**EIMAGINING THE GOOD CITY FROM ENNORE CREEK**

Interview Transcription

**Interview Information**

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

 (GV,SR,AJ, MS)

Place of interview: Athipattu

Date of interview: 28.05.2023

Transcription by: RK

**Interviewee Information**

Pseudonym: R1,R2,S,S2,G,C

**Transcription Note:** The responder is using the term ‘Company’ to identify the NCTPS in most of the places.

**Interview note:** The respondents are the higher caste community who used to speak Telugu, they owned salt pans as a family and as a community in this region; they also owned land for farming. She speaks as a representative of the salt pans laborers, though here family was a salt tenant, but she is helping the salt pan workers of the Athipattu, Seppakkam, Mouthamedu, Koranjur, Tamil Koranjur villages for their employment rights along with the activists in Chennai working on the labor movement.

**00:00:00**

GV: You told that ‘\_\_\_\_\_G’ came here in 2008

R: We started by the year 2007

GV: How did the organization start; did they come to you? How did it all start?

R1: First time, she (G) came her and she visited a woman in Athipattu Pudhunagar; that woman informed her that our family had salt pans in the past and I also do similar kinds of social work. Then she came to me and we talked about the labor issues. I stepped forward to help the salt laborers. She saw my interest in this work; she decided to work together; she asked me to organize the salt pans workers; I organized all the salt workers from this region. The salt office existed behind this house; Javans, sub-inspectors used to stay in that salt office. They left once the salt works were not here anymore.

R2: After the thermal power plant came, they left.

R1: No, they were here for long after that. They left from here by 2015 or 2017; at that time, only Javan was there in the office; the sub-inspector was not here. But we started by 2007, when we started, salt pans existed in that corner. Then salt workers used to come, we would organize here. Later we decided not to gather next to the salt office, we can gather a bit inside the village. Inside the village, we organized a meeting in the ‘Ration shop’, where there would be neem tree. We would also meet near the Athipattu government school. Then we also met in Seppakkam (Cheppakamm); the Mouthamedu village, then Koranjur village and Tamil koranjur village; we would be having rounds of meetings in all these 4 villages. Then we would get people in vans (vehicle) and we would organize a ‘human chain protest’; we have also done demonstrations (aarpattam), we have been to the Collector office and done demonstrations. We did organize things step by step, we went to the Labor Commissionerate; we discussed with the officers there; we gathered as much as information for our campaign.

If this salt pan existed, people here would have lived a better life. The salt pans were acquired and Thermal power plants were established; if the TPP is built, where would the salt pans go for work? They lost their livelihood; so we requested employment for the salt workers in the Electricity Board’s Thermal Power Plants. We demanded all these and we protested. Hearing our demands they informed us that they would provide us jobs, but it would not be permanent jobs, but private (contract) jobs. But we again demanded for permanent jobs as the salt workers were doing the salt works as full time job permanently; people from other regions came and worked in the thermal power plants, but they were working here for their lifetime. If the ash pollution was not impacting the salt pans, the tenant would have produced the salt in the same place. As the salt production is stopped, there is no employment for the salt workers. With this, we requested, ‘C’ madam was there with us; she made a letter to Jaipur (salt commissionerate head office) and she even went to Jaipur. She also asked me to join once, but I refused to go as it was a long distance. After the intervention with the salt commissionerate, the letter came from Jaipur to NTECL company, Petrol company and to EB (hope it’s NCTPS) company; 3 letters cae to 3 companies asking the companies to provide jobs to the salt workers, the letter stated that,”the livelihood of the salt works has been severely impacted by the companies, thus employment has to be served to the salt pan workers”. But, by the time we took that letter to the district Collecterate, the district Collector changed, and a new Collector was appointed. As the collector kept changing, people working on this campaign lost interest and stopped coming and the salt workers also slowly stopped coming for meetings.

GV: Why do you think their involvement has been reduced?

R1: They were aged and people started dying one by one; all they were very aged people. All the salt workers are aged like him (a 85 year old salt worker), their children would not have worked there. People of his age were working full time in the salt pans; most of the existing salt pan workers are very aged and they are elderly.

GV: Didn’t their (salt pan worker’s) children ask for permanent employment?

R1: It’s their children who are asking for employment on behalf of their parents. Their children's statement is,”if the salt pans where my grandfather and my father worked exist now, we would have worked in that, as it’s no more, we are asking for employment. They (salt pan workers) are asking employment for them, they are asking employment for their children and grandchildren.

GV: Are their children not joining this campaign for their employment?

R1: They are telling us they would come; but because of their work they were not able to join us.

GV: Where did the Human chain protest happen?

R1: That was happening in Seppakkam (Cheppakkam).

GV: How many people would have attended the protest?

R1: Some 50 people were there at that time.

GV: When did this happen?

R1: I couldn’t remember the year, as we have done many interventions over the year, I didn’t remember that.

00:05:03

SR: Can you share us an average timeline?

R1: We started this work in the year 2007, the human chain protest happening hardly 2 years after that.

GV: What are the other protests you have done and where else you have done protests?

R1: Yes, we have done many demonstrations (aarpattam); once we organized and made a demonstration in front of the EB (NCTPS) gate; then we did one in the Collector office. After the demonstration in front of the NCTPS gate, we: G, C and I went into the NCTPS and met the chairperson and we submitted the letter to them with the help of our village panchayat head. In 2018 or 2019 we did our last demonstration; it was the time when the construction of the stage 3 of the NCTPS was initiated. We did a demonstration at that time thinking that we would get any employment if we demanded it by protest when the NCTPS stage 3 started; we wanted to bring attention to our demands; even then G was present, the press media came; this was also published in the press.

GV: Did this come in the year 2018?

R1: It was before 2018; it was in the year 2015 or 2016. But it was all covered in the press. Our village president (/leader) was cooperating with us in this issue. If we ask him that all the workers have to go to Marakannam, he (panchayat president) would set a vehicle and send the workers there. He (S) and my mother have been to Marakaanam.

GV: Why did they get to Marakkanam?

S: For demonstrations.

R1: I didn’t go then as I was pregnant by that time. They have gone then; as their livelihood has been impacted, went to Marakkanam and demonstrated.

GV: Oh okay; was there a protest organized?

R1: Yes Twice, we went to Marakkanam for demonstrations.

GV: You said that you also demonstrated in the Collector office. Is that the Thiruvallur district Collector office?

R1: Yes.

GV: Would you meet the Collector after the demonstrations?

R1: We would always meet the Collector; they would also respond to us well, they would welcome us and they would say,’let’s look into the issues’. But whenever we met the Collector, they would say,”lets see”; then there would be no action on it. Then we thought we at least provide some kind of employment for the people in here. The G bought ‘sewing machine’, provided training to the women in the village. Then training on the ‘files making’ with cardboard was provided; the ‘files’ were produced here in a small shed; people were working in the ‘file making’ work and we were able to provide regular wages to them. We produced and stocked the files; we asked the women to work on the sales part, but women weren’t ready to get out to sell the made files.

We went to the Collector office, we petitioned and we received an order from the Collector stating that,”any nearby government offices should get the files from them; they are producing the required files”. People aren’t going anywhere with that order; people were only ready to work in the closed space and not ready to get out.

GV: When there were no salt pan works, what work did the salt workers were doing?

R1: They were doing Mason works, garden works, watering plants; they were doing any daily wage works for their livelihood.

GV: But they were working in the company (NCTPS and nearby industries).

R1: Yes, they were only working in the companies on contract. Some people were able to get employed with the Electricity Board in NCTPS; those were people who started working while the NCTPS was in the construction phase. Even his (S) wife worked in NCTPS; people who joined then got permanent government jobs.

GV: Then salt pan workers weren’t given compensation employment.

R1: Yes, the salt pan workers weren’t given employment.

GV: Salt pan workers were also not provided with employment and also the salt manufacturers were also not given employment.

R2: Yes, but I heard that salt lifters have been given employment. It’s confirmed that they have got some employment. After the salt production, salt would be stocked. The workers who would shift the stocked salt to sacks and load the sack in the trucks (lorries) have received employment from the government; but the salt pan workers haven’t received the employment.

00:10:02

GV: You could have joined them while they are filing the case in the court.

R1: They weren’t in the thought.,

R2: They did it by themselves. They were not letting others know; they did this in silence.

R1: G told us that we can try and we could get employment for the workers. Then she decided that we could approach the court as we are constantly approaching the Collector, but we are not getting responses from the Collector.

GV: You told me that some of you have been to Jaipur and you have received a letter stating employment should be given by the companies to the salt pan workers. Did you try with that letter?

R2: That is what I am saying; the Collector Veera Raghava Rao told us to bring that letter and told us if the letter stated if the employment has to be provided and he added that it’s his duty to provide jobs to the salt pan workers. While we were about to meet the Collector with the letter, heavy rain started. The situation became worse and we couldn’t go to the Collector office by that time. Though we thought of going after sometime, he was transferred and someone else was appointed as Collector.

GV: Who has that letter?

R1: It’s with G’s office; we have a xerox copy of it; I have given all the copies to the Village panchayat leader. He told me that we can give it to the press; for a Dina-Thandhi press report. It’s with him, I have to get it back from him. G has the original copy of it.

GV: With that letter, you could have filed a case.

R1: She (G) also said the same,”If the Collector is not responding we would definitely file a case.” Even when I met her last time, she told me that we would file a case. But she got silent after that. Now our village president is saying that he is ready to coordinate with us for any actions; He also asked me to visit G madam and check on the steps to be progressed; he is ready to help us from his side. He is also ready to come to the Collector office and he is also ready to talk with any officials regarding this.

GV: You said that you spoke to the NCTPS chairperson after a protest. What was the chairperson responding then?

R1: The chairperson told us that they would provide employment. Anywhere, anytime they (bureaucrats) would only tell us that ‘we would provide a job’. If we go to the labor commissioner office, I would take my sister, my little-mother (chithi) along with me. I would take my family members to show the counts (strength) to the Commissioner at that instance; as the workers won’t be available at that time. If I take my family members, the bureaucrats would ask,”they don’t look like they worked in salt pans”. They would ask “where are the workers?”Two salt pan workers used to always come with me for such campaigns; A person named ‘Mannar’ would come here, he is dead now; he is from Mouthamedu village; he would be shorter like him (S). He always used to come with me, he would come anywhere if I asked him to come; though he was a very elderly person he used to come with me. After his death, it’s hard for us to go to places without support. Now some more people are saying that we are ready to come anywhere; getting employment is more than enough for us. Even the elderly salt pan workers' children are stating that. They asked me to speak with G madam. Now the village president is also pushing me to do this work,”we can do that as I am in a posting (being the village president); I am ready to do that”. We requested some 250 jobs, but enough for us if we just get some 100 jobs; 100 families would benefit from it.

GV: She told you that we can try for that.

R1: Yes, she said that.

GV: You said there were 3 people while you were protesting; one is tenants, another is the works and the third one you said about the ‘S2’. Would the third group come to the protests?

R1: They won’t come to the protests.

R2: Their work is only after the salt is produced; they take the salt from the ‘Ambaram’(salt stockage) and load it to the truck by filling in the sacks. They (S) are ones who would work in the salt production.

R1: They are laborers of different domains; there is no connection between these two domains. One would complete their work by stocking in the ‘Ambaram’. Another laborer group would only transfer the salt from ‘Ambaram’ to the sacks and load the sacks in the trucks. These are the two works;

R2: How did the ‘salt loaders’ get employment? Without salt production how were they able to load the salt? We produced salt, but why weren't we provided with jobs?

R1: I am raising this question on behalf of the salt pan workers; Only after the salt was produced and stocked in the ‘Ambaram’, they (salt loaders association) were able to load the salts. They got the employment; but if the salt pan workers didn’t produce the salt where would they get salt from, where is the employment for the salt pan worker who produced salt.

GV: You said that you have some documents to ‘S2’ to file the case. What are those documents?

R1: It’s like evidence that they worked in our salt pans regularly; it’s an attendance sheet; it would have names of the workers and mentions about the weekly salary payment and amount. It’s generally an attendance register kind of thing; we took xerox copies of the register and we sticked photos. Such documents were made ready by my father and it was provided to him ‘S2’.

GV: Okay. It’s your father who did that.

R1: Yes, it was my father who made all that document. He also does good social work; he helps people and he also knows most languages and he speaks well; so he would be involved in most things. Mostly Hindi-people would be there in the salt department; my father also knows Hindi; he would speak to them in Hindi. He did all the preliminary work for the salt workers employment. By the time my father was dead; three-fourth of the work was done on the employment for the salt workers, only one-fourth of work was remaining. After my father died, he asked for all the documents that we had and told us that they would take care of the employment thing. They took all those documents.

**-00:15:19**

GV: Oh, they took that. Okay.

R1: They took all the documents and they informed us that they (salt loaders) got jobs; it’s been more than one year since they received the employment order; he (S2) also told us that an order notice was served for the employment.

GV: Then he didn’t support you folks.
R1: No, he did support us.

GV: He got the help from you; but he was not supporting you.

R1: No.

SR: Is there any reason, he didn’t support you folks.

R1: It’s the ego of them,”why we need to help others”. He was just a person who was thinking it’s enough for us to get the benefitted; selfishness. That’s the reason.

SR: Or is there any reason they belong to another village?

R1: They are also in the same village. We went to the village president's house on this side of the railway track; they are residing on the other side of the railway track line.

GV: Have you decided about filing a case?

R1: Yes, G told us that we can file a case. Also we discussed visiting the Collector for the one last time. The stage 3 of the plant is almost complete; the plant would start functioning sooner. If anyone helps us by this time, there are lots of chances for us to get employment for the laborers in the NCTPS stage 3 plant; We worked on this to this extend; if anyone helps us to get to the Collector office and if we gained that jobs with that; we don’t want to file a case in the court. If not, we only have to file a case in the court.

GV: This land has changed from saltpans to industries. Do you think that is a good thing?

R1: I would say it is a bad thing.

GV: Why so?

R1: Only because of the industries we lost salt and at the same time, people lost their jobs. We are not sure about the salt that we consume today; whether it’s a medicinal salt produced in industries and we are not sure about the quality of the salt.

R2: We could get only Iodine salt and we can’t get any normal salt in any retail shops.

R1: In the past, to cook food, if we needed salt we would take the salt from outside and we would use it; we would be storing the salt in a pot, we would be using the salt from that pot. We used salt like that, now this place has become a saltless village.

R2: We would never buy salt for money; we used to sell one sack of salt for 8 rupees; now we get one kilogram of salt for 10 to 15 rupees in the shops.

R1: We used to get fresh fishes here from the River.

R2: One sack of salt would have 75 kilograms or 100 kilograms of salt. One sack was just 8 rupees, now 1 kilogram of salt is 15 rupees. Even those salts are medicinal salts, not natural ones.

R1: The fish we used to consume at that time used to be very fresh; the fish, prawns all used to be very fresh. My mother used to catch prawns well; though people working in our house used to get the prawns and fishes for us; my mother and my lil-mother (chithi) would go and catch the prawns for just time pass and get those fresh prawns to home. The fish and prawns of that time were very fresh.

GV: Where would you catch those prawns and fishes?

R1: It would be caught in ‘salt canal (uppu kaalvai)’; many fishes would be coming into the River; we would ‘Madava’ fish in the canal, it would be very much tastier.

R2: The salt water from the canal would be stored in one place called ‘Ganjeri’. That water would be stored in a land (with bund) for some days and after that salt-water would be moved to the next large pan-like land (on lower level); eventually that would be used in the small-small salt pans to cultivate the salts. The place where the water salt is stored in the phase (directly from the canal) would have more fish in it.

R1: We used to hit the fishes with logs; so many fishes would be there and they would be larger in size. To my knowledge, even I have hit the fishes with logs. The fishes would be very much larger. We have caught such fishes next to the [pump house](https://maps.app.goo.gl/DKrX6ChA5bQN1br78); on that side, the Ganjeri would exist. Did he (S) share about the Ganjeri.

GV: Yes, he has said that. He used to transfer the salt-water from one tank like pan to another step wise.

R1: When he (S) pumps water from the canal to the larger pan; in that larger pan, fishes would also get along with water; people used to catch fishes in that ‘Ganjeri’. Now because of the company the ashes have been deposited in the canal; even during the flood time, the canal is not draining the water from the village to the River, because the ashes have completely blocked the canal.

GV: Then earlier, rain water used to drain from the village.

R1: Yes, rain water would not stagnate anywhere.

GV: Is that water getting stagnated?

R1: Now the water is getting stagnant everywhere. In the recent 2015 flood, the Athipattu Pudhunagar village got completely submerged.

GV: Do you think the era while you were getting good fish and prawn was a good era?

R1: Yes, definitely, it was a good era. The fishes/prawns used to be very much tastier, the same things at present aren’t tastier to eat; when we consume that we can sense kerosine smell. The fish at that time was very much delicious; we didn't catch and sell it, we would catch and use it for our house; it would be very much fresher. There is a difference between the fishes that are iced and fish/prawns that are caught fresh and cooked. All the prawns caught would not even be smaller, it would be very much larger in size.

GV: The industry has been established here. Do you think that the establishment of the industries here could have been stopped from your side?

R1: Yes, we could have done that. But what we are going to do by stopping the industry as a single person (or family). Even ‘G’ told us that we could install a machine to stop the dust due to the truck movements; we thought of doing something to control the dust pollution, but we couldn’t make it. The ash would be carried by the trucks, so much of the dusts would be arising from the ash shipped in the trucks; me as a single person would block all the trucks (carrying ash) with the ‘prosofis’ thorn branches (mullu poottu madakkiduven) demanding them to stop and no trucks should not travel as so much of the dusts are polluting our environment. I would tell them,”I would mix the ash dust with the rice and serve you, please consume; only then you would know how much we are impacted by the dust.” By that time, I was the only one fighting for the ash dust pollution. Then the village panchayat president intervened in this issue and informed press about this concern; made this as larger issues and later the ash in the soil (along the road) was cleaned; road the road was cleaned, the water was sprinkled on the road to stop the dusts from flying and then the trucks were made to move. After that, the work was stopped to replace the old bridge with a new bridge (subway bridge); recently only two months before the bridge was opened, it was almost 10 years back the road )(/subway bridge) was closed.

GV: So the road was closed as you fought for it?

R1: Nothing like that; it was to replace the old small bridge (subway) with the new bridge; the old subway bridge had water stagnation during the rain time and it formed pits in there. So a new larger bridge is built with new piling.

GV: You said you were fighting to stop the ash dust pollution with ‘prosofis’ branches; when did you do that?

R1: I hope; it was before the year 2010; it was during the year 2009. Even during 2013, I have also done such protests; at that time, the construction work for the bridges would also happen and also, there was a small way for the trucks to move on the other side. I got married in 2010; even after that during 2011 and 2012, I have done the protests. I would fight with the truck drivers and make the situation better; it was exactly 2012 or 2013.

GV: Has there been any news on that in the newspaper?

R1: yes, the news has appeared once in the paper.

SR: Have you done it alone or have you done with people?

R1: I would do it individually; but later they (family members) would stand next to me. Because we have to show the counts to them. I would stop the trucks and ask the driver to get down; but at the time when the press comes, we have to show the counts. So I would ask the other people to join me. Because so much dust would be floating over our house; we would bear the tension that arises on our heads because of it, we can’t just resist the pollution; so I would go there and stand on it. We have children with us, so we have the fear of sickness for the children; we couldn't be able to stop the pollution; then how could we stop the industries coming here.

Okay! The company (NCTPS) has been established here, atleast they should have provided employment for the hard working laborers impacted by the company; but they were providing the employment for educated people and for the individuals who would provide money to get the government job; they are providing jobs only for them.

GV: Didn’t you ask for employment?

R1: That is; while they are getting employment, we would also get it. We are trying for it, we are not doing it out of selfishness; we hope while they get employment, we would also get the employment; we are working with that though. I have been working on this since 2008; since then I have been working for some 8 years. In that term, I was working without expecting anything; I did this for the sake of people’s good. G used to conduct medical eye camps for the people here, I would inform my mother in my home and I would be out to take the people to the eye camp; people in my home would not comment anything on that. I would take elderly people for the operation to the hospital; once their operation is complete, I would again get to the hospital on the next day to bring them back home; I have done all such help.

GV: You told about the eye issues; how many times have you conducted eye medical camps for the people yere?

R1: There were many camps; I think we would have conducted more than 5 eye camps here.

GV: As the people have lost their jobs; have you requested the company for any help on any self employment of the people.

R1: No, we haven’t requested that.

GV: Is there any resolution passed in the village panchayat?

R1: That has been done; yes resolution has been passed and a copy of that has been provided to us.

GV: Who made the resolution?

R1: It was the village panchayat president. He is also ready to do that now.

GV: What was the resolution?

R1: The salt pan workers have been impacted; you (NCTPS) have to provide employment in their company; only because of your company, the salt industry is down and there are no jobs for the laborers. So, the company has to provide employment for the salt pan workers. That is the resolution made.

GV: Jobs are their demand.

R1: That's our demand.

GV: Bringing back the salt industry is not your dream?

R1: How would that be back?

R2: How would that happen?

R1: All the things started running; pipelines have been installed; ashes have been deposited in this side; is water running in the canal? There is no water flowing in the canal. That is the canal; the water would come (high tide) from the river via canal; that water would be pumped to the salt pan with the motor. In that canal there is no water flow; how we could produce salt without that?

**00:25:16**

RK: How would the canal present?

R1: When you come from the Ennore side; from that River, the River channel would be passing by this side, the water from the sea would be flowing in that channel towards the Pazhaverkadu.

R2: That channel has been blocked without leaving any way.

GV: Where was it blocked?

R2: It’s the ashes (sambal mannu). In that company (NCTPS), the current is produced with the coal; the remaining waste is the coal-ash. The ash comes via pipelines, that ashes are transported to bunds (ash pond); there would be 4 or 5 bunds. The ashes are discharged in those bunds (ash ponds). On the way, if any leakage happens in the pipes, the ash would be leaking along with water (the ashes are pumped to the ash pond as a slurry along with water). Entirely the ash-sand (sambal mannu: ashes) would block the channel; if the ashes block the channel, how would the water flow in the canal? There would be no water flow in the River.

GV: Have you requested the government to clean the canal?

R1: No, we haven’t requested it.

GV: Why didn’t you request the government?
R1: What is the use of demanding government; there is no use. If we are in the plan to produce salt, we could request the government. Now the village president is fighting with the Electricity Board, how they can let the ash in the River; his question is ‘if the ashes block the water body, how would the water from the village drain out?’ If the canal is in the right structure, rain water would not stagnate in our village; water would completely drain the canal and from their the water would drain out to the sea. Only during the rainy season, the government would be dredging the canal to remove the ashes. Even you see the trucks carrying ashes from the bund (ash pond); sometimes the trucks would also carry the ashes that are leaked in the River (/flood plains).

GV: Then, even today you have a request to restore the canal; but not for salt, it’s for the rain water to drain.

R1: yes, it’s for the water to drain. Today, we can’t produce salt here anymore. If you go and check the salt pans, how does it look? Is it full of ash-sand or good sand filled in there?

MS,AJ: It’s full of ashes; you can only find the ashes. Ash-sand would be darker (relative to sand at that place).

AJ: people were catching prawns in that.

R1: What, were they catching prawns?

AJ: yes.

R2: Yes, the Irulars (Tribal people) would be catching the prawns there.

R1: It’s full of ash-sand; even after the canal is restored. No one can do salt production in that land.

GV: Then, it's hard to revive the salt pans.

R2: No, it can’t be done.

R1: If the (EB NCTPS) is closed; that can be done.

R2: Yes, if the EB is closed. It’s possible.

R1: If we get the land ready for the salt production; we have to be dependent on the water that comes in the canal. The ashes would not stop leaking in the River; if it’s leaking constantly, it would block the canal and there water would not come in the canal. If there is no water, how can we draw water to produce salts?

GV: Salt is not just produced for edible purposes; even industrial salts are produced. That industrial salt is again sent for other productions. Was that kind of salt produced here?

R1: Here, there was nothing like that.

GV: Were there no production of industrial salt? Were only the edible salt production.

R1: Here salt would be produced and sent from here; we weren’t sure where those salt would get to. Here, people only produce salts.

GV: Were all that edible salt?

GV: How do you want this place to be in the future? Your future, this place's future?

R1: How! It’s all not with our hand; it’s with the company invading this place; only they would be deciding the future. If we say, who is going to fulfill that? We want a peaceful place; it should be silent; this should be a good place. Our thought is there should be no pollution.

GV: Why do you think so?

R1: only if the place is like that it would be good.

GV: Are you impacted by this pollution?

R1: There is so much dust in here; due to dust we are getting more allergies. I would sneeze often because of this dust.

GV: What are the other issues you are facing here?

R1: Nothing else.

GV: You have dust allergies; it would be good if you don’t have that.

R1: Yes. If we see anywhere, there would be dust. If we just place our feet, it would be full of dust. We would just clean our house; again in some there, the same place would have dust again in there. The dust would come invisibly.

GV: Aren’t benefited by this industrialization?

R1: We have earned nothing.

GV: Are you fine with the industrialization that benefits you?

R1: I don’t understand how you are saying that.

GV: You are getting a job, you are getting a salary, but the pollution is also present here. Are you fine with that?

R1: Are you saying there would be no pollution?

GV: It’s present. Is that fine?

R1: How we would accept that.

GV: But you would get employment.

R1: Is it enough for us if we just get employment? If we just consume food with that salary, would we not get any diseases?

GV: Would we not get any diseases?

R1: I am rasing this question to you. Would we not get any diseases?

GV: People would be facing diseases.

00:30:00

GV: Then, what I am asking is, if it’s industrialization, you are asking for industrialization without pollution.

R1: Yes. If it happens it’s good. Only pollution less industrialization is good. People would survive; we would also not have to worry about life with medication.

GV: The general saying is if industries are established, employment is created.

R1: Where employment is created for us? Where are we working? None of us are working anywhere; only people outside this territory are working in the industries in this territory. Can you say, people who worked hard in the salt pans are employed at present? Can you show me those people employed? That’s our concern.

GV: You are saying that you are not getting benefitted with the industries here.

R1: Yes, we are not getting benefitted; that’s the fact. We are not getting benefitted and we are also facing the loss (negative effects) of industrialization; who else is impacted, we are the ones who are impacted because of it.

GV: You are saying that you are gaining the bad part of it, but not gaining the good part of it. That is your concern.

R1: What is a good part of it?

GV: You are not gaining the employment or salary parts of the industrialization; that is your concern. Am I right?

R1: Yes. We are gaining the pollution part of it.

GV: You are saying that’s the worst part of it.

R1: Yes! We are completely part of the salt industry in this region; but we have not gained employment. Salt pans have been destroyed and industries have been bought over that place. As the salt pans have been destroyed, it would have been helpful for us if atleast employment is provided for us; but we have not provided employment. We have lost our jobs and we also do not have any new employment; how hard it would be.

GV: Now you have provided licenses for the people worked in your salt pans. With that, any of the salt workers got employment in the companies.

R1: Salt pan workers are not gaining any permanent employment; they are seeking any employment for their livelihood; they work in any jobs they get. They waited for some years for permanent employment, after some time they were working with any private job they got. They started working in private jobs as they have their children to care for.

GV: They haven’t received any permanent jobs.

R1: Yes, no one has received permanent jobs.

GV: People have received any job; it was not permanent jobs.

R1: yes, but it was not a permanent job. Even some people won’t get those private jobs. Village president would help some people to get their job; the Councillor would employ some people in their work (private contract they have with industries), that is. Mostly company management would bring people from other places. This also only accounts for a limited number of people in the village. Others would be working in the 100 days' government work scheme (MGNREGS) in the village; some would be earning from that.

GV: Then other than company work, this 100 days work is being the alternate employment for them.

R1: yes.

GV: Is there any alternative employment for people in this region?

R1: Nothing.

GV: Then, 100 days' job. Contract company job. That’s it.

SR: Both women and men are going for the 100 day jobs?

R1: Yes, both genders can do that job.

SR: What kind of work would be allotted in the 100 days’ job scheme?

R1: In that we used to dig a percolation pond, it’s similar to a normal pond. And we would also dig some small canal like structure, in that there would be an in box structure dug out (in the pond). If water was stagnant in the last box like a pit, the cattles would drink water from that. Percolation pond is different from this. Do you know about that?

SR: No, we don’t know about that.

R1: You don't even know about that. It would be circular in shape; it’s also similar to a pond; we would dump the sand on the edges of that pond; the bund would be something like pavement. This is the percolation pond. And the canal is something that we dig for water movement, that work would also be done. If rain water comes, we would not be able to work on these (above stated works). At the time the government officers would employ the worker to clear the prosofis along the road sides; they would be cleaning the schools, anganwadis; these kinds of works would be given to them. Now they are getting 220 rupees per day per worker. Actually, the full amount is 294 rupees per day per worker. But they would not credit the 294 rupees in the account; those amounts would be coming only to the supervisor.

SR: But I learned that this amount would be credited to my bank account.

R1: Yes, it would be credited in the bank account. The worker has to submit their bank details. Once in 2 weeks the amount would be credited in the bank account.

SR: Are people employed throughout the year?

R1: No, only for 100 days. That’s why it’s called the 100 days work scheme. One person could work only for 100 days a year. If two people work with the same ration card (family card); then only 50 days a worker would be employed; for 50 days another worker from the same family would be employed.

SR: Then like, 100 days work for a family.

R1: Yes.

GV: In 2009, there was a resolution mentioned in this document stating,”To meet the chairperson of the Electricity board to get alternative employment for the 500 laborers with their working documents.” Have 500 laborers given the working document (salt labor identity) and have you met the chairperson?

R1: 500 people don’t have the document; there is documentation for 250 laborers. We would have got the document with the license number.

**00:35:14**

GV: You have that. Okay.

R1: Yes we have that; the original is with the G’s office; I only had the xerox copies of all those documents. I have kept it by filing, but completely I took it and gave it to the village president. Even today I searched if anything was left in my home, but I was not able to find it.

RK: Do you have any photos of the salt pans?

R1: We had those photos; but we aren’t sure where those are now. If we search for it we would be getting that.

R2: I think we didn’t have the photos of salt pans.

R1: It’s the photos of British men who were working in the salt commissionerate; some of the pictures have the police personnels with short trousers. At that time my grandfather; my mother’s father took photos with them in the saltpans; it’s all british era photos.

GV: Do you have those photos?

R1: It should be available; but we have to check on that. I will check on that and I can get you that.

GV: What is your immediate demand?

R1: It would be good if people get permanent employment with the government, because I have worked for these many years on this; many were commenting bad about me on this stating,”this one (R1) is going for many places, but what job she is going to earn people; this one going simply somewhere taking people”, like that people have spoken low about me. In front of them, it would be great to get employment for my people at least for the hard work I did for my people; that is my desire. Even now I think the same, I would be happy to get employment for the people there. Even when my brother (RK) approached me, I asked him,”What is the benefit for me to share such things with you; what you folks would do for my people”. Then he clearly said that we came for different things. But once you told them that you were coming, people heard about this and people from Mouthammedu village started coming to my house one by one asking,”have officials come here regarding the employment of the salt pan workers?”.

Now, if he (S1) gets to the village and says something to the villagers about this, people would start thinking that it’s for employment and they would start visiting me, enquiring about the employment. People would be ready to come anywhere for their employment campaign. For me, they have to get employment as they have suffered so much. Their children/successor has to get that employment. They are laborers in salt pans; they worked hard in the salt pans. They have really suffered hard in salt pans. If we are providing documents simply for them, it’s different; but they are the one suffered in the salt pans.

GV: Do you think the next generation of the salt pan workers didn’t develop to a considerable level or their growth has not progressed?

R1: Yes.

GV: Then if they have employment, their life would see a growth?

R1: yes.

**00:38:01**

\_\_\_+\_\_\_