

Tibet Oral History Project

Interview #6 – Norbu Dhondup
June 27, 2007

© 2009 Tibet Oral History Project. This translation and transcript is provided for individual research purposes only. For all other uses, including publication, reproduction and quotation beyond fair use, permission must be obtained in writing from: Tibet Oral History Project, P.O. Box 6464, Moraga, CA 94570-6464.

TIBET ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

www.TibetOralHistory.org

INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

1. Interview Number: #6
2. Interviewee: Norbu Dhondup
3. Age: 78
4. Date of Birth: 1929
5. Sex: Male
6. Birthplace: Tengchen
7. Province: Utsang
8. Year of leaving Tibet: 1959
9. Date of Interview: June 27, 2007
10. Place of Interview: Home for the Aged and Disabled,
Lugsung Samdupling Settlement,
Bylakuppe, Mysore District,
Karnataka, India
11. Length of Interview: 1 hr 13 min
12. Interviewer: Marcella Adamski
13. Interpreter: Tenzin Yangchen
14. Videographer: Jeff Loda
15. Transcriber: Tenzin Yangchen



Biographical Information:

In describing his early life, Norbu Dhondup states, “I was happy when I was a nomad. The hills were full of flowers and we didn’t have to feed the animals. We milked, churned the milk and made butter.” His life was drastically altered when his father, a land owner, was arrested by the Chinese, who confiscated all the family’s possessions and property. After being falsely accused of supporting the Tibetan resistance fighters, his father was subjected to *thamzin* ‘struggle sessions.’ Norbu Dhondup was told to torture his own father but he refused. After arrest his father castrated himself, but survived after receiving medical treatment while imprisoned.

Norbu Dhondup fled to India with his family. Two decades later he heard that his father at age 86 was still alive after being released from 20 years imprisonment in China. Norbu Dhondup went to find his father in Lhasa and brought him back to India carrying him on his back part of the way.

Topics Discussed:

First appearance of Chinese, life under Chinese rule, Chinese oppression, *thamzin*, escape experiences, life as a refugee in India.

TIBET ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
www.TibetOralHistory.org

Interview #6

Interviewee: Norbu Dhondup

Age: 78, Sex: Male

Interviewer: Marcella Adamski

Interview Date: June 27, 2007

Question: Norbu, may I ask where were you born? What place?

Interviewee #6: It is Khambu. You can say Phari Khambu. The name of my family is Tengchen.

Q: How many people were in your family?

#6: There were seven or eight members in those days.

Q: Did your family live in a village or further out in the country?

#6: We lived further away, engaging in herding as well as farming.

Q: You said that there were seven or eight children, people in the family, where were you? Were you the oldest or middle or young?

#6: I am among the oldest. There were five sons and I am the oldest.

Q: What was it like to be the oldest son?

#6: I faced a lot of problems while in Tibet, when the Chinese arrived. My father was captured by the Chinese.

Q: We can talk about that, but first I wish to understand a little bit more about when you were a little boy growing up. What do you remember about being a little boy in your area?

#6: When I was little, my parents took me along with them to the nomad camp and we milked. As nomads, we used to churn milk in the hide of a cow. We made about four and half kilograms of butter and over four kilograms of cheese everyday.

Q: Was that all for your family or did you trade it?

#6: We sold them. We sold them at Phari. We sold the cheese to India, which the others [traders] bought from us.

Q: Norbu, what kind of a little boy were you?

#6: [Laughs] I cannot recall much now.

Q: What were your favorite memories of being a little boy?

#6M: I used to play as a child and then loaded the cows and *dri* 'female yak.' I used to herd the yaks.

Q: You must have been a very strong boy.

#6: Yes, I was. I used to load eight yaks by myself and go to Phari to trade and then come back.

Q: How old were you then?

#6: I might have been 25-26 years old then.

Q: What kind of games did you play when you were a little boy?

#6: Being nomads, we played with the horns of the yaks. If you put a cloth over it, it looked like a tent. Being nomads, we used to play that way.

Q: Did you play with your other brothers or other children?

#6: There were [other children] but we did not stay at the same place all the time. We went our separate ways.

Q: Can you tell me a little bit about your father? What kind of a man was he?

#6M: My father underwent a lot of suffering. He was captured by the Chinese.

Q: [Can you talk about] before the arrival of the Chinese?

#6: Before the Chinese arrived, he was the Genpo in Phari, similar to the [refugee] camp leaders we have here [in India]. He used to travel on work to Phari. We were under the Sera [Monastery]. Our leader was from Sera *Mey* 'one of the two divisions in Sera Monastery.' That's how we worked and lived.

Q: It sounds like he was a respected man in the village?

#6: Yes, that is right.

Q: What kind of memories do you have of your mother?

#6: I remember a little. She passed away before my father, due to illness. I do not have much to say.

Q: How old were you when she died?

#6: I was about 30.

Q: Did you get married after you were a teenager?

#6: I married when I was about 18, 19 or 20. These days my grandchildren are also grown. They are in Dharamsala. [Laughs]

Q: Where did you find your wife?

#6: I met her in Tibet itself. My parents arranged the marriage.

Q: Did you like her?

#6: Yes, she is good.

Q: How old was she?

#6: We were of the same age. [She was also] 18-19.

Q: When your parents brought her, where did you live?

#6: We lived at a place called Ten in Khambu and worked as nomads there. We were *samadok* 'farmers and nomads.'

Q: Was your wife also from a nomad family?

#6: Yes, she was. She worked in the fields and also as a nomad. She is one who did everything.

Q: How did your life change after you got married?

#6: After marriage, you had children and then the children grew up. Then the Chinese arrived and all the people escaped in different directions.

Q: When is the first time you remember seeing the Chinese in your neighborhood?

#6: They first arrived in Khambu. The Chinese said they had come on a visit and gave us money. We told them we did not want the money.

[Discontinuity in interview]

...50-60 *dhayen* 'Chinese silver coins.' We [my family] received about 18 *dhayen*. Actually we were not in need of it. They [the Chinese] said, "When you take loans, you have to give a *gyechu*. Later when you go to repay the loans, you have to give a *gyechu*."

Q: Does *gyechu* mean interest?

#6: Yes, interest. *Gyechu* means a sort of gift. "We, the Chinese, are asking you to take these. We are giving you the money." They were deceiving us at that time. That's what they told us.

Q: Why did you think the Chinese were coming and giving you silver coins?

#6: They were just giving us the money. If we had to borrow money, we had to give presents, and I did wonder but did not understand. I was a child then.

Q: How were the Chinese dressed?

#6: Some were in green dress and some in khaki.

Q: Did they look like soldiers?

#6: Those in green dress were peace troops and those in khaki were the real soldiers. Seven or eight of them arrived.

Q: But they were both Chinese?

#6: Yes.

Q: So the green was like soldiers, peaceful army, and the khaki were more like Communists?

#6: I don't know. I didn't understand if they were Communists. We just called them Chinese.

Q: After they came the first time and gave you silver coins, did they come back?

#6: Then they left for good. I didn't know.

Q: They left for good?

#6: Yes, they did.

Q: Where did you see them again?

#6: They came again when my father was arrested.

Q: When was that?

#6: Maybe '82? I can't say for sure.

Q: When you say '82, that is after His Holiness had come to India. We are talking about the Chinese before 1959.

#6: I don't know when it was. He was arrested and sent to China for 20 years.

Q: Your father?

#6: Yes, it was 20 years. We had escaped to India.

Q: The first time the Chinese came to your village, were you married? Were you grown up?

#6: I was married.

Q: So that year was 1950?

#6: Yes, maybe around that time.

Q: Then what happens? How did your life change when the Chinese came?

#6: At that time there was not much change in my life. After my father was arrested, then it changed.

Q: When your father was arrested, you were already in India.

#6: No, I was in Tibet.

Q: You were in Tibet?

#6: Yes, I was in Tibet. My father was arrested and all our possessions were confiscated.

Q: You were living with your father?

#6: Yes, we were living together in one house.

Q: When did they come to get your father?

#6: I don't remember the exact date when they came to arrest my father. They said there would be a meeting at Phari and that all the prominent people were to attend it. When they went to attend the meeting and gathered in a house, they were not allowed out. That was when they were arrested.

Q: They were captured?

#6: Yes, they were captured. After that they brought him once again to Khambu to undergo a *thamzin* ‘struggle session.’

Q: To Khambu?

#6: They brought him to Khambu from lower Khambu. They spent one night at upper Khambu. There were troops there and my father was not let out. He took a knife and cut off his genitals. He took out the testicles. I have suffered so much. If I relate my life story, it is very shocking. I've undergone so many difficulties.

Q: How did you learn about that?

#6: It's not something I heard. I was there in Khambu. We were all together at that time. Then my father was taken to China and our properties were confiscated. After that six of us fled together.

Q: Where were you when your father took the knife and cut?

#6: At that time my father was at upper Khambu. We were at lower Khambu.

Q: Was there any resistance in the village to try to get the leaders back?

#6: No, not at all on seeing the might of the Chinese. Nothing of that sort happened.

Q: How did your mother take that when your father was arrested? What happened to your mother?

#6: My mother had already passed away.

Q: She was already gone. So you were about 30 years old then?

#6: Yes, I was 30 years old then. My father lived to the age of 85 in India.

Q: At that time you were 30 years old?

#6: Yes, I was 30.

Q: Earlier you said you were 30 when your mother died.

#6: Yes.

Q: Your father was arrested after your mother's death?

#6: Right.

Q: You may have been above 30.

#6: Maybe a little under 40.

Q: Could you ever visit your father in prison?

#6: No, we were not allowed to visit him. From upper Khambu to Phari was a day's journey. He was taken on horseback. At Phari he received medical treatment and we heard he was put in a house.

Q: From upper Khambu he was taken to Phari?

#6: Yes, he was taken to Phari.

Q: For medical treatment?

#6: They treated him at Phari. They had to go to Phari. They wouldn't leave him at upper Khambu.

Q: For having castrated?

#6: Yes, he was treated and he became well. After he became well, he was sent to China.

Q: Where in China?

#6: We don't know where in China. We had never even visited Lhasa!

Q: When your father was in prison, what was happening in the village and with your family?

#6: At that time we learned that His Holiness the Dalai Lama had escaped to India, and I didn't want to stay back. There was just the thought of escaping to India.

Q: What did you feel when you heard the Dalai Lama had gone to India?

#6: At that time our livelihood was farming and dairying.

Q: No, the feelings in your heart.

#6: Oh, feeling! I thought it would be enough if I could see His Holiness the Dalai Lama even once. There were not many thoughts or feelings.

Q: And did you get that wish?

#6: Yes, I did. When I went to get my father, we got an audience with His Holiness in Dharamsala. I didn't have an appointment.

Q: Very special.

#6: Yes.

Q: When your father was moved to China, when did you decide to flee, to go to India?

#6: After my father was sent there, I was in shock. I thought I should flee. His Holiness had left for India, and the thought was always there in my mind that I should also escape. There was an old lady called Mo Dolkar. She said, "I am going to flee. You people stay back. Please help me and my child until the mountain pass. I am going to India." So I said if you are going to India, let's go together.

Q: Mo Dolkar said she was going?

#6: Yes. So Mo Dolkar brought us.

Q: Was she your neighbor?

#6: She was not a neighbor. She was my wife. I didn't speak directly. [Laughs]

Q: Your wife said that you should flee to India—you both, as a couple?

#6: Yes, together. We went together, I had another wife.

Q: You had two wives?

#6: Yes, I had two wives. So we all escaped together; Gonpo, myself, my younger child; we were all together. There were six of us.

Q: And both wives went with you?

#6: Yes, both reached India.

Q: Did they know about each other?

#6: They knew each other. After we reached here, my son got married and his children grew up and then we separated.

Q: I understand it's more typical for a woman to have two husbands than for a man to have two wives.

#6: [Laughs] That's right.

Q: How did you manage that?

#6: The first wife was an arranged marriage by my parents. We had to work on the farm and rear cattle. There was a lot of work to be done and if we hired a helper, we had to

provide food, pay wages and they didn't perform their work well. If she was a wife, she would work well and the family would benefit. That was how it came about.

Q: How did your first wife feel about that?

#6: It was to share the work.

Q: What did your first wife say; what did she feel?

#6: She said it was fine. The work would be shared. She didn't object.

Q: And the second wife; where did she come from?

#6: The second one was from Phari. She was living in Khambu as a sort of servant for one of my relatives.

Q: About how old was she when you married her?

#6: At that time she must have been around 25 or 26.

Q: You were how old?

#6: Around the same age.

Q: All three of you were of the same age?

#6: Yes.

Q: When the Chinese came, this is when you married the second wife. The Chinese were not bothering you yet? Is that correct?

#6: No, not at that time.

Q: So what are some of your best memories of those times together as a family? What do you remember?

#6: If we lived amicably, it was good. But there were more family members and we had our share of unhappiness when unpleasant words were spoken. I used to think if we could stay happily, it was good.

Q: What are the happiest memories you can recall?

#6: The happiest time for me is the happiness after arriving here. There is electricity, water, food due to the grace of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. There would be no greater happiness than this.

Q: Don't you remember the happiest memories in Tibet?

#6: No, not in Tibet.

Q: So even before the Chinese came, you have no happy memories?

#6: In Tibet, there were difficulties, but I was happy when I was a nomad. The hills were full of flowers and we didn't have to feed the animals. We milked, churned the milk and made butter.

Q: What animals did you have?

#6: We had *dri*. The dialect is different; some say just animal and some say *dri*.

Q: It sounds like a beautiful memory.

#6: Yes. [Laughs]

Q: Did you have many children at this time?

#6: Both my wives had only two children each. The children from one wife are married and have children of their own. The child from the other wife is a monk.

Q: What would be a typical day like in those days? You were out in the mountains? What was it like?

#6: We started milking in the morning and by now we would have finished. The milk had to be left to cool and at around 12 noon, we had to churn the milk.

Q: The same day?

#6: Yes, the very same day. We churned the milk and obtained over four kilograms of butter and an equal quantity of cheese. The work had to be completed. The next day the same routine continued, milking...the same thing everyday. The best times were the fourth, fifth and sixth months. It was like living among the flowers.

Q: Sounds very lovely.

#6: Yes, this season was really lovely. *Shotay* flower, *Taksha* flower; every flower had a name and we could eat them. There were different types of pasture mushrooms and water mushrooms to eat.

Q: Were there many wild animals?

#6: Yes, there were plenty of wild animals. There were musk deer, blue sheep, antelope, and Tibetan gazelle; there were many animals.

Q: And what were the animals that you had?

#6: We had *dri* and cows. We also had horses to ride on.

Q: What's *dri*?

#6: Some people call it *nowo*.

Q: What type of animal is it? Is it a cross bred between a yak and a cow?

#6: Yes, like that.

Q: What animals do you cross to get a *dri*?

#6: There were many cross breeds, I do not understand much. We do not cross *dri* with any other animal though I heard that some people do. I haven't seen it.

Q: What animal is the *dri*?

#6: It is like a yak. The yak and *dri* are the same. Only the name is different; yak and *dri*. They are the same. Yak is the male and *dri* is the female. [Laughs]

Q: The female yak, *dri*. What kind of food did you have for breakfast, supper or lunch? What did you eat?

#6: In the morning we drank sweet tea.

Q: Sweet tea?

#6: Yes, sweet tea and *tsampa* 'roasted barley flour.' After that we had pancakes made from buckwheat, a kind of yellow grain, milk and cheese. For lunch, nomads did not have vegetables; we mostly ate butter and cheese. We also did not eat meat.

Q: You didn't eat meat?

#6: No, we didn't.

Q: Never?

#6: No, there were [times], but it was very rare. It was not common in the region.

Q: No vegetables or meat. How old were your children then? They were growing up?

#6: They were around six or seven then.

Q: Did they like to play?

#6: Yes, they had nothing to do but play.

Q: Did your family have any spiritual practices that you did?

#6: Practicing religion there, was the same as we do here. It was exactly the same.

Q: Was there a monastery nearby?

#6: Yes, there was a temple. We gathered there on the new moon, the eighth and the 25th days of the month. We circumambulated and made offerings. If we didn't attend, there was a fine of a *nyakha* of butter.

Q: How much is a *nyakha* of butter?

#6: It was like a scale. Here it is called a kilogram. In Tibet it was made of wood. The Chinese called it the *gyama*.

Q: What kind of offerings did you have to make?

#6: The offerings were tea and the day's food. That was called *thongo*.

Q: Did you go on any pilgrimages during that time?

#6: I had never been on pilgrimage.

Q: You said you made offerings of food and tea. Was this for the monks in the monastery?

#6: No, that was not for the monks. From the lay-population, any one person from a family had to go to the temple and if you didn't attend, the penalty was the butter.

Q: To whom was the tea and the food offered?

#6: That was for the people who came there.

Q: Not for the monks?

#6: No, not for the monks.

Q: Were these people from around the neighboring villages?

#6: Yes, they were the people from the village.

Q: Everybody shared food?

#6: Yes, everybody ate together, drank tea together, said prayers, and recited the *mani* mantra and other prayers that we normally said.

Q: How did you feel about that kind of religious practice?

#6: It was very good. When these gatherings were going on, I was a child. My father used to attend. I couldn't go as I was engaged in work.

Q: He represented you. And then when did this very peaceful life begin to change?

#6: I wonder which year it was. We suffered a lot. I can't relate to you all the experiences.

Q: Do you remember the year?

#6: I don't remember.

Q: 1950-something? When did the Chinese come? It happened after that?

#6: Yes, that is right.

Q: Around which year did the Chinese arrive?

#6: It must have been around 1956. I think it was around that year.

Q: What became different?

#6: The difference was that we escaped. I don't know what happened later to those who were left behind.

Q: When you said your father was arrested, how many other men, were they all men, were arrested with him from your village?

#6: Yes, about four men from upper Khambu were arrested. From lower Khambu a monk was arrested...no, the monk was not arrested; about five to six men were arrested.

Q: Were these the leaders of the areas?

#6: Yes, they were the leaders and from prominent families and officials.

Q: Your family was a high-ranking family?

#6: Yes, it was.

Q: What did you feel when your father was taken away?

#6: I couldn't think, but I felt terribly depressed. There was nothing to do even if I was depressed because our possessions were confiscated. They took away all the things, our brocade and fur *chupa* 'traditional coat.' Our men told me that they didn't want the brocade and fur *chupa*, but demanded from me *puruk chupas*! I told them, "You are getting these things free of cost and I do not have the things you demand." They impertinently questioned me as to who I thought I was.

Q: Who were these men?

#6: These were the poor men from our village who were given our things. They were questioning me! I told them that they were getting all these things, food, drink, and clothes to wear without having to pay anything. In those days we used to have brocades and furs, but all were confiscated. They didn't want these but demanded *puruk chupas*!

Q: What's *puruk* made of?

#6: *Puruk* is made from wool.

Q: These were your neighbors in the village that was being given these things by the Chinese?

#6: Yes, that is right.

Q: Were the Chinese giving them permission to take these things?

#6: No, in our village there were people appointed by the Chinese to represent them. It was these people who sent them. At that time there were no Chinese.

Q: But then it's actually the neighbors who took the things?

[Interpreter to interviewer] That's right.

Q: What did you feel when your own neighbors and friends took your possessions?

#6: There was nothing to think about. I thought it doesn't matter; let them take and do anything they want. I never felt loss or had any thoughts.

Q: You felt numb.

#6: Yes, that's how I felt.

Q: You were in shock?

#6: Yes, I was in shock. Something happened to me.

Q: Why do you think the people did this to you?

#6: There is a very long story to relate about this.

Q: Can you tell me the story?

#6: First, the *Chushi Gangdrug* Defend Tibet Volunteer Force arrived there, in our village. The *Chushi Gangdrug* wanted a place to stay and they asked for guns if we had guns, swords if we had swords, horses if we had horses. They said they were the defenders of the country. My father did not give them. Later when the Chinese arrived, the people of our village told the Chinese that my father provided the men of *Chushi Gangdrug* with horses, guns and swords.

Q: Your father didn't give them?

#6: No, he didn't give. They were lying. Eventually we had lost horses, guns and swords; everything to the *Chushi Gangdrug*.

Q: Your father did not actually give these to the *Chushi Gangdrug*.

#6: He did not give.

Q: But they forcibly took them?

#6: Yes, they took them.

Q: But the people told the Chinese that your father gave them away?

#6: Yes, they said that he gave them away. That was all lies.

Q: But you just said your father didn't.

[Interpreter to interviewer] He didn't, but they took everything by force.

Q: They took it by force, the guerrillas?

[Interpreter to interviewer] That's right.

Q: And so the neighbors then said...

[Interpreter to interviewer] ...that his father helped the resistance army.

Q: So that's why the neighbors felt they could come and take your things?

#6: Yes. They didn't take the things from my house. Some of them entered the house and brought out the things. As the things were brought out, they started distributing them. We had three sets of the seven water bowls made of silver. Some got three, some got one and some got two, when they were divided among them.

Q: Do you think the villagers really thought your father helped the guerillas or do you think they just went along with the Chinese?

#6: That I don't understand. Whatever it was, I didn't understand. I didn't have much to say. That's what they did initially. My father used to help the villagers by lending them money and grains, but in the end they subjected him to *thamzin*.

Q: To your father?

#6: Yes, to him. Whatever he hadn't done, they said he did. They pulled him by his hair and spit in his mouth. The *thamzin*; it was so bad.

Q: Did you see the torture sessions of your father?

#6: Yes, I saw. The Chinese told me that even I should *thamzin* my father! They told me to *thamzin* my father! I said I was not going to do it.

Q: They were doing this in the village before they took him to prison?

#6: Yes, that is right.

Q: And how many days did this go on?

#6: One day. The *thamzin* was done in one day. One day at upper Khambu.

Q: So they arrested your father and they brought him in the village and what did they make the people do?

#6: They called all the people to gather and made him stand in the center. Then they made them *thamzin* him. Everyone had gathered. Whatever he had not done... All the help that my father had extended to them...they told all lies.

Q: Why do you think the villagers did that?

#6: The Chinese were prodding them to do so.

Q: Because they feared the Chinese or what?

#6: That must have been to flatter them. I do not know.

Q: So what happened? They actually brought your father into the village and what did they make the people do?

#6: They lied that my father had earlier done bad things; that he had provided the *Chushi Gangdrug* with horses, swords and guns. They related all bad things that occurred in the past and subjected him to *thamzin*.

Q: How was the *thamzin* done?

#6: The *thamzin* happened this way. He was made to bow among the people. They spit in his mouth, they pulled his head up holding his hair and then made him bend. They told him to confess what he had done in the past. They did horrible things. He hadn't done anything in the past. They were lying.

Q: Then?

#6: Then after the *thamzin* was over, he spent one night at lower Khambu and the next day he was taken to upper Khambu.

Q: Besides pulling the hair and spitting in the mouth, did they do anything else during the *thamzin*?

#6: There wasn't anything else they did.

Q: Was he beaten?

#6: They didn't beat him. They didn't make them beat him. They almost did beat him, but did not do it actually.

Q: And you had to watch this?

#6: Yes.

Q: Your heart must have been very broken?

#6: I was so depressed. The arrested were put in a house and the Chinese stood guard with guns.

Q: Where were the Chinese?

#6: The *thamzin* was done in one place and then my father was put in a small room.

Q: And what happened next?

#6: Then he was taken to Phari. The prisoners were shackled two together and put in a vehicle and sent to Lhasa. Then we heard in Lhasa that he was sent to China. My father was away for about 20 years when I heard from a relative who lives in Mussoorie that my father had come to Lhasa. Then we requested someone to accompany him up until Nepal.

Q: He had reached Lhasa. How did he get out of the Chinese prison?

#6: I don't know how he got out of the prison. We heard that he had arrived in Lhasa. About 20 years had passed.

Q: What did you feel when you heard that news?

#6: I was happy and I was sad at the same time. We wondered because we had all along thought that he was dead as he was old. We sent him letters and those who read them told him that he should go to India and that his children were asking him to. But he replied, "No, I am not going. I have five sons in India and one of them should come here to fetch me. Unless that happens I am not going to India."

Q: So who went to fetch him?

#6: I went. [Laughs]

Q: Naturally!

#6: I had a lot of trouble with the travel documents in Nepal. I couldn't get a permit and finally I went to Dam without one. At Dam, they questioned me as to why I was going to Tibet. I told them that I was going to fetch my father who I had not seen in 20 years. I told them that I did not have any goods to sell, nor wished to buy anything from there. I had no other intention except the above reason. Then they let me through giving me a letter. I had no permit.

Q: How fortunate!

#6: After my father came here, he was able to see His Holiness the Dalai Lama. That was enough.

Q: How old are you at this point?

#6: I may have been around...

Q: What year was it?

#6: I went in 1982. I was about 65 or 66 years old.

Q: How old was your father at that time?

#6: He was 86.

Q: So tell us how you found him?

#6: When I arrived in Tibet, he was kept at the Lhasa Nyethang. There was a ceramic factory. I got down from the bus near the road. Then I asked my way around. We met but at first did not recognize each other. It had been so many years.

Q: Your father was working in the factory?

#6: No, he was not working. He was living in the Home for the Aged there.

Q: At the Nyethang factory?

#6: Yes, at the Nyethang factory. First when we met, we didn't recognize each other. When we started talking about the old days, then I knew. He hugged me and cried.

Q: What did you feel when you found him?

#6: I thought he was healthy and that was so good. I thought now I can take him to India.

Q: Did he want to go?

#6: Yes, he did, but he asked me a lot of questions. He asked, "How are you living in India? What type of house do you have? What do the people do? What land do you have? Do you have cows?"

Q: Why do you think he asked so many questions?

#6: I told him that he needn't worry and that all the brothers were doing well.

Q: Was he worried that he would be a burden?

#6: That might be in his mind because he asked about the houses, the lands and our livelihood.

Q: Did he have any other questions for you?

#6: Our house and possessions were confiscated and he asked me how they did it. I told him that our things were distributed among the people of our village. When I said that he replied, "That is okay."

Q: What was his spirit like?

#6: He looked happy. It was just like here; when the bell rang, he went to get his food.

Q: At the time when you met your father?

#6: He looked happy.

Q: Did he tell you anything about his experience in prison?

#6: He didn't seem to recall.

Q: Do you think he didn't remember?

#6: I think he did not remember. We didn't know how to ask him. He had already borne all the sufferings, so why ask?

Q: You didn't want to upset him?

#6: Yes, that was it.

Q: How did you bring him back? He was 86; did you carry him on your back?

#6: When we came to Dam, the roads were very bad and there were no vehicles. All the coolies and our companions went ahead and my father and I were left behind. I carried him on my back.

Q: At Dam?

#6: Yes, Dam, at the border.

Q: Dam is the border between Nepal and Tibet?

#6: Yes, it was just before we reached Nepal, on the border.

Q: How did you reach here from Lhasa?

#6: There was a direct bus from Lhasa to Dam. We reached in two days.

Q: You brought your father in the bus?

#6: Yes, my father, myself and there were many others.

Q: Until Dam and there you carried him on your back?

#6: Yes, from Dam I carried him on my back.

Q: Until which place?

#6: I don't know the place. It was about a day's journey.

Q: You came walking?

#6: Yes, walking.

Q: And then?

#6: And then we got a vehicle and came in it until Nepal.

Q: You mean Kathmandu?

#6: Yes, Kathmandu.

Q: How did that journey feel to bring your father back?

#6: I felt now he would be happy. My father was very happy. Here he met relatives and people from our region.

Q: Did your father get to meet the Dalai Lama?

#6: Yes, my father got to see His Holiness right away in Dharamsala.

Q: Did you go direct to Dharamsala?

#6: I have a brother in Mussoorie. So we went to Mussoorie and from there we went to Dharamsala.

Q: What was that like for your father?

#6: He got an audience in His Holiness' private quarters while I was not allowed in. When he came out he was crying so much that he was speechless.

Q: He got an audience in His Holiness' private quarters?

#6: Yes, in the private quarters. When I returned here and told people about carrying my father on my back, some of them start crying.

Q: Where did your father come to live?

#6: Then I was living on my farmland. We came in a bus up to Bylakuppe and from that point someone gave us a ride until my house.

Q: What was his reaction when he saw your house?

#6: When he saw my house he said, "I didn't think that you had such a nice house." My house was a fine one. He said he didn't think it would be this good. He said it was adequate.

Q: Was he happy to be with you again?

#6: He was happy. Then he was very happy. He used to walk until the house of my brother in another area and then walk back home in the evening through camp number one.

Q: On walks?

#6: Yes, on walks.

Q: Everyday?

#6: Sometimes. Not everyday.

Q: He was in good health?

#6: Yes, he was very healthy.

Q: Amazing!

#6: He had a small foldable wooden stool with a leather seat. In Lhasa I told him not to take it with him as we could have one made in India but he said he wanted to take it. When he needed rest he sat on it and then carried it under his arms.

Q: When he got tired, he could sit on it.

#6: Yes, he sat on it and when we walked, he carried it under his arms.

Q: I am so happy to hear that you got your father here but we missed one piece of the story. How did you get from Tibet to India?

#6: It happened like this. We went to Bhutan. I had about seven or eight *dri* and the usual nomad things. We didn't have anything else because everything was confiscated. We got to Bhutan.

Q: How did you get to Bhutan?

#6: We escaped towards Bhutan.

Q: How? What things did you have?

#6: We had the usual nomad stuff. Some yaks, some *dri*, which were the leftovers from the confiscated possessions. We reached Bhutan. While we were staying in Bhutan, a brother who now lives in Mussoorie wrote to me saying, "You should send your two children to school. You can remain there or if it is possible you should all come here."

Q: Your brother was already in Mussoorie?

#6: He was not in Mussoorie then, he was in Kalimpong. So we send the two children to school at Dharamsala.

Q: At that time you were staying in Bhutan?

#6: Yes, we were in Bhutan.

Q: The journey was a hard one or easy or what?

#6: The journey was an easy one. We didn't face any problems.

Q: I am glad to hear that.

#6: We didn't have any troubles.

Q: Given all that happened to your family from the Chinese; your father's arrest, your loss of property; how do you feel about the Chinese now?

#6: I can't think of anything. They are a mighty country. India is a mighty country. But ours is a country in which we did not know how to make a needle. It is only the grace of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, our religion and our compassion that we have.

Q: And you still have your religion, compassion and the Dalai Lama.

#6: Yes, that is right.

Q: What advice or message would you like to give the next generation of children who are in Tibet or who are living here now? What advice or message?

#6: As I do not have much knowledge, I do not know what advice to give. They must abide by the words of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and it is very good if they can serve the Tibetan people. They should all stand united and be kind-hearted.

Q: That is a very beautiful place maybe to end. Thank you very much.

#6: Thank you.

Q: Thank you for a very wonderful interview.

#6: Thank you.

Q: Your story was very beautiful and very moving.

#6: Thank you.

Q: And it shows great courage and a big heart.

#6: [Laughs]

Q: And the Dalai Lama would be very proud of you.

#6: Yes.

END OF INTERVIEW