**REIMAGINING THE GOOD CITY FROM ENNORE CREEK**

Interview Transcription

**Interview Information**

Interviewer/s: Raju K.

Place of interview: Athipattu village (13°15'41.8" N, 80°18'05.5" E)

Date of interview: 10.08.2022

Transcription by: RK

**Interview Notes**:

**Transcription Notes: NA**

I worked in Pattukolar’s salt pan (audio wasn’t clear). Pattukolar has died now, his son is the current Vallur panchayat head and they reside opposite to a IOB near Vallur. I was working in their saltpans for 10-20 years. Then NCTPS was commissioned. My daily wage was Rs. 5 per day. Saltpans existed beside the NCTPS; the road laid for NCTPS adjacent to Athipattu Pudhu nagar was transporting the ash dust into the salt pans. The salts were contaminated due to the fly ash from NCTPS. The ash pipelines were built over salt pans. Salt work stopped not just because of ashes but also because land was taken by the NCTPS (maybe the government); the owners of salt pans also sold their lands to set up industries. Chettinad (may be the current JSW coal yard) and the oil companies all were salt pans earlier. On the other side of the river (shore side) where the 2 stack tower (NCTPS) stands now, salt pans were existing; that was the only space where the salt existed on the other side of the river. Salt pans were existing in the place where the harbor road runs now. After the salt pans had vanished, I and some of the co-worker joined the harbor through the women’s association and the salary was Rs.65 per month. I worked there for some 6-7 years and it was on contract basis; till now the workers are employed on contract basis. When Karunanidhi (Kalaignar) came to power, many educated and illiterate (in academics) people were made permanent employees in the NCTPS. I used to work as a daily wage worker (Kooli). Later, I worked in the Zuari Cement industry for 10 years which is behind my house. It is on the way to Seppakkam from NCTPS. I worked in Zuari cement from the initial construction phase for a wage of Rs.110 that gradually increased to Rs.200 in 10 years. After that I was terminated from my work stating that I was too old and I was given a compensation settlement of Rs.2 lakh and 17 thousand and PF of the amount Rs.70,000 which was deducted. Now I am at home and will go to 100-day work (MGNREGA - Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act ) and receive my widow pension of Rs.1000 from the government.

During the rainy season, I would stay home and also go for agricultural work (kalai eduthal, Naduvu naduthal, arapu arathal). This place has now become as plots as earlier it were all farm-fields along the railway line. We worked in the farm-fields in Athipattu. If we were not working in the farm-fields, my neighbors and I would go fishing and picking prawns in the Kosasthalai river. We would hand pick prawns and make curry. Now industries have people going to different kinds of jobs and most of them are not interested in going into the salt water. Only among the Irulars do men also go for hand-picking prawns. In our community, men wouldn’t go fishing. Young women also don’t go for picking prawn; only women of a particular age would. We would go handpicking for prawns even after childbirth because of poverty.

On hot days, our skin would get caked in salt (uppu poothurum) while working in salt pans. Our feet would get scratched and it would cause \_\_\_\_ (poo vilundhudum). To heal the wounds, we would apply turmeric powder over the wounds and dip the legs in the rice kanji water. It would be quite comfortable while working for the next day. We would be working bare feets (current salt pan workers in Kattur were wearing socks while working in the salt pans). We would wake up by 4 in the morning and work until 9 or 10 a.m.. The wages were Rs.5 per day. Earlier we had good food habits; we got fresh prawns and cooked the food. illnesses were not common;, currently our knowledge has increased, but so also the disease and money. There were salt pans on both sides of the railway track. The salt pans extended till Sadayankuppam. Now there are industries all around. Zuari on one side, highway on the other. On the other side, the village has an oil company and then Chettinad. But these factories are no good. Nothing good happens because of these factories. If I hand out a white cloth to dry on my terrace, it will become dirty. My village is surrounded by dust. There’s so much of cement dust when I sweep the floor,

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