

# INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

From Rajesh Mahajan:

The following workers work at Metro Polythene Manufacturers, Daman. The product they manufacture is flexible printed packaging multi-layer film for packaging of mainly milk and oil.

Three indirect Interviews:

1.

- Name: Sheshnath Yadav.
- Age: 25.
- Original 'home': Azamgadh, Uttar Pradesh.
- Nature of work: Works as helper on flexo printing machine since the last five years.
- Classifies this as a "dangerous disease".

2.

- Name: Satender Mahto.
- Age: 31.
- Originally from: Rasalpur, Bihar.
- Nature of work: Works as Operator on Slitting machine, since the last nine years.
- Calls the disease a mahamari (mass-killer disease, or, pandemic. Also, a term used for crop pestilence.)

3.

- Name: Baliram Sahoo.
- Age: 34.
- Originally from: Cuttack, Orissa.
- Works as operator on adhesive lamination and pouching machine, since the last twelve years.
- Names COVID-19 a "Killer Disease".

All three of them currently stay in Ringanwada, Daman. They feel that masks *should be* worn and hands should be washed. They are particularly wary of the authorities as they cannot move freely while commuting to the factory. Sheshnath was, in fact, beaten up by the police for commuting.

Food arrangement: The earlier food arrangement consisted of the factory providing them with khichdi and dal/vegetable. Eventually they protested, saying they needed chapatti, and so the factory arranged extra volunteers from the plant to make chapatti, since the main cook

himself could not manage everything.

The food schedule now is:

Morning – Biscuits and Tea.

Afternoon – Lunch.

Evening – Tea.

Night – Dinner

Lunch and Dinner includes chapati, *rassa-wali sabji*, rice, dal and onions.

Working conditions:

They only work on select machines in the factory. They work in shifts, and alternate their sleep schedule. One batch sleeps from 8pm to 2am, while the other sleeps from 2am to 8am. In the morning they freshen up have and have a bath. The company has provided each one of them with soap (lifebuoy). They sleep only in the designated area on the floor, to maintain social distancing.

Every time they enter the plant, they sanitize their hands. A sanitizer is placed on every entrance (this includes the main gate, factory gate) and inside the plant at strategic locations. They sanitize their hands before punching in their biometrics. Their temperature is also checked.

They are however, not aware of any government schemes for their benefit.

## Transcription of Personal Interviews from Chala, Vapi.

### 1. Rajkumar Moriya

- Originally from: Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh
- No. of years in Vapi: 10 years
- Household size: 5 (including wife and three kids)

Rajkumar Moriya was seated along with his chawl-mates in the open ground outside their abodes. Four of them sat on the ground variously on cement bags, blue tarpaulin and large pieces of cloth. Rajkumar was dressed in an untucked checkered grey shirt and dark brown trousers. He appeared to be a middle-aged man, with a whitening moustache and receding greyish hair.

Upon explaining the nature of my project and obtaining permission to record them, Rajkumar, who was the most vocal so far, set out to explain his situation. He explained he worked at *Jhanda Chowk*, a landmark circle in the older part of Vapi. He explained he worked in construction, working with RCC, concrete work and centring. He classifies as a daily wage labourer.

Upon inquiry, he said he had lived around Vapi for ten years, also getting married here. He lives with his wife and three kids in the chawl.

Rajkumar mentioned that he heard about the lockdown for the first time on 20<sup>th</sup> March, as it was announced. He had heard a little bit about the virus before that, chiefly that it had been spreading internationally, originating from China.

Answering my query, he said that he still has family in UP, family consists of his mother and Younger brother, no father. He spends money back home, but he has not been able to this month.

Besides not earning anything this month, they also have to spend at ration shops. And that while the ration shops would give food on credit earlier, even they cannot afford to do so in these times.

He also reflected that it is fortunate that the government declared the waiving of all rent for a month, which they were paying at the rate of Rs 2000 per month. But he fears that within the coming months, even the chawl-owners will have no option but to squeeze them for money. Within the next few months, he says, everyone will be walking with only ten rupees in their pockets.

Their chawl-owner, who happened to be passing by, mentioned that the first case in a village nearby, named Umargaon. The conversation then sprawled towards chiding said case, a young man admitted at Jan Seva hospital in Vapi. From the few minutes that this conversation on the patient lasted, it became clear that Rajkumar, along with his chawl-mates, held very strong views on movement in the times of the pandemic. Holding the patient entirely accountable for not having had himself tested earlier, and for continuing to meet people (as is a youth's wont, Rajkumar adds), they reveal that they understand the importance of the restricted movement, and approve of the lockdown. They feel, however that there should be more measures in place for people like them, to survive the lockdown.

When asked about food arrangements, Rajkumar noted that a van makes rounds daily at 4 pm, to deliver food. This consists of one plastic box of Khichdi served per person, served upon showing one's Aadhar card.

Another van delivers 5-6kg of rations, including 1kg Rice, 1kg *chana* dal, 1kg salt, 1kg sugar and 2kg of wheat. This appears to be part of the scheme initiated by the Gujarat Government as of April 1, 2020.

When asked how he spends his time during the day, he raised his palms to the sky and laughed with his colleagues, as if to suggest that he himself does not know. He says that they just sit around, watch cable news, and shows such as Mahabharat and Ramayana.

They do not use smartphones, but "*sadharan phone*", or ordinary phones. They are unaware of apps such as Aarogya Setu.

Interview 2:

Name: Bipin

Originally from: Jaunpur

Living in Vapi since: 10 years

The second interviewee was a younger man named Bipin.

He is also a daily wage labourer, and said corroborated the details on food and work. He is also uncertain of the future. However, in one key difference, Bipin says that the lockdown seems to have had little effect, because despite it lead to a case in Umargaon. Even if they were to lift the lockdown, and allow limited people to go to work, that would not work because “aadmi samajte nahi hai”. He says, that if one of them was to go to work, ten others would follow. He seems irked by the fact that the youth was not had not self-quarantined, and that the doctors will have to trace back the people he came into contact with.

He also confirmed the fact that ten ambulances had been set aside for cases of COViD-19 in Umargaon-Vapi, as per the local news on TV.