

Tibet Oral History Project

Interview #33 – Ngawang Chomphel
July 1, 2007

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TIBET ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

1. Interview Number: #33
2. Interviewee: Ngawang Chomphel
3. Age: 76
4. Date of Birth: 1931
5. Sex: Male
6. Birthplace: Donpa Gonpa
7. Province: Utsang
8. Year of leaving Tibet: 1959
9. Date of Interview: July 1, 2007
10. Place of Interview: House No. 18, Old Camp No. 2, Lugsung Samdupling Settlement, Bylakuppe, Mysore District, Karnataka, India
11. Length of Interview: 1 hr 24 min
12. Interviewer: Martin Newman
13. Interpreter: Lhakpa Tsering
14. Videographer: Tsewang Dorji
15. Transcriber: Tenzin Yangchen



Biographical Information:

Ngawang Chomphel spent his early years living in a monastery, where his father was the head lama's business manager, and roaming the plains of Tibet as a nomad. He recalls his childhood was filled with "happiness, plenty of milk and [I was] physically healthy." As a boy he grazed the animals in the fields with large dogs to protect from the livestock from wolves.

Before seeing them himself, Ngawang Chomphel heard rumors about the sufferings imposed by the Chinese. When the Chinese did come to his region, some of the neighbors reported his father to the Chinese saying that he had repressed them. Fearing for his life, Ngawang Chomphel's father escaped to India a day before he was to be subjected to *thamzin* 'struggle session.' At that time, Ngawang Chomphel and his wife were harvesting crops in a nearby village and did not know his family had fled. He soon felt compelled to also escape after hearing people say, "The tree may be gone but the branch is here. So we will *thamzin* the son."

Traveling to Bhutan was not difficult because Ngawang Chomphel had frequently taken that route as a trader. Starting new life in exile in Bylakuppe was challenging— Ngawang Chomphel helped to build the settlement which was threatened by dangerous elephants.

Topics Discussed:

Childhood memories, nomadic life, life under Chinese rule, escape experiences, early life in Bylakuppe.

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Interviewee: Ngawang Chomphel

Age: 76, Sex: Male

Interviewer: Martin Newman

Interview Date: July 1, 2007

Question: Hello.

Interviewee #33: Hello.

Q: Please tell us your name?

#33: Ngawang Chomphel.

Q: Do you give your permission for the Tibet Oral History Project to use this interview?

#33: Yes.

Q: Thank you for offering to share your story with us.

#33: Okay.

Q: His Holiness the Dalai Lama requested that we record your stories, so that we can share your memories with Tibetans for generations to come.

#33: Yes.

Q: And to also inform the world community and the next generation of Chinese about the true history, culture and beliefs of the Tibetan people.

#33: Okay.

Q: During the interview if you wish to take a break or stop at any time, please let us know.

#33: Okay.

Q: If you do not wish to answer a question, or discuss some issue, please tell us.

#33: Okay.

Q: If this were shown in Tibet or China, would that be problem for you?

#33: It's not a problem.

Q: So let us begin.

#33: Yes.

Q: I would like to ask you about what life was like in Tibet before the Chinese invasion, particularly what you remember about your childhood.

#33: As a young child I was in the monastery learning the scriptures. I learned to read and write. Then I used to play as a child. In Tibet we would play a game with stones called *dhekong*.

Q: Where were you born?

#33: I was born in Donpa Gonpa.

Q: Is that a monastery?

#33: Yes, that was a monastery.

Q: And where in Tibet is the location?

#33: It is in Tsang, very close to Samadawa.

Q: How many people were in your family?

#33: There were my parents, a sister, myself, my wife, and when we escaped from Tibet we had a daughter.

Q: What did your parents do?

#33: We were nomads and reared goats, sheep, *dri* 'female yak,' and yaks.

Q: Did you live in a house or in a tent? Where did you live?

#33: When we lived in the monastery, it was in a house, and at the nomad camp, we lived in tents.

Q: How much time during the year did you spend in a house and how much time during the year did you spend in a tent?

#33: For two months we were in the monastery practicing the dharma. We spent three months looking after the animals, milking them. That was our livelihood.

Q: Can you describe your tent? What the inside of your tent looked like? What was in it?

#33: We bring the milk into the tent and do the churning to make butter and other such activities inside the tent. That was during the summer. In winter we went home.

Q: Do you remember how you did that?

#33: Yes, certainly I can remember.

Q: Please tell us.

#33: The sheep and goats of Tsang are different from those found in Dhotoe and Dhomay in that there they do not milk them. However, we tied the animals with ropes around their neck and milked them. In autumn we milked the *dri*. The milk is boiled and then made into curds. When this cools, we churn it in the churner called *dhongmo*. We get yellow butter from this.

Q: Did you do this yourself or did you help your mother or your father?

#33: As we were nomads, it was not just one sheep or one goat; we had thousands of them. There were also thousands of *dri* and yaks. So to churn the curds, we hired girls from outside to help us. It was not just our parents and us. There would be 15 to 16 people engaged in churning.

Q: If I were in a tent right now with a camera, and I were taking a photograph, what are the things I would see?

#33: You will see how we lead our life, with happiness, plenty of milk and physically healthy. I think of those.

Q: What else will there be besides milk? Did you have things like in here hanging on the wall? Did you have skins, perhaps thrown on the floor? What did you have?

#33: During summer in the tents we did not have *thangka* 'scroll paintings' or animal skins except photos of gods. In the monasteries there were a lot of statutes and religious items.

Q: What did you sleep on?

#33: We slept on carpets. In Tibet we didn't have blankets; instead we had *tsukdu* like the one you can see there on my bed.

Q: When you went out to tend your animals, did you go by yourself? Did you take dogs with you? How did you go out and do that?

#33: We went with the dogs because there were wolves, very similar to dogs and white in color, which lived in the forests and killed the sheep, goats, *dri* and yaks. We took along three to four dogs.

Q: Were these big dogs?

#33: The dogs were very big. They are not like the Indian dogs. They are as big as the donkeys here.

Q: That's a big dog!

#33: [Laughs]

Q: Did you ever see any foxes trying to take your flock?

#33: I have seen it. Everyday we have to take the animals to the grazing place. At times when we are not alert, the wolves, which would lie in wait, would grab an animal. So our dogs gave chase but by then the animal would have been killed. But we always managed to get the carcass back.

Q: You saw them killing your sheep?

#33: Of course, why wouldn't we? We are there the whole day.

Q: What did you do when you saw that?

#33: When the sheep are out grazing, we cannot cover all the sides, so the wolves lying in wait kill the animals. The wolves are white in color.

Q: They are very clever.

#33: Yes, they are.

Q: You mentioned that you liked to play games; do you remember the games that you used to play as a child?

#33: I remember the games. Friends of my age would play a game of throwing stones.

Q: Can you describe the game?

#33: A stone is placed in the center and each player has three stones in hand. You have to hit the stone in the center and if your stone touches that, you are a winner. If your stone does not touch the stone in the center and falls elsewhere, you lose.

Q: Do you remember as a child, were there any performers or magicians or traveling shows that come to your village?

#33: There were no magicians at all in our place. As is the Tibetan tradition, we had many *lhamo* ‘opera’ performers.

Q: Did you see the opera that was performed?

#33: Yes, I have seen it. They would come and perform in our place.

Q: Can you tell me what the opera was about? Do you remember the story?

#33: I can remember in bits but not the entire story. They were Dolwa Sangmo and Chongpo Dhonyoe.

Q: And who are they?

#33: [Jokingly]... I am Dolwa Sangmo!

[Question repeated.]

#33: I knew earlier but I have forgotten the stories now.

Q: Did they wear costumes?

#33: Yes.

Q: Did they perform in front of the whole village?

#33: They performed in front of the whole village.

Q: You said part of the year you lived in the monastery. Were you a monk?

#33: I was not a celibate monk. The Kagyu Monastery monks were monks who could get married.

Q: So you were allowed to be there, but you were not actually a monk?

#33: We practice religion in the monastery like a monk, but we were not celibate monks.

Q: This was a Kagyu Monastery?

#33: Yes, a Kagyu Monastery.

Q: After being there, did you have any interest in becoming a monk?

#33: Yes, my parents had admitted me into the monastery and I too wanted to be a monk. I have studied the scriptures to a certain extent. However, coming into exile, there was no

time for religion as we were busy in cutting down the trees. Now these days I remember those prayers.

Q: The time you escaped interfered with your religious studies.

#33: Yes, that was an obstacle in my religious studies.

Q: How many years did you live this way in which part of the year you were living in the tent and part of the year you were living in the monastery?

#33: I lived in this way for about 24 years. Practicing religion as well as rearing the animals. Mainly I was a nomad with a few months to practice the dharma.

Q: How large was this monastery?

#33: It was not large. There was a rock on which this monastery was built. It is hundreds of years old.

Q: It was very old? How old do you recall it being?

#33: It is hundreds of years old.

Q: It was on a rocky mountain top?

#33: Yes, it was on a rocky mountain.

Q: When did things start in your life, personally and in the life in the monastery and the life in the village; when did things start to change?

#33: Until I was about 18 or 19 years old, life was the same in the village. Then a lot of development was happening among all the *samadok* 'those who did both farming and dairying' and the Chinese were about to arrive.

Q: For the first 18 years, can you repeat?

#33: Before I was 18, there was not much development in my village. After 18, I saw lots of developments.

Q: What do you mean by development? What kind of things were going on?

#33: In my village, we did not have labor tax or many taxes to be paid. In some other places they had to give a lot of taxes and also perform labor tax. We did not have wealthy families suppressing the other families in our village. So we were free to go to Bhutan for business and to Samadawa to trade in meat and butter. Thus we made a lot of progress.

Q: Are you saying that then it started to increase?

#33: Yes, that is it, not because of any other form of livelihood.

Q: Why did you think that meant the Chinese were coming?

#33: At that time, no Chinese had come to our village. They had come to Samadawa which is close to our village. We heard a lot of different things at that time. We heard rumors that the Chinese were separating the men and women and taking them to China. This talk led us to escape.

Q: When you heard that, did that scare you?

#33: At that time everybody was afraid. We had never seen the Chinese but heard that they caused a lot of sufferings. I have to tell you that my father, at that time, was the *chanzo* 'business manager' of the lama of our monastery. When the Chinese came, some neighbors reported to them that my father, in the capacity of the lama's *chanzo*, had repressed them and should be tortured.

Q: He wants to surrender? Why did he want to surrender?

#33: He was the *chanzo* of the lama. A *chanzo*'s position has power and some people said that they had to undergo difficulties because of my father's dealings. That was why he was to be subjected to *thamzin* 'struggle session.'

Q: Yes, but why would he want to *thamzin* himself? Why would he want to do that?

#33: It was not my father who said he was to undergo *thamzin*. It was the bad people of the village who said that.

Q: I see. Now that makes sense to me. Why did the people of the village want to *thamzin* your father?

#33: They claimed that my father who was in a position of authority had misused his power by subjugating them.

Q: Did the people of the village just want to do that or did the Chinese inspire or force them to do?

#33: It was the villagers who complained to the Chinese that during the old system, my father had mistreated them and the Chinese said that he should undergo *thamzin*.

Q: Did they do that? Was your father *thamzined*?

#33: There were some villagers who liked my father and they came and told him, "It has been decided to subject you to *thamzin* tomorrow, so you'd better flee." When he got this

news, that very night he crossed over the pass into Bhutan. Bhutan is just a pass away and he was able to escape *thamzin*.

Q: You were all left behind?

#33: At that time, my wife and I were in Samadawa where we had purchased some land and were harvesting the crops. My father, on hearing news of his imminent torture, had fled to Bhutan. So we became separated.

Q: You were away when this happened?

#33: Yes, that is right.

Q: This is the first I heard about your wife. When did you get married?

#33: I married when I was 20.

Q: How did you meet your wife?

#33: In Tibet our parents look for a bride who is good-natured, from a good family background; and when my parents found such a girl, she was brought home.

Q: So it was an arranged marriage?

#33: It was arranged by my parents.

Q: Do you remember your wedding day?

#33: Yes.

Q: Can you tell us what that was like?

#33: On that day, we held a ceremony and in order that we would have a long life, a healthy life and good fortune, we offered *khata* ‘ceremonial scarf’ to the altar and prayed. Our friends came to the house and offered scarves.

Q: Was there a big celebration?

#33: Yes, it was a big celebration.

Q: Were you very happy at that moment?

#33: Of course, you are happy when there is a celebration.

Q: Good, it's a good thing.

#33: [Laughs]

Q: Did you have any children then?

#33: We had two children in Tibet. On our journey during the escape, we lost one child. One of our daughters was with my parents and when they fled, they had taken her with them to India. Upon reaching India, the authorities announced that children without parents should be registered. She was taken to Dharamsala and then to Switzerland.

Q: So I'd like to go back to the moment your father escaped to Bhutan because he was about to be *thamzined*. You were away tending your flock and then you return home and what happened?

#33: When I returned from Samadawa, my parents were gone, so I decided to follow my parents. It was the 11th month and the mountain pass to Bhutan was blocked by snow. There was no way to escape and we had to remain one year. After the year, we made our escape to Bhutan. As my father had fled before he could be subjected to *thamzin*, the people said, "The tree may be gone but the branch is here. So we will do the *thamzin* to the son." I came to know this from some friends and immediately made my escape.

Q: The branch of the tree, if they can't get the trunk, they will take the branch. This is really hard to imagine because I would think that before you considered these villagers your friends. Is that true?

#33: There were friends who came and told me that some people complained against me and that I was to be tortured. It was told to me secretly that I should flee and that I shouldn't remain in the village. There were spies everywhere and we had to be very careful; someone might tell the Chinese that this person had informed me. So he came at night to tell me this and I fled that very night.

Q: Why did you think the villagers hated your family so much? These were people you knew.

#33: The reason they were angry was that my father had been in authority at the monastery. When he could not be punished, they said that the tree may be gone but the branch was there, so they were going to do the *thamzin* to me.

Q: You said because your father was a decent person, they wanted to *thamzin* him?

#33: Because my father worked in the monastery. He was a good person so they want to *thamzin* him.

Q: I don't understand why they would want to *thamzin* a good person?

#33: Because the Chinese ordered them to *thamzin* my father.

[Interpreter clarifies]: The father used his power on the people. So the villagers didn't like that.

Q: He used his power? What kind of power did he use in the village?

#33: He had great authority in the monastery. During his tenure, my father maintained very strict rules and regulations in the monastery. That was the reason.

Q: What did the secretary of the lama do that would make people angry? I don't understand.

#33: The full authority of what was done to the lama rested on the *chanzo*. The secretary could do what he wished.

Q: Maybe some people in the village thought that your father was unfair.

#33: That is right. They said he was too authoritarian. They made suggestions to the Chinese that my father was not doing the right thing. So he was to undergo *thamzin*.

Q: He wasn't *thamzined*, he escaped the *thamzin*. Now you heard that you were next. What did you do when you heard that you are about to be *thamzined*? What did you do?

#33: When I heard from my friends that I was to undergo *thamzin*, I made my escape, through Bhutan.

Q: What did you do?

#33: I crossed the pass to Bhutan. We were close to Bhutan.

Q: Tell me please about your escape.

#33: It took us four days to reach Bhutan. The pass was narrow and filled with snow. When we reached Bhutan, the Bhutanese authorities didn't treat us well. The fine clothes we had, they said would rot in India, and they forcefully took our things from us. Then we came towards India.

Q: Who did you go with?

#33: Myself, my wife and child. There was also another couple with us.

Q: Where was your mother?

#33: My mother had fled along with my father.

Q: They escaped together?

#33: Yes.

Q: And your brothers and sisters?

#33: They had already fled, with my parents.

Q: They all escaped while you were with the sheep?

[Someone prompting off camera]: In Samadawa.

#33: Yes.

Q: You say it took four days to get to Bhutan. Tell me about some of the difficulties that you faced.

#33: The difficulty was leaving your place. The four days we journeyed, everywhere it was desolate, there were no villages; there was nothing except mountains and snow. We stayed in caves and it was freezing cold.

Q: You had to hide in caves. Were there Chinese around you? Did you see Chinese soldiers?

#33: On the first day of our escape when we were climbing the snowy mountain, I saw about seven to eight men on horseback coming to catch me.

Q: Had you heard at that time what had happened at Lhasa and had you known anything about the escape of the Dalai Lama and what was going on in the rest of the country?

#33: We heard about the escape of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to India. We also heard that the people of Lhasa protested against the Chinese. So we too wanted to escape to India.

Q: What did you think and what did you feel when you heard this?

#33: I felt that we should go. His Holiness had already arrived in India and the people were escaping. So I thought there was no use living there now and we should also flee.

Q: What did you think about and feel about all the things that were happening in your country and in Lhasa? What were your feelings?

#33: At that time I was very unhappy that I had to leave my country. The thoughts running in my mind were: When and where will I be? What will happen? When you have to leave your country, you are filled with sadness.

Q: So let's continue with your escape. You are hiding in the caves; you were with your wife and your child and someone else. Did you have to cross high mountains to get to Bhutan?

#33: Yes. There are only mountains in Bhutan. You never saw plains except at Wangdu Phodang, which is only as large as the local school playground here. All the houses are constructed on hills. You had to climb hills everywhere.

Q: At any time did you feel that you might not make it?

#33: Earlier, since there was just a pass between us, I used to go to Bhutan in autumn and in winter for trade. So I knew the way through the mountains to Bhutan, but I never had any intention of staying in Bhutan. I wanted to go on to India.

Q: Do you remember anything else that happened during your escape?

#33: I do not remember anything else.

Q: What happened when you reached Bhutan?

#33: When we escaped, we didn't have many things with us. However we had clothes made of *nambu* 'woolen cloth' which they [the Bhutanese] said would rot in India and they took these forcefully from us. We had golden rings on our fingers and saying that these were useless in India, they paid us four or five rupees and took them. Then they sent us through Wangdu Phodang into Buxa in India.

Q: So you are saying they stole your valuables?

#33: They forcefully took them from us.

Q: What was your reaction to that?

#33: There was nothing for us to do; we were in someone else's country! They just paid four or five rupees for the rings. Gold was valuable but we couldn't ask them to give us more. It was their country; we couldn't fight them. Then we reached Buxa.

Q: How long did you stay in Bhutan?

#33: We were in Bhutan for almost a month.

Q: Was the climate any different from where you had come from? Was it a hard adjustment?

#33: Not when we were in Bhutan but when we arrived at Buxa, we faced a lot of climatic problems. Buxa is in India and it was very hot. There were Tibetans from the Phari side and many died in Buxa due to the heat.

Q: Your wife and children, how did they do?

#33: My wife and I had a small child which died in Bhutan due to the heat.

Q: Your child died in Bhutan. What did you think at that time?

#33: My father and mother had gone earlier to India and it was my hope to meet them. His Holiness the Dalai Lama was in India and I thought I would get a chance to see him. That was why I came to India from Bhutan.

Q: You spent a month in Bhutan and then you went to Buxa where your child died.

[Someone prompting off camera]: The child died in Bhutan.

Q: What did you do in Buxa?

#33: There was no work in Buxa; we were free. The monks of the three monasteries of Sera, Gaden and Drepung had arrived in Buxa. Just like the monks, we were given plenty to eat by the Indian government. They provided us with rice, flour, and *dhal* and we stayed here for about 20 days.

Q: And from there, where did you go?

#33: From Buxa we came to Darjeeling. At Buxa we had requested the Indian authorities to issue us permits but they were in connivance with the Bhutanese and said we would be returned to Bhutan to work on road construction sites. We were around 30 in a group and we told them that we would not go back. His Holiness is in India and so are our parents and relatives. They said you may go but we will not issue you permits. Without papers we were stopped at many points, like railway stations, but we carried on to reach Darjeeling.

Q: At all this time you were with your wife?

#33: Yes.

Q: Then what happened in Darjeeling?

#33: We were in Darjeeling for about 18 or 19 days when the authorities said that we would be sent to settlements. There we requested permits and we were issued them only when we reached here.

Q: So you were sent from Darjeeling to Bylakuppe?

#33: Yes, to the Bylakuppe settlement.

Q: So you must have come right at the beginning of...when Bylakuppe was established?

#33: The first to come to Bylakuppe were the people of the first camp. Next was us.

Q: You were the second group that came. What did you find when you came here?

#33: The place was not like this; it was a dense forest. The people of the first camp had made a clearing for us to stay in the forest and the Indian government had put up tents and bamboo huts, near the lake that you see there. The next day we were told that we had three days to rest and then should start cutting the trees. At that time many people had come here from Kalimpong, Darjeeling, and other places.

The authorities told us to work hard and that we would be paid two rupees a day. We would also receive aid from foreign countries, which they said would benefit us. Every week they gave us our salary. As we had freshly arrived from Tibet, our bodies were strong and we worked very hard. The forest was so thick that even if an elephant was close by you, you wouldn't be able to see it. An elephant killed a man too.

Q: Is that something you witnessed yourself—you saw that when you were out working that someone got killed by an elephant?

#33: I saw it. The man did not die immediately. The elephant had come to eat the corn in this man's field and he tried to drive it away. Elephants, unlike other animals, do not kill by biting. The elephant used its trunk to throw the man up and when he fell down on the ground, he was trampled under its feet. The elephant being such a heavy animal, all the ribs were broken, and he was breathing heavily when we went to retrieve him.

Q: And you saw this?

#33: Our fields were close by, so I saw it.

Q: What did you do when you saw this?

#33: When this man tried to drive the elephant away, I was nearby. We yelled from the sides of the field and the elephant was so angry that even when it ran away, it smashed down on the standing corn in the fields. It was a lone elephant. When we went to the man, he couldn't speak; he was panting.

Q: Were you then afraid to go out into the field again and to the forest after you saw that?

#33: At that time, although the elephant killed a man, we did not have fear. We had to go out to work and we would hear them. There were some elephants which were not aggressive. When they saw a man they would spray water from their trunks and we would run away.

Q: You mean the elephants would spray water from its trunk?

#33: Yes.

Q: How did everybody deal with this elephant problem? How are you finally able to clear the area of elephants?

#33: The matter was reported to the Indian authorities and they have certain tribesmen, with curly hair, who would catch and tame these elephants.

Q: I did not understand the last part: curly hair? And putting the elephants in the forest?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: The Indian government ordered some people who are experts in keeping away the elephants to keep the elephants away from the people who are working.

Q: What's the curly hair got to do with it?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Those people have curly hair.

Q: They came and they were experts in keeping the elephants away?

#33: Yes.

Q: Please continue.

#33: After we had cleared the jungle, His Holiness the Dalai Lama came on a visit. He was very happy. He said: "My people do not have machines like the foreigners but by using their two hands they have done a great job." It was wonderful that His Holiness was so happy. He spent a night here.

We had people from Kongpo who are experts in making huts. Did you see the huge water tank there? We built a palace of bamboo there and furnished it with carpets borrowed from whoever had them. His Holiness spent the night here and people from all the three provinces of Tibet gathered. We sang and danced and everyone had the hope that we would be back in Tibet within a year. Who knew then that we would be here for so long? His Holiness told us that we have done well and should do well. He encouraged the people that nothing bad would come to us.

Q: What did it mean to you at that time that His Holiness came here to be with you?

#33: When we heard that His Holiness was coming on a visit, all the people were overjoyed. When the Indian authorities announced that the Dalai Lama was coming, people were overjoyed. Once when His Holiness had come here, it was a dense forest. Then the Indian government had given it for the Tibetans to use. Now the area was cleared and His Holiness came on a visit.

Q: Did you speak to him yourself?

#33: His Holiness gave a speech but I did not speak to him. At that time His Holiness' private officer was Kungo Tara-la.

Q: Did you find out what happened to your parents?

#33: My parents had somehow reached Kulu Manali. We were here at the settlement waiting for my parents who didn't come. We didn't meet. My mother and my sister had died in Kulu Manali as the place did not agree with them. My father was able to come here

and lived for three or four years during which time I served him to the best of my ability, and then he passed away.

Q: You were very fortunate that you had an opportunity to spend that one year with him.

#33: Yes.

Q: Did you have any more children?

#33: We had 4 or 5 children but only one survived. That is the son with whom we live now.

Q: What happened to them?

#33: Some died in the womb and had to be taken out through surgery. Some lived a few days and died.

Q: I am sorry that you had to go through that.

#33: Yes.

Q: Now that you are here and if you could go back to Tibet, what would you do?

#33: The hope is there that we could go back to Tibet but I am 76 years old, so it just remains a hope. Even if we get there, the time to earn a livelihood is over for us. However the joy of seeing one's homeland will be there.

Q: What do you miss most about Tibet?

#33: Earlier I used to think of going back to Tibet with my children and living my life. We were nomads and I thought we would go back to what we did.

Q: What do you miss most about Tibet?

#33: My monastery in Tibet. Though it was small, yet it had a lot of precious items and treasures, like *bop* 'cymbal,' *phurpa* '3-sided metal dagger,' *gyaling* 'clarinet,' and other golden treasures, which were recovered from the earth. All these things the Chinese have taken away to Samadawa. I wonder about these things.

Q: What kind of advice would you give to the younger generation of Tibetans?

#33: The advice I would give the younger generation is not to lose the tradition and customs, for which I fear. The dress, the language and the script, I advise the children to preserve these.

Q: And before we end, because of your previous answer, I am curious you said you remember the Chinese taking gold from the monastery. Can you tell me what happened then? Do you remember that?

#33: After we had fled to India, there were some other people from my village who also escaped. These people witnessed our monastery's entire collection being taken to Samadawa. This was the nearest town from our village. The monastery was emptied and from there they didn't know whether the treasures were shipped to China or elsewhere.

Q: I think that is all. Thank you very much.

#33: Thank you. I have also come to the end.

[Gifts are presented to the elder and the elder offers a Tibetan ceremonial scarf to the interviewer.]

END OF INTERVIEW