling about this..

**Interviewee**: Yes. They would hang up the oysters (*chippi maatti),* 2-3 families were working on that.

What the men would do is – there were lot of men here. One – Kamarajar Nagar is there, right? That used to be a mango plantation.

**Interviewer**: Mango plantation.

**Male voice**: You came through that way, right? On the side there.

**Interviewer**: Yes.

**Interviewee**: These areas were open ground only. Near here, there was a tree.. What tree was it.. \_\_\_\_ (unclear) tree. Village panchayats used to be held there. They would punish the people who did wrong there.

**[06:00]**

At that time, they would not want us – the little kids to be there. So, without them knowing – we would climb up the trees.

**Male voice**: After that.. People here were farming and..

**Interviewee**: Wait. What they did was.. It is there now, right? Where? At the Railway station. Ernavoor Railway gate. On the other side – there is a waterfall (*aruvi)* there, see.

**Male voice**: Water. Pond.

**Interviewee**: Water. They would cut a canal in that water. They would go in the morning, and carve out the soil. One would carve and pour the soil there, another would carve that one out. So at that time, spring water would come through that.

**[06:30]**

That water would go to Madras.

**Male voice**: That was water for the Railways.

**Interviewer**: For the Railways.

**Interviewee**: Yes.

**Male voice**: They would take a big ditch, and suppling water from there.

(overlapping voices).

**Interviewee**: From where.. The canal would be there till – the railway station they are building now, see.

**Interviewer**: Yes.

**Interviewee**: From there till Ernavoor – there was a canal. There were canals nearby. There were about 5-6 canals like that. They would all be drained into a \_\_\_ (unclear) and it would go. We would be grazing our sheep there. We had many sheep.

**[07:00]**

In the summer season, we had to drink water there. In that.. One of our people.. They would call him *thiruttukaaran* (thief? Unclear). For security. Without him knowing, we would get down there. When we get down, we would slide down, right?

**Interviewer**: Yes.

**Interviewee**: We would get down like that, and get a cloth in that, and drink like this. In that, this *pithala-karisi* fish and *ura-karisi* (names unclear) fish would be swimming there. We would catch them in our cloth and bring them back. They would not scold us for catching the fish there. That water had to go to Madras. It was drinking water. It had to be clean. So, we should not bathe there.

**[07:30]**

But, from there only, we would pour water on ourselves. Because, we were doing all that without them knowing, right? We were doing *thiruttuthanam* (like thieving). We would do that and we would run away. We would go that way, and there is this company there, right – the tablet company. We would go to the Kuppam on the other side of it. Only now, they would not dry the fish (*karuvadu)* outside. Back then, they would be drying them near the shore.

**Male voice**: There were lot of people living near the shore there.

**Interviewee**: We would go. They would spread a big net there – it was a bit of a distance from this side and the other side. If we help them in dragging back the net, they would give us a fish. They would give us that. And they would give us *kezhangu (*tubers) and *urundai* (balls)*.* We would eat everything there.

**[08:00]**

And some of that, we would bring them home. When they harvest here too – a *kuruthuthu-kaara* lady from that side, would bring the *urundais.* It would be filled in coconut-shells. If we give this much of rice, they would make a lot of things like – *aappam, atlaappam.* We would eat lot of *atlaappams.* It would be really tasty – with coconut. We would eat that. Behind his house, there is a low-lying area (*pallam)*, right?

**[08:30]**

They would do a round-shaped *thagaram* (tin). They would put the *thagram* there, and if they take some sand – then we would get a ditch. They would take that white-sand (*vella mannu)* in each of their baskets. They would sell that white sand. Some families would earn income through that. It used to be a mound here. This too was the place where they took that soil.

**Interviewer**: So, it was sand to build houses?

**Interviewee**: No. For the companies – to build glass.

**[09:00]**

**Male voice**: Ponds company is there, right? They make Ponds powder and all.

**Interviewer**: Yes.

**Male voice**: All these companies needs sand. They need very fine sand. They would supply that white sand to many companies. If you see even now.. They had a unit at Tirunelveli. Now they have closed it. Opposite to our Leyland – there was a company there. This was their job. They would take the sand from these ditches. If you see, the Foundries and other companies needed sand.

(overlapping voices)

**Interviewee**: There was a company opposite to Leyland. That would ask for the sand.

(overlapping voices)

**Male voice**: They have left now.

**[09:30]**

**Interviewee**: This biscuit (unclear) company is there, right Raja? It used to be a *mannu-kotta* (place where sand was accumulated).

**Male voice**: In that area.. Opposite to Leyland, Government itself had that. They would buy that sand – separate them and send them. Right now, it is done by Gulf Engineering.

**Interviewer**: Gulf Engineering.

**Male voice**: Back then, the sand business was like – this white sand is here, right? They would make pack them into gunny bags and send it through lorrys. They would separate the sand based on its grade.

**Interviewee**: They would sieve it and separate it. They would bring it there. Some people were earning through that.

**[10:00]**

**Male voice**: Many people would work on that white-sand.

**Interviewee**: The women used to sieve that.

**Male voice**: They would export it like that.

**Interviewee**: As I know, they would take a mat (*paai).*

**Male voice**: This person was also doing that, right..? (name unclear)..

**Interviewee**: Yes, he was doing that.

(overlapping voices – unclear)

**Male voice**: … they would first dry it here and do it.

**Interviewee**: (unclear)

**Male voice**: There is another thing too. So, people had sheep and cattle in our village, right?

**Interviewee**: Yes, we had cattle with us. We had cattle with our family.

**[10:30]**

And then.. There was \_\_\_\_ (name unclear) here.

**Male voice**: Veerasamy.

**Interviewee**: Yes, Veerasamy. He had cattle.

**Male voice**: (name unclear)

**Interviewee**: They also had. After that, *thaadikaaran* (bearded-man) also had that.

**Male voice**: Some 6-7 families had cattle here. The ones who had sheep and cattle.

**Interviewee**: Over there, they would call him \_\_\_\_\_ (name unclear). His house also had sheep and cattle.

**Male voice**: At Ammavasai’s house?

**Interviewee**: Ammavasai came only now, right?

**Male voice**: So.. Their livelihood is like…

**[11:00]**

**Interviewee**: Wait, Raja. Do you know when Ammavasai came?

**Male voice**: I am not asking about that, *Saamiyaar.* If you look at livelihoods at our village – people went for farm work; they went for harvesting, right? And then, people had sheep and cattle. Some people were taking that white-sand, that was also a business.

**Interviewee**: They would go for harvesting.

**Male voice**: This was the main livelihoods. After that, only some people were catching fish or taking oysters, or doing some other work.

**Interviewee**: Do you know what the women would do back then? They would wait for some time, not knowing what to do. They might get some rice from their neighbours.

**[11:30]**

If not, if I had some rice with me – they would say ‘Give me some rice today. Tomorrow, I will get some paddy, process it and give it you’. So, that was *morathu-kadan.* They would get that *morathukadan*; they need some *Jeevan (*unclear) for that, right? They would run off nearby. They would catch some snails and come back. On the other side – what is the name they call it as?.. *Karimodu*. AC Colony. Back then, there was lot of water there; boats would go in that. They would catch fish. They would catch fish, get back home and make some curry with that.

**[12:00]**

**Male voice**: At the old canal. This was the business back then. They were doing all that. Only few people were working at the company. Only some people were working in the company. That was it.

**Interviewee**: There were not a lot of people working for the company. Over here, Srinivasan was working. And then, my dad worked at WIMCO.

**Male voice**: Though they worked at WIMCO, they had cattle.

**Interviewee**: We had cattle, and we also grew our crops.

**Male voice**: So, not only that. So, this are the things related to work.

**[12:30]**

**Interviewee**: So, at that time – as far as I know. They would work at Vella’s house (unclear), and they would do harvesting work at the Mudaliar’s house (unclear).

**Male voice**: Not about that, *Saamy.* With respect to work, only these were the jobs back then at our village.

**Interviewee**: These were the jobs. There was no other work.

**Male voice**: So, the next thing is. How did the temple originate at that place?

**Interviewee**: As far as I know – that temple.

**Male voice**: Tell us about how it came about – from the beginning.

**Interviewee**: That temple came about like – there was an *Eecham* plant (Silver date palm). It was a bush. Near that *Eecham* bush, they made a thatched roof there, and placed the *Amman* there. I knew it back then.

**[13:00]**

We used to play around there. At the corner around the temple there, there was a *kal-post* (Stone slab). We had a *karun-kal-post* (Black stone slab) there. They would keep a light over there.

**Male voice**: Like petromax light.

**Interviewee**: Like petromax light, yes. They would bring a ladder, and bring some kerosene (*krishnaayil)* with him. He would clean up the wick inside a bit, and he would pour some kerosene; and light it up, and he would leave.

**[13:30]**

**Male voice**: He would light it up, close it and leave.

**Interviewee**: That was it. They would close it. We used to play around there only. We would play till 8 or 9 PM. The light would be there till 8PM only; after that it would extinguish. Sometimes, it would extinguish around 7PM itself. And we would go back home. At that time, the Perumal temple was also of thatched roof only (*kottai).*

**Male voice**: Those are the only temples in our village.

**Interviewee**: Yes, only 2 temples. They would keep a light there. And then, there would be a light at the corner there. That was it. These people also did not have houses here back then. As I knew – they were living there. Where?..

**Male voice**: At the backside.

**[14:00]**

**Interviewee**: Yes, there is our \_\_\_\_ (name unclear). His house is near that.

(overlapping voices)

**Male voice**: That is correct only. The thing is – these were all the works back then. It was all the atmosphere of a village back then.

**Interviewee**: Village, yes. It was surrounded by forest here.

**Male voice**: Ponds.

**Interviewee**: Ponds were here.

**Male voice**: How many ponds were here?

**Interviewee**: There were so many ponds. Now, the pond that is here is called *Magaliyar kulam* (name unclear). There was a pond there called *Saamy kulam (or Saani kulam – unclear).* On the other side was *\_\_\_\_\_\_ kulam* (name unclear – sounds like *Krishnaayil*). On the other side of that was *Thaamarai kulam (*Lotus pond). On the other side of that only was *Meththoppu.*

**[14:30]**

**Male voice**: Here? On this side?

**Interviewee**: On this side – *Puthu kulam.* After that was the lake there. After that only is the *Moonadiyar kulam.* On the other side of that was *Meththoppu kulam* (name unclear)*.* On the other side of that is *\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ kulam (name unclear –* sounds like *Krishnaayil).*

**Male voice**: On this side? *Maakaali Amman* temple is there, right?

**Interviewee**: That is only *Minna kulam.*

**Male voice**: At Erneeswaran temple?

**Interviewee**: Erneeswaran – that is only forest.

**Male voice**: As I was telling you about Erneeswaran.

**Interviewee**: Wait. There was also the spring here.

**Male voice**: (unclear)

**[15:00]**

**Interviewee**: From there was the *neettu theru* (straight street). And on the other side, there is a street till \_\_\_\_ (unclear).

**Male voice**: That is it.

**Interviewee**: In our area, that street was one. This street. And our street.

**Male voice**: *Mettu theru.*

**Interviewee**: There were only 3 streets.

**Male voice**: And then.. The Eeswaran temple is an old one, right?

**Interviewee**: *MariyAmman temple. Eeswaran temple.*

**Male voice**: It is there since the beginning times, right?

**Interviewee**: It is there from times back then. We do not know when it was built. But they would say one thing about it – the elders would say. Since *Ernian* was won over here, it was named Ernavoor here; but no one won over *Ernian* here. They named it like that back then.

**[15:30]**

They say that one buffalo pushed him to a tree and killed him.

But, one thing they say is… They built Maakaali *Amman* temple. At that time, some foreigner had come here. And that whole ship started to drown. When the ship was drowning, the foreigner prayed to the God that – ‘If my ship is saved and just gets ashore; I will build a temple for whichever *Amman* is there on the shore.’ And that ship did not drown.

**[16:00]**

As the ship got ashore, he started searching for any temple here. He was searching for any village here. And he found the Maakaali *Amman* temple.

Back then, *vettiyan* were playing the *udukkai* (hour-glass shaped hand drum). They were hitting the pump (*Tamil phrase: pump adikkuraanga – unclear)* at the Maakaali *Amman* temple. The *vettiyans* are there even now – their father used to do that before. They played the *udukkai* for ten days. Why? They were building the company back then. Using a screen they were pulling dow the Peepal tree (*Arasa maram).*

**[16:30]**

The screen gets broken. The person who was operating it pulling down the tree started vomiting blood.

**Male voice**: He is telling the ‘crane’ as ‘screen’. You just take care of the language. He means crane.

**Interviewee**: The crane broke. At the same time, the person who was pulling the tree down was vomiting blood. Back then, they had a pathway here. There was a quarters here near the \_\_\_\_ *thoppu* (unclear); they had it here. As it started to fall, they wanted to know why it was happening. So, they had a meeting and they spoke. They called it the *Namasivavaayan thottam* (unclear).

**[17:00]**

As they were talking, they were hitting the pumps (Tamil phrase: *pump adikkuranga – unclear)* for 10 days at Maakaali *Amman* temple. At that time, *Saamy* (God) came into one of the women there and said – ‘If you want to remove this, you should do as I say.’ ‘There is a *parai* drum at this place; go and bring it’ she said. I told about *Namasivaya\_\_\_\_* (unclear), right? From that plantation, they brought a *manai.* They say that there was something written on that *manai* (unclear). So, at that time – when the talk came up about who should have the *manai* at their house. One – there is the village *vazhuk* (unclear), it should be there. Or, it should be there at the house where one goes to cemetery everyday – so they kept it at the *vettiyan’s* house.

**[17:30]**

That *parai drum.* They would take it out only during the time of *Maattu Pongal.*

**Interviewer**: It is still there?

**Male voice**: Even now, only that family plays the drums (*melam)* at our village. The people who play the drums, right? They asked for Government jobs.

**Interviewee**: They have the Government job now. I will tell you another thing – we went to the village.

**[18:00]**

When we go to the village, the village people would give work. He would give a 3 *padi’s.* They would bring the *padi* here, and they would keep 3 *kani’s* in their hands, and get it back; they would keep it near the *Amman,* and then only they would make that Amman. Now, the statue that is there at *Ellai-Amman* temple is not *Ellai-Amman* statue. It is the statue of *Maakaalai Amman.* The statue that is at Ellai-*Amman* temple is not that statue – it is the statue of Erneeswaran temple. It came only after I got to know about it. Because that temple got demolished on its own.

**Interviewer**: Erneeswaran temple?

**Interviewee**: Yes, Erneeswaran temple.

**[18:30]**

As the temple was demolished – one priest was there. At that time - \_\_\_\_\_\_ (unclear) Mudaliar passed away. Jaya Mudaliar passed away. Subramanya Mudaliar – their kids only are there now today. They used to be the MC. And now – another person is the President now. On their behalf, they took that statue and kept it here. Why? Because that temple was broken – to prevent anyone from stealing that. At that time, Maakaali Amman temple also was separate. When it rains, it stinks a lot around there.

**[19:00]**

Like it would smell of a corpse. They took that statue and kept it here. They did that – after I was born; it is still there at the village.

**Interviewer**: So, how old would you be, *ayya?*

**Interviewee**: I am around 70 or 75 years old.

**Interviewer**: Around 70-75 years old. When you were a child, how many families were here at Ernavoor?

**Interviewee**: That is what I am telling – 2 festivals would happen. Back then. There were 2 *vettiyans.*

**Interviewer**: *2 vettiyans.*

**[19:30]**

**Interviewee**: Yes. And two *pannai’s.*

**Interviewer**: Two *pannai’s?*

**Interviewee**: Yes. For the two villages. As there were two *panna-kaaranga* and two *vettiyans –* when they came from these two things; for one family – they would come during the 4th week, and for the other family – they would come during the 5th week. For both *Thiruveethi ammaal* and *Perumal.* One year – Perumal would go to WIMCO and come back; they would say ‘Perumal goes to WIMCO and \_\_\_\_\_ (unclear), drinks tea and comes back.’ On the way back, \_\_\_\_\_ (unclear).

**[20:00]**

After that something happened. After that, the village got together, they repaired it. When I was a very little child, we should not go this way – for any of our deaths.

**Interviewer**: Why?

**Interviewee**: Back then, one should not go. Back then, one should not wear slippers on one’s feet. As far as I know, at the *vaasakaal –* there would be a tumbler. Aluminium tumbler. They would have nailed it to the wall and tied it to a thread. There would be a bucket, and the tumbler would be kept on top of that. One should drink water only from that.

**[20:30]**

As far as I knew – if we go to the tea shop; they would have an aluminium tumbler like that; and after we drink, we should wash it using a bucket of water there, and come back. One should not wear slippers. Many people would go directly and stand in front of the Mudaliar’s house in the morning. At their house – picking up cowdung, working at their farm, cutting down firewood, cutting a small canal – they would do all that.

**[21:00]**

At that time, his father and others were working at Leyland. I knew his father back then, when I was a kid. But I did not know him that well – he was my relative only. I did not know many things back then (Tamil phrase: *Avlo onnum vivaram theriyathu).*

**Male voice**: *Saamiyar* was a youngster who traveled throughout the world (Tamil phrase: *Ulagam suttrum vaalibar).*

**Interviewer**: Is it?

**Male voice**: He was not only here. He had travelled to a lot of places, and again has come back and sat down here.

**Interviewer**: I see.

**Interviewee**: As my father was \_\_\_ (unclear), I went to Coimbatore.

**[21:30]**

**Male voice**: Only thing is – he does not have any education.

**Interviewee**: I worked at Coimbatore DM’S mill. I went to Coimbatore and worked there at DM’S mill.

**Male voice**: He would not be afraid of anything.

**Interviewee**: There were three *Iyer* women (*maami)* there. I was to be there with them; they would put the silkworm there. The silkworm would be like a small fruit. I had to change them. Sometimes, I had to drizzle some dung-water on that. No one should come inside that place. As the worm grows up, and about to fly away – one should put that in hot water. When it was about to fly away – one should boil it and dry it.

**[22:00]**

It should be ground down in a machine. Then, that should be taken and kept for them. So, I was doing the work of keeping that flour for them.

**Interviewer**: As you were saying – most families would go and stand at Mudaliar’s house..

**Interviewee**: Yes. They would go straight from here – some 4 to 5 families. There was *Daatchaayani* amma was also here. That lady would wear a saree a drive the vehicle by herself. (unclear).

**Male voice**: Who?

**Interviewee**: She would bring milk along with me. I would pour some milk around here.

**[22:30]**

At their garden only, there were lot of cattle. So, around 10 families survived only on the work given by the Mudaliar.

**Interviewer**: They worked for him.

**Interviewee**: They worked, yes. In the morning, they would bring the porridge *(kanji)* that they give to their kids. For afternoon and evening too – they would pack some food for themselves to take home. They employed some people. (unclear) this person.. They worked there as well.

**[23:00]**

This work only.

**Male voice**: It was there. In the villages, the community issue was there (overlapping voices).

**Interviewee**: If they do not go to work at their house in the morning, they would come here and fight.

**Interviewer**: They would fight.

**Interviewee**: Their kids had to go for grazing the cattle. So, basically working like a \_\_\_\_ (unclear – possibly *kothadimai?* Like slavery).

**Male voice**: All those things..

**Interviewee**: There was a fight once. A funeral procession was going on. I think his name was Gokul.

**Male voice**: (unclear)

**[23:30]**

**Interviewee**: Yes. There was water everywhere in the village at that time. So they took the procession that way. They said that the procession should not go that way. So…

**Male voice**: It is the street that you came through. You were telling earlier, right? About Bajanai kovil street. It was through that.

**Interviewee**: We had to go through that, take a lane and go.

**Male voice**: They should not go through that.

(overlapping voices)

**Interviewee**: There is a ditch there, right? A pond.

**Interviewer**: Yes.

**Interviewee**: We had to get into that only and went. In the water. There was lot of water there. They said that we should not go that way. There was flooding in the village. At that time, they said that we should not go that way.

**[24:00]**

At that time, my father’s elder brother (*periyappa),* the bearded man (*thaadi-kaarar),* and another person – Vaalan, and then – Logan, and then; MGR came here for a music festival (*kutchery).* In the very beginning, he came here only at Ernavoor. He only lifted up one of Logan’s kids and named him as Manimaaran. At that time, I was a child – I went and pinched him; I touched him.

**Male voice**: (unclear)

**Interviewee**: He was climbing the steps from below; as he was climbing, I touched him.

**[24:30]**

Back then, some white people also used to come here. They would talk about God and give us something.

**Male voice**: Christians.

**Interviewer**: Okay. Christians.

**Male voice**: Many people converted to Christianity.

**Interviewee**: They would come. Their skin used to be very white. They would call us – the children. We would get the chocolates that they gave – and we would go and touch and see them. We would not stand still after getting the chocolates (laughs). We would touch them. If it hurts them, they would call, make us sit and hit us (*thattuvaanga*).

**[25:00]**

So all these people worked there only. Only this was the livelihood for us. Other than that, no one lived like a King and all here (Tamil phrase: *Raaja bogam’ah yaarum vaazhnthathu illa)*. At that time, when this fight happened, everyone tied up a turban; took up the corpse, and walked through the village. They started cussing and yelling ‘we would beat you.’ After the corpse went that way, the village became silent.

**Male voice**: Munusamy’s son was there, right? He was the munsif. He only call and make the police come here.

**[25:30]**

**Interviewee**: No. That was the accountant (*kanakkupillai).* But one thing for sure – the police now… I will tell about the munsif a bit later. At the accountant’s house only.. At that time, \_\_\_\_ (name unclear) was the village accountant. The police would come to their house only for any theft – if anyone steals cows or something. Frequently someone would steal a cow, and they would fight and everything. Someone would steal a cow, butcher it, sell it and just drink some porridge from that.

**[26:00]**

If they get to know – that they find some cow-skin on one side, and the head on the other side; so the police went directly to their house. They stopped the police there, and they called the *thalayaari* (Village head).

**Male voice**: The *thalayaari* was here at that time.

**Interviewee**: The *thalayaari* was here then. His family is living here now. He would take whoever did the wrong thing to the accountant’s house. And they would take them directly to the police.

**Male voice**: That is.. The conditions here were that of a village only.

**[26:30]**

**Interviewee**: After that, the village was silent. After the Nagars came here, there were some fights between us and the Nagar.

**Interviewer**: By Nagar, which one do you mean?

**Interviewee**: Burma Nagar.

**Male voice**: Annai Sivagami Nagar.

**Interviewee**: There was an issue between them and us. That is – when they come here and talk, they would talk arrogantly. They kept their hands on some of the women here, and the people here hit them. They came here making a ruckus, with knives and other weapons – they came running in the night. They were looking around here.

**[27:00]**

There was a thatched roof hut (*kotta)* here. Back then, they gave a request letter (*manu)* to deputy collector and everyone. Back then – they carefully did that. What they did was – when they were coming was.. They were thinking ‘what do we do to them? They come running here every day. All the women are afraid. They all go and hide somewhere.’ So, when they came – they lit that hut on fire. They lit that hut on fire, and everyone went and hid themselves. We were children, and we were there. As they came, saw that and went away – immediately they came and…. They ran away (unclear).

**[27:30]**

They did not come inside the village. They lit it on fire, and our people got down into water or something – we do not know.

**Male voice**: So.. At that time, there was no other way to deal with people like that who were making a ruckus.

**Interviewee**: They were coming every day. The women were all afraid – what would they do? After the sunsets, everyone had to be afraid.

**Male voice**: They lit it on fire, and.. I was telling you earlier about a big issue where they came and burned things down, right?

**Interviewer**: Okay, so they would come here from there. They would come here from Burma Nagar.

**Male voice**: That is – there would be fights within the village, sir.

**[28:00]**

**Interviewee**: They were making a ruckus for 4-5 times. After the third time….

**Male voice**: After the kids’ generation came up.. That is what I am telling, right? Those days – the village people had that mentality.

**Interviewer**: Why were the people from Burma Nagar coming here?

**Male voice**: Everything is nearby here, right?

**Interviewee**: After they built Burma Nagar there; they would even come here to steal.

**Interviewer**: They would come here to steal.

**Interviewee**: Yes.

**Male voice**: Sir, know only one thing. They came here as refugees. The people here were original habitants. They did not know each other. Everyone had to survive, right? There was no livelihoods then. So, everyone would..

**[28:30]**

**Interviewee**: As I knew, they would sneak inside houses and go. No house had doors back then.

**Male voice**: There was no roads back then.

**Interviewee**: There were no doors. They would have some rice at home – so they would think ‘who is going to take that’, and they would leave.

**Male voice**: At that time..

**Interviewee**: No one would take anything.

**Male voice**: So people were like that back then. Similarly, the Kuppams are there, right? Everyone would behave with each other like mother and children (Tamil phrase: *Ellarume thaaya pillaya pazhaguvaanga).*

(overlapping voices)

**Interviewee**: Only then, the stealing happened. Back then there was no stealing.

**Male voice**: Someone did a mistake.. The thing that gave refuge to everyone was the canal. Because, on the other side was the sea.

**[29:00]**

**Interviewee**: They ran away like that.

**Male voice**: On that side is the sea. On this side is the canal.

(overlapping voices)

**Male voice**: Rest of the place is forest. And there was farming – so how would he go?

**Interviewee**: They would do farming all the time..

(overlapping voices – unclear)

**Male voice**: So what would happen? People from nearby would come around here only..

**Interviewer**: So, they would steal and run this way?

**Male voice**: No. Generally..

**Interviewee**: For stealing alcohol also… (unclear). They would do everything this side. He would drink alcohol and we made him sit around the thorny bush there only.

**[29:30]**

**Male voice**: These things happened in such a situation. Once upon a time. This is the truth. These things happened back then. As the next generations came in – things changed. Like, they would say that we should not walk with slippers on our feet.

**Interviewee**: Should not wear slippers.

**Male voice**: They said all that – that time. But, now?

**Interviewer**: Changed. But so many..

**Interviewee**: We could not wear a turban and go to the Mudaliar. Can they say it now?

**[30:00]**

**Male voice**: Can say it now?

**Interviewee**: Can they say it now?

**Male voice**: They have studied now.

**Interviewee**: Wait. We had to call them from the doorstep (*vaasal)*. They would say ‘Hey, is it Aadhi? Come to the backside (*kolla pakkam).* Come through the back-gate.*’* We had to go to the backside only – we couldn’t go in. Can they say it now?

**Interviewer**: They cannot.

**Interviewee**: They call me as ‘*Aadhi saamy’* to about 9 houses. Now. Me.

**Male voice**: Hear this, *pa.*

**Interviewee**: They say ‘Come and light a lamp in these houses. Come and inaugurate the *Pooja* room at our house’ now.

**Male voice**: The same people. Their generation. The same *saamiyar..* (overlapping voices)

**Interviewee**: This *saamiyar..* In that same village. Me.

**[30:30]**

When I used to go there and stand – they would say ‘Who? *kolakaaran*’s (murderer) son? Who? What do you want?’ I would say ‘Nothing Mudaliar. They asked me to come.’, and they would say ‘What? Go and stand there.’ Then they would say ‘Why are you standing here? Come to the backside.’ And I had to go to the backside.

Now they say ‘*Saamy.* Please come here. Please come, lay your feet in my *Pooja* room, light a lamp and go.’ I would always light a lamp and go.

**[31:00]**

I would not say anything.

(Phone rings)

**Interviewee**: (on phone) Hello. Yes, wait for some time, I will come.

**Male voice**: Why they are calling him now is.. Back then, he was only a milkman.

**Interviewee**: I was only a milkman.

**Male voice**: Today..

**Interviewee**: I would take milk to every house.. Wait. If I take curd with me, they would not get the curd from me.

**[31:30]**

If they see it somehow, they would say “*Ayyayyo.* This curd?” They would say “*Ayyayyo.* This milk?”

But today, they would eat even tamarind rasam made at my home. This is today.

**Male voice**: Why?

**Interviewee**: I will tell you. Back then, they marginalized us (Tamil phrase: *Othukki vachaanga).* The untouchable person (*theendappadaathavan).* The untouchable (*theendaathavan).* I should not wear slippers. I should drink porridge with my hands only. For a plate, we should be ready with our own plate. Some people would keep one separate. After eating, one should wash it and keep it at the backside.

**[32:00]**

**Male voice**: Can anyone do something like this these days?

**Interviewee**: From when they hit us up for taking the funeral procession. From when the youngsters of the village started hitting them. From then, this hand climbed up; and that hand got down (Tamil phrase: *Annikku intha kai onguchu, antha kai adanguchu)*

**Male voice**: Okay, but did they call you for these reasons only?

**Interviewee**: Who?

**Male voice**: Why do they call you?

**Interviewee**: They call me because – I am a priest at the temple; and I do all the deeds for them (Tamil phrase: *Nallathu kettathu seiyyaruthu naala),* I am a *Saamy* for them today.

**[32:30]**

**Male voice**: Spirituality here.. has changed the communal angle; I was telling you, right? Someone who scolded him as “Is he even a person?”… I am telling you the happenings here. I am telling you the reality. Someone who used to scold him as “Is he even a person” are now saying “Hey, he too is a great person.”

(overlapping voices)

The time has changed now that they call him “*Saamy*” now.

**Interviewee**: At that time, they would call me as ‘that boy!’. They would raise their voice and call ‘Hey! Call that boy.’ But I would not get angry now. And I did not get angry back then. But, now?

**[33:00]**

They start calling me as “Saamy”. From when I got into the temple; as we got into building the temple.. Building the temple was also very difficult. We built it holding our lives in our hands. The *thalaivar* (head) said “only I should be made the *thalaivar,* and he cut the root of a tree.”

**Male voice**: You should not touch upon those things.

**Interviewer**: What happened?

**Interviewee**: The Peepal tree (*Arasa maram).* We only used to look at the tree – him and I. We would say “what happened? The peepal tree looks so worn out and old.” Its skin was curled up.

**Interviewer**: What happened?

**[33:30]**

**Male voice**: The Peepal tree.. There is a tree for the temple. It is the temple tree. Peepal tree and neem tree were together there. When the temple was being built..

**Interviewee**: That is what I am telling; once, ladies built that temple.

**Male voice**: They cut off the root of the tree.

**Interviewee**: The root.. One *Saamiyar* told earlier to him that – “if you cut off the root of that peepal tree and bring it with you; you will always be the *thalaivar*, and no one can do anything to you.”

We had built that temple. He came in the middle, and said this temple should not be built.

**Interviewer**: Who?

**Interviewee**: The *thalaivar.*

**Interviewer**: By *thalaivar –* you mean this village *thaliavar?*

**[34:00]**

**Interviewee**: This village *thalaivar.* He said that we should not build the temple. So, we said ‘let us not do anything for few days.’ We stopped for a month, thinking – ‘how things will be if we do not build the temple.’ After that, we were going and looking at it daily – we saw that the root was cut. The root was cut, and he had kept some *Kumkum* (*kungumam)* there. We were seeing it daily, and it was like that. After that, when we sat down and looked at it closely – we saw that the root was cut off. After that, we poured some dung mixture, and lot of other things – and it started sprouting again. And we built the temple.

**[34:30]**

After that, he had a fight within his family. And then, he left. His son also became like mentally affected. Back then, there was a lady here (unclear) ; the village people called and asked her, and she said ‘he asked me to cut it off. He only gave the knife to me.’ Like that, even with building the temple – there were lot of difficulties for us.

When we were building the temple, they helped us with some things.

**[35:00]**

Because, if I say; Now if I say – if I say truth or a lie – I do not know. Whatever I say, it becomes true and happens for them (Tamil phrase: *Naan onnu solla, athu avangalukku palikka)* ; so they brought sand and stone for the building. We built it after breaking it down.

**Interviewer**: *Ayya*, as you said earlier – that after a fight, they became silent. Which year it would have happened?

**Interviewee**: I do not know exactly.

**Interviewer**: Approximately.. How old were you then?

**Interviewee**: At that time, how old was I? Maybe 30? I was around 20-25 years old then.

**[35:30]**

**Male voice**: Because, as far as I know..

**Interviewee**: I have not studied.

**Male voice**: I am 60 years old now. You understand? He is older than me. But, I have only heard about it.

**Interviewee**: I have crossed 75.

**Interviewer**: You have only heard about it.

**Male voice**: Because, when we were growing up, these things were not there.

**Interviewee**: He does not know.

**Male voice**: We got to know about this, as they told us. My dad used to..

**Interviewer**: But, it happened during your times?

**Interviewee**: Yes, it happened.

**Male voice**: He would have seen. He would have seen when he was a kid.

**Interviewee**: At the same time…

**Male voice**: The thing is – as he was saying.. Things like – we should not go in that street; we should not wear slippers. Those things used to exist.

**[36:00]**

But the next generation, what they did was..

**Interviewee**: Should not wear slippers and go..

**Male voice**: As he was saying earlier. That death happened, right? At the time of that death and funeral – they had done a lot of things. If one keeps knocking on the other’s head, he would bend down – but only to a limit (Tamil phrase: *Kotta kotta kuninjaalum; oralavukku thaan)*.

**Interviewee**: We couldn’t go at that time. There was water everywhere. We had to go that way only.

**Male voice**: What he says is..

**Interviewee**: We were holding the fire-torch (*pantham)..*

**Male voice**: What he was saying was – there were ten people, and they were just saying ‘do not come this way carrying the corpse ; get down into the water and go that way.’ Like how they do in many villages now – like that. At that time, what did they do? They said ‘Let us see. We cannot do that. Whatever happens. You go (Tamil: *Po da).* They do this all the time’ The fire should not be kept down. After that, between them..

**[36:30]**

**Interviewee**: After that, they would do a tiger dance (*puli vesham aaduvanga)*; at that time, one should not enter the village. They would dress up like tigers and other things – they would make a festival, plant the *kodi-maram* (flag staff), every villager started to come.

(overlapping voices)

**Male voice**: One VAO; one munsif was here.

**Interviewer**: Munsif..

**Male voice**: Yes; we would call them as village munsif, right? VAO. Village administrative officer. They call him as munsifer. He used to stay there only. He had built a big house.

**[37:00]**

At his house only, whenever something happens, the police would come.

**Interviewee**: The police would come and stand there.

**Male voice**: Whoever he points the finger at – he will get caught. For anyone – if he says that, that person did something wrong, they will be caught. Because, there were no advocates here back then.

(overlapping voices)

**Interviewee**: My dad gave one land for the munsif.

**Male voice**: Once – what happened was – everyone beat up the munsif. Everyone got together and beat him well (Tamil phrase: *pinni eduthutaanga).*

**[37:30]**

They beat him up well. It happened.

**Interviewee**: His house is still there.

**Male voice**: They beat him up, and chased him. Why? To say that ‘how are you a superior person? If you are a munsif, are you a big person?’ There would be a *thalayaari* at our village. They beat him up asking if he was a big person. At that time, people were somewhat educated. So at that time, they all wrote something together, asking that ‘we need a munsif for our village. Why should we let that person?’ So, they made one person from our community as a VAO.

**Interviewer**: They made a VAO.

**Interviewee**: The name of that person is… It is a good name.

**Male voice**: Dhanasekaran.

**Interviewee**: No. Dhanasekaran came after that. Another person was there before, right? (name unclear)

**[38:00]**

**Male voice**: Not him. We brought Dhanasekaran like that. Because, we asked – ‘why shouldn’t someone from our village become that? There is someone who is educated. He had finished his 10th grade.’ Back then. They asked the Government and they made him a munsif. That is what I am saying – education.. (overlapping voices)

**Interviewee**: After that, on thinking ‘we should have someone from our community’ – they appointed him. They voted for him.

**Male voice**: Everyone came in after that. That is what I am telling – education, spirituality and sports – only these three things. As education came up, everyone involved themselves and developed themselves.

**[38:30]**

Because, studies comes from the inside, right? For spirituality – this person. The thing was – as we got him into the temple; as he came in..

**Interviewee**: I did not get down into the temple. Simply they kept me there. I do not know.

**Male voice**: No no. We did not know the original habitation things (*poorvigam).* We were taking care of administration, and I was a small kid. I was with the administration. When I was with the administration, I did not know anything about the temple. What we asked was…

What he would do was – he would decorate really well.

**[39:00]**

How to say.. How would someone do for their own daughter? He would do like that. In my mind – God, *Amman* and all is secondary. According to me. He would do it like how he would do for his daughter.

**Interviewee**: Like my baby.

**Male voice**: Consider it as his baby. He would do it like how he would take care of his baby. How a mother and father would take care of their baby – like that.

**Interviewee**: I do not know what anyone thinks of me or anything. I would do decoration (*alangaaram),* would drape the saree.. As I would decorate, and things are abnormal – what I would do is – I would start talking. I would call her as ‘*amma’.*

**[39:30]**

If things are abnormal – what I would do is, I would wind up and punch. I would fold my hands and do that. I would say ‘what is it for you? How long we have to wait?’ – if things take too long.

**Male voice**: That is his style. That is – with his involvement.

**Interviewee**: I had punched many times. I would wind up (*ongi)* and do that. After punching, I would say ‘You are my mother. You are my gold (thangam)’ like that and give her kisses. So at that time, it would be like she was smiling in her decorations.

**Male voice**: He had that involvement. Someone used to be there and did something. In those days, there was nothing there.

**[40:00]**

After he came in, what he did was – as he went in and what he would do is.. When I was part of the administration, he went in. He would sit there, and decorate. How someone would do it for their child. He does not think of her like a God or along those lines.. We do not know – he would decorate her thinking as if she was his child.

**Interviewee**: I had lot of fear.

**Male voice**: He would wear the earrings on her ears. Would keep *pottu* (*bindi* – colored dot on forehead).

**Interviewee**: Whatever needed to be done, I did that.

**Male voice**: For an *Amman,* for a woman – how she should be dressed; he would dress her up like that. He would look at her from afar and see. He would also trouble us.

**Interviewee**: I would keep checking and seeing if there is any shortcomings or flaws.

**[40:30]**

**Male voice**: As he did these with so much involvement, for him, that was his God. He did not know how we saw that. But for his mind, that is his God. At that time, what we said was. All the time, when festivals happen – what would happen is – on Saturday evenings, they would play the radio. They would play the *udukkai* at night. Some 4 people would dance with the God in them (Tamil phrase: *Saami aaduvanga).* The next day morning, they would play the *udukkai* and *parai* (drums), and they would go around the whole village. People would make ragi *koozh.* They would be bringing that stone with them. They would take it and pour it here.

**[41:00]**

**Male voice**: This is what would happen.

**Interviewee**: I came here from there.

**Interviewer**: They would pour and..

**Male voice**: One minute – I will just finish this. They would pour the *koozh* for everyone. And in the evening – they would sacrifice chicken.

(overlapping voices)

**Male voice**: Wait, *thalaivare.*

**Interviewer**: We can come to the *koozh* story.

**Male voice**: What I am telling is – this is what used to happen. This was the routine. They would give *koozh,* and in the evening – they would sacrifice chickens. They would make Pongal. After that is done, around the sand there, they would stage a *kooththu* (play). People would play the *kooththu.* And that would be it – festival would be over.

**[41:30]**

**Interviewee**: After that the fights will happen.

**Male voice**: They would play the radio, do these things and.. Fights would happen. It happens casually. This is what would happen.

**Interviewee**: See. Do you know how festival happened at our village? I will tell you. On Friday – everyone would gather together. On Friday, they would want the temple to be cleaned and everything. On Saturday, they would make *koozh.* After making *koozh* on Saturday morning, on Saturday evening – they would take the God on a procession (*oorvalam)* around the village.

**Male voice**: When did God come on a procession around the village?

**[42:00]**

**Interviewee**: I will tell you. They would play the *udukkai* drum on Saturday. Near the temple. On Sunday, they would play the *udukkai* and *molam* (drum). They would play the drums and start from there. They would give *koozh* to the one of the houses. They would drink it. They would give *koozh* to my house.

**Male voice**: They would keep on their head..

**Interviewee**: Wait. They would wear neem leaves. They would rub turmeric on a coconut and keep *pottu* (colored dot) on that. After everyone has turmeric on them, and wears neem leaves – the children should roll the coconut and they should fall at the feet. Then they have to take the coconuts. They would go around the village like that; on that side, come near the temple, and then – they would keep it there.

**[42:30]**

In the village, they would keep big pots. They would take all the *koozh* from the village and pour into that.

**Male voice**: They would mix everything as one.

**Interviewee**: As one. They would make *kolams* with powder (unclear). After that, they would keep making *koozh* in the village. And they would mix everything together, and everyone would take them back in a vessel. So at that time, they would give it to \_\_\_ (unclear – sounds like *panna-kaaran*) and the *vettiyan.* They would make Pongal. Everyone would make Pongal. Some would bring a chicken.

**[43:00]**

They would make Pongal, and around the *Amman,* they would sacrifice the chicken. They would cut the chicken, and in the evening – there would be *gummon* (maybe *gummi).* And that would be it.

**Male voice**: So the festival was – generally for 2 days. They would eat some meat, be happy, worship the God and go; that was how it used to be. What we thought was ‘we see at many temples. They do things differently. Why is that our temple festival is like this?’. So, we thought we would do it well. And we went around asking everyone how we could do it.

**[43:30]**

As we were asking around – firstly we asked ‘what is the origin of this temple? How did this temple form?’. We asked the elders. We asked the older people back then. Each person told something different.

**Interviewee**: What the *thaadikaarar (*bearded man) said was.. *Mama* was there – he was really old. What he said was – floods came here in this village once. As the floods came, a boat capsized. At that time the boat capsized – it was a small boat – no one took away the capsized boat. It was there for a long time.

**[44:00]**

After that, another flood came and washed away the boat, which got broken as well. At that place was this statue. They kept that statue over there – that is the story.

**Male voice**: They kept it at the corner of the street itself. It would be there till the neck.

**Interviewee**: She is still there – my mother.

**Male voice**: Wait, the temple statue was present only till the neck.

**Interviewee**: Only till here.

**Male voice**: If you look at Thiruvottriyur *Amman* and all..

**Interviewee**: Droupadi *Amman*.

(overlapping voices)

**[44:30]**

**Interviewee**: There would be an *Amman* on top; and an *Amman* on the bottom.

**Male voice**: So, similarly – the statue would be present only till the neck. Opposite to that, there was nothing back then. They made some lines..

**Interviewee**: It was a thatched roof hut. After that, all the ladies joined together and said that a temple needs to be built. So, the men said – ‘if the ladies are building, what would we do..’; so the bearded-man and others joined together, they got some money from people, they built some stones around it, and built a tiled roof on top (*odu).* That was how the temple used to be.

**[45:00]**

After that, as I knew only – the roof broke a lot.

**Male voice**: No. As the temple was just a tiled roof, he was doing *poojai* inside it. Many people would not go into that. Many would not worship the God there – because they would say ‘there are snakes there.’ Someone would go on a Friday and light up a camphor there. Once in a while only. They would be afraid to go in. They would stand outside only. That was how the temple used to be. Similarly, for the Perumal temple – during the month of *Purattasi* (mid-September to mid-October) – they would always conduct a festival every year without fail. Whatever happens or not – during the month of *Aadi* (mid-July to mid-August), they would do.

**Interviewee**: A priest would come for that. He would be there only for those 2 days. Then he would leave.

**[45:30]**

**Male voice**: Only after that – he came in there. As he started doing all this – one person I knew before; similar to how you do your research, he was doing a research on spirituality. BA something – he was doing a research. As I was talking to him unexpectedly – I was saying that ‘everyone is telling different stories. We do not know the origin of the temple.’ For that, he said that he would come there one day. He said that ‘I have a friend at Madurai. I will bring him with me. And we can see.’

**[46:00]**

So, what I said was – I did not have any belief. I would make everyone come. I would make everyone in the village – men and women, I would make everyone come there. There was a priest at the temple. People here also did not know him.

(overlapping voices)

He also did not know who that priest was. No one knew. One of the people I knew – and his friend. I told the priest that ‘I am bringing those people here. You please stay here.’ He said that he would stay. He had cleaned the temple and was sitting on that day.

**[46:30]**

As he was sitting, I made everyone in the village to come. Everyone sat down. At that time, there was this old recording set. I think it was the National \_\_\_\_ (unclear). I took the tape and sat down. I told them that I do not have any beliefs. Let me record. Let him tell. He came normally only – he did not come like a priest. He came and sat down. He asked him; there were no drums or *udukkai* or anything there. Like how this person is talking to you. Similarly, he was talking casually.

**[47:00]**

He read out something like a *slokam* (mantras). He read it from a book. He read about *Saamy.* What he said then was – ‘There was a pond here in this village. There was a tree there. At that time, you gave *maangalyam* there’ At that time, we asked him; all the elders of the village were there. They all agreed that there was a pond there. He said that a person died there.

**Interviewee**: It is the pond where they receive *maangalyam.*

**Interviewer**: Place where *maangalyam* is received?

**Interviewee**: Yes. They would get the *maangalyam* there; they would take it off, and dip themselves in the pond, and just leave it there.

**Male voice**: All these things – I did not know.

**[47:30]**

**Interviewer**: They would put the *maangalyam* into that?

**Male voice**: After someone passes away.

**Interviewee**: If their husband passes away, some people give away their *maangalyam* in a *kudam* (a vessel). Some people get it near the pond. So, to get it there only – that *maangalyam* pond was there. (unclear)

**Male voice**: They said all this. We did not know all this. We were also like – ‘okay, someone might have said something scientifically or something.’ So, at that time – he asked them a question. He asked them. I still remember well.

**[48:00]**

The priest who does *poojai* inside, right? We do not know him; nor does he know him. He asks him – “*Saamiyar.* What did you see yesterday?” We did not understand anything. He was inside the temple – he did not come out. At the temple, near the God – he was standing there. At that time, he told that ‘I saw her like a child.’ He asked ‘what color clothing was she wearing?’. At that time – if he (that person - *avar*) tells the color of the jacket, he (this person - *ivar*) will tell the color of the saree. We did not believe that priest. We believed him (this person).

**[48:30]**

He (that person) would ask ‘did she wear this color of clothing?’; he (this person) would say ‘yes’. He would say ‘Yes, I did all this; and she came inside here.’ He asked – ‘So, you are telling all this, right? What do you think?’; for that, he said ‘Certain things come to my mind if I come there’

So, what I said was.. ‘So, he is doing \_\_\_\_ (unclear). He (this person) is saying all this; he (that person) is doing all this. How many days (unclear)’

This is the truth. This did not come up only now. This is a temple from the original habitation (*poorvigamana kovil).* This is related to three temples.

**[49:00]**

As you say – there is Melur, Thiruvottriyur and Avadi.

**Interviewee**: Vadivudaiyaar, Thiruvottiyur and this – there is a power with all three of them combined.

**Male voice**: Avadi only. There are three of them.

**Interviewee**: So, those three originated (unclear) in this place only.

**Male voice**: No. I will tell one thing.

**Interviewee**: Okay? So he said that – this temple is the combination of all those 3 powers.

**Male voice**: The thing is.. He said that.

**Interviewee**: I remember him telling all this.

**[49:30]**

**Male voice**: *Ichchaar Sakthi, Kiliyaar Sakthi, Gnyaanaar Sakthi.* These three powers have combined together and come here. This *Amman* has 3 heads. He (that person) said all that. We had not gone inside the temple and seen that. Because only him (this person)…

**Interviewee**: Three heads only. Three heads. Our *Amman* has that. I have gone inside and seen at many temples.

(overlapping voices)

**Male voice**: After that – he (that person) asked if there was something on the backside there.

**Interviewee**: Yes, on the backside, there would be a *sarppam (*snake-like)

**Male voice**: He said yes, there is this thing on the backside. Though we have been here in the village, and the temple is here, even our fathers and grandfathers have not gone inside and seen all that.

**[50:00]**

**Interviewee**: Like, how *Vinayagar* has a *sarppam* like an *arna kayiru* (waist-string), she has on the backside.

**Male voice**: So, when he says like that – a sense of confidence will come, right? He said all that. After telling all this, what he said was.. (phone rings)..

**Interviewee**: Look here. If I bathe the *Amman* today, and dress her up and come back; the next day, I would dream of going into plants (unclear). It would be like – she would be going in a circle, and it would be like her saree is stuck on a thorny bush; and she waves her saree to get free from that, and it would be like her saree had torn.

**[50:30]**

It would have torn. As soon as I get up and urgently wash my face, and come running to the temple, and light up a lamp – I would look at the saree only. It would have torn there. It would have torn at the bottom there. I would think ‘I dreamed of this yesterday’.

**Male voice**: So, he (this person) had this involvement. He (that person) said that this temple was from our original habitation here. From here, people would take the *parai* drum and go to the Thiruvvottriyur temple. But, whatever he (that person) said was correct. There was no habitation around here. As we climb up the sand there, there was nothing there.

**[51:00]**

**Interviewee**: Nothing was there. Even WIMCO. The railway gate near WIMCO – there was forest even till there.

**Male voice**: Till WIMCO nagar, there was nothing.

**Interviewee**: There was only Chinna Ernavoor village back then.

**Male voice**: As we climb up the sand around WIMCO and get down, there would be *KonniyAmman* temple. It would be alone there.

**Interviewee**: From there till *KonniyAmman* temple; all the way till Ajax was forest only.

**Male voice**: There was nothing till there. Only forest. Everyone would walk and go. If you look at the companies – there was WIMCO, Enfield and \_\_\_ (unclear). These were the companies. Other than that, there was MRF. There was only a road back then. There would be no houses around there.

**[51:30]**

In that condition, he would go. So, things were like that back then. He (that person) said ‘From here, the people who play the drums (*melam adikkravanga)* would go there. So, there was a connection like this between here and there. So, like this – there are three temples. But whatever had to be taken from here stopped at some time. It did not go. Whatever had to go to those temples did not go. They stayed here. Hereafter, your village will develop very well. Your *Saamiyar* itself will tell *kuri* (divination)’ Like that, he said a few things. He said ‘people who are struggling with their business and sick people – if they come here and just drink some water, they will be cured.’

**[52:00]**

He said ‘If unmarried women come here, they would soon get married.’ He said all those things. And in the end what he said was ‘All these things I have said. Whether you have the belief or not – the person inside the temple knows. He would do. Though he had not studied..’ He had not studied or anything. He was grazing cattle and doing those things. He said ‘He would do all those things. Your temple will develop well.’

So, at that time, we asked him – ‘Can we demolish the temple and build it again?’

He said yes.

**[52:30]**

So, I asked – ‘This temple is near the road. If we could take it a bit inside – away from the road, and build it well.’ He said – ‘The statue should not be disturbed from that place. If that is the place it was – it should remain there. You build however you want. Whoever comes – no one can do anything to that.’

I said – ‘To circle the temple?’

He said – ‘It would come. You would be able to circle the temple.’ And then what we said was ‘It is not straight.’ If we look from our village, it looked a bit cross and tilted. It would not be straight with respect to the road. We wanted to make it right. He said that it would not become right.

**[53:00]**

After that, what he said was – ‘In the coming *Chithra Pournami,* what you do is – all the people in the village get together and make a Pongal. Keep a new pot in the temple, and make a Pongal on the entrance way (*vaasal).* When you pour milk into it, and it would boil over and overflow; it would overflow only in this particular direction. If it overflows in that particular direction – whatever I say is right. Okay? See if your village develops or not.’ We recorded all this. So he said that he would leave and he left.

After that, with him (this person), we made all the arrangements. As he said, we arranged for a Pongal. As he said – the milk overflowed in that particular direction. So, every one of us got involved in that – and we decided that we would build the temple. And we started building the temple.

**[53:30]**

**Interviewee**: We dug a well. Everyone went and dug a well. Because, we had to keep \_\_\_\_ (unclear) and keep it there.

(overlapping voices)

**Male voice**: After he (that person) said like that, he (this person) told a lot of things. What to say – one cannot believe such things; one cannot also not believe such things (Tamil phrase: *Nambavum mudiyathu; nambaamalum irukka mudiyathu).* Because, we say things practically for 4 days.

(overlapping voices)

**Male voice**: I will tell one incident. As I saw it. When he says such things, everyone would make fun of him.

**[54:00]**

People would say ‘What is this? He is blabbering something, and you guys are listening to him. He is telling these things.’ Some people say ‘What is this? He says *arul vaakku* (divine words). He is dancing with the God within him (*Saami aduraan).* Should I take a video of all this? Are these true or fake?’ But, some people know their truth.

As I was sitting at the temple one day – one incident happened. People were talking about a very big *Saamiyaar.* We should not talk about these things related to the temple.

**Interviewee**: Do you know what happened at first?

**Male voice**: We should not talk about that *Saamiyaar.* As far as I am concerned, he is a *Saamiyar* of high esteem.

**[54:30]**

He does lot of sponsors for many temples. I had spoken and arranged from him to come to our temple. We spoke to him about developing our temple, and for sponsoring it. I asked him to come one day – and he said that he would come. I said to him (this person) ‘*Saamiyare,* that person who said would come is a very big person. Just arrange things accordingly.’ And he said ‘Let him come. Nothing wrong in that.’

He came with some people. He came to the temple. We were announcing that – we would be getting some sponsors through him. He came there.

**[55:00]**

He kept the flowers and everything – and he was praying to the God. He (this person) would usually light up the camphor and show it to the God, right? He did all that, and brought it to him (that person) – he (this person) said some word. He said some word. As soon as he (this person) said it, that person; that big person, fell at his (this person’s) feet. How would you feel? We call him – as a VIP. He fell at his feet. And he said something. After that he (that person) told me – ‘I have done many things; but I do not know what took me over. Really, this is a big thing here.’

**[55:30]**

I was quite moved by what he said. I asked him (this person) – ‘What *Saamiyar.* What did you say?!’ He said ‘*Dei,* what did I say? Whatever it is.’ That incident got over then. Why I am telling all this is – that kind of situation started to arise. As such things happened, many people started coming to the temple. As I was telling you about community differences, right? Even Muslims started coming to our temple.

**Interviewee**: Muslims, Christians. Big Christians would come.

**Male voice**: They would come here wearing the *purdah.* They would come here wearing it and started getting the ash here (*vibhoothi).* Now, because of this spirituality, this condition has changed?

**[56:00]**

**Interviewer**: How did Muslims and Christians start coming here?

**Male voice**: Those things we do not know.

**Interviewee**: Muslims they come – when there is some issue in their family. Many people would come. Nothing else – one Muslim *amma* came here and asked us to bring the *Amman* to her village-side. She requested. Like that. Only after that, we started bringing and getting around the temple. We started getting around Erneeswaran temple. Till then, we were getting around only *Maakaali Amman* temple.

**Interviewer**: So, there are Muslims in Ernavoor?

**[56:30]**

**Interviewee**: Lot of them are here.

**Male voice**: Now, lot of them are here.

**Interviewee**: Not in Ernavoor. From surrounding areas.

**Male voice**: They would come from other places. They would come from lot of places and get *vibhoothi* here and get back.

**Interviewee**: I would tell them certain things. Those things would happen. So they would come back and buy us some sand, stone or cement for my *amma*. When Christians come here – they would tell us about how some of their pastors get money and cheat them. I would tell them certain things and say – ‘go’. If I tell them like that, they believe that, and they come back here.

**[57:00]**

They would go back and tell these things at the Christian temples.

**Interviewer**: So, the temple has brought many people from outside to your area.

**Interviewee**: Yes. Many. From Koyembedu they will come and stand here. They would come from villages so far away. During new moon (*Ammaavaasai) –* they would stand here whole night and morning. One person died. Listen to this.. They would look at the God whole night on *Ammaavaasai.*

**[57:30]**

**Interviewer**: Another thing that you said – that earlier festivals would happen for 3 days, and after you came you changed it. So, what have you changed?

**Male voice**: So, what we did was – we went to all the temples and enquired what a festival should be about. So what they said was – ‘They should tie *kaappu.* They should follow *viratham* (fasting)’ Who should follow *viratham?* The people who are conducting the festival. So, he (this person) should follow it. Not us. We are people outside the temple. I told him.

(overlapping voices).

**Interviewee**: Should follow *viratham.* Some people should stand..

**[58:00]**

**Male voice**: When they tell me all this, I would come directly to him and tell him ‘*Saamiyare,* come here. They have told me all this. Tell me what we can do.’ And he would say ‘We can do it, *Raja.’* I would say ‘Don’t say ‘We can do it, Raja.’ Only you have to take care of this. I will come. But only you have to do these things.’ So he said that he would do everything.

**Interviewee**: They said ‘Should not tie *kaappu* for ten days. We would cut your hands.’

**Male voice**: Wait. We asked him to tie the *kaappu.*

**[58:30]**

**Interviewee**: I said I will tie. But, one thing. To take the *Amman* on a procession around the village (*oorvalam),* I did not even tell this to Raja. That statue \_\_\_ (unclear). Because they might ask – ‘how can you bring the statue.. (unclear). I have been lifting her.”

**Male voice**: You asked right? What have we changed? They said that – 10 days before the festival, they should tie *kaappu.* They said that we should tie *kaappu* and follow *viratham.* Those things were not there earlier in our village. So we tied the *kaappu.* And we followed the *viratham.*

**Interviewee**: One should circle the temple.

**Male voice**: We followed *viratham* and got around the temple.

**[59:00]**

So, whoever ties the *kaappu,* they should follow the *viratham.* These things they said.

**Interviewee**: Some 3-5 people should stand there.

**Male voice**: So, the procedure to tie *kaappu..* What village was it? From Aandaalkuppam, an old man came here, right? From the very beginning. There was a fair-looking old person – he was at Aandaalkuppam temple. We went and met him. He came here. He only decorated (*jodichaaru)* at first. In a *kudam* (pitcher pot); in a mud-pot, he asked to bring water from the sea. *Amma unavagam* is there, right? There was a well there.

**[59:30]**

A person was doing sand business there. Using river sand. They poured some water into that mud pot, and they did a lot of other things.

**Interviewee**: Nothing in that. They would put water, lemon in the pot; they would add *javvadhu,* cardamom (*elakkai),* and everything in that – they would tie it up.

(overlapping voices)

**Male voice**: They would add flowers, and they would make the *karagam (or jeragam – unclear).* They would lift it up and keep on the head. They would come to the temple.

**[01:00:00]**

They tie up the *kaappu,* right? While they tie the *kaappu,* they should tie up the *karagam* too. To tie up the *kaappu,* the people were ready. As I was working in the company back then, I told him and went to work. He would take care of everything. I was always working in the general shift only. As I came back home, he came and said ‘Raja, there was lot of fighting. Some people have said that – if we tie *kaappu,* fights would happen. So, I should not tie *kaappu.*’ They said like ‘You have not done anything like this before; why are you doing all these new things?’. People from the village, not outsiders, they were asking like that.

**[01:00:30]**

(overlapping voices)

**Male voice**: They said all that. So, what I said was ‘Whoever is asking; we will take care of it. What is your work? To do that. You do that inside. If people come outside, we will talk.’ Because, all the administrators spoke to them, they did not accept. So I asked him to do his work. He had bought everything that was needed and kept it there.

As we were going to tie the *kaappu,* all the groups (*gumbal)* came there. They said – ‘how can you do this in our village?’. The older people were also accomplices to that. Not only the younger people. I told them ‘Whoever is against this, tell me.’

**[01:01:00]**

They said – ‘if you tie the *kaappu,* no one should go outside and stay overnight.’ People watch lot of cinema right. So they think what they show in movies as true and they said – ‘if you tie *kaappu,* one should not stay outside. You have to do lot of things.’

I told them – ‘in our village, we are not alone. There are Christians, Muslims and many people from other communities.’

**Interviewee**: Many people come and go.

**Male voice**: Secondly, we were all going to work. If I was given night shift work, I had to do it, right? I would go at 10PM in the night, and come back early morning. I had to stay. Nothing like that.

(overlapping voices)

**Interviewee**: Whoever is tying the *kaappu,* only they should not stay outside.

**[01:01:30]**

**Male voice**: Let whoever stay here stay here. Let whoever ties the *kaappu* not stay outside. I told like that. What would the Christians know – if we tell him that we have tied the *kaappu.* He would go for his Jesus. Muslims would do their own thing. I told them ‘Why are you worried? This is common for everyone in the village. Did you tie the *kaappu?* Whoever is interested, let them tie.’ As soon as I said that, everyone were silent.

So, we tied the *kaappu.* And whoever tied it, they had to do *viratham* one day, and the day after the next day; and they had to circle and come around the God there.

**[01:02:00]**

After that, on the day of the festival – what we did was – before we took the God on a procession around the village, the *karagam* went first. After that only, we would make the statue. The *karagam* would go around the village.

**Interviewee**: After the *karagam* went, and after the temple was built – we told our *Amma.* How we told it was – ‘I have taken you on a procession. And *karagam* is also done.’ We made arrangements to take her in *pallakku* (palanquin) and oonjal (swing).

**Male voice**: We started doing all this. After that, what we did was – on one day, we would conduct a fire-pot event (*thee-chatti).*

**[01:02:30]**

Some took fire-pot in their hands. Some would do *alagu kutharthu* (small spear – *vel* pierced through the cheeks)*.* They would do all this right from Erneeswaran temple. They would do fire-pot in their hands, they would do *alagu kutharthu,* they would take tender coconut (unclear), they did a lot of things. In the beginning, it would be very festive with lot of crowd (Tamil phrase: *Je Je Je nu irukkum koottam).*

**Interviewee**: Then, we did a temple-car (*thaer),* and we got it around.

**Male voice**: After that, to bring her back – they would pierce *vel* on their backs, and bring her back. So, we changed the festival that happened on only one night – to about ten days.

**Interviewee**: Ten days.

**[01:03:00]**

**Male voice**: But, everything happened with everyone’s involvement. We did not force anyone or anything.

**Interviewer**: What changes have happened in the village because of the festival?

**Male voice**: After the festival, many people from outside are coming to the village.

**Interviewee**: The village has become popular. It has become good.

**Male voice**: As we did the festivals, in the main road.. (unclear).

**Interviewee**: What he is saying is – if we call an auto-rickshaw for Ernavoor, he would not come. Now, for Ernavoor, they would come.

**[01:03:30]**

**Male voice**: Earlier there were no one inside the village. No stores here. Everyone was afraid. It was like a murderer’s village.

**Interviewee**: After the Nagars came, things became low here.

**Male voice**: Whatever was separate as different units back then – they have become one now – with unity. Like – lot of advertisements have gone out now. Now, if you say – *Thiruveethi Amman* temple – people everywhere will know. Earlier, they would not know. Now they say that ‘I went there this day’.

**[01:04:00]**

**Interviewee**: On this side, they know till Kanyakumari. On this side, they know till Madurai. People would even come from Madurai.

**Male voice**: The people here, right? The same people who said that we should not wear slippers on our feet, should not walk on their streets, should not take the corpse through that side; all those people, when the God comes on a procession, the ladies of the households pour turmeric water on feet and get the blessings.

**Interviewee**: When people who do not have babies – if a baby is born; I have asked them to write it in the minutes. I have asked them to write – ‘this baby was born; it has this mole here’.

**[01:04:30]**

**Male voice**: He was telling earlier, right? They now ask him to come inside and light a lamp. What is the concept? This is it. Because of this involvement, all these things happened.

**Interviewee**: All these things happened. Now everything is one.

**Male voice**: A unity has come. A different trend has come now. But the nature of it has changed now.

**Interviewee**: Look here, even now – if I come down the street, some don’t wish me. He told me. He pushed me away.

**Interviewer**: Who?

**Interviewee**: A Mudaliar. He passed away.

**[01:05:00]**

He would say loudly ‘What? You are wishing me with folded hands? Take this *amma* with you.’ – like that he pushed her away. But at the end, he bought a *thaali* (marriage thread) for the *Amman* so that someone at their household would get married.

**Male voice**: So these kinds of incidents have happened.

**Interviewer**: So, first they said that you should not bring *amma* here?

**Interviewee**: We were doing all this, right? The village has developed too. We were taking her on a processions, so they became like something. So, what he thought was ‘That *Amman* has come here.’ The whole village came here; and they were giving like dowry to her. The people there.

**[01:05:30]**

**Interviewee**: So what happened to him? He became like something (jealous). So what did he do? While praying to *Saami,* he pushed me away. He said ‘go’.

**Male voice**: As many people started coming here. After he started telling *kuri* and *arul vaakku,* lot of people from outside started coming here. Important people started coming here.

**Interviewee**: A boy who used to be with me – I have to tell it. Sathye.

**Male voice**: Tell, tell.

**Interviewee**: My mom was sick then. We took her for an operation. This person had come to donate blood.

**[01:06:00]**

At that time, there was a fake doctor. He said ‘Do this. Do that.’ We did everything. He had done operation to others. While we were talking about our *Amman,* he said – ‘Look at our *Aandavar (*God*).* Your God is stone.’ He started talking like that. We were listening to him speak. I do not know from where I got angry – he spoke too much. Like – his *Aandavar* is great. So, I said ‘If you tell that my *amma* is just stone; she would become just a stone? After he had passed away and gone to the cemetery, you are worshipping him.’

**[01:06:30]**

He started creating a ruckus. But that Pastor there. If he tells him something in English, he would tell in Tamil. He said – you will get lot of money (unclear). I got very angry. I hit him on the face. I do not know how I hit him. I told him ‘I will cut your tiger skin, I will showcase your cow-skin; and I will remove your disguise (*vesham).’* I hit him, and brought my mother back – saying that we do not need to do operation. I got her back. She is good now.

He (this person) asked ‘What happened *Saamiyaare.’*  I told him ‘I do not know. I did not do it.’

**[01:07:00]**

After 15 days of this, they caught him as a ‘fake doctor.’ I went and saved him. At that time, he asked me – ‘*Saami* must give me punishment’. He would hit with a whip. He would hit with twice; and the 3rd time, my hand will pain – I will hold saying ‘Should not hit’ (unclear). For him – *Kathavaraayan Saami* came for him. He left without listening to my words (unclear).

**Male voice**: We do not know certain things. But certain things – we do know.

**[01:07:30]**

I would go and ask him (this person). ‘Why are they doing like this?’ For that, he would say – ‘*Ayya,* they would keep doing something like this.’ We also had someone – a villageman (name unclear); he would do certain things. At first only, he made a ruckus – while tying a thread around the hands (unclear) (laughs).

**Interviewee**: Called him and tied a thread.. (unclear)

**Male voice**: Spiritualit and Power are on one side. (phone rings – unclear). But we should have (unclear). Certain things are human only (unclear).

**[01:08:00]**

**Interviewee**: (on phone) I am at Raja’s house. I will come now.

**Male voice**: These things happen without our knowledge. Certain things come with your belief, my belief or his belief. But, we should do a lot of things. So, when we talk about certain things like these, only we should talk. If we go there and ask the *Saami* (God) to do, it would not do. As he keeps saying certain things to people, whoever believes him and feels contended, he keeps doing such things.

**Interviewee**: I do not do anything. I should know. If *amma* tells me that I should do it, then I will do it.

**[01:08:30]**

**Male voice**: The things that he does – I have also sat down with him and seen him. Certain things he says – it would be like he would tell a lot of things. Even I would ask ‘What *Saami,* you would get me into some trouble.’ Once – one incident.

A mother brought her daughter with her – she was of marriageable age. She brought her and she was asking him something – I was sitting inside and watching that. Why would I go is – It would take 11-12 PM sometimes to close things. It used to be only thatched roof, right? So, I would go.

**[01:09:00]**

So, she had brought her, and he had told her something. What he told her was.. Her mom said ‘this girl is not studying well. She is not doing anything. She looks tired all the time. She just does something.’ To that he said – ‘Do not worry ma. She will be okay. You do not have to go anywhere.’

So, I asked him ‘Simply why are you telling her like this?’. To that he said ‘What do you want me to say? I just asked her to leave.’

That is, there was a group standing there. Lot of people. People would not come alone and talk separately. There is this place here, right?

**[01:09:30]**

**Interviewee**: Wait, I will tell about this.

**Male voice**: Some 50 people would be standing there. The statue would be there. Everyone would be standing there – the whole public. Whatever they say, we can her. Whatever he says everyone would be listening. At that time he said ‘You go.’ to that girl. The girl said ‘What have I done? Why are you telling like this?’ He said ‘*Amma.* Take her and leave.’

She kept saying ‘Tell me. Tell me.’ What he said was – ‘Someone nearby her was a bit abnormal. That is why she is not studying.’ He hit it like that.

**[01:10:00]**

That lady there started crying. For that, I said ‘Go *ma.’* After that the mother told me that (unclear. Low volume).

The reason I am saying all this is – that incident is.. Even I asked him ‘When did you see *Saamy?* You said it just like that?’

He said ‘It occurred to me and I told her. That lady was saying like that in the public. What if something happens tomorrow?’ what if she does something tomorrow? Who would take responsibility? He said ‘ I do not know all that. I said things openly.’

Like that, he would talk realistically.

**[01:10:30]**

If that reality sets well for them – they would gain that belief. That was how the temple grew. He was telling like that. He is also doing them now. Now, he is not doing it at our temple. He has a statue at his home, and he is doing that. Though there were lot of suffering, lot of fights and lot of difficulties – for me, as he is here..

**Interviewee**: People came to hit me. There were lot of unnecessary things.. (unclear). On my lap.

**[01:11:00]**

**Male voice**: They once even broke his legs.

**Interviewee**: I once caught a guy – who had kidnapped a girl. In this also..

**Male voice**: Do you understand what I am telling about him? The things that he says casually – might be good for someone and might be harmful for someone else. The person who gets something good will be happy; what would the person who gets hurt do?

**Interviewee**: They kidnapped that person.

**Male voice**: They went. They broke his legs. They broke it, he couldn’t walk and he had to go to the hospital.

**[01:11:30]**

**Interviewee**: They had left it after that. Some have poured alcohol on me.

**Male voice**: Let us not tell the damages.

**Interviewer**: What was that?

**Interviewee**: They hit me and broke my legs. They poured alcohol over me.

**Male voice**: As if he was drunk.

**Interviewee**: They wanted to portray it as ‘he fell down after he was drunk.’ I did not tell them that they hit me. I told them that I fell down from the bus. One word.

**Male voice**: Yeah, after that – there would be more problems.

**Interviewee**: There would be problems in the future. My child was alone at home. I would go to the temple. I would go outside. I would say ‘my *amma* would take care of things.’

**Male voice**: Why I am saying all this is – this is about spirituality.

**[01:12:00]**

Similarly we built up that temple as well. We did the festival too. Now, at Ernavoor – people come for Thiruveethi *Amman* temple and \_\_\_\_\_\_ temple (unclear). All the people come. Now, *poojai* happens at the temple every day. Everything happens. It is not like – he goes there once in a while or something. The thing is – the old style is gone.

**Interviewee**: If you believe and come, my *amma* would not let you go. One must believe. That is it.

**Male voice**: I will tell one thing. Whatever they are doing now, happening now – is not in agreement with me. I do not agree with it.

**[01:12:30]**

So, what we did was – as a formality only, we came out and came to a corner outside.

**Interviewer**: As you were saying earlier – they said that you should not come to their streets; but you fought and changed those things. But people who were dependent on them for their job opportunities, right? What happened to that?

**Interviewee**: That only – everyone got separate right? Everyone..

**Male voice**: Everyone was taking their own sand, right? That is.. There would be a group for that even now.

**Interviewee**: They were doing the sand business.

**Male voice**: There would always be 10% of people for that.

**[01:13:00]**

(overlapping voices)

(unclear)

**Male voice**: There would be some people dependent on that 10 people. Whichever village you go to. If someone goes and tells them ‘Hey, what is this?!’ he will return back on what he was doing. And that 10 person will also run away. It is that kind of culture only.

Secondly, the kids have started studying. Look at this. His son finished diploma or EEE. He finished that and is now working in an engineering company. His son. Even today, when I go there – do you know what he does? He gets the cow from there, ties it up..

**[01:13:30]**

**Interviewee**: He would get the cow back from grazing, tie it up, get milk from it.

**Male voice**: I am telling the truth. He has finished BE or EEE or some degree, and he is working in a company. But as he comes back.. He (this person) was sitting there. He came back and was tying up the cows, gets milk, picks the cow dung and throws it away, and he says ‘why are you doing all this? I will do it.’ Unmarried young man.

So he has both his education and he is maintaining his own business. So, if you look at his style, how would he be? He cannot be a slave to anyone.

So, it would be like ‘I am doing my own work.’

**[01:14:00]**

So, what happens then – his development would come automatically. And in his friends’ circle, he would rise them up too like that. For an example, I am telling about his kid. I went and saw him yesterday. To bring him to talk to you, I went to his house, and was talking to him. On looking at what he was doing, I was asking him (this person) – ‘why are you letting him do all this?’.

**Interviewee**: For me, I do not like that much in this village. Nothing like how I like him (this person). In his family too, he is there, and his younger brother who passed away – I like them only; there is this other person, right? I do not like him (laughs).

**Male voice**: So, why I am telling all this is – the culture has changed like that. Education has come to everyone. Everyone in the village is going for some degree or another.

**[01:14:30]**

Many have studied. Everything has changed now. All the style has changed. That was what I am telling – if you go to the backside there and see -

**Interviewee**: All that used to be forest has become habitations now.

**Male voice**: All the people who had very few cattle have built up their houses there now.

**Interviewer**: Can you take me around there one day?

**Interviewee**: Definitely. Come. I will take you around there. I will show wherever I grew up (unclear)..

**Male voice**: If you come one day, we can go to the backside and see everything.

**Interviewee**: I will show you around everything. Where were the forests; how did the houses come here; where were the mounds here – I will show you everything.

**[01:15:00]**

**Interviewer**: When can I come? Tuesday or Wednesday?

**Interviewee**: Tuesday not possible.

**Male voice**: Tuesdays not possible. Do not call him on Tuesdays.

**Interviewee**: You can come on a Sunday.

**Male voice**: He is a *Saamiyaar.* Every Tuesday only he says *kuri.* If you come there, you can stand there and listen to all that.

(everyone laughs)

**Interviewer**: Wednesday?

**Interviewee**: Yes. I will come, we can go.

**Male voice**: We can fix the time on a particular day. Because, I have asked the youngsters who come to the ground to come be here one day. I will tell my younger brother (*thambi*) and tell him to do that.

**[01:15:30]**

**Interviewee**: You can ask him to come on Wednesday too. He can look at the ground and everything, and then go from there.

**Interviewer**: As you said earlier – things changed, and many people started coming here. Did people have farmlands here?

**Interviewee**: What I am telling is – older people back then used to do farming. Their kids – who used to play cards and gamble have all gone to jobs now. People who played cards and gambled – they got married over time. They had families and started going to jobs. Their wage labour jobs became permanent – like that.

**[01:16:00]**

They did not want their kids to be like them – so they educated their own kids. As they got educated, and started going for jobs – the village also developed along with that.

**Male voice**: That is what I am saying. He studied – he developed and climbed up. Spirituality came in – everyone became one. Sports has created a unity. Everything has changed now. However, a group of people are still like that. Even now, some group of people have not changed.

**[01:16:30]**

**Interviewee**: Even now, there would be a group of people who would be different. When we get together for a festival in the future – they would argue that some things should be done, and certain things should not be done.

**Male voice**: They are not outsiders.

**Interviewee**: Listen to this. One person would say – we need that. One would say – we do not need that. One would say – how can you do like this? If there is a person to do something good, there would be two people to do something bad. We should not prioritize those two people.

**Male voice**: The industries have not changed too many things here. There was no damages to Ernavoor because of the industries. But fully houses.

**Interviewee**: Why, Raja?

**Male voice**: I am not talking about that *Saamiyare,* they did not take much land.

**[01:17:00]**

**Interviewee**: Now, on the other side of the \_\_\_\_ (name unclear) mound, *Kari medu –* they have done it for \_\_\_ (unclear), right? They make good money now. In the night time, they cut the power and they give it to them only, right?

**Male voice**: I am talking about the big companies.

**Interviewee**: Big companies – not much. The big companies were like Leyland.

**Male voice**: But they did not take any land here. Some companies took land from the Ernavoor porombokke land. They have put small sheds and containers here and there.

(overlapping voices)

**Interviewee**: And lot of houses.

**[01:17:30]**

**Male voice**: Things have changed like that. It was farmlands only. If you go check today, there would be clayey soil there.

**Interviewee**: Look here. Till Korukkupettai, it was fully empty, except for the Buckhingham canal.

**Interviewer**: What kind of farming was happening here?

**Interviewee**: We would grow paddy.

**Interviewer**: Did you have your own land?

**Interviewee**: Yes, I had my own land earlier. Now too, I have land. There is land there; there is land here. I will show you.

**[01:18:00]**

We sold that. We sold that and bought land at \_\_\_\_ (unclear: Athipattu?). We sold that, got some money and did few things.

**Male voice**: People had lot of farmlands. Those farmlands have become houses now.

**Interviewer**: Houses now.

**Male voice**: If you have 4 grounds of land, what you would do is – you would document that land in your mother, father and other relatives names, and then sell it. And then, the people who came from outside registered it for themselves. That was how the Nagars formed.

**[01:18:30]**

Registered as Vasantha Nagar, Mullai Nagar.

**Interviewee**: Cannot do farming after that. There was no water after that. So they sold the land. What do the kids say? ‘Why are you working so much in that land? If you sell that land, and get some money – with that money, you can become a big person.’

**Male voice**: There is a person at Ponneri. He would come many times in television. He is a farmer at Ponneri. He does natural farming. His name is Devarajan.

**[01:19:00]**

I have seen him a lot in many TV channels. He is a quality person. He is taking care of farming – he had retired. But his sons are not into farming now. But even now, he would tie up his *lungi,* get down into his farm and work. He is featured in many TV channels. But no one is coming into farming now. Who is there now to do farming?

**Interviewer**: So, you were saying – that the Buckhingham canal was here. But, there was no water for farming. Can you tell a bit about that?

**[01:19:30]**

**Interviewee**: We cannot do farming with that water. There were ponds here, right? The *puthu kulam..* All those ponds are gone. If we cut canals from the ponds, they would flow. At the same time, they would irrigate the fields manually (Tamil phrase: *Eththam pottu eraippaanga)*.

**Interviewer**: So, as the ponds have disappeared.

**Interviewee**: All the ponds have disappeared. Now, there are very big buildings. I cannot even look up at those tall buildings.

**Male voice**: There is Kamarajar *arangam* there right? All that used to be ponds.

**Interviewee**: There was a pond right here nearby. It has become houses now.

**[01:20:00]**

**Male voice**: But it has become residential areas now.

**Interviewer**: So, ponds would have been only *porombokke* lands, right?

**Interviewee**: There was *porombokke* land. And land for the people. At the time, the Government..

**Male voice**: If someone is a big person in politics, they would get some legal registration for that pond.

**Interviewee**: You have gone there. There was a well here where the whole village drank water from. Even the whole world. When there would be no water during *Chithirai and Vaigasi* months, that well had abundant water for everyone.

**[01:20:30]**

Now, someone has encroached that well as well. What to do? The whole village drank water from that. That person is not even from this village. He came from outside and established a shed just outside the well – they were doing household work only. Now they are saying that ‘It is mine. This land belongs to my father.’

**Male voice**: Politics has come in now.

**Interviewee**: He has become a politician now. He has become arrogant.

**[01:21:00]**

I have some work, I have to leave.

**Interviewer**: Okay *ayya,* I will come back to you another time. I will come on Wednesday?

**Interviewee**: Come on Wednesday.

**Interviewer**: When shall I come on Wednesday?

**Interviewee**: If you like to roam around the whole day on Wednesday, come in the morning itself. We can roam around with Raja. I would not worry. Though I am old, I will walk. If you can walk, it is okay.

**Interviewer**: I will also walk.

**Male voice**: I cannot walk, *thalaivare.*

**Interviewee**: Okay. You come slowly in your bike.

**Interviewer**: It is okay, you please come in your bike.

**Interviewee**: It is nearby only. Only one round from here.

**[01:21:30]**

**Interviewee**: Not one round. I was talking about showing him how the place has changed from here till Sathyamoorthy Nagar.

**Interviewer**: I would like to see.

**Male voice**: He has a vehicle. Sit in his vehicle.

**(AUDIO ENDS)**