Mehgal River Basin Oral History Project
Interview Transcript

Interviewers: Alexandra Mouche and Dakshesh Gajjar
Narrator: Vakmat Jesu Darbar
Interview Dates: March 22nd, 2012
Place: Maliya Block, Junagadh, Saurashtra, Gujarat, India
Program: Fulbright-Nehru Grant 2011-2012
Date completed: June 23rd, 2012
March 22\textsuperscript{nd}, 2012

Persons Present: Alexandra Mouche’ (interviewer)

Dakshesh Gajjar (research assistant/interviewer)

Vakmat Jesu Darbar (Narrator)

(Dakshesh) दक्षेश : तपाईं नाम छूँ छेकै?

What is your name?

(Vakmey) वक्मेि : माझे नाम वक्मत भाई जेसुभाई दारबार हे

My name is Vakmat Bhai, JesuBhai Darbar.

(D) दक्षेश : तपाईं जन्म छूँ छाए, क्यान्छे थ्यो?

When and where were you born?

(V) वक्मेि : माझे जन्म ५८-८-५० आपेक्षा गाम भाणीया तालुकामा थ्यो

My birthday is the 6th September 1950 in Abecha village in Maliya taluka.

(D) दक्षेश : तपाईं डेटी वेडीमा आफ्नो रहको छो?

How many generations of your family have lived here?

(V) वक्मेि : माझा आपदाका आफ्नो रेखा छताऄ हुं दुर गाम हट्टो त्यां रेखामा

क्ले, ८०माघ्यो आफ्नो रेखा आफ्नो हुं आ वेधा गाममा आपदाका रसोधी

रहे हुँ।
My forefathers lived here and I lived in a village far away, but in 1990 I came here. My forefathers have lived in Becha village since then.

What do you remember from your childhood?

When I was a child we were really poor. We grew vegetables at home and sold it in the village and from that money we started a small shop. God was great and now I have 250 Vigah (100 acres) of land. I haven’t forgotten about my past: how poor people work and how do we work. We still put in a lot of hard work and effort.
Alexandra Mouche  Vakmat Jesu Darbar Interview  3/22/12

(D) दरेश : तबारा वजन क्यारे थाया?

When were you married?

(V) वकमबाइर : मारा वजन ज० नी सालमा थाया।

I was born in the year 1970.

(D) दरेश : तभे केटबो अब्मास करो?

How many years of education do you have?

(V) वकमबाइर : दस घोरखा सुधी अब्मास करो।

I have studied until 10th grade.

(D) दरेश : पेटी कोह रीटे शीप्या?

How did you learn farming?

(V) वकमबाइर : पेटी मारा आपदाबनो वारसापन घिरो।

Farming has been my forefather’s ancestral business.

(D) दरेश : तभे केटबा वरसाडी पेटी करो को?

How many years have you been farming?

(V) वकमबाइर : पेटी नापसघी करीमो छोमो जमारेंदी समज्या थया।

Since my childhood I have been farming, since 1965.

(D) दरेश : तभे पेती करता हत्ता त्यारे केटो पाक घरो छो?

When you used to farm, what crops did you grow?
There is a huge difference between the crop output of today and previous years. Due to shortages of water in those days we grew only enough for us to eat.

What kind of tools did you use for farming?

Earlier the tools had wooden handles, now they are replaced with metal handles. Now we have tractors and other vehicles. We did not need rickshaw and bollocks.

What is your method of farming?
We first removed bushes and trees with a shovel and prepared the field for sowing. There was nothing else to do in farming. Because there was no water there was only one season for farming. People who had stored some water grew winter crops like jawar (great millet), millet and wheat. Others had nothing to grow. In summers we cut trees and grew groundnut and millet, the output was not great. Life was tough.

(D) दशेश : तारी पासे जमीन केटली कती?

How much land did you have?

(V) वकमेनार्ट : भारी पासे सामान्य १० विघा जमीन कती

I had approximately 10 Vigha (4 acres) land.

(D) दशेश : तमें कोई संस्था साथे जोडणेला को?

Are you a part of any organizations?

(V) वकमेनार्ट : ना अमें कोई संस्था साथे जोडणेला नभी

No, I am not part of any organizations.
What religion do you follow?

We are followers of Swaminarayan.

Do you have any hobbies?

Horse riding is my hobby. Today I have one animal of each kind. I love animals, birds and insects. In our field we have everything. I love animals: cows, buffalos, and dogs. I like the simple life. I have a bungalow, but I stay in a hut in my farm.

What do you think about the Meghal River?
For the Meghal River, we have been working with water since we were teenagers. Now more people are becoming aware. We want to take steps to make sure the Meghal River stays alive all around the year. The
Meghal River is of great importance in our lives. The Meghal from Maliya goes into the ocean. We are making efforts to keep the water in the Meghal all around the year, even in summers. We make check dams, boribands and wells to prevent the water from flowing into the ocean. We ask for the support of people, as much as they can give. We spend Rs 5000 every year on water management; next year I am going to contribute another Rs. 5000 to stop water. I also fund other activates for water. If there is activity happening in other villages for stopping water I go there as well and inspect the area and give advice to people. If they don’t have knowledge about these things we teach them how to stack sand bags for boribands. From this many villages have benefited. A check dam has been built in Maliya, and if its level is raised water would last for few more months and 4-5 villages will benefit from it throughout the year.

(D) दशे : तभे ना मा क्या त्यारे मेघल नदी ठेवी छली ?
What was the Meghal River like when you were young?

(V) Vakmat Jesu Darbar: The Meghal River was dry. If it rained a lot, water was there till the month of March. And if it rained less, water was there only till January, that too only in some spots. From the time boribands and check dams are built the river has stayed alive. When we were children we went to the river to take baths. At that time there was little water.

(D) Alexandre: What is the importance of water to you?

(V) Vakmat Jesu Darbar: Water is very important because it is the source of life.
Water is life for humans and also other creatures. Water is a lifeline for every creature. Collection of water is essential. Water can be collected by putting in dams and boribands. Pipes can be laid in the boribands and water can be sent to other places.

(D) डलेख : मेघाल नहीं सुकाय गर्दै त्याए छू ज्यूँ?

What happened when the Meghal River dried up?

(V) वकमेभारी : मेघाल नहीं सुकाय गर्दै त्याए चाहौँ प्यास नेतरर्म उत्पादन थाँ नही श्रमजीवी भेडुनै भो ओराकम छेडा सहजता नही. वर्षाकाल पातक नाम खाम खाम भटटा प्यास अथवारे भागवानी मकेरजानीसी मेघाल सुकाय नथी अथे धोकी पाले two wheelers अने four wheelers हैरे छ.

When the Meghal River dried up, there was no cultivation on any farms. Hardworking farmers couldn’t even arrange for food. There was a shortage of money.

Today, due to the help of God, the Meghal has water all the time. Now people have 2 wheelers and 4 wheelers.

(D) डलेख : मेघाल नहीं सुकाय गर्दै त्याए तमाका ऊपर तेनी असर केनी बरह?
What was the effect on your life when the Meghal River dried up?

나দিও জর্জে ত্যাগে সুখী নদিও জর্জে জীব বণ্টি জয় নদিও জর্জে নদিও জর্জে নদিও জর্জে নদিও জর্জে নদিও জর্জে নদিও জর্জে

Now, when we see the river, we feel like taking a dip in the river. When the river was dry no one felt like going to the river.

Our hearts were in grief when we saw the dry river.

What was the effect on your family and village?

What was the effect on your life when the Meghal River dried up?

Earlier we went to do labor. For Rs 5 and 7 we dug wells. Our life has improved since the Meghal River has had water. By the grace of Swaminarayan God we have a better life due to water.
When the river dried up, from where did you get water for farming?

We tried to live our life with as much water as we had. Some water was used to grow fodder for animals. There was no other work without water. If the monsoon was good we could have one round of crops. We grew groundnut and millet. Millet can be grown in less water. Since Mandavi had more water, people could grow groundnut. Urad beans and mung beans were also grown. If someone had more water they could grow
winters crops as well. Wells were dug deeper to find water.

(D) दिशा : तमेहूं पत्याचा, प्रभातकाळी, शेरानकामा के बोक्कावरांना भाग दिघो तो?

Have you participated in any lokdayro (public performance), prabhat pheri (morning processions), sherinatark (street show, play) or pad-yatra (foot march)?

(V) विकमेनारे : पत्याचा, शेरानकाम, बोक्कावरांना भाग दिघो नयी पडत पाऊँव बवाव काळ्यक भाग दिघो नाटक यशू तेमां भाग दिघो अनेक भगता त्यांच्या शागांच्या पृथ्वीराज गोकुलाच्या नाटकांना भाग दिघो मे जयचंद राठोड सुं पडत पाँच भजवूं पत्याचाच्या दर्शन सोनभाऊ गया तो

I did not participate in padyatra, sherinatak or lokdayro.

But I participated in the play done for conservation of water. When I was in school I participated in the Pruthviraj Chauhan play. I also played the role of Jaychand Rathod. I did a pad-yatra (foot march) to Somnath.

(D) दिशा : आ प्रौढत तमेहूं करी तेनी असर तमारा जीवन पर शुं पडहो?
What was the effect of this activity on your life?

(V) Vakmat: नाटकमध्ये व्यक्त केवली आपली बोलवणी स्वीकार मान

My speech improved by taking part in the play, I got the courage to speak in front of others. We went to pay our respect to the God and it was helpful. It is said that if you plant something it never goes to waste. 12 times I have done charity of feeding people. Twice in India I have travelled to places.

(D) Dash: रोज पाणी बघावा शुद्ध करू घरात कोणता नियम करता?

What do you do to save water daily?

(V) Vakmat: रोज पाणी बघावा मात्र पाणीनो नव सरणी रीते

बंध करून चावले क्यांब बाबुर जंगा वाळुन त्यांच्या पाणीनो बझून चोप तो चावले चावले के जंगा पूर्णता पाणीनो उपयोग करून चोपत रीते पाणीनो बझून करून जोडून नवीन नव सरणी रीते बंध करून जोडून पाणी अमूल्य च हजारे पाणी आळ व त्यांच्या पाणीनो डिव्हाट समजत नयी हजारे पाणी न
To save water every day, close the water taps properly. When we go out and see that water is wasted, we tell them to use water sensibly and not waste it. Close the taps properly. Water is priceless. When we have water we don’t understand its importance but when we don’t have it, that is when people think it is priceless. We advise people of the village to collect water and not waste it.

(D) दशेश : तमारा ददा जेली करता त्यारे पाणीमध्ये उपयोग केली रीते करता?

How did your forefathers use water for farming?

(V) वकमेबाक : अभारा ददाना समयात पाणी कल्पना ज नकल पाणी

समय पुरूषात ज कल पाणी बनान करता शेतकर पाणी न कल पाणीचा माने पाणी करण्यात करून करते पाणीमध्ये उपयोग करता

In the time of our forefather there was no water. It was available only in a specific time. There was not enough water that anyone could waste it; it was barely sufficient.
(D) दशेश : अत्यारे आतींमां पाणीच्या उपयोग केली रोजे करते हो? 

Nowadays how do you use water?

(V) वकमेबारी : अत्यारे आमच्या आोजा पाणीच्या ग्रीडव्या उपयोग 

करूनच्या ग्रीडव्या पाणीच्या उपयोग करूनच्या तो 30% पाणीच्या उपयोग ठार छ पाणीच्या पाणीच्या अभाव ठार छ पाणीच्या वापर तो 8 क्वांट सुद्धा पाणी फूटें नाही पाणी आहे वपरत्यावर अनं आोजा पाणीच्या पाक पडण सारी ठार अनं बांधपाके पूर्वत प्रमाणात पाणी मंडण छ आोजा पाणी होय त्यां ग्रीडव्या उपयोग ठार छ आमच्या मोहरजानी देते गारे आोजा पाणी ठार पाणी फूटत नाही ग्रीडव्या मोटर साठेच उजराषण पाणीपाक ठेट करते देते अंदे जेणे पाणी तपक तपक आवश्यक मंडण छ अनं जेणेंतेंतें पाणी वपरत्यावर अनं नुकामांच्या पाणी फूटत नाही.

Nowadays we use water saving grids in the village. If we use water through a grid, 30% of water is used. The grid saves water. If we use water through the grid, even after 8 hours there will be no shortage of water. Less water is used and the output is good even with less water. The crops get enough water. Where there is less water, the grid is used. We are grateful that there is water everywhere and we don’t have a shortage of
water. If we connect a motor and pipeline with the grid, water starts dripping automatically. Water can be used as per our needs so the wells never dry out.

(D) दक्षेश : तबे जन भवाव पद्धति विशे शु जाणो छो?

What do you know about water conservation methods?

(V) वकमेनाई : जन भवाव माटे आगांकन संस्थाना जोडाया बाट

What are your expectations from the Water Conservation Committee?

(V) वकमेनाई : जन भवाव समिति सारी सामग्री भवाव छ अमारा

After we joined the Aga Khan Organization we gained some knowledge about water conservation. We try to save water everywhere; our entire team works to save and stop water everywhere possible.
The Water Conservation Committee has been successful. People of our group work hard and people of the village also support them. We also benefit by saving water. Now people of the village also talk about making boribands. The entire region of the Meghal is aware of water saving. People of our village are not rich, and they can’t give anything to the fund, so they try to do something to organize action. It is not just about money. Farmers give good support for making boribands. Water is a necessity so we have tried to stop it and use it. I am a part of the Aga Khan organization. We have a meeting every month and we attend the meeting and look into the expenses.

(D) दक्षिण: जन अभ्यास समूहातां कार्य करतला असर पडतो वा?
Alexandra Mouche  Vakmat Jesu Darbar Interview  3/22/12

How affective has the Water Conservation Committee been?

(V) Vakmat Jesu Darbar:  धनुः असरकारक हे जल ब्याव समिति कार्य बाँध

2000मा मेघल जिवित घरी, आणांमध्ये संशोधना द्वारे, तेयार घरी पणी
लोकांमध्ये जागृति आपली, आणांमध्ये संशोधना आणि आमरा गृपणे तेयार करा
पणी अमने पूर्ण झापडो घमो हे

It has been very effective. After the work of the Water Conservation Committee in the year 2000, the Meghal River was revived. Due to the Aga Khan Organization there has been awareness amongst the people. After the Aga Khan Group helped us prepare, we have had great benefits.

(D) Dalesh:  तमाशी जीडेसीनी सोई अंत घट के तमने अमने
जाणवणा मांगता होय?

Is there is anything about your life that you want to tell us?

(V) Vakmat Jesu Darbar:  मे मारी जीडेसीनी अंडर गडरीले पूर्ण झोडी हे मारा
बापूली मनें जा. 500 आपटा घात द्वारे राजस्थानात रंगले तेलनी जडूर न पडें.
500 जा. नी मुडीमाझी मारी जीडेसीनी शुभेच्छा करते हे, 3000 डिऱ्स दास्तासाठी
साप्तदशांत अबूले डिवी बांड वरी आणि अंत अंत जीडेसीनी शुभेच्छा करते.
I have seen a lot of poverty; my father gave me Rs. 500.

We kept short hair so that we would not need hair oil.

From that Rs. 500 I started my life. I started by getting half a kilogram sugar on cycle for 3000 kilometer.

When Sadhu Maharaj came to my house we fed him.

Maharaj from his sack gave me Paro, Rudhraksh Paro. I used the Paro. I took a box of Jaggery for Rs. 50 and sold it for Rs. 150. I made a deal of 1 Vigah land for Rs. 4000 at 4 o’clock and by 7 o’clock the price of the land became Rs. 9230. This was because of the blessings of the Mahatma. Today after so much hard work I have property worth Rs. 50 Crore. My family is very happy.