Mehgal River Basin Oral History Project

Interview Transcript

Interviewers: Alexandra Mouche and Dakshesh Gajjar

Narrator: Hira R. Parmar

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Persons Present: Alexandra Mouche’ (interviewer)

Dakshesh Gajjar (research assistant/interviewer)

Hira R. Parmar (Narrator)

(Dakshesh) दक्षेश : तमाए नाम शुं छे?
What is your name?

(Hira) हीरानेन : मारु नाम हीरानेन आर. परमार छे
My name is HiraBen R. Parmar.

(D) दक्षेश : तमारो जन्म कम अने कमारे थयो?
When and where were you born?

(H) हीरानेन : मारो जन्म १–१९६९ मा बघो जुल्मु गामां थयो.
I was born in Juthal village on the 1st of January 1969.

(D) दक्षेश : तमारी देतबी पेडी अधी रले छे?
How many generations of your family have lived here?

(H) हीरानेन : आफ्दा ना वपलथी अधी रली छीजे हीजे
Since the time of our ancestors we have live here.

(D) दक्षेश : तमारी नामपत्री देतबी वस्तु तमाने बाद छे?
What do you remember from your childhood?

(H) हीरानेन : नामपत्रां रमत गमतां जाय छ निरागामा.
When we were young we played games, took part in
कोइ स्पालो दोष तेमां भाग बर्ती छीजे अेंगु बौँ बाद छे
competitions in school, all that I remember.

(D) दक्षेश : तमारा वजन कमारे थया? देतबा भागा?
When were you married? How many children do you have?

(H) Hira R. Parmar Interview:
I was married in 1989. I don’t have any children.

(D) Dinesh:
How many years of study have you completed?

(H) Hira R. Parmar Interview:
I studied until 10th grade.

(D) Dinesh:
How did you learn farming?

(H) Hira R. Parmar Interview:
We inherited farming and have been doing it since the time of our forefathers. We went to the farm with our mother and father and learned farming while watching them.

(D) Dinesh:
How many years have you been farming?

(H) Hira R. Parmar Interview:
Farming, 18 years we have been farming.

(D) Dinesh:
When you first started farming, what crops did you grow?

(H) Hira R. Parmar Interview:
We grew mostly monsoon crops, but if the monsoon failed the crops also failed. In the case of groundnut, the crops would fail even if the fields received one rain shower less [than needed].
What tools did you use for farming back then?

When we farmed we used an opener and machinery tools. Our forefathers used bullock carts.

Which crops do you grow now?

Nowadays, due to machinery, the crops are growing well. Today it takes less time and gives good output.

How did you farm?

When the crops are ready we would have to stay in the farm at night and guard the crops and field. That is our way of farming.

Do you belong to any organizations?

Yes I am a part of the Aga Khan Gram Samarthan Bharat.

Which religion do you belong to?
(H) सीराबेन : विनु धर्म साथे संकल्पेला छीने 
I’m part of the Hindu religion.

(D) दशेश : तम्ने कोई शोध छो भने?
Do you have any hobbies?

(H) सीराबेन : शोध बढ्दो तेमां भास सामाजिक काम कर्मवानो छो भने 
I have many hobbies, but social work is favorite hobby.

(D) दशेश : तमेम भेष्टल नाही विसे तमें छु विखारो छो?
What do you think of the Meghal River?

(H) सीराबेन : आमेम भेष्टल नाही विसे विखारीभे छीने व्यभिचार आपली नौकरी आपली शेजारी रोलेशन जीवनी शके पसू सारूं शिक्षण आपला शाहीभे 
Due to the Meghal River, our traditional lifestyle can prosper and be maintained. Our next generation can live a good life and they can get good education.

(D) दशेश : तमें नानाओ हता त्याते भेष्टल नाही केही हती?
When you were little, what was the Meghal River like?

(H) सीराबेन : आमेम नानाओ हता भेष्टल नाही विसे पाती सांभाजी हती आपली भेष्टल नाही अनेक पातेलांनी भेष्टल नौकरी धर्म तहावत छे परम्परा आंध्रो पाती त्याते नौकरी पाणी न ैवेत त्यां झुज्झण्डी भेष्टल नौकरी तो भाग धरता न हता 
When we were little we had heard stories about the Meghal River. The river today is very different then the river back in those days. When there was shortage of rain the river dried and the crops failed.

(D) दशेश : पाणी तमारा माते केही महत्त्वमुळे छे?
What is the importance of water to you?

(H) सीराबेन : पाणी आपली माते पूर्ण ज महत्त्वमुळे छे आपणी 
Water for our mother’s is complete and is of importance.

या प्रकारी आपणी भेष्टल नाही छे ते आपणे मीहूँ पाणी भेष्टल धर्म शके भेष्टल नौकरी शैवन वरील वरील मांटू हेम वांट्या माणीला गावात 64 आपल्यांने मांजरोव टाकून 65 मांजरोबो भेष्टल नौकी शोध पाहे छे
Water is extremely essential for us. This whole region is of salty water; only the Meghal River gives us sweet water. The Meghal River was revived and huge dams were built. The Meghal River fulfills the requirement of sweet water for 64 villages of Maliya and 65 villages in Mangrol.

(D) द्विभाष : मेंढळ नही सुखाई गई त्याई शुद्ध ब्रह्म ?
When the Meghal River dried up, what happened?

(H) द्विभाष : मेंढळ नही सुखाई गई त्याई परिस्थिति भूमि बराबर गई गई फाड ओझा बतो मज़नात वहाइट करवा छता जीवने टेटी उपजेम यमकी शक्ति न छता.
The situation became critical when the river dried up and the output decreased. In spite of putting in a lot of effort, the output was below expectation.

(D) द्विभाष : मेंढळ नही सुखाई गई तेनी असर तमारा जीवन के ई पडी ?
When the Meghal River dried up, how did it affect your life?

(H) द्विभाष : आपने पानी के तो उदार ज्यादा पानी होग तो शाकाहारी पन उगाड़े शाकाहारी मेंढळ जीवन तो मेंढळ जीवत छो तो असारे जीवन सर्से मेंढळ जीवत न होग तो असारे जीवन पर भुष बराबर असर जय।
Today, because there is water, everything is possible, we can also grow vegetables. Our lives are good because the Meghal River is alive, if the river goes dry our lives will be in trouble.

(D) द्विभाष : गामडा अने कुंटुं पर देवी असर वड़ ?
How did it affect your family and village?

(H) द्विभाष : गामडा अने कुंटुं पर बाजारे असर पडे पानी दोे तो ज अंती वाय, पानी बाजार कई पन बाय नही उपज बाय नही तो आवीद रीते पन मुकुटली बाय अंती वाय तो पन बाजारे पुरतु ज बाय.
Without water farming is possible, without farming our financial situation is also affected; only if it rained things would be better in that time. So the effect on the family and the village was devastating.
During the drought how did you get water for farming?

At that time digging wells was also useless. If we were lucky we would probably get water at the range of 80 or 90 feet deep. From that water, winter crops were possible with 1 or 2 rounds of water. Now since the Meghal River is revived, our crops get water.

How did you get to know about the foot march, street plays, and public performances?

The foot march is very important. Jasa Bappa had taken an oath that until the river Meghal was revived he would not stop his foot march.

Did you participate in any of these activities?

When the seminars for women were held we could call and have discussions and we would join them and work together. In the seminar the ladies did plays and street shows.

How did this affect your life?
Earlier we did not know anything as to what the shows were all about. Since we joined the organization we learned and became aware about all this.

What do you do everyday to save water?

To save water daily we built underground water tanks. These water tanks were built in each village and the work to built underground water tanks in other villages is in progress. The capacity of the tanks is approximately 10000 liters and we store rainwater in the tanks.

How did your grandfather use water for farming?

For farming our grandfather got water from wells, if our wells went dry they got water from others wells. People helped each other and used water.

How do you use water for farming?
Now we have water because the Meghal River is alive again. The output of crops is also large in quantity. Cumin, coriander, millet, and wheat all grow healthy. Wells are also full of water.

(D) दवेश : तबे माह स्थान पृथ्वि विशेष शु जाशो छो?
What do you know about water conservation methods?

(H) दीर्घन : जल स्थान पृथ्विमाघ जल स्थानमा महिता जग
आयो घुप बनायो छ अने भिमिङ्गो कारी पाठ्य क्वां रीते वापरवु रे रीते उपयोग कर्नो , पाठ्य वस्तु शु छ पाठ्य आपाया जीवन माटे उटलूँ महत्वानु छे ते वर्ण करिएछीने.
To save water, the water conservation group was formed and meetings and discussions are held imparting knowledge on how to use and conserve water, and that what is the importance of water in each person's life.

(D) दवेश : जल स्थान महिति पाद्रे शु आशा रायो छो?
What are you expectations for the ‘water conservation’ committee?

(H) दीर्घन : जल स्थान महिति पाद्रे ओरेट्ती आशा छे के पुकार
पाठ्य मणि नुवा रिचार्ड वाय बोर अने मोटा मोटा बेडकिम बने लेरीजंग बने के गामकान्नो जयं तवीलीको छ त्यांहो ईडिक मूकाय अने पाठ्य मणि ओवी अपेक्षा राजपींछीने
The expectations from the ‘water conservation’ committee are that: we should get lot of water, well research should be carried out, check dams should be built for water bores, and boribands should be made. In villages where there is a scarcity of water. Hand pumps should be installed and everyone should get water.

(D) दवेश : जल स्थान महत्ती ले कार्य कर्ने छे ते उटलूँ असरकारक छे?
According to you, how effective have the efforts of the water conservation committee been?

(H) दीर्घन : असरकारक तो पूण जे तेदो जे नूतनर्म दाङपुन
They have been very effective, they have arranged for the underground water tanks, so water is now stored. Two rounds of crops can be cultivated, groundnut and other winter crops like wheat, millet, coriander seeds, cumin etc. Then immediately summer crops like sesame, mung dal, urad dal, etc are grown. This way 4 round of crops are grown.

(D) दक्षिण : तमारी श्रीदेवीनी कोई अन्य वात बरी के के के तबे अन्ये कहेता मांगता होय?
Do you want to say anything more about your life?

(H) दीर्घकात : अमारां बहेनो आ रिते पस्तिका जागृत न हता। धरणी कोई बड़ा निकालता न हता। नेती वर संभागको अन्ये कोरो संगणका अे अंगुरु काम छैन अंना बहेअ अन्ये कुणा परिपृष्टि छैन बढाय छे बहेनो जागृत थया। महंगी बनाया गुप्त बनाया अमारां अंगुरु जागृत ठया। महंगी बनाया अमारां काम करेल ठया ठालिम आपी तमारा बोली साचे मुखाचल करायी अवधारी संथागी साचे वात्तीत वाचक नहीं पूण आगण वधे अंगुरु अमारु स्वपन छे।
Our women were so unaware earlier; they never stepped out of the house. Taking care of the house, children and farming was their job. But now the situation had changed a lot, women have become aware, created committees and groups and we were given positions. We started working with them, started giving training to people. Talks should be held with the organization so that they can make arrangements for us to meet you, and the Meghal River should prosper. That is my dream.

Question for Hiraben about challenges facing women.

(D) दक्षिण : आ तमे दोर, आ तमे मेर्दवपुर मोर गुप्तां जोकारा बरोलर तमे छ। जे बीजा छायावेन छ।, बरोलर, तमने दोरी प्रोलबम अंवा आविवा के, कॅमह इनकाजी बधा मेर्दव मोर गुप्तां बधा
So the core, so in Meghal Core group, you joined with HaluBen. So what kind of problems did you face there, since all the other members of the Meghal core group are men? What problems do you face and how did you come out of it? Did it ever happen that people did not listen to you?

(H) दीर्घनेन : पहला प्रश्न तो घरनो ज जोय ने, घरमां आपणे पेला आपणा मिस्तरने अनेक मंडूरी मेलिवी पडे, अनेक पहेला आपण्यांना विश्वास देवू असे. आपणा घरना लोकांना आपण्यांच्या विश्वास देवू असे घरनी बार नीकेनी आपणे इतर सुपर्नवा तो ई विश्वास आपणा घरने पाळी थी ई लोकांना अनेक लोकांना अमने माहू नभावल तसेच क्रम करुं मुखेंद्री तो भरीजने तो पडा. अभे भे-माहूंची चेम अमने कॉल मुखेंद्री होय तो ई अमने दशके जाणे करे, कॉल मिळणे होय तो कर्या करी भावही आपणे संगणकांनी चेम, मुखेंद्री तो पडाने, कॉल ध्रम करीजने अटले मुखेंद्री तो पडणे ज घरवी बार निकेनुं, घरमां विश्वास आपणो पाळी तयां एडिक्य के संडसनी वस्तेच क्रम करुं अने लांड करू रोते क्रम करता होय ते जोयुं, अं लांड करू रोते प्रयुत रोता होय अं शीमवी, अटले मुखेंद्री तो हे ज.

The first concern was about the house, we had to take permission from our mister (husbands) and take their approval. We also had to assure other family members. Then we went out of our homes and created the Core Group, so we had to win trust of our family and others. Obviously there is going to be problems and difficulties but in the Core group the men and women work together like brothers and sisters, and if there was any problem they warned us and helped us. If there is a meeting they discuss and share the information like real sisters. Any work you do, there are obstacles. Here we had to go out of the house, work alongside men, observing what they were doing and learning from them. So it was difficult. The main thing was winning the confidence of our family members, who allowed us to work outside alongside men.