



“I regularly felt the difficulties while reading small letters, and also had to strain a lot when tying the net for fishing”: Field interviews with Mani and Boobalan, fishermen in Tamil Nadu

Rollo Romig
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Rollo Romig: My name is Rollo Romig. I'm from the US and I'm studying the eyeglasses program. What is your name?

Mani: Mani.

Rollo Romig: And you work as a fisherman?

Mani: Fisherman.

Rollo Romig: You bought glasses from Padmavati, yes?

Mani: Yes.

Rollo Romig: What is your age?

Mani: 45.

Rollo Romig: She came to your door to sell you the eyeglasses?

Mani: Yes.

Rollo Romig: What did you think when she told you about the eyeglasses?

Mani: I felt really happy when Padma came to my house because it is very beneficial. It helps for my eye health. It really helps. That's why I was very happy when Padma came, and I also bought glasses.

Rollo Romig: Before she came, had you noticed that your vision was blurry for close things?

 **Mani:** Before Padma came to my house and gave me the glasses, I knew that I had problems with near vision, but my distance vision was very good. I didn't face any difficulty with distance vision, but I regularly felt the difficulties while reading small letters, and also had to strain a lot when tying the net for fishing. When tying the nets, if any knot is not correctly done, then I had to restart it again. It's quite difficult. I need to be very careful. To be carefully doing that, I need to strain a lot.

I was facing some uncomfortability. But I thought it's because of aging and that it was a natural thing. I didn't consider it very seriously, but I knew that I had a near vision problem.

Rollo Romig: How did it change for you working on the nets after you got the glasses?

Mani: It really helps when tying the nets, but not when going for fishing, because it can get lost when they're fishing. When they are here and doing the other works, like tying nets and bending and all that, for that, it really helps.

Rollo Romig: Has it made you faster at tying the nets?

Mani: Yes, it really helps to do or to mend the nets very quickly and also without much strain.

Rollo Romig: Is there anything else you would say about it? How would you sum up the benefits of having the glasses?

Mani: I use this not only when I work. When I do near vision tasks, it really helps, and I'm so happy and satisfied.

Rollo Romig: What do you think about the pricing?

Mani: I feel ₹300 is an affordable cost.

Rollo Romig: What is your name and your age?

Boobalan: Boobalan. 48.

Rollo Romig: Are you also a fisherman?

Boobalan: Yes.

Rollo Romig: Did you buy glasses on the same day as Mani?

Boobalan: The same day.

Rollo Romig: Did she come to your door, or did Mani tell you about it?

Boobalan: Mani.

Rollo Romig: Had you noticed that your vision was blurry before she came?

Boobalan: I was wearing another glass previously, it was some time back. I thought I need to change the glasses. That's why I bought another pair of glasses.

Rollo Romig: Because the other one wasn't strong enough. How are the glasses helpful to you?

Boobalan: Mainly for two things. First to see numbers in the mobile phone. Secondly, while tying the nets.

Rollo Romig: The previous glasses you had, were they bifocals or were they single lens?

Boobalan: Bifocals only.

Rollo Romig: Where did you get your previous glasses?

Boobalan: Emaan Hospital. From a hospital nearby.

Rollo Romig: Do you remember how much they cost?

Boobalan: It's nine years before. I don't remember.

Rollo Romig: How was the price for these? ₹300—is that okay?

Boobalan: ₹300 is very low for these good glasses.

Rollo Romig: How would you sum up the benefit of having these glasses?

 **Boobalan:** It is quite difficult to actually do regular tasks, like seeing numbers on mobile phone, and calling somebody, and see who is calling before receiving a call without a spectacle. That is very important. Very recently, yesterday, when I did not take my glasses when I went outside and I got a call when I was traveling, it was quite difficult for me to receive the call because I didn't know who was calling. Otherwise, I have to pick up the call and then ask who is calling because it's difficult for me to see. That is one thing, and it really helps in tying the nets. Without spectacles, it would be difficult.

Rollo Romig: Thank you so much.

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*Rollo Romig is the manager of Solutions Insights Lab. He is the author of *I Am on the Hit List: A Journalist's Murder and the Rise of Autocracy in India*, which was named a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize.*

** This interview has been edited and condensed.*