**REIMAGINING THE GOOD CITY FROM ENNORE CREEK**

Interview Transcription

**Interview Information**

Interviewer/s: Karen Coelho and V. Gajendran

Place of interview: Nandhiyampakkam Irular Settlement

Date of interview: 12 May 2023

Transcription by: AR

**Interviewee Information**

Name:

Pseudonym: Respondent 1, RGespondent 2

[00:00-00:00]

**Respondent 1:** What’s the matter?

**Question:** We are researching about the Ennore district. Specifically, how Ennore district was earlier, how is it at present and in what state, it probably will be in future? How should it be according to the people? How a good area should be like? Not just the Ennore district but also the areas around it. The development of Ennore cannot be seen separately, it is also determined by the development of the surrounding places also. If a factory is built, people are displaced from that place and shifted somewhere else. That is how people from Athipatti and Pudunagar came.

**Respondent 1:** Yes..

**Question:** From there, they go to some other place. So why people living in one place are shifting to another place. How their occupation was earlier and how it has been affected after shifting to another place. About their livelihood, how they are surviving in a new place. So, we are researching about the lives of the people. What is right and wrong according to the people, we are researching about it. When we came to Nandhiyampakkam, we spoke to Chinnarasa. We spoke specifically about fishes and prawns, how the situation was earlier. They said people mostly go for prawn hunting. We asked about how the people are affected after the coming of industries, they talked about this. Today, talking to you, we want to know how did this place, Nadhiyampakkkam came into existence. I was told there were only 4 families initially, and now 175 families are there. So how did this, everyone is from the same community, they have come from nearby areas and. We can’t see people and the area as different entities, right? So, we are asking now about the history of this place.

**Question:** When and how did you come to this place?

**Respondent 1:** My native is Minjur, rice mill. We don’t have a place there. We were working under the owners of the rice mill. They give us money for our work.(coolie)

**Question:** As bonded labourers?

**Respondent 1:** yes, we would only work for them. There would be no houses, the employer will only provide a place to stay for the family. Now I’m old so my son is continuing the work. So, like this, three generations continue to work for them only.

**Question:** You can’t go to work for anyone else?

**Respondent 1:** No, we cannot.

**Question:** Why?

**Respondent 1:** Because we have taken the advance money.

**Question:** Ohh okay

**Respondent 2:** Can’t go outside.

**Question:** How many years have you been working here?

**Respondent 1:** We have been working for more than 5 years. We don’t have a house to stay, so we would just live and work there.

**Question:** You have been living there since you were a kid?

**Respondent 1:** Yes, in the rice mill.

**Question:** You said, 3 generations have worked here; you, your father and grandfather. 3 generations have worked as bonded labourers in the same rice mill.

**Respondent 1:** Yes, 3 generations. Now, my sons have studied. I have told them, “You leave our work, you study and work in a company.”

**Question:** So, while working there, you sent them to school?

**Respondent 1&2:** Yes.

**Question:** They didn’t say anything for that?

**Respondent 1:** No…children have studied till 10, 11th, 12th from there.

[00:00-05:02]

**Question:** How many kids do you have?

**Respondent 1:** I have 3 sons and 1 daughter.

**Question:** What have they studied?

**Question:** One has studied 10th, daughter has studied till 11th, son till 8th and another son till 9th.

**Question:** You were working there, so for what reason did you decide to leave?

**Respondent 1:** When we were working there as bonded labourers, a relative had passed away in the neighbouring village, we couldn’t go there immediately because the owner did not let us go; he wanted us to work. We had our own Trust.

**Question:** Which trust?

**Respondent 1:** It is called Sarbam

**Respondent 2:** Irular Sarbam.

**Question:** Irular?

**Respondent 1:** Irular Sarbam in Tiruvallur.

**Question:** Irular Sarbam

**Respondent 1:** Her name is Siddhama.

**Question:** Yaaa…

**Respondent 2:** You have heard of her?

**Question:** She sings songs.

**Respondent 1&2:** Yes, her only.

**Respondent 1:** She said that the masters are dominating the workers from Irular community, they are not sending the kids to school, they are suppressing the people. She decided to free us from slavery. So, they told that if we joined them, we should be united. How much ever debts you have, whether it is 50,000, 1 lakh, 20,000, 30,000, I will help you to become debt free. So, she mobilized us.

**Respondent 2:** From every village..

**Respondent 1:** Not just us, from other areas also. Wherever STs are living.

**Question:** So, is this the place that she created?

**Respondent 1:** Yes.

**Question:** So, she called and?

**Respondent 1:** She said, if we strongly stand strong with her, she would help us from oppression. So, we also joined hands with the woman.

**Question:** Did they give money?

**Respondent 1:** No

**Respondent 1:** We joined her in the mission. She kept a meeting with the collector in Tiruvallur. She protested for our freedom. The collector told her to go to Delhi, there will be SC/ST Welfare Department. So, she took us to Delhi.

**Question:** You went to Delhi?

**Respondent 1:** 3 people went. One lady, one man and madam. When they went there, they showed the photos and videos to the minister. The minister asked to leave and told us that he will come there to see.But the landlords, who had given us money, didn’t let it go easily. They asked Madam, “who are you? Why are you interfering in this, they have taken money from us, they are supposed to work for us. You are taking them and doing all this.”So, Siddhama said, “they are disadvantaged people, why are you treating them like this, you are not even sending the kids to school.” The landlords and madam got into a heated argument. Then, she called all of us and took us away from the owners. She said, “I don’t care if the police comes or anyone comes, I’ll handle it, you all come with me.” So, we all went together by van to that place.

[05:03-10:19]

**Question:** With all your things?

**Respondent 1:** Like that only, with the dress that we had.

**Respondent 1:** Because we are just being dominated by the owners. Money is just sufficient for food because we are getting less money.

**Question:** No money is left in hand.

**Respondent 1:** Just because we have gotten the advance money, we are getting meagre wages.

**Question:** Is the debt reducing?

**Respondent 1 &2:** No, it is the same**.**

**Respondent 1:** Only if we get enough money, we can ask them to retain some money from it and provide food from it, but we don’t get it. The money we receive is enough for only food. So, we decided that we will not be able to clear our debts like this, and the owners also came to know about this. They stopped the kids also from going to school because they want our kids also to work for them. They formulated rules like these and dominated us. After that, Madam came and helped us. Four days later, she had come from Delhi.

**Question:** Where did she take you?

**Respondent 1:** She took us to a distant place in Andhra. Everyone, ST were there.

**Question:** How many people went?

**Respondent 1:** Around 2000- 3000. All families.

**Question:** She kept a camp?

**Respondent 2:** Yes, camp... they provided food also.

**Respondent 1:** Not 1 or 2, she took everyone. Five members in this family, 5 members in anotherfamily, like that there were 2000-3000 individuals went.

**Respondent 1:** We only prepared food and ate.

**Respondent 2:** They provided us with all the groceries, rice, pulses and we prepared our food.

**Question:** How many days did you live like this?

**Respondent 1:** Over 1 week. Then the rice mill owners started searching for us. “Where are they, they have taken money from us”. They kept men to search for us. We needed police protection because of that.

**Question:** Sounds like a movie.

**Respondent 1:** Yes, story can be written too. After a week, we got news from Delhi that they are coming to meet us in this date. On that particular date, a camp was set up in Tiruvallur, everyone assembled there. All 3000 people came by vans and lorries. Military was also there, safety was given. The rice mill owners would keep men to hit us, saying “they have taken money from us, where have they gone now, they need to work for us”.

**Question:** Okay, just see if the facts are correct or not. So, you were working under the rice mill owners, they gave you loan at the same time they gave you less coolie wages, which made it impossible for you to pay back the loan. Siddhamma came and took you to District Collector, who then directed you to the Delhi authority. Siddhamma took 3 persons to Delhi, while everyone else were taken to Andhra. Then police protection was requested, which was provided. When they returned from Delhi, you went back to Tiruvallur.

**Respondent 1:** The Minister was also coming...

**Question:** Do you know the Minister’s name?

**Respondent 1:** No, I don’t remember.

**Question:** Okay okay.

**Respondent 2:** It’s been so long.

**Respondent 1:** it’s been 20 years.

**Question:** 20 years?

**Respondent 1:** I am not able to recall**.** At that time, who was governing in Delhi…

**Question:** It’s okay, we’ll find out.

[10:20-14:53]

**Question:** Do you remember the year?

**Respondent 2:** 2002 or 2003 maybe.

**Question:** We can guess the year by the age of your daughter, right?

**Respondent 2:** Yes, she was a small kid back then.

**Question:** What is your age?

**Respondent 3:** I am 20 years old.

**Question: 20.** So, it would be 18 years?? She was 2 years old then?

**Respondent 2:** Yes.

**Respondent 1:** Yes, 18 years must have passed. We came to district collector office in Tiruvallur. They kept the meeting in a wedding hall. We expressed all our concerns; saying, we took money because we were in a difficult situation but they are taking advantage of that and treating us as slaves. Each one spoke out, ladies, gents, everyone. After that, the Minister announced, “Okay, you all have expressed your issues, from now on you all are free, you don’t need to be a slave for anyone, no one will disturb you from here on, you are being set free, you can go anywhere. Government will provide houses for you all, goat and cows will be given, don’t take loans from anyone, don’t be a slave under anyone.” He said all this and set us free.

**Question:** After this, did they provide you a house?

**Respondent 1:** Yes

**Question:** Where is it?

**Respondent 1:** This place.

**Question:** Ohh, he only gave this place?

**Respondent 1:** What we did was, this place is someone else’s, patta (ownership of a land given by the government to a person) land. We had put up 3-4 huts here so the owner told us that since we are homeless, we should ask the government for giving us a place to stay. But the government won’t give houses for just 3-4 houses, at least there should be 15-20 houses. So, what we did, we told our relatives and to build houses here. It went from 4 houses to 10 houses, 10 to 15 houses, and then it increased from 15 to 20 houses. When we were in Minjur, before we were set free, when we were working in Minjur rice mill, the rice mill owner told us that we can’t get a place here from government and sent us away. At least there were 10 families who worked for that owner, he sent them all away. There was a man called Boobalan, who sympathised with us and showed us this place.

**Question:** Who is Boobalan? From the village?

**Respondent 1:** Yes, he if from the village. He is an auditor. He said, “This land is someone else’s and a case is going on in this land. Even if the case is won or lost, you live here. If he wins the case and asks you to empty the place, let him do. If he loses, you can stay here only.” He made us reside here.

[14:54- 19:09]

**Question:** What case was this?

**Respondent 1:** The landowner lives in Bombay; he had assigned someone, Mudaliyar to take care of the land. Boobalan asked him to give land to the homeless because of which Mudaliyaar filed a case, and Boobalan too filed a case because of us. I don’t know what the house owner did, whether he gave the money or something, we don’t know..but he won the case. The house owner won the case. Case was going on for 2 years. By then, in 2 years, 25 families had settled here.

**Question:** From 4 to 25 families**.**

**Question:** Yes. I was the one who called everyone here. Whether we win or lose the case, we decided that we would not move from this place. If it is 1 or 2 families, they will easily send us away. At least there should 20 families, then we can go to the collector, RDO, Minister. I gathered 25 families then. Then the house owner won the case. They came with the police one day and asked us to move from this place. I requested from them to give us 2 months, we’ll ask land from the collector and then we will go. He said that it is not possible and that they wanted to build a flat here, we asked for time, he didn’t give so we went to the collector and said, “Sir, we are poor and unfortunate, we don’t have a place to stay…please, you can only help us.” Then he said that he’ll come to the spot and see. By then 30 – 35 families started living here.

**Question:** In 2 days?

**Respondent 1:** Yes, before that many people-built house here and left the place because they were scared. After going to the collector, many people started coming here, more than 35 families settled here. The collector called the RTO and came here.

**Question:** After how many days did, he come? The very next day?

**Respondent 1:** He came after 2 days. He came because we pressurised him to come. The day he came here, it had been raining heavily here. At that time, there was no road. From where you came today, that did not exist back then. Can you see that temple there?

**Question:** hmm

**Respondent 1:** He came and stood there. All these 35 houses were all thorn groves**.** To come to the spot, we were thinking how to bring them to this side, it was raining heavily also. RTO, tahsildar, everyone had come. We arranged a tractor, picked them up from that spot, held umbrella for them and stopped near the huts. He observed the area and asked who the owner of the place was. The one who had won the case, the owner; he had also come on that day.

[19:10-24:02]

**Question:** Owner was also present.

**Respondent 1:** I pointed to the owner and he asked how many acres is this? He told us that this place is not. When it rains, you can’t wear slipper and walk here; it would be completely muddy here. You can’t even wear pants; the mud will go inside. “This place is not suitable for living; you will be adversely affected with diseases. You don’t need to live here; I will arrange a different place for you all”, the Collector said. “Where will you give?” we enquired. He told, “Near the forest, I will arrange bus, goats and cows, loan, whatever you need, ask, will arrange everything. Then we replied, “Sir, this place is close to river, it is convenient for fishing fishes and prawns. After fishing, we can go directly to the market. We can go to the Atthipaatu market, Pudunagar market to sell, we have all the comfort in, how can we leave this and move somewhere else.” But he did not agree to this. He said that this place will give you lots of health issues, so this place is not right for you. We pleaded, “No sir, you can see for yourself, we have been living with our little kids, there are so many kids here. We go to the market also. Sir, please arrange this place for us.” Everyone started shouting saying that they want this place only. Then the Collector gave it a thought and then called the owner. He asked the owner to come with all the documents to his office. He announced to us, “Okay, I’ll give you this place itself, you don’t need to go anywhere.”

**Question:** Which year?

**Respondent 1:** It must be 8 years. 8 years, right?

**Respondent 2:** More than that. 15 years.

**Respondent 1:** 15 years.

**Question:** 15 years. What was this kid studying back then?

**Respondent 2:** She was studying in the school.

**Respondent 1:** Siddhamma was the one who was running that school, provided meals 3 times a day. She did a lot for kids. After the collector announced and left that day, he asked all the ST population, From Minjur, Ponneri, Attipattu, Pudunagar, even Ennore wherever they are, whether individual or family, they were told to shift here and settle down here. The place is not just for us, it is for everyone who are under slavery. So, what we did is, we searched for ST and brought them here. Now there are 175 families are here.

**Question:** So, when was the last time these 175 families came here?

**Respondent 1 & 2:** When patta was given, everyone was there.

**Question:** It was given to everyone at the same time?

**Respondent 1:** Yes, on the same day, same time.

**Respondent 2:** Siddhama built us a house and the collector gave the patta.

**Question:** Siddhama built a house?

**Respondent 2:** Yes, she did.

**Respondent 1:** 65 houses.

**Question:** So, she built them before you got patta?

**Respondent 1 & 2:** No, only after we got our patta.

**Question:** After getting patta, Siddhama built houses for you.

**Question:** Why she did not build the other houses?

**Respondent 1:** No, we are the 65 houses.

**Respondent 2:** They did not come.

**Respondent 1:** Earlier I said right, 35-40 houses, it increased to 65 houses.

[24:03- 29:59]

**Question:** So, the others built it themselves?

**Respondent 1:** Yes, during that time, 65 houses were there and Siddhamma helped us.After that when the Collector had told us to bring the other ST to this place, she got transferred. Then the remaining were given as registered (pata) land and got settled here.

**Question:** When you left from the rice mill, what work did you start?

**Respondent 1:** We hunted fish and prawns.

**Question:** So, whoever comes here, they do this work only?

**Respondent 1:** No, they will have their own work. Educated people would go for company work. Children had started to study. Only those who had transferred from the rice mill company, they started to hunt fish and prawns. Children studied and went for company work.

**Question:** You didn’t catch prawns?

**Respondent 1:** No, I didn’t. I go for company work.

**Respondent 2:** Parents would go for fishing and we would go for company work.

**Respondent 1:** Our parents would go for fishing and we would go for company work.

**Question:** Which company?

**Question:** Harbour, EB. Contract..contract

**Question:** Where do you work now?

**Respondent 1:** I work now in EB in contract.

**Question:** work now in EB in Contract…that North Madras?

**Respondent 1:** Yes, that only.

**Question:** What work do you do there?

**Respondent 1:** We are given all kinds of work.

**Respondent 2:** Cutting plants, collecting sand, to put cables...

**Question:** You also go there?

**Respondent 2:** Yes, I also go there.

**Question:** Ohh you go together.Where did you first join for work?

**Respondent 1:** First only, I went to LNB

**Question:** Ohh... there only you have been working all these days...

**Respondent 1:** Not only here, we go to Harbour also.

**Question:** Which all companies you have worked in?

**Respondent 2:** Harbour, EB, company, oil company. Every company we have worked.

**Respondent 1:** We have gone to all companies.

**Question:** The contractor keeps changing that?

**Respondent 2:** Yes.

**Question:** Many from here are going there?

**Respondent 1:** Yes, they are going.

**Question:** Salary is given?

**Respondent 1:** Yes

**Question:** Rs. 400 in one day?

**Respondent 1:** Yes, 400, 600, 500.

**Question:** How much in a month?

**Respondent 1:** We don’t get monthly, only weekly.

**Question:** How much do you get weekly?

**Respondent 2:** 4000- 6000 weekly.

**Question:** How much?

**Respondent 1:** Saturdays we get our salary.

**Respondent 2:** Ladies get 400.

**Question:** Gents?

**Respondent 2:** 500.

**Question:** So weekly, you get 3000.

**Respondent 1:** Yes, 3000, 2500 they’ll give.

**Question:** Weekly salary they give.

**Question:** Now also?

**Respondent 1:** Yes, if they call us tomorrow also, we’ll go.

**Question:** But who is the contractor?

**Respondent 1:** There are many contractors.

**Respondent 1:** If this contractor is calling for work, I’ll go and work for a week, then his work gets done. So, sir directs us to another contractor who needs people for work. So, we go for work there.

**Question:** So, you don’t have any problem, you keep getting work.

**Respondent 1:** Except on rainy days, it gets difficult.

**Question:** So, there’s no lack of job opportunities here.

**Respondent 1:** There’s no problem.

**Question:** What are the kids doing?

**Respondent 1:** Children are going for painting. My sons go for painting houses. Constructing houses and painting on the walls, like that.

**Question:** I didn’t understand one thing... Siddhamma took you to collector, right? You were released in the Tiruvallur. After releasing, you all came here?

**Respondent 1 & 2:** Yes, we came here.

**Question:** Directly you came here. After that only, he put the case on you?

**Respondent 1:** Yes

**Question:** After that, Boobalan helped you..

**Respondent 1:** After that what happened, after releasing us, Boobalan requested the collector to help the ST. “Houses should be built for them, they don’t have any source of income, we need to help them so that they don’t go back to slavery again”, Boobalan convinced the collector. He also requested, “Loans can be given, provide them with cows and goats. They don’t have homes, through government, support can be done.” Like this, he supported us and now they have even constructed quarters for the ST population.

**Question:** Where is it?

**Respondent 1:** In Palavakkam. Near Thiruvallur.

**Question:** South

**Question:** So, they said that cows and goats will be given to you all, was it given after you came here?

**Respondent 1 & 2:** Yes, they gave.

**Question:** You also received?

**Respondent 1 & 2:** But we didn’t take the goats and cows.

**Question:** Some areas look bigger? 1 cent or 3 cents?

**Respondent 2:** 3 cents.

**Question:** Everyone got equal share of land? Everyone got 3 cents?

**Respondent 1:** 175 in total. It is 7.5 acres.

[30:00- 35:05]

**Question:** Was there area to graze cows and goats initially?

**Respondent 2:** Yes, all this was forest only.

**Respondent 1:** Before 20-25 years**,** there was no electricity.

**Question:** No electricity? When was the first time, there was electricity available here?

**Respondent 1&2:** After getting the patta ..

**Respondent 2:** after building the house Siddhamma requested on behalf of us and got us electricity supply.

**Respondent 1:** She only provided electricity to us.

**Question:** Water supply?

**Respondent 1:** Yes, we get water.

**Question:** Inside the house?

**Respondent 1:** No, it is outside.

**Question:** And drainage?

**Respondent 1:** Yes, they have recently constructed it.

**Question:** Underground?

**Respondent 1:** No, not drainage.

**Question:** Thotti (tank)?

**Respondent 1:** Yes, tank.

**Question:** So, are they cleaning it time to time?

**Respondent 1:** Yes.

**Respondent 2:** If that amma would not be there, we would not have settled here.

**Respondent 1:** She is like our God.

**Respondent 2:** she is the one who gave us the strength.

**Question:** Siddhamma**.**

**Question:** Does she still come here?

**Respondent 1:** Yes, if we call, she’ll come. She is old now, cannot come regularly.

**Respondent 2:** She’ll give us food, clothes, she’ll come and see the children.

**Respondent 1:** She does a lot specially for the children.

**Question:** Who is the leader here? If you have a problem, whom do you go to?

**Respondent 1:** Didn’t understand.

**Question:** Do you have a leader in the village?

**Respondent 1:** Yes, we have a panchayat leader.

**Question:** No.. in the village?

**Respondent 1:** It’s me.

**Question:** You are the leader?

**Respondent 1:** I was the one who discovered this place.

**Question:** You discovered?

**Respondent 1:** Yes

**Question:** Through him?

**Respondent 1:** Yes, through him.

**Respondent 1:** When I was working in Minjur under him, there he scolded us right, we left and started working under him after that. We had no homes so we used to sleep on platforms in front of textile shops. At night, they close the shops right, so like drunken people do, we slept like that. During that time, he came. He was in Ambedkar group.He said, “why are you sleeping here like this, it does not look good. You should not be living like this, come with me.” He showed us this place. During that time, we had been struggling even for food. So, he asked us to come; he called 5 families, I also convinced 5 families to come, saying that we don’t need to sleep on roads, we have a place to stay. After that he told us, “This place belongs to someone else, you were sleeping on roads therefore I brought you here, the owner lives in Bombay, he is filing a case, you also file a case, the case will go on for years, during that period, you can request land from the government.

**Question:** Nice plan!

**Respondent 1:** Then they will come and see the land and you ask land here itself. So, we took action according to this idea. This place, government gave money to the owner and bought it for us.

**Question:** Ohh, they bought it from the owner?

**Respondent 1:** Yes, he won the case, right? So, they had to buy it from him and give us.

It is a patta land from before.

**Question:** You have gotten the patta now?

**Respondent 1**: Yes, they have given.

**Question:** So, you are the leader, right? So, are there more people with you?

**Respondent 1:** Yes, there are, everyone comes.

**Question:** No, do you have an association of your own?

**Respondent 1:** This is our association itself.

**Question:** What is the name?

**Respondent 1:** Sarbha sangam (association)

**Question:** So, it is a fraction of Siddhamma’s sangam (association)?

**Respondent 1:** Yes. Everything is hers only.

**Question:** Vice president and other designations are appointed?

**Respondent 1:** No, nothing like that.

**Question:** So, it’s only you?

**Respondent 1:** Yes, all that have not been done yet.

**Question:** Excluding you, there is a Panchayat head?

**Respondent 1:** Yes, Panchayat head**.**

**Question:** He’ll speak well?

**Respondent 1:** Yes, he speaks well

**Question:** If you have any problem, you approach him?

**Respondent 1:** Yes, counsellor also comes, leader also comes and speaks.

[35:06- 40:03]

**Question:** So, now when you reflect back on your life, what are the good things that have happened and how it has brought in changes?

**Respondent 1:** During the initial years after coming to this place, we had been facing many hardships. With no water, electricity, road…

**Respondent 2:** There would be no water

**Respondent 1:** Lack of water was the main issue. During that time, water would not be available here. We would go all the way to Athipatti railway station to get water. Then only, we would prepare food, eat and go for work. At that time, we were working in EB in contract.

Whenever Panchayat leader came, we would complain about the issue. After requesting relentlessly, finally, we got water supply from Nadhiyabakkam through pipeline.

**Question:** Ahhh.. from Nadhiyabakkam**..**

**Respondent 1:**  yes, from there directly it came here. After that, for 15-20 years, we would be requesting for a road.

**Respondent 2:** Borewell was also installed.

**Respondent 1:** Yes, what we did was, through our trust, there was no water so madam installed it.

**Respondent 2:**  It was salty water.

**Respondent 1:** Whichever water, but we were grateful for that. We were very happy with that also because we had been going far for water. With her own money, she installed borewell. Furthermore, what she did was, “children are suffering from hunger, what to do”, she collected clothes for children through the trust, they bought dress for the kids, constructed a school, provided 3 meals a day.

**Respondent 2:**  We worked there.

**Question:** Ohh, you all worked there?

**Respondent 1:**  Yes, we would cook and serve.

**Question:** Teacher?

**Respondent 1:** Teacher was from ST community itself.

**Respondent 2:**  Salary was also given.

**Question:** It was like a government school?

**Respondent 1:**  The school was constructed through the Trust.

**Question:** The school is still there?

**Respondent 1:**  No, everything has changed now. Now there is a government school here, which is till 8th standard, therefore they stopped running that.

**Respondent 1:** After that, we cannot work just for you, there are people in Cuddalore, Pondicherry, also, we cannot do everything only for you, we are directing you to the government, whatever happens you need to ask there. Only if you are not able to do anything, then only you should contact us and we’ll help.

**Respondent 2:**  She gave us the courage to speak and stand for ourselves.

**Question:** So, before she said all this, you didn’t have courage?

**Respondent 1& 2:** No, we didn’t. We were enslaved. She gave motivated us to stand up for ourselves. Daily she gave us classes; “this is how you should speak to a collector; this is how you should speak to RDO; this is how you should speak to a minister; this is how you should speak to a leader; this is how you should speak to a party people”. Night tuitions would be held.

**Question:** Ohh..., night tuitions.

**Question:** Ohh very nice… can I take a photo of you, sir?

**Respondent 1:** Yes, you can.She made us strong individuals. Then only we learnt how to speak to the ministers, collector, RDO. We learnt it now. Then we stopped calling her because she has given us the courage to speak and act for ourselves. We directly approach the collector, “sir, there is no water, sir”, it will take 2 or 3 days, prompt action is taken now onwards.

**Question:** Night tuitions wereconducted right, what did they teach you? How to speak?

**Respondent 1:**  She herself would teach us.

**Question:** How to speak?

[40:04- 44:45]

**Respondent 1:**  What she’ll say, “if you are going to a minister or a collector, you should not be scared, go bravely and don’t be scared that they will scold you.

**Respondent 2:**  ST are seen as different and told to go out.

**Respondent 1:**  ST are looked at strangely.

**Respondent 2: “**We are humans only; you listen to us.”

**Respondent 1:**  The same blood is flowing in your body as well as mine, why are you talking about caste separately. Listen. If you are ST, you should be standing low, we’ll slowly do your work, they’ll say that, but you should not agree to that. Stand strong and question them,” why can’t you do this for me, what’s the reason?”

**Respondent 2:** “You can protest on the road, I’ll come with you.”

**Respondent 1: “**Carry out strike, protest, stand there, go to Bureau office, go to Collector office, call others and go, if you call, he should come, if he calls, you should come, like that you should speak and mobilize. Don’t give up on your rights, fight for it.” She taught everyone, motivated us and gave us the courage.

**Question:** Gave courage**.** It’s a good thing.

**Respondent 1&2:** Yes, it is a good thing.

**Respondent 1:** Now, we don’t disturb her.

**Question:** You are doing it by yourselves.

**Respondent 1:** Yes, we are doing by ourselves. We ourselves go and ask and write ourselves. Even recently, during the rainy season, we arranged food and clothes for everyone through MRL company. I went and said, “We ST people have not gone for work since a month because of heavy rains, children are hungry, we are not able to do anything, how can we go for work”. So, what they did, they brought food, clothes, bedsheets, mosquito nets, mats.

**Respondent 2**: (pointing to a mat) This mat, they only gave, we sleep in this.

**Respondent 1:** I asked and distributed it to everyone, everyone ate. At least for 15 days, everyone had food. We ask everyone, counsellor, leader, everyone.

**Question:** So, you have been taught to ask for your rights and needs, and that has proved to be very beneficial for you**?**

**Respondent 1&2:** yes!!

**Question:** So, you have come this far, a big change has taken place. From being enslaved and oppressed...

**Respondent 1:** Many changes have come.

**Question:** Yes, many changes... then, you came here for a place, you were taught to speak for your rights, you have your own place, you have your own association, so now, what do you wish things to be tomorrow?

**Respondent 1:** Tomorrow, how it will be… that the time will tell.

**Question:** According to you, what do you think?

**Respondent 1:** According to me, the place should be happy without any issues because there are still problems now. Problems have not ceased.

**Question:** What are the main issues now?

**Respondent 1:** The road facility is not proper. There is no tank. In each governance, we get one thing from them. In 5 years, one time. In those 5 years, only one thing will be provided. In the next 5 years, they will provide one thing. Like this only, there is change. It’s going on this way.

**Question:** There should be a quick change?

**Respondent 1:** Yes

**Question:** it is not consistent**.**

**Respondent 1:** Yes, it is not consistent.

**Respondent 2:** In the previous governance, they constructed a tar road for us. The currentgovernment constructed a cement road.

**Respondent 1:** That’s what, in 5 years, 5 years.

**Question:** Schools are there?

**Respondent 1 & 2:** Yes, it is there.

**Question:** Hospitals?

**Respondent 1:** Hospital is government hospital in Athipattu.

[44:46-48:58]

**Question:** Transportation facility is there?

**Respondent 1 & 3:** Yes, it is near only, no problem. For urgent reasons, we can go and come.

**Respondent 3:** Auto is called, or if bike is there, we can go on bikes also.

**Respondent 1:** That is not a problem. Now the change is coming slowly and steadily. But it is late.However, before 15- 20 years, we faced many challenges because there was no road, just mud, no graveyard. If a person has passed away, we won’t be able to bury the body immediately as there won’t be place to bury.

**Question:** Do you have the place now?

**Respondent 1:** Yes, we fought and asked for it.

**Question:** You’ve got?

**Respondent 1:** Yes.

**Question:** When?

**Respondent 1:** It’s been 5 months.

**Question:** Ohh this year only.

**Question:** Whom did you ask? Who gave??

**Respondent 1:** Collector

**Question:** Tiruvallur Collector name…

**Respondent 1:** Good name

**Question:** Malayali

**Respondent 1:** Yes, Malyali.

**Question:** Aabija

**Respondent 1:** Yes, Aabija

**Question:** So, the You had been burying it separately**.**

**Respondent 1:** It was patta land, we didn’t know. We had been temporarily doing it. He was building a flat there, “You can’t bury here, it is my land” Where should we go, you only tell us. Now, that same place has been permanently given to us as a graveyard.

**Question:** The place you were burying, you got that?

**Respondent 1&2**: Yes.

**Question:** So, did he build a flat there?

**Respondent 1:** No, they stopped constructing. After compromise or negotiation, I don’t know.. through government we got it.

**Question:** You got through the government?

**Respondent 2:** Yes

**Question:** Can we see the patta?

**Respondent 1:** I just have the xerox.

**Question:** justto see the date.

**Respondent 2:** Madam constructed the houses for us, the painting, wiring, door, pipe, everything. We didn’t have to do anything**.**

**Question:** Siddhamma

**Question:** 2007, January (reading the patta)

**Respondent 1:** Yes, first month.

[48:59- 55:05]

**Respondent 1:** But we are not yet satisfied.

**Question**: January, 2007, you got the patta, you’ve got a land but still you are not satisfied? Why so?

**Respondent 1:** We are not happy completely. We don’t have tank convenience, no proper road, there’s no proper way for the collected rainwater to get discharged**.**

**Question:** There are factories located here; is it a good thing for you?

**Respondent 1:** Yes, it’s good because all the educated children are working there.

**Question:** If more factories are developed here, then?

**Respondent 1:** Yes, we’ll be happy because there will be ample of job opportunities.

**Question:** You said that Irular people would go and catch fish and prawns, however, with the coming of factories, their livelihood gets affected. So how do you see this?

**Respondent 1:** On one hand, it’s getting affected, because of factories we have jobs for our children who are the future. Now, we are getting old, we have stopped catching fish and prawns and the kids do not want to do that, they are educated and want to work in companies.

They say,” why should I go for catching fish and prawns, I have studied. Even if they give less money, I will decently go and work in a company.”

**Question:** So, they like the company work?

**Respondent 1:** Yes, many educated children in this generation are not getting jobs**.**

**Question:** They are working as coolie?

**Respondent 1:** Yes.

**Question:** Then also, they prefer coolie over fish and prawn hunting?

**Respondent 1**: Yes, that’s what they prefer. We went for fish and pawn hunting and saved them, now we can’t go, we educated them and saved them. Now they have to take care of us, we’ll stay at home, can’t go for fish and prawn hunting. If it rains 10 days, we can’t go to work, but they can go to company and work, earn money. Therefore, they have taken the decision to work in companies.

**Question:** Okay sir. Thank you so much for speaking for so long!

[55:06 -59:24]

Notes:

1. Both Summary Notes and Transcriptions should be headed with the above information.
2. Further details about the interview and interviewee to be entered into the Interview Log.
3. Transcriptions to include questions and responses from interviewee.
4. Transcriptions to include timings in audio files to locate when something was said in case the audio file needs to be referred to again.