Mehgal River Basin Oral History Project
Interview Transcript

Interviewers: Alexandra Mouche and Dakshesh Gajjar

Narrator: Shabadin Dobariya

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Persons Present: Alexandra Mouche’ (interviewer)

Dakshesh Gajjar (research assistant/interviewer)

Ravji Karathgara (Narrator)

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

(RajivBhai) राजीवभाई : माफु नाम राजीवभाई करागरा।
My name is RajivBhai Karathgara.

(D) दक्षेश : तभारि जन्म कसा अने क्या रायो छो?
When and where were you born?

(R) राजीवभाई : जन्म आफासा १–१९३९ मा थयो।
I was born on the 1st of January 1939 in Khodasa village.

(D) दक्षेश : तभारी डेक्की डेक्की आफी रहो छो?
How many generations of your family have lived here?

(R) राजीवभाई : आफी–पाथ्य डेक्की आफीया ज रहीने छो।
4-5 generations of us have lived here.

(D) दक्षेश : तभारि नामप्रणी डेक्की वसलु याहो छो?
What memories do you have from your childhood?

(R) राजीवभाई : नामप्रणा ब्रह्मा ब्रह्मा त्यारे आफी बाटीलु व तरी ३ पास पहिया देशी आफास जला गो।
When I was a child I remember our village did not have a high school, so after 7th grade I had to go to Kesod for further studies.

(D) दक्षेश : तभारि जन्म क्या थया? क्या बालको?
When did you get married? How many kids do you have?

(R) रावजीस्वाभाई : २० वर्षस्वती उम्रेचे बनावून भाषा लणे आलेली.
I got married when I was 20 years of age. I have three children.

(D) दलेश : तमे केट्वे अभ्यास कर्यो छ?
How many years of study have you finished?

(R) रावजीस्वाभाई : मे घोर १० श्रवी अभ्यास कर्यो
I have studied until the 10th grade.

(D) दलेश : तमे पेटी केट्वे रीते शीघ्रा?
How did you learn to farm?

(R) रावजीस्वाभाई : वडीलो पेटी करताच तेंचा सुधारा करूने पेटी शीघ्रा
Our elders used to farm, so we made improvements and learned farming.

(D) दलेश : तमे केट्वा वरस्त्वी पेटी करू को?
How many years have you been farming?

(R) रावजीस्वाभाई : पेटी २५ वरस्त्वी करूने चीजी नवीनही
We have been farming for 25 years.

(D) दलेश : तमे पेटी करता त्याचे केट्वे पाक वत्तो को?
When you first began farming what crops did you grow?

(R) रावजीस्वाभाई : वडारे केवा वापरता अती. उपायाने ती भूल जाणू
We used more medicines (pesticides). The output was great, 40 to 45 man (1 man = 20 kilogram). Four man cotton we grew but back then we did not get a good enough price, we got only Rs. 80 to 85.
What tools did you use for farming before?

(R) रावजीभार : त्यांना बांधकामो आमी आहे. अनेक बांधकामी होते हवावता होती भेट राहता १० वा १५% माणे पावेत होता बहुत पडतरे पडले जुऱ्ऱे वेगासुळे झाक १००% झाले ठिकाणून झाक १५ वा २०% झाले.

Back then bullocks were used with tools and leather bags to pull out water from the well. With leather water bags 10 to 15 % of the field was watered and cultivated, and the rest of the land could not be cultivated. During the monsoon the cultivation was 100 % and in winter the cultivation was 15 to 20 %.

(D) दलेश : अव्यांना तमें केवळ झाक घोडे को? Which crops do you grow now?

(R) रावजीभार : अव्यांच झाड, वाणिज्य, त्वात, अग्रेंडा, धावणा, शौर्य अफा झाक घोडे घोडे

Nowadays we grow wheat, groundnut, sesame, arendo, coriander, cumin etc.

(D) दलेश : तमांची वेती कर्त्याची रीत केवळ हे?

How did you used to farm?

(R) रावजीभार : वेती कर्त्याची रीत वाणिज्य में वेती करता पद्धति तो अनेक पडणे पडेवा करणारी में वेती लागला अनें अव्यांम यांमध्ये रीते वेती झाले हे?

The method of farming was that we used bullocks for farming. The method is the still the same only mechanical tools are used instead of bullocks.

(D) दलेश : तमें कोई संख्या सारे लोकांमध्ये को? Do you belong to any organizations?

(R) रावजीभार : AKRSP संख्या सारे १४ वर्षांची झाले

Yes I have been a part of AKRSP for the past 14 years.

(D) दलेश : तमें क्या धर्म सारे संख्यांमध्ये को? Which religion do you follow?
We follow the Samatan religion of the Vaishnav community.

Do you have any hobbies?

My hobby is to do social work. I got the inspiration to do social work from AKRSP.

What do you think of the Meghal River?

We think well of the Meghal River. For the river we started a procession/rally. From the spot where the river starts and till it reaches the ocean, 28 villages on the way created 2 committees, which are called the Core Group and were formed by Aga Khan organization. The rally had 8 to 10 thousand people and everyone was excited.

When you were little, what was the Meghal River like?

When we were little the Meghal River was full of water. If we had to go somewhere we had to turn back from the Meghal River since there was no bridge on the river.
Why is water important to you?

(R) रावजीभार : "पाढी कूपा कूपा " पाढी वर जीवन अधिक छन्
“Water Blessing, Blessing” : life is impossible without water.

(D) दलेश : मेंढ़ल नही सुनाई गई ल्यारे झुं झुं छू रा?
When the Meghal dried up, what happened?

(R) रावजीभार : मेंढ़ल नही सुनाई त्यारे तेना तमारा उड़ी किवा, तेना धुर ज्वा भर्कट के आंश मारकट आपयने पाळी बणी रहे बाढ उड़ी जता डरोयो नजिक कावाधी बारे पाळी आए
When the river dried the water underneath was deep and could be pulled out with water bores and wells. If we went deeper, we got salt water because the ocean is close to here.

(D) दलेश : मेंढ़ल नही सुनाई गई ल्यारे तेनी असर तमारा जीवन पर डेवी रही?
When the Meghal dried up, how did it affect your life?

(R) रावजीभार : आमारे वापर क्वाल किवा, हाल्चरी पर्यंत करवाली आमारी
ताक्त से घटी छोरकराने भलायी ने शहिये, नवा मकळन ने बनावी शहीये
होई ताक्त ने हटी आमारे बड़ी मेंढल आने किवा कावीडी नहीने आमारी छे
कावीडी नही मेंढल नहीने पेटा विमाग छे पेटा नही पर त हैम भंडावा छे
तेना परिमत मारु म्यू छे
We did not have any money to spend, we could not educate our children, and we would not build houses. We are thankful to the Meghal and Kalandi River. The Kalandi River is part of the Meghal River. On that part 7 dams were built and its result had been excellent.

(D) दलेश : तमारा झुंझून अने गामडा पर डेवी असर रही?
How did it affect your family and village?

(R) रावजीभार : ल्यारे गामडा अने झुंझून पर भराव असर रही हवे आपण्यू झुं झुं छाये?
At that time the effect on the village and the family was bad, and we thought, what would happen to us? It was
like visiting an exhibition where there is a picture of a farmer staring at the sky.

(D) द्विश : मेघल नही सुकाई गई त्यापै अती माटे पाल्णी व्यवस्था क्यांगी करता?
During the drought, how did you procure water for farming?

(R) रावजीतमार : पाक वेवाटो ज नही अपा संस्चाओ लाते के सरकारी काममां पड़ जूं पढ़तू लूं
We could not grow anything. There were times when we had to go do government labor.

(D) द्विश : तमे प्रद्युकर, शोकदापर, शेरीनाटक विषे केही रीते अबर पड़ी?
How did you come to know about the foot march, street plays and public performances?

(R) रावजीतमार : अमे नेवा नीक्षण्ये त्यारे आ जैल बोलू आ जाकर नकाशी वृषी, आला माटे प्रवाननी जुटू छे मैटेजग आयोजन करवावां आत्युं के अंदू बूं करीमे के रोडी सुधी आपाणी वाष पडूंये पडू विटेज मां नकाशी वृषी के पहाणान करू, सुटर रेली डो, शेरी नाटक करू जठां ल्या लोकदापरा भांती कौस त्यां तेने प्रोत्साहित करी आपणे मेघल नहीन भागाची वृषी अर्न करूं तो जेठू परिवाराम आवे प्रवासना तंज बनावा तो १ मासानूं पाळी बसावूं
When we came out we saw all this and how it all happened, for this promotion was important. In the meetings we discussed what we could do such that our message would reach the people. Then, in the meeting, we decided that we should start and promote the foot-match, rally, street show and public performance. If we start from the middle of the Meghal River then what would be the result? We saved water for 1 month by making dams of stone.

(D) द्विश : तमे आ कोई प्रश्नतिमां भाग दीघो लाटो?
Did you participate in these activities?

(R) रावजीतमार : मे दरेक प्रश्नतिमां भाग दीघो लाटो
I participate in all activities.
What do you do daily to save water?

The farmers who waste water we go and teach them to stop the wastage of water, since water is valuable. Instead, they should use dhoriya fountains to water the fields. These fountains, which are given by the government on a subsidized rate, should be installed to water the fields. This is what we advise people and this is what we do to save water.

How did your grandfather use water for farming?

My grandfather used a leather bag to pull out water from the well.

How do you use water for farming?

We use an electric motor.
About water conservation methods, we learned a lot from the Aga Khan Organization. Where water has been wasted we tell them to use a fountain system. Wherever drip irrigation is possible, if 100% is developed and used, then a lot of water can be saved.

(R) रावजीबाई : जबबन्धव समीति पासे जे जेम जबाब्दीनीस मेटेंगेट वाघारे बेड़ूतने जरूरे समझावे अवा स्वतः जस्मिना जोईबे हे टपडी उत्पादन पयुं आवे जो समझावे तो वयुं कामी धाव जबबन्धव समीति पासे जे जेम जबाब्दीनीस मेटेंगेट वाघारे बेड़ूतने जरूरे समझावे अवा स्वतः जस्मिना जोईबे हे टपडी

They should increase the subsidy target and persuade the farmers to use drip irrigation with an actual example of more output due to drip irrigation.

(D) रावजीबाई : जबबन्धव समीति पासे जे जेम जबाब्दीनीस मेटेंगेट वाघारे बेड़ूतने जरूरे समझावे अवा स्वतः जस्मिना जोईबे हे टपडी उत्पादन पयुं आवे जो समझावे तो वयुं कामी धाव जबबन्धव समीति पासे जे जेम जबाब्दीनीस मेटेंगेट वाघारे बेड़ूतने जरूरे समझावे अवा स्वतः जस्मिना जोईबे हे टपडी

The efforts of the water conservation committee have been slow, but surely successful. Today it is 50% effective, each farmer is taking advantages [in collaboration] with other farmers and there has been progress, though a bit slow.

(D) रावजीबाई : तमारी जीडीवीनी होळ अेवी वात के जे तमे असह सुवेमा रागने होइ?

Do you have anything you would like to say about your life?
We are doing social services. Conferences have been called: one conference in Surat and the other in Rajkot. In the Surat conference, there was Hari Om Ashram on the banks of Tapi River, it had 9 rooms of 20x20 feet, no fans, only light. The Rajkot conference was held for 10 days, wherever they required people for public work we helped. We don’t have any other expectations.