Mehgal River Basin Oral History Project
Interview Transcript

Interviewers: Alexandra Mouche and Dakshesh Gajjar
Narrator: Ashok Shekhat
Interview Dates: March 22nd, 2012
Place: Ajab village, Maliya Block, Junagadh, Saurashtra, Gujarat, India
Program: Fulbright-Nehru Grant 2011-2012
Date completed: March 22nd, 2012
March 22\textsuperscript{nd}, 2012

Persons Present: Alexandra Mouche’ (interviewer)  

Dakshesh Gajjar (research assistant/interviewer)  

Ashok Shekhat (Narrator)

\textbf{(Dakshesh)}: तमाहू नाम शुं छे?

What is your name?

\textbf{(Ashok)}: माझ नाम अशोकभाई शेखात छे

My name is AshokBhai Shekhhat.

\textbf{(D)}: तमारो जन्म कमां अने कमाइ थियो?

When and where were you born?

\textbf{(A)}: माझो जन्म १९६७ मा अजब गामामा थियो

My birthday was in 1967 in Ajab village.

\textbf{(D)}: तमारी क्षेत्री पेडीभाली असी रहेछे?

How many generations of your family have lived here?

\textbf{(A)}: लगभग ६ रो ७ पेडीभाली रहिएका छाइने

About 6 to 7 generations of us have lived here.

\textbf{(D)}: तमाहो नामप्रजानी कोई वसित मने गाउँ खोप?

What memories do you have from your childhood?
In our childhood we played games, studied, and went to the farm.

When were you married? How many children do you have?

My marriage was in 1993. I have two children - one daughter and one son.

How many years of education have you had?

I have a Bachelor of Arts in Gujarati.

How did you learn how to farm?
We learned farming from my forefathers, we use to go to the farm during school vacation, and with the guidelines of our elders we learned farming.

(D) दशेश : केवल वरसबी पेटी करो जो?

How many years have you been farming?

(A) अशोकमार्थी : लगभग 1984 थी पेटी करिथे कीहे जी?

Since about 1984 we have been farming.

(D) दशेश : पेटी करता छता त्यांच्या पाकेच्या यातो छतो ज?

When you farmed, what crops did you grow?

(A) अशोकमार्थी : त्यांचे पाक गोरे, मकई, जोवार, गाजर याता छता.

पशुओऱ्यांच्यां आवश्यक पाक वडण्या येवांच्या आवश्यक काले के त्यांचे पशुओऱ्यांचा संचय वाघारे घरी बोकरीणी जडायाचे आहे जाती.

At that time we grew wheat, corn, jowar and carrots.

Back then there were more cattle, so crops useful to cattle were grown. Human needs were not so much.

(D) दशेश : तमें पेटी शुरू करी त्यांचा वेगवेगऱ्या साधनो व्ययाता?

What kind of tools did you use when you started farming?

(A) अशोकमार्थी : मारा समयमध्ये पेलीनी शुरूनाच करी त्यांमध्ये इलेक्ट्रिक
When I started farming, electric tools were already in use. In one farm there were electric tools and in others there were diesel tools. Iron tools replaced wooden tools, which were used in early times. Tractors were used for farming and there were no tools for processing, but after some time tools like ‘openers’ were introduced.

(D) : अत्यारे पेटीमात्र वेला पाक दो छो?

What types of crops do you grow now?

(A) : अत्यारे अमारा गाममा ऑछा पार्णीमां छै र वायाम
ते पाक दोथिए सीनी सीरा, धारा, मला जेवा पाक दोथिए सीनी अमारा गाममा भुर्वना सोवी छै र आधुनिक क्यांग नहीं पसार थती नयी डिसम्बर, जनून मारीमां अमारा बृस्तर पार्णीमा सतर ऑछा थाई जाइ छ

Today in our village we grow chickpea, which is grown with less water, cumin, coriander seeds, chickpea etc,
we also grow. The terrain of Ajab village is such that there is no river close by. In December and January the water level in the ground goes very low.

(D) शेश : तमारी पेटी करवानी रीत कैली कती?

How did you farm?

(A) अशोकभाई : पेटी करवानी रीत अत्यारे बोकोनी जटरियात बघी

How did you farm?

The method of farming today is that people’s needs have increased and so have the tools. Today nobody wants to keep bullocks. Bullocks were used back in the old days and now tractors are used for farming. My grandfather had 50 Vighas land; all four brothers got 10 Vighas each.

(D) शेश : तमें कोणसा साधने जोडिली भो?

Are you part of any organizations?

(A) अशोकभाई : 1999 मा जंगलातिनु काम शुरू भो तेमां टेकनिकल
Yes, in 1999 I handled the technical department in Jal Kranti. For the past 2 years I have been the trustee and president of educational organization. I am also the Pramukh (chief) of the organization committee for the betterment of Samajik Umiya Parivar, and Siddhsar Parivar.

(D) रक्षश : तूमने कैसी शॉप परे ?

Do you have any hobbies?

(A) अशोकभाई : गामनो विकास केम चाय बोके गामना विकास केम

डोक्याह, बोकेमां जगपति केम आवे गामनु जी.वी. केम वधे ते माटे सतत प्रथलशील हुं.

I am making efforts to ensure the village and villagers are developing. I am trying to spread awareness amongst people and to increase the reputation of our village.

(D) रक्षश : कसा घरम साये संकणाचं चं?
What religion are you a part of?

(A) अशोक शेखत : हिंदू धर्म साथे संकल्पावेळा येतो.

I am a part of the Hindu religion.

(D) दक्ष : मेघल नदी विषय मध्ये म्हणतो नाही?

What are your perceptions of the Meghal River?

(A) अशोक शेखत : मेघल नदी मार्गापासून विषयावर ती मार्गांना जंगात असतील.

If we think about Meghal River, peoples needs have increased. Earlier only 10 Vighas were cultivated but now due to high demand more area is cultivated and it needs more water, so the river has dried up. The Meghal River dried up because the water level had gone down. The revival of Aravalli River had been an inspiration to us, so we have also tried to revive the Meghal River.
When you were young, what was the Meghal River like?

When I was young, I used to go to my aunt’s house. In the last 2 or 3 months the water used to dry out; earlier the river would dry up in December and January. In the past 9 years in the region around Meghal River, the 64 villages around it, from Ajab to Barda Hill (where the Meghal River starts), AKRSP Organization has worked on the rivers connected to Meghal River. This has been helpful.
From the day you are born till the day you die, nothing is possible without water. When a child is inside the womb, water is required there as well.

What happened when the Meghal River dried up?

When the river dried up there was a scarcity of water, instead of producing 3 rounds of crops in a year, 2 rounds were barely produced. When it rained we could grow monsoon crops but we could not grow winter crops.

When the Meghal River dried up, what was the affect on your life?
The effect on our lives was very bad, because our lives depended on farming. If there is no farming and no production of crops, obviously our lives are going to be effected. We cannot fulfill the needs and education of our children and the development of the village also stops.

When the river dried up during the drought how did you procure water for farming?

10 वी १२ द्रूपांतो छोय तेमां पाणी उपलब्ध होइ पीवना पाणीला पन्न १९८० वी १९९८ तारीखांमध्ये घराती जास्तीत तांतील बालांनी बालांनी नववटी येतील पाणी पूरुं पाता ५० वी ७० व्यांनी वाढीला होय
There was no arrangement of water for farming. In one village there were 10 to 12 wells from where water would be available. There was a huge scarcity of drinking water. For drinking water the Government would get it from the villages where the wells had water and bring it to our village through water tankers and dump it in the main tank of the village. The line for water would be 60 – 70 people long. This lasted from 1980 to 1998. There was not enough rainfall, and water levels in the ground went low. This situation lasted for 11 years.

(D) देश : तम्य पदयात्रा, शरीनतकमारे बोकडारा जेवरी

एरुतिमा बाजाबीं जे?

Have you participated in pad yatra (foot-march), sheri natak (street show, play) and lokdayro (public performance)?

(A) अशोकभाई : जयाये जणातिमा जोडया त्यारे अजान गाम भाले
When we joined Jal Kranti we started from Ajab village. When we started earlier, the foundation of the first check dam was laid by the hands of a religious chief. Then Jal Maha Sammelan was called at Ajab Village. AKRSP thought that Ajab was an aware village and they thought we could be an inspiration to other villages. AKRSP organized a pad yatra (foot match) with us from Ajab to the Meghal River for 3 days doing shows and plays in different villages. They also called for meetings in each village. They spread awareness in 54 villages of Meghal River.
Alexandra Mouche

Ashok Shekhat Interview 3/22/12

(D) दलेश : आप ऐसे शेरिनाटक में के लोकदायराम भाग लीजिए?

Did you participate in these activities like sherinatak (street show, play) and lokdayro (public performance)?

(A) अशोकमार्ड : आप ऐसे शेरिनाटक में के लोकदायराम भाग लीजिए?

(A) अशोकमार्ड : आप ऐसे शेरिनाटक में के लोकदायराम भाग लीजिए?

Due to these activities the water levels rose, winter crops could also be grown, and the needs of our livelihood were also fulfilled.

(D) दलेश : रोज पाणी ब्यापार माटे शुद्ध करो करो?

What do you do to conserve water daily?

(A) अशोकमार्ड : रोज पाणी ब्यापार माटे पीवाना पाणीमी कश्चित करी पकेता आपका विस्तारमां पीवाना पाणीमी करण नही। अर्थात विटरनो काफी काफी आपको पीटा हो की पाणी वह पाणी अच्छा रोज वह पाणी नीचे है। अर्थात पाणी वह पाणी वह पाणी वह पाणी नीचे है। अर्थात पाणी वह पाणी नीचे है।
To save water daily we start from drinking water. Earlier in our region there were Kalash (small pots) to drink water. They were half-liter pots. We drank water and threw away the extra water. Now we have small glasses instead of pots to save water. To wash clothes and utensils, a minimum amount of water should be used. Rainwater should be collected so that the water goes into wells and into bore wells, and so that the water of the village stays in the village. This is how water should be saved.

(D) दशेश : तमारा दादा बेटी करता त्यारे पाणीचे उपयोग केवी रीते करता?

How did your grandfather use water for farming?

(A) अशोकभाई : ज्यारे मारा दादा बेटी करता त्यारे अभ्यंजने आईवी गावा कता पेटीमां पाणी क्यारा पद्धतीनिर्देशी पावरायरता कता?

When my grandfather did farming, engines were already introduced. Thin trench lines were build in the farms to water the field.

(D) दशेश : ते मे अत्यांगे पेटीमां पाणीचे उपयोग केवी रीते करें का?
Nowadays how do you use water in farming?

(A) अशोक भाई : अत्याधृत तूफानी आस्था गई है तथापि नाना अणिमो उता
तेघी ओररे पावेतर वर्तन अत्याधृत अंता पावेतर वर्तन है

Now we have electricity. Back then there were small
engines so the cultivation was less. Now farming has
expanded and so has cultivation.

(D) दलेश : तमें जब भाग पद्धति विशेष शुद्ध जालो छो?

What do you know about water conservation methods?

(A) अशोक भाई : जब भाग पद्धतिना तो जो आफ्नो चेकडेम बांधिए अभारी
शृंखला नामी है तेघी नाना चेकडेम बांधिए जटली श्रमिता मूलय चेकडेम बांधिए
अने कुला परसाद पत्ती बोरीबंध बांधिए पाणी वही जता रोक्की शक्य.
जयभाग भागे हुमारी पद्धति ने उपयोग करी शक्य

About water conservation methods, so the Check dams
we build are in small streams. So instead of small check
dams, strong check dams should be built, and after the
last rains, water can be stopped from flowing away by
making Boribands. To save water, the fountain/shower
method can be used.

(D) दलेश : तमें जब भाग पद्धति पासे शु आशा रामो छो ?
What are your expectations from the Water Conservation methods?

(A) अशोकभाई : जब ब्यापार समिति निवेदन आ कार्य करती रहे आचारी भी

(व) जबबापाट प्रमुखों राहूं बाबी अगे नक्सलवादों ने जागृत करी आ कार्य

विर्तर आशा रचे तेनी आशा

The Water Conservation Committee should continuously make efforts. They should show the way of water conservation to the next generation and make them aware of the situation and this work should always go on. This is what we expect.

(D) डेल्श : जब ब्यापार समिति जे कार्य करे छ ते कार्य तमने डेटबु असरडारह छे?

According to you, how affective have the efforts of the water conservation committee been?

(A) अशोकभाई : जबबापाट समिति जे कार्य करे छ तेनु परिणाम सार्वत्रु आत्मा छे नानप्रचारं अयानं मेघल नदीनं स्थिति हती ते स्थितिमां अत्याने पडोंी गता हे लक्षण 50 वि 60 % बाजीनं काम आप्से करी याब्या.

(व) जब ब्यापार समितिनं कार्यक्षी घण्या सारा परिणाम भयं छे.

The result of the efforts by the Water Conservation committee has been good. The Meghal River has now
become the way it was in my childhood. We have been able to do almost 50% to 60% of water works. The results of the save water committee had been effective.

(D) दक्षिण : तबारी जीवनती तो वात तब कहेवा भागता खोई तो?

Do you want to say anything about your life?

(A) अशोक : मारा जीवनती वात जो छे जेथे बेकड़म बांधा छे तेनो संतोष छे. कारण के मारी नानी उमरमां आ. कार्य करी शक्या छे अन्यो मने आतम संतोष छे जे ते मारी बूटकावणी स्थिति प्रभावः छु अन्यास न करी शक्यो तेनो मने आकर्षित छे बाबस्कम्ब पत्र शेषित बेठे कार्य करवा मांगीथे छीमे.

About my life, that is all. I am satisfied about the Check Dams that we have built, because I did it at a small age so I am satisfied. I regret the fact that I couldn’t finish my education because of my poor condition in the past.

In the future we want to work in the field of education.