Mehgal River Basin Oral History Project
Interview Transcript

Interviewers: Alexandra Mouche and Dakshesh Gajjar
Narrator: Kanchen Kanpara
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Persons Present: Alexandra Mouche’ (interviewer)

Dakshesh Gajjar (research assistant/interviewer)

Kanchen Kanpara (Narrator)

(Allie) अलीः तमें क्या आवो छो?

Where are you from?

(Kanchen) कँचनः कोस्काही आवु छूँ

I am from Kholsa.

(A) अलीः ् कोस्का—कोस्का… तथा आवो छो

Kholsa, she is from Kholsa

…… so तमाआ नाम शुं छे

So what is your name?

(K) कँचनः मन्भरा कँचनः शी

Kanpara KanchenBen G.

(Dakshesh) दाक्षेशः तमाआ जन्म क्यां अने क्याआ धमो?

When and where were you born?
I was born in Jasathal Village next to Talala, at my father’s house. My birth date is the 23rd of May 1968.

How many generations of your family live here?

My father-in-law’s family, two generations have lived here.

What memories do you have from your childhood?

Yes, in my childhood we went to school, did housework, and after that we lit the fireplace and learned how to cook. After that we made chass with our hands because there were no valona and we learned to milk the buffalo.

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*Butter milk*

†traditional tool used to make butter milk
When did you get married and how many children do you have?

(K) दंगनबेन: मारे.. वन था छ ८८ मार ने २३-प-८८ ने मारे एक बाबू छे.

I got married in 1989 and on the 23rd of May 1989 I had one son.

(D) दिवेश: तमे डेटमा अन्व्याल्क कर्यो?

What are your education qualifications?

(K) दंगनबेन: डाई

10th Grade.

(D) दिवेश: तमे पेटी डेवी रीटे शीथ्या?

And how did you learn to farm?

(K) दंगनबेन: पेटी तो पैप्पाने ख्यान त्यापैरे क्यारेक क्यारेक साये ज्याके क्यारेक बाबू वेषवानु दाम करोने वायवानु दाम कराने होईने अनें घीमे घीमे तेनी पायसी शीथ्या ता ने पछी अने आया आवीने ठोंठ ठोंठ दरुं दरुं करें पहुँच बाकी तो घर काममा....

Farming, I learned when I was at my father’s house; sometimes we would accompany them with a small sickle and slowly I learned and did some work and also the rest of the housework.

(D) दिवेश: तमे पेटी डेटमा वपतसी करो छो?

How many years have you been farming?
Farming, I did every year, now since 10-12 years I have been working in Aaya organization as a worker.

When you did farming, what was the output (crop) like?

At the time, peanuts were grown. There was also cotton and we had mostly sugarcane plantations.

Which tools did you use when you first began farming?

Farming, at that time was done by pick, shovel and sickle. Wooden tools mainly, now so there are many modern tools used.

What types of crops do you grow now?
What was your method of farming?

In the old method there was more and less work, I did not know the systematic way, which work should be done first, that I did not know.

Are you a part of any organization?

Yes, I am a part of Aga Khan Organization, in Maliya District, I am the chairman of the women, and I am also connected with Aatma.

What religion do you follow?
I am part of the Vaishnav group.

(D) दशेश : तमने क्या शोष छे?

What are your hobbies?

(K) कवनाने : मने शोष अत्यारे अनेको छ द कंप्यूटर शीर्षी जाउ तो बोको जुमे ने का बालाउनी आयो मने शोष छे. पश्चात क्यारे शीर्षी

My hobby right now is to learn to use a computer, people can see when I am using it. But when do I learn.

(D) दशेश : तमे मेघल नही विश्व भुं विश्वारो छो?

What do you think of the Meghal River?

(K) कवनाने : मेघल विश्व तो.. पहेला तो बहती बारे मास पही वय्यानो जाणो अनेको ने सुद्धी यही गरी बती साव अने दवे अत्यारे छेड़वा बेडे मास आदू थाय अनेक सर्पनु मछ. जे बोको ना मेघल नही अंडर पाणी आयु यही जाउ तो बार बोको के स्थान तर करे छ सुद्धी बोको स्थान तर ना करे अने जे गामदामा रहता लोक त्याजर रहीने रोजीरोजी मेघने आयु विश्वारु छु तो आयु विश्वारु छु जो बोकोनो साथ सहकार लोष तोज आयु विश्वारी शक्तिने ने.

About the Meghal, earlier it had flowing water all year round. Then in the middle it went completely dry, and now it is our dream that it will start in two months. I think that people who migrated to other places once the Meghal River had dried up should not migrate and instead try to earn their livelihood from their own
village. That is what I think, and I can think so only due to the support of the people.

(D) दाश : तमे नानाका हटा ल्याउँ भेक्न नदी डेवी रहेकी?

What was the Meghal River like when you were young?

(K) द्वारे : त्यारे तो हु मारा चिपरे डोउने हु तो अङ्गिया २० वर्ष पाके आवी हु अकी आवी पाकी चिवाणी जाय पाकी नदी सुंदरी जती. पाकी ज्यारे मधुबाई सवाणी आवा त्यारे आवानान संस्थानाने रेरी काही पाकी त्यारी. पाकी धीरे धीरे भरर पाके आपने पालीने भावावयुं तो पाकी आवाने भावाणे. तो नाना नाना बेरकेम बंधपणा आवुं करवाणी पाकी भवावा माइं ने प्रथमने नदीनी अंडर पाकी टका लागुं अल्टारे पाक वर्षाक आये तो नवा जुनु बेगुं धाय छे. त्यारे तो हु आवी त्यारे तो भेड़ु नोटुं

I was living in my Fathers house then, so I didn’t come here until after 20 years of age. After I came here, after Diwali, the river would dry up. Later on MathuBhai Savaani came and then Aga Khan Organization removed the sand. Then slowly we realized that if we save water, water will save us. Small checkdams were built and water was being conserved and water stayed in the river, now when it rains the old and new water mixes. When I fist came here it was not the case.

(D) दाश : तमारी मारे पाथी डेट्युं महत्वनुं छे?

How important is water to you?
Water is obviously important. From birth to death you need water. It’s a priceless gift from nature. So obviously it is important.

What happened when the Meghal River dried up?

When the Meghal River dried up and there was no water in the wells. 2-4 villages shared one well from which trough were filled for the cattle to drink water, and the people also took water to their home for drinking purposes. And when the river dried the wives and children would stay in the village and the men would go elsewhere looking for work and livelihood like polishing diamonds etc.
When the Meghal River dried up, how did it affect your life?

As I said women would be alone in the house when the husband was elsewhere. In such a situation if there is a problem or an issue, where would the women go to ask for help? Where to arrange for the money? Without the men there were many problems.

And how did this affect your family in the village?

Water was not available in the family and the village, so water tankers were called, water had to be purchased so diseases started spreading. The water tanker
company sold dirty water procured from unreliable sources. People’s health was affected, like getting kidney stones and other kidney disease and more cases of diarrhea and vomiting. Income was less and expenses were more.

(D) द्वीश : अने पाणी सुक्का शाम तो तमे बैठी माटे पाणीनी व्यवस्था क्याँगी करता?

Once the water dries up from where do you arrange more water for farming?

(K) द्विशने : अटो एमा एतु जे के कॉर्ट पिघल ना करता, योमासमा जे वरूसाड थाम अे पाणीयी ज मङ्गणी हु वाच्येतर थाप, पुरुषां हे अे आक महिनाचा बार कमावा जायने पहेलो हे अेनारे गाव हे हे राहतमा काममा करे.

Its like without making more efforts in the rain during monsoon peanuts are grown. Men are out for 8 months trying to earn their living. And women do relief work.

(D) द्वीश : तमने पड़वाना, शेरीनाटक, बोक्कायरानी देवी रीते भरवर पड़ी?

How did you know about pad yatra (travelling by foot), sherinatak (street show, play) and lokdayro (public performance)?

(K) द्विशने : अटो आजामान संस्थामा जोडाय पड़ी भ्याल आयो हे आ संस्था आया सारा कम करे हे ने पाणी व्यवस्था क्रम करे हे जबारे देवीमा जोडाय त्यारे मने भरवर नीती हे आतुं हे हे मने अंबे हे कोई नेतानी देवी नीक्षी हे. भजाउ लागणे. आमा नो जोडाय पड़ी अे बोको अे बोक्कानाटक कर्स बेनोना घर सुधी अेमने मगवा आया अने बेनोने पाणी विषे वाट करी त्याची आ बाधी भ्याल आयो हे
After I joined the Aga Khan Organization I got to know that they did such good work and that they work for water conservation. When I joined the rally I did not know that it was like this- I thought it was some political rally with flags. When I joined they did public drama and plays, they went to the women in their homes and talked to the women about water. From them I got this idea.

(D) देशी : तभी आपी कोई प्रूतिमा भाग बिखो लेतो?

Did you participate in any such activities?

(K) क्याँकि : नाटक पण जाते बनाय तुं पाणीणी जाकमरी आवु नाटक कर्बुंतुं वडने माने सानु आतवास साजु गुइजरे चे अंगु नाटक कर्बुंतुं

I created a play myself called The Struggle for Water

Another play about the torture of Daughter-in-Law by her Mother-in-Law.

(D) देशी : आ प्रूतिमा अंसर तमारा पर देवी फडी लेती?

How did this activity affect you?

(K) क्याँकि : मामा जीवन पर तो फडवा कुं माटवु नर्मं होय तो बीजा डिवसे वाची जाकमरे नाणी लेती लेती पाणी मने जबर फडी के पाणी कोई वाची नवी जीवना जाकमरी जवा मोटा कर्बा वापरवावाला ल्यां नाणा ज्वास वापरीवे छीने पाणी अर्जे उटक्कने जे पाणी नाणी लेता ता अंगु कोई बुल बीकुं छे नाणीवेळीने छे तेमां क्यांवर रोयीले तेमां नाणीवेळीने छीने आए बन्यो जमारा जीवनमध्ये वडो बहावाव आयो.
In my life the effect was that before I used to throw away extra water from the pot everyday thinking it was stale, then I realized that water does not go stale. For drinking we changed to small glasses instead of big vessels. The extra water from the utensils was given to plants like chikoo, coconut. This way in many ways our life’s has changed.

(D) दक्षेश : रोज पाणी बनावा खु सो करो छो ?

How do you save water daily?

(K) कन्हेन : रोज पाणी बनावा तो जे २२–२३ वर्षराशनु छे के बेस्टेज पाणी नाभी नट हे मानु पना कोईपण नामकर्णीनो कपारे बनावीगेक वृक्ष हेप तेने नाभीगेक नाना ज्वास हेप ते वापरिंगेके.

To save water, the daily use water or waste water is given to plants, vegetables and trees and small glasses are used.

(D) दक्षेश : तमारा दाणा पेली माटे पाणी उपयोग केवी रोटे करता ?

How did your grandfather use water for farming?

(K) कन्हेन : दाणा तो..... पेशा कोह आयो तेनो उपयोग करता तेमारी विधो ये बे विधा पियत थतु जुवामां बणदाशी पाणी काढे, उवेशीने थाय तो विधा ये बे विधानु वांढ पियत थाय ने आयो दिवस कोह लाहकनानो.
Earlier my grandfather used KOH, with that 1 or 2 VIGAH were irrigated, Bullocks were used to pull water out of the well. Only 1 or 2 VIGAH were irrigated, rest of the whole day KOH was used.

(D) दक्षेश : अपने तमे अन्यारे पाणी होवा राखते करेटे चो ?

How do you water the fields now?

(K) कङ्चनका : अन्यारे अन्य मोटरधी पाईंगे छीने आफ्ना मॉटरमा मोटरधी

Now we have a motor so the entire field is watered by motor.

(D) दक्षेश : तमे जसं ब्यापार पद्धति विशे शुं जालो चो ?

What do you know about water conservation methods?

(K) कङ्चनका : अपना विशे बयां बढु जालो धुं संगठनधी बजर परिधी. बढ़नो छे छे पाणी ब्यापारवान प्रयत्न करें तो मॉटरमा गाम्नु पाणी गाम्ना, कुड़के आयेका अण्डमोल मेट सावधीने, ८०% रोजो छे पाणीजन्य धार्म छेन तेनाथी वाग्ने. आफ्ना लोको सुगी संरक्षणा पडोवाडीने.

I know a lot. I got to know of it from the organization. The women make efforts to save water in the farm, the village. It is nature’s most precious gift. Also, 80 % of the diseases are spread through water. I want to spread such a message to the people.

(D) दक्षेश : अपने जन ब्यापार समीती अभाग छुं आफ्ना राखो चो ?

17400 sq meters
What do you expect from the ‘save water’ committee?

(K) Kanchen : जब बायाव आजम तो जे लोकों माकालों जागृतता नथी से जागृति आवे तेचूँ करेव दाते उत्पादन सार धाय छे. तेनी जागृति नथी. पाणी बायावं जोडी लोकांनी आवेच उठावे.

For saving water, awareness should be spread amongst people, and the output of the crop is good. There is no awareness. Water should be saved and people’s partnerships should increase.

(D) Dinesh : जब बायाव समाजी ते जे कार्य करे छे ते उठावुँ असरकारक लागे छे?

How affective has been the steps taken by the ‘save water’ committee?

(K) Kanchen : जब बायाव समाजी जे नाणा नाणा एकदेवो जवपादा, पर्ती तबाबडी जे बनावे छे ते सार्थ फेरवा जे गोमासु पाक धायत्ता अनेव बनवे खे बीजा पाक धाय छे. उनामां जे पाक अक्का, मक, तबे, वेगेरे धाय छे. वापों तेनां उत्पादन तथा मांडवो छे ते असर छे.

The small check dams and water holes made by the ‘save water’ committee are helpful. Now other crops can be grown instead of just monsoon crops. Urad Bean, Maag Bean, sesame seeds, etc are grown. Production has gone into millions of tons, that is the effect.

(D) Dinesh : तमारी जीवनची अभ्यास ते ते अदने केलेल्या गार्ता जो

Do you want to share something about your life with us?
I want to do glorious deeds in my life and to spread a good message to the people, and that 5 people should learn from me and improve our villages. That people should take measures to save water and understand its importance is my dream. It is because of this MEGHLATA of Aga Khan Organization that I have all this and I hope that because of this MEGHLATA our children will go to study at university one day.