

Tibet Oral History Project

**Interview #56M – Kalsang Dolma (alias)
April 14, 2010**

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INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

1. Interview Number: #56M
2. Interviewee: Kalsang Dolma (alias)
3. Age: 58
4. Date of Birth: 1952
5. Sex: Female
6. Birthplace: Phari
7. Province: Utsang
8. Year of leaving Tibet: 1974
9. Date of Interview: April 14, 2010
10. Place of Interview: H. H. the Dalai Lama's Palace, Doeguling Settlement, Mundgod, Karwar District, Karnataka, India
11. Length of Interview: 1 hr 46 min
12. Interviewer: Marcella Adamski
13. Interpreter: Tenzin Yangchen
14. Videographer: Pema Tashi
15. Translator: Tenzin Yangchen

Biographical Information:

Kalsang Dolma is the eldest of five siblings. Her father owned a horse-cart and earned a living by transporting wood from the forest of Dromo to the Chinese army camps. Later when her father was imprisoned, she carried on the work of her father. She recounts her experience during the Cultural Revolution. She describes how her parents were arrested in the middle of the night, imprisoned, tortured and labeled as “Dalai Clique.” The different kinds of *thamzing* 'struggle session' inflicted on the prisoners are discussed in detail.

Kalsang Dolma talks about the ordeal she and her mother went through to obtain food for the younger children and imprisoned father. The miserable life of her family and other Tibetans during this period and her desperate wish as a child to see a miracle of His Holiness the Dalai Lama appearing in the sky are some of her vivid descriptions.

Kalsang Dolma is concerned about the environment of Tibet and talks about how the Chinese denuded the forests of Dromo and carted away centuries-old wood to China. She describes the serious impact it has had on the environment such as the melting of snow and rise in temperature.

Topics Discussed:

Childhood memories, farm life, environment/wildlife, life under Chinese rule, oppression under Chinese, Cultural Revolution, imprisonment, *thamzing*, brutality/torture, forced labor.

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Interview #56M

Interviewee: Kalsang Dolma [alias]

Age: 58, Sex: Female

Interviewer: Marcella Adamski

Interview Date: April 14, 2010

Question: Please tell us your name.

00:00:17

Interviewee #56M: Kalsang Dolma.

Q: His Holiness the Dalai Lama asked us to record your experiences, so that we can share your memories with many generations of Tibetans, the Chinese and the rest of the world. Your memories will help us to document the true history, culture and beliefs of the Tibetan people. Do you give your permission for the Tibet Oral History Project to use this interview?

#56M: Yes, you can use it.

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

00:01:18

#56M: [Nods]

Q: During this interview if you wish to take a break or stop at anytime, please let me know.

#56M: Okay.

Q: If you do not wish to answer a question or talk about something, let me know.

00:01:37

#56M: [Nods]

Q: If this interview was shown in Tibet or China, would this be a problem for you?

#56M: There will be no problem. You can show it.

Q: We are honored to record your story and appreciate your participation in the project.

00:01:59

#56M: [Nods]

Q: *Acha-la* 'respectful term for older sister,' can you please tell us what kind of work did your family do for a living?

#56M: When I was young, my father owned a horse cart in which he transported wood. He used to bring wood from the forests of Dromo and deliver it to the Chinese army camps. He also transported provisions for the Chinese. That was my father's work.

Q: When you were a little girl, say before 10 or 11, what kind of work were you doing?

00:03:08

#56M: When I was younger than 10, I cannot recall much, but the Chinese had started a makeshift school and I remember I was sent there for a short while. After I turned 12, 13 or 14, I have never seen any happiness. I did not get to live as a child.

Q: When you went to that school set up by the Chinese, can you remember what you were learning in school?

#56M: At that time, all the teachers in the school were Tibetans. We were taught the alphabet and a little arithmetic. Nothing else was taught since we were small.

Q: Can you describe? Was that a small class or a large group of children?

00:04:48

#56M: All the small children of Phari were sent there. I do not know how many children were there at that time. I did not know anything then.

Q: Did the Tibetan teachers teach math or did Chinese teachers come in for math?

#56M: They were the Tibetan teachers. All the teachers were Tibetans.

Q: Did the people of the area, did they have to pay to go to school or was the school without cost?

00:05:40

#56M: I do not know if they had to pay or not at that time but we used to be sent home to eat. We attended school and went home to eat and returned to school for the afternoon. I do not know if they had to pay or not, as I had no understanding then.

Q: What kind of food were you eating at that time as a child? Do you have any memory of that?

#56M: We mostly ate *pa* 'dough made from *tsampa* (flour made from roasted barley) and tea' in Tibet. Rice was very rare. After getting up in the morning, one ate *pa* or drank *chamdhu* 'gruel made by mixing *tsampa* and tea.' Lunch was *pa* and for dinner our parents cooked *thukpa* 'noodle soup.'

Q: Do you remember if the food was sufficient or were you hungry as a child?

00:07:06

#56M: When your parents are there, they provide their children with a full stomach. After that, I spent almost my whole life hungry.

Q: Do you have any memories at all of...when you think of yourself before the age of 10 or 11, any memories that you still hold in your mind?

#56M: The earlier times when my parents were there, those were like happy times. My parents took all the responsibilities. Those were somewhat happier times as my parents earned for our survival. I remember the times after the Chinese arrived, when there was no joy.

Q: You felt more secure [with parents].

#56M: Yes.

Q: It sounds like things began to happen—the Chinese were already there when you were a little girl. What do you remember about the Chinese when you were a little girl?

00:09:06

#56M: When I was a child, except for playing or attending school, I did not much notice the Chinese. I was living with my parents and playing. I did not particularly notice what the Chinese did. I did not notice them doing anything bad. I took no notice of the Chinese when my parents were there.

Q: When did you begin to take notice of the Chinese presence?

#56M: That was at the time of the great Cultural Revolution. That was during the great Cultural Revolution when the monasteries were destroyed. I was 15 years old and since then I have suffered, as both my parents were imprisoned.

Q: Is there a year, a date that you remember? What year was that for you, the Cultural Revolution began in your area?

00:10:38

#56M: I am 58 years old now.

Q: How old were you then?

#56M: I think I was 14 or 15 when my father was captured and taken to prison by the Chinese. The Cultural Revolution came into force earlier to that. It was enforced before my father was captured. I was perhaps 12 or 13 then, give or take a year.

Q: Can you tell us about what happened to you, say from 12 or 13 on when the revolution began? What happened to you or to your family?

00:11:27

#56M: This is what happened at that time. Soon after the great Cultural Revolution, my parents and siblings—we are five children including me and I am the oldest and the rest younger to me—were sleeping when at around midnight, without asking for the door to be opened, [the Chinese] kicked and broke the door. All of us children and parents were sleeping at home then.

At once Chinese soldiers and officials came in and told my father to get up. Father got up. I was older to the rest of the children and I thought that father might have stolen some kitchen articles that he had been transporting in his cart for the Chinese from Dromo. I thought my father was being arrested because he stole some things from the Chinese. When asked, my father said he had not stolen.

They told my father to get up. My mother asked them, "What wrong has my husband done? What has he done?" Those who had come to arrest my father replied, "Your husband has not learned his lessons. We are taking him to be educated." They took away father first. Then after sometime they told my mother, "You must come and watch if your husband has learned his lessons." My mother was taken away. Both my parents were taken away that night. I was 14 or 15 years old then and the youngest was 4. The five children were left alone. From then on, they were both imprisoned.

Q: What happened next?

00:14:14

#56M: Then my parents were in a sort of prison, a place in Phari itself. In the morning we had to take food to our parents, but we were children and could not locate our parents. About 22 people were taken to prison in one night. Someone's father was imprisoned and someone's mother was imprisoned and in our case, both our parents were imprisoned. At first we could not locate them and when we found them—it was not exactly in a prison. They were put in halls or school buildings. All their food must be supplied from home.

We kept taking food to them. We were children and the food and *tsampa* our parents had left, we took them to our parents. There was no one to work the animals. My father owned horses and we had cows. I was the oldest of the children and as a 14-15 year old, I could not work. We took all the food to our parents. Then there was no grass for the horses and no *tsampa* to make gruel for our parents.

Q: And then what happened?

00:16:26

#56M: My parents were imprisoned in Phari itself. My mother was in jail for four months, right in Phari itself. Then my mother was released. If she was not let out, there were the five children and animals at home. My mother was labeled *miming takung gyablo*. I do not know what it was but it meant she would have no freedom. She had no right to speak. Giving her the label *miming takung gyablo*, my mother was released.

Mother was released but father was still in prison in Phari. After she was released, I, being the oldest asked my mother what had happened. She said that they were taken into a room at night and beaten. She was beaten a great deal and at first she did not know the reason why she was being beaten. She had no idea why they [the Chinese] were beating her. Later they told her, "You are in the Dalai Clique. An organization has been formed. The Dalai Clique is assessing the army." They said whatever they felt like saying. She said she denied it, "I have not set fire to the mountains nor have I put poison in the waters. We are not forming an organization of the Dalai Clique." When she said this, she was beaten more. She said she was beaten ruthlessly.

After some time she admitted in desperation, "I belong to the Dalai Clique and we formed the organization." This lessened the beatings. They said, "You have admitted to your mistakes." Even though they [the prisoners] did not know anything, they accepted their faults and were spared the beatings. If they denied the charges, they were beaten mercilessly. They were beaten until they became unconscious. In the night, 10, 11 or 12 people were gathered to beat them. [My mother] told me that that's what had happened when she was locked up.

00:18:21

Mother was released after the beatings. The children had been alone at home and there was no one to do any of the work. There was no food left to take to father in the prison. All the food [for him] had to be brought from home. They [the Chinese] did not provide anything. There was no food to take to father. Then mother came home. I had just turned 16 years old then.

There was a small village nearby and since they were *samadok* 'farmers and herders,' they possessed more grains and meat. My mother sent me there with the carpets, ladles and all the more valuable household items saying, "Sell these for whatever you can get." I did not know where I had to go and mother sent me to sell these things. She told me to sell [exchange] them for anything I could get like bones, meat, fats. Without any food, father would die in prison. Then I went to sell the things. I have undergone such miseries.

Q: And then what happened?

#56M: Then after mother was released...

Q: You were sent to sell the things.

00:20:51

#56M: Yes, I was sent to sell the slightly valuable articles in the house like carpet, ladles and stuff. I was instructed to bring whatever I could get in exchange for them, whether it was hay for the animals or bones or whatever. If we could not [exchange] these for something, there was no food to take to prison as well as for the children at home. There was no hay for the animals. Everything was exhausted. Then I returned after selling the items. My father was interned in Phari for about two months. After their arrest, I think my parents were together in Phari for half a month and then father was sent to Nyari Prison in Shigatse.

Meanwhile mother and we were labeled *mimang takung gyablo*. When we did some field work, though we worked hard, we were apportioned the worst part. They did not give us the full [wage], whether it was my mother or I who got the job done, the worst job.

Q: You mean the most difficult job?

#56M: We got the difficult job but we performed it like all the others. However, we were given the least payment. They did not give us the full wage on account of our being *mimang takung gyablo*, who do not have any freedom and any rights. That was one. And if an animal ate our grass, we were not permitted to chase the animal away. If we hit the animal, we would get beaten. Being *mimang takung gyablo*, our family was deprived of our freedom.

Q: Whose animals, animals belonging to others?

00:22:23

#56M: They could be animals belonging to others or our own animals that ate the crops. We could not chase them away by hurling a stone, as we were a family of the Dalai Clique. Such was the misery heaped upon us.

Q: Continue.

#56M: Before my father was sent to Shigatse, he was subjected to *thamzing* 'struggle session,' in the local area. He was beaten every night, because in the morning when we took him food and a change of clothes which we'd patched up, within two days his clothes were in tatters as if he had been pulled apart by dogs! I do not know where they took him to be beaten in the night. All the tattered clothes would be sent to us.

Then there was the *thamzing*, during which I think there were 15 or 16 people [prisoners] who were made to stoop [indicates "in a row" with hand]. There was a paper this long [shows a length of two feet] on which the Chinese had written the crimes that they [the prisoners] had admitted to. They were made to stoop.

If it was my father's [turn to be denounced] that day, they read out all that he had done and his admission to those offense. All the untruths that they had written were read out. Some [of the crimes listed] were throwing poison in the water, assessing the army strength and planning to destroy bridges. All such untruths were written down by the Chinese, which they said had been admitted to by them [the prisoners] and from thence, they were sent to Shigatse.

00:24:42

Initially they were subjected to *thamzing* and beatings in the local area. They were labeled as "Dalai Clique" and beaten for that. After this was accepted, they [the Chinese] said that the rebels have accepted their crimes. They fabricated all these things. In reality, they had never done such things. When we could not earn a decent livelihood, how would we become

rebels? We were labeled “Dalai Clique” by them after the great Cultural Revolution, during which many people were arrested, imprisoned and beaten.

I was told that they [father and mother] received more punishment compared to those who were captured before the Cultural Revolution because the Chinese had just arrived at that time and the accusation pertained to not having learned their lesson [not acting according to Chinese dicta]. The latter ones were those that were said to have done such things despite knowing their lessons, which was why [those captured] during the period my father and mother were arrested received more severe beatings. They were thrashed so much that some suffered broken ribs. Some women, during the *thamzing* were pulled by their braided hair, which came off along with a bit of their scalp. Such *thamzing* were carried out in the night.

Q: Then what happened after that?

00:27:25

#56M: After that my father was first sent to Karkhang in Shigatse. My younger sister went to Karkhang to see him once. I have not been there; I had never been outside Phari. When she went to meet him, she said she was not allowed to meet him in the prison. She was sent with a few clothes and some *tsampa* for father at Shigatse. She was the one younger to me. She could not meet father as she was not allowed to. From Karkhang, father was sent to Nyari where mother went to meet him once.

I heard that at Nyari, the prisoners were supplied with a mug—you know the Chinese mug—of *tsampa* and a mug of black tea. They were made to work in the stone quarry. However, they were not beaten there. They were forced to work but unlike when they were at the local area, they did not have to endure any beatings. Once they were in the proper prisons at Karkhang and Nyari, they were not subjected to beatings, but they were forced to do a huge amount of work. They were made to work in the quarry cutting out piles of stones. My father was forced to work there when my mother went to meet him. She was able to meet him and take him some food. As for me, I never saw my father again after my 14th or 15th year as I came to India.

Q: And then?

00:29:43

#56M: My father was sent away and my mother strived exceptionally hard to bring up the five children. I was the oldest but I could not bear any responsibility. However much we worked, we were given the least marks. The Chinese would not sell grains beyond a certain limit. There were no grains in the region. Phari is so cold that crops do not grow there. Compared to the standard measurement in India, a very strong man received 15 kilograms while children who could not work received only a quarter of that. Children could not work but they had a good appetite, so we did not have enough to eat. My mother faced the greatest difficulty because she had to care for father as well as the children. Though my mother worked the whole day, being labeled as “Dalai Clique,” the Chinese paid my mother only half the wage a regular person received.

Q: What is the Dalai Lama's group?

#56M: The family was called Dalai Clique, the rebel family. We were deprived of our rights. We did not receive payments when we worked. Even if we worked on par with the others, we received the lowest wage. We were deprived the right to speech. We could not speak up to them [the Chinese] because they told us we did not have the right to speak. The family was labeled “Dalai Clique,” the rebel family. Once the label was given, we were helpless.

Q: What made people to be considered a rebel family?

00:32:44

#56M: Initially when the process of Revolution of Democracy began, I was just a child then [but I heard] they [the Chinese] categorized the families into the wealthy class, the middle class and the leadership class. That was long ago when the Chinese first appeared. I was a child at that time. These categorized people were also subjected to difficulties.

Later, after the great Cultural Revolution, they coined a new name called Dalai Clique, rebel family. These families were arrested but everything depended on their [the Chinese] whim. If they were not satisfied, they just gave a new name to the family. I was a child then and did not notice much. My family was called Dalai Clique, rebel family. Except for working, we did not have any freedom. They gave us that name and reduced our family [to that situation].

Q: Please continue and tell us what happens to your family?

#56M: Then I grew up a bit and I took the responsibility of my father. I worked in the fields, helped my mother and sort of, took the responsibility of a father. The younger ones were not quite big. However much I worked, I only received a quarter of the wages at that time. Once someone became a classified person, whatever work you did, you had no right. We did not have any freedom, how ever much we worked. We received the least wage and we had to accomplish any work that people refused to do. They classified [the people] and made us suffer.

Q: Can you tell us what kind of work you were made to do?

00:35:50

#56M: After I grew up and when I was about 16-17, the main work I did was transport wood to the Chinese army camps, when they cut trees for two or three months.

Q: Was it firewood?

#56M: Yes, it was firewood for the Chinese from the forest. All those in the region, who owned animals and who were capable could cut trees and transport the wood on their animals to the Chinese army camp. This [the wood] was weighed and they gave you the payment according to the weight. I did that kind of work. I cut the trees myself and sought help in loading them on the horses. That was one way I earned a livelihood along with my

mother. I performed the duties of a boy like transporting wood and plowing the field. I plowed with the help of horses and oxen innumerable times. There was no father and no brothers in the home and I did all the jobs of a man. I went to pick medicinal plants, cut wood and transported them.

Q: What did you say about the medicinal plants?

00:37:08

#56M: We used to pick medicinal plants in Tibet. There was one medicinal plant called *tseka* which we picked in the mountains. We picked the medicinal plants and sold them to the Chinese. So this was what I did after I grew up, helping my mother and taking the responsibility of my father.

Q: Can you tell us about the other people in the village? Were they all considered rebels or was there a difference in how you were treated and how did they treat you?

#56M: In that year, over 20 people were captured that very night by the Chinese, calling them rebel families. We were children and when the door was broken and our parents were taken away, we looked out. The next morning when day broke, we heard someone say "My father was captured." and another "My mother was captured." In that way over 20 people had been arrested. They were all called as rebel families or Dalai Clique—all those families in Phari who were captured. Mothers were arrested in some families, which included pregnant women and they delivered in the prison. I was a child then.

Among those families in Phari, there was one family whose parents were arrested and their two daughters were left alone and in my home we were five children left behind, while in the rest of the cases, it was either a father or a mother who was captured. It was only two families where both parents were taken away. They were my family and the other one.

Q: What about the people who were not rebels? Can you tell us how they treated you or how they were treated? How they interacted in the village?

00:40:58

#56M: There was a group called *rokrey*. The Chinese called it *rokrey* and it was a group where its members helped each other. Our family was in this group. If I worked with a non-member of this group, if the non-member was being paid one *rupee*, I would be paid half of that, irrespective of the work load; I had fewer rights.

If the other person said something wrong, we had no right to tell them. We did not have the right to point out their mistakes. In case we did speak about it, we would be told that we belonged to a rebel family, the Dalai Clique and did not have the right to speak so. Even if you were in the right, you had to endure what the other said, whether it was good or bad. The rebel family must endure whatever the other person said. We did not have the right to argue or tell him so.

Q: How did those families treat the families like yours?

#56M: They treated all families equally.

Q: Those families that were not the rebel families, how did they treat the rebel families?

00:42:17

#56M: There were some who were exceptionally good. There were some, perhaps they were flattering the Chinese, perhaps they had to, and these were the ones who did the *thamzing*. I think the Chinese themselves did not come out in front and do the beatings. I believe there were families who flattered the Chinese and they were the ones that carried out the beatings on my mother. However, it is not possible that every family was bad.

Q: What was the difference between...what distinguished the rebel group from the other group? Why did the Chinese select one group as rebel and one group as allies?

#56M: As I recall, I can see that all those families who were captured, were those families that had a name like Tsarong, Gapshi, Phala. They [the Chinese] arrested those families that possessed a name. Families that did not have a name, we call them *phepa* or *dhuechung* in Tibet, were not arrested. As I understand now, it was those families that possessed names that were mostly captured.

Q: Wealthy?

00:44:13

#56M: It was wealth as well as the family name. Initially they [the Chinese] had implemented the Revolution of Democracy, during which all the wealth had already been distributed. Then they [the families] were labeled “Dalai Clique” and a father or a mother was taken away. I can see that all those captured were from families with names. [Rich] families in Tibet possessed names.

Q: Your own family, were they considered middle class in your opinion or very rich because you said you owned a farm and your father did some transportation with a cart. So is this what made you a rich family?

#56M: No, my family was not a rich family. My father and his older brother lost their parents when they were very young. So they were sent to become monks. Ours was not a rich family at all. My father and mother were *phepa* or poor families. However, [my father] had been a monk and the Chinese labeled us. There was no rhyme or reason because if they [the Chinese] did not like [someone] they captured him. That was how it happened.

Q: Can you tell us more about how your family continued to survive and where were they living in your house? Were they still in the house? What else happened in terms of survival?

00:47:00

#56M: My parents owned a small house since long and that's where we lived. We did not live anywhere else. That was in Phari.

Q: What other work did you engage in?

#56M: Until I left for India, I engaged in—during winter the Chinese allowed people to cut wood in Dromo for a month for our livelihood. For a month they cut trees and we could transport them and sell them, which brought us some money. During summer, I went to pick medicinal plants. We picked medicinal plants from the mountains and sold them to the Chinese to earn an income. We earned a living transporting wood, picking medicinal plants and gathering dung.

Q: Cow's dung?

00:48:03

#56M: Yes, we searched for cow dung.

Q: Did you have land?

#56M: Yes, we did but it was very cold in Phari that one cannot reap good grains. Due to the severe cold, the crops froze and could not mature. The Chinese distributed 15 kilograms of grains. There was hardly any harvest in Phari. Everything froze in the region and crops did not grow.

Q: So before the Chinese took over your home, you hadn't been doing farming at all?

00:49:23

#56M: Before the Chinese arrived, *jangpa* used to be grown in Phari. The seeds were sown and since the barley could not mature, the plant was cut. The older people used to say that traders arrived there with their horses. So the crop, which does not yield grains, was sold as fodder for the animals. After their arrival, the Chinese forced us to grow barley. Around midnight when the sky was blue and there was fear of the crops freezing, they made us light a fire to cover [the field] with smoke. That happened during the period I was growing up. That was in order to prevent freezing but it froze anyway and grains did not form due to the intensity of the cold in the region.

Before the arrival of the Chinese, I heard that the plants were cut when they were green and sold to the traders for their horses. That's what the older people used to say. Once the Chinese arrived, they made us grow grains saying that there were not sufficient grains. The sweetish type of grain had to be harvested according to the Chinese. Then this was weighed and depending on the quantity, it had to last a certain number of months and we had to consume it, irrespective of whether it tasted well or not. It was impossible to eat it. It was bright red in color and impossible to eat. This was added onto the portion of grains we were entitled to. That was when I was growing up. The Chinese forced the people to consume the grain, whether one could or could not.

Earlier the *jangpa* was cut and sold for the horses. After the Chinese arrived, the half-formed grains were removed and added to the grain allotment.

Q: Had you ever grown this kind of crop before, of barley?

#56M: In the olden days in Phari, before the Chinese arrived, it was only *jangpa* that used to be grown. That's what the older people would say. The barley seeds were sown and when the *jangpa* grew tall, they were cut and sold [as fodder] for the horses. I heard grains never grew in the region. They froze because of the cold climate.

Once the Chinese arrived, they forced the people to grow grains. It was a type of small red grain and did not grow fully, due to the frost. The Chinese made sure that the people ate what they grew. That was when I was growing up. Earlier they never used to cultivate barley nor did barley grains grow in Phari.

Q: And *jangpa* is not barley?

00:53:19

#56M: *Jangpa* is the same grain. It is barley. However, it was [used as] grass for the horses and other animals. They used to grow *pekang*. [To interpreter] You know *pekang*?

Q: For oil?

#56M: For extraction of oil. They used to grow that. But *pekang* too did not grow [into maturity]. It was grown along with the *jangpa* for the animals.

Q: If the townspeople did not eat the barley before the Chinese, what was the major source of food in the area?

00:54:30

#56M: The older people used to say that traders converged in Phari from India, Bhutan and Tibet. Phari was located centrally and was a trading point. So the *jangpa* was sold to those who brought animals. Horses and donkeys were used in transportation those days in Tibet. The *jangpa* and *pekang* plants were cut and sold to them [the traders] and they traded their wares in Phari. That was how the people used to earn a livelihood. The older people used to say that. [Phari] was a trading center.

Q: If the people in Phari did not eat the barley, what did they eat for their major grains? Were they getting grains from the traders?

#56M: Barley was brought to Phari from the Tibet side—from Gyangtse and Shigatse where I think crops grew better. It [the distribution of grain] was like this. A strong man received a share of 15 kilograms per month. That was sold at the Chinese shop and you could not buy more if you wished. [People were] issued a grain pass, in which it was recorded that an adult could receive 15 kilograms and a child half of that. That was not enough to fill one's stomach. If you made *tsampa* at the beginning of the month, you did not have enough *tsampa* left to eat at the end of the month. The region did not produce enough grains to sustain the people.

The Chinese brought [the barley] from Tibet and sold at a share of 15 kilograms, according to the weight measurement used here. In Tibet that was 30 *gyama*. The Chinese sold it but you could not buy more if you wished to. In those good old days when [Phari] was a trading

center, they were brought from Bhutan, from India, from Tibet and from everywhere. Later there was no trading at all. Except for what you bought at the Chinese store, whether it was enough to fill you up or not, that was it.

Q: If you were considered a rebel in town along with these 20 other families, were the people who were poor and who inherited the properties, were they allowed to talk to you?

00:59:01

#56M: These [poor] people were gathered by the Chinese in the night to conduct *thamzing*. The *thamzing* was not conducted in front of a collection of people. [The Chinese] called 10-11 [poor] people in the night into a room like this and these people conducted the *thamzing*. They were brought especially for this purpose. Perhaps these were people who liked the Chinese. They were the ones who did the beatings. The [prisoners] were not taken to public meetings to be beaten. They brought a group of people who was responsible for conducting the *thamzing*. They were a few Tibetans whom the Chinese took along.

Q: And it was the same 10 or 11 people?

#56M: Yes, they were taken along to beat [the prisoners]. These [beating sessions] were always conducted in the night. They [the prisoners] were called at night, enclosed in a room like this [points to interview room] and charged of various offences. Then they were beaten there. They were not taken to be beaten in view of the public. The beatings happened at night.

Q: Did you ever witness any of these with your own eyes?

01:00:52

#56M: There was a father of a somewhat wealthy family. He was subjected to the *dakpoe thamzing*. *Dakpoe thamzing* was when [the prisoner] was brought in view of the public. I was a child then. A group of 10-15 people were brought in and he was beaten in front of the public. Some people pulled him by the cheek, some pulled him by his ears and some kicked him. This man had a *ba* near his ear [points near right ear], but I was a child and did not know about that.

Q: What's a *ba*?

#56M: He had a growth here [points near ear]. When his ear was pulled for a long while, blood gushed out. I thought that his ear was torn off. But it was not, it was the growth. *Dakpoe thamzing* was when one is brought to be beaten in full view of the public.

Q: Did the struggle sessions stop after you were a child or did they continue?

01:02:44

#56M: During that struggle session, two people [prisoners] were brought there. If 20-22 people had been captured, they brought two people to be subjected to *dakpoe thamzing*. [The Chinese] brought that father and a woman [that day]. [The Chinese] said that the woman was to undergo *shiway thamzing* and that she was not to be beaten. They said she

could not be beaten because she was pregnant. So, it was the *shway thamzing* for her and she could not be beaten.

The father was subjected to *dakpoe thamzing*. *Dakpoe thamzing* meant that [the prisoner] could be beaten. So, the people pulled his hair, kicked him and beat him a great deal. The woman was not allowed to be beaten because she was to undergo *shway thamzing*. These two people were brought there. However, the *thamzing* session did not continue the whole day. The session went on for an hour or two during which they were subjected to *thamzing*, made to admit [their crimes] and interrogated. After an hour or two, they were taken away and I suppose, locked up.

I heard that the worst was being subjected to the thrashing at night. Being beaten at night by 10-11 people was the worst, because the beatings were intense. [The Chinese] did not allow them to be beaten to that extent in view of the public.

Q: And so the *dakpoe thamzing*...did you see this man being beaten? Was he the one who was bleeding from the ear?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Yes, that is right.

Q: Do you know what he was being accused of? What his crimes were?

01:04:44

#56M: His crimes were the same as my father's. He was one of those labeled “Dalai Clique” and accused of crimes like poisoning the water, planning to set fire to the mountains, assessing the strength of the army and all such fabrications. The Chinese made up these charges and wrote them down on paper. They charged him of having committed them and made it serious enough for him to be imprisoned. They [the Chinese] created these [charges] and had given him a name. They charged him of plotting to poison the waters, taking the responsibility of assessing the army strength, planning to set fire to the mountains, and made the crimes so serious that he needed to be subjected to *dakpoe thamzing*. The Chinese fabricated these and they [the prisoners] had no rights. Though he had not committed them, he was forced to admit to all the charges made up by the Chinese.

Q: Two of these crimes, I wonder if you could explain. What did they mean by poisoning the water and setting fire? What was the basis for that? Was there water that was poisoned and had there been fires that had occurred?

#56M: Such things did not happen. It had never happened. The Chinese did not have any crimes to charge him of, after they had arrested a person. They had to give a reason and accuse him of having done something. So they made a list of these charges and had them accepted [by the prisoner]. Then they could say that the prisoner had committed such serious crimes. They fabricated them as such things never happened in the region. Tibetans would never poison the waters or set fire to the mountains. The Chinese just made up these names [charges]. Then they said that [the prisoner] had admitted to these charges.

Q: You mentioned two kinds of *thamzing*, the *dakpoe thamzing* and the *shway thamzing*. What was the *shway* type?

01:07:47

#56M: [The prisoner] was not allowed to be beaten during a *shway thamzing*. He could not be beaten in any way. He was questioned orally, but he could not be beaten during a *shway thamzing*. That's what the Chinese said.

Q: When they took them at night, was that the *shway thamzing*?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: No. The *shway* and the *dakpoe thamzing* occurred in the public, while the prisoners said that the beatings that they underwent in the night were the worst.

Q: Did you know any of these poor people?

#56M: I do not know them. They were brought at night. My mother had been in prison and she told me that 11-12 people were brought in. The prisoners would be all sitting in a room. Whoever was to be subjected to *thamzing* that night was not called out, instead he was either pulled by the hair or kicked and dragged away to the place where he was to be beaten and subjected to *thamzing*. After the *thamzing* was over, he was dragged back unconscious and dumped in his sleeping area. My mother was there and she told me about it.

My grandmother was also arrested that same night. My grandmother was subjected to *thamzing* and the bone near her bottom was broken due to the kicks she suffered.

Q: Where?

01:09:39

#56M: Here [points to area behind the hip], she was kicked here and the bone broke. Later in the prison, the bone was jutting out. She was kicked on the behind during a *thamzing* session. The night beatings were more intense. Ribs were broken and hair was pulled out. The beatings during the public gathering were less intense.

Q: Was your grandmother living in the same town?

#56M: Yes, my grandmother lived in Phari. Her arrest also happened on the same night.

Q: As your mother?

01:11:13

#56M: Yes, they were arrested the same night.

Q: Did your grandmother recover?

#56M: My grandmother was not well when she was released. She was old. She was around 70 when she was captured. She was captured during her old age. She was my father's...she

was my grandmother. My mother told me that she [grandmother] was dragged away [to be beaten] and then they brought her back like a corpse after the *thamzing* session. Later it was found that she had been kicked on the buttock and her bone was broken. She was old and was released later. She was thrashed.

Actually none of those who had been in prison at that time enjoyed good health; some had their ribs broken, some had the bones at the back broken, some had their braided hair pulled out, some had their ears pulled until they almost came off. [I] heard they'd been beaten excessively at that time. They [the prisoners] were not beaten that much during the public [*thamzing*].

01:12:44

Q: The day she was to be beaten...

[Interpreter to interviewer]: The night she was to be beaten...

[Interviewer to interpreter]: So the night she was to be beaten, what happened?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: She was dragged out of the room and when they brought her in, she was almost dead.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: So did they beat her there?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: You mean...

[Interviewer to interpreter]: She was dragged out from the room where she had been beaten?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: No, all the prisoners lived in a cell. She was dragged out, taken to another room and beaten up. The prisoners didn't see her being beaten but when the grandmother was brought in, she was half dead, I mean almost dead.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: Almost dead after the beating.

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Yes.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: And never fully recovered.

Q: Was that your mother's mother or your father's mother?

#56M: We used to call her *momo* 'grandmother.' Actually my father's mother and this *momo* were sisters. We used to call her *momo*.

Q: You also mentioned stories of women's braids being pulled so hard, they were ripped off their scalp. Did you ever see that with your own eyes or did your mother tell you? And how do you pull out so much hair one time?

#56M: That had happened during the night [beatings] and my mother told me about it. She told us how the beatings were conducted. In the public gatherings, such beatings and ripping off braids did not occur. Those happened in the night.

Q: Did you ever see a woman whose hair had been ripped out, her braid?

01:14:55

#56M: I did not see it but my mother told me about it. She said such things occurred in the prison. There was a family called Rading. The lady of the house was called Rading Sadon-la. She was captured at the same time as my mother that night. All the women were interned in one room and the men in another. The women were together and when she was brought in after the *thamzing* session, [mother] said that her braided hair had been ripped off and there was no braided hair there [touches right side of head]. It was pulled off and she was beaten.

Q: During this time, were your brothers and sisters going to school or were they working?

#56M: The sibling younger to me attended school. The school in Phari had classes until 5th grade and taught only Tibetan. She studied until the 5th grade. The one younger to her might have studied up to grade 2 or 3. The school in the region had classes only until 5th grade and after I left, my younger siblings might have passed that grade. After I reached here, I heard that the youngest was sent to a school in China. When I was there, they did not attend school very much. My younger siblings had not completed high school.

Q: With this disturbances going on in the town, what was your feeling in your heart? You are a young girl and what are you feeling? What are you thinking about your life situation—16,17,18,19, what are you feeling?

01:17:48

#56M: I did not understand much at that time. When the great Cultural Revolution and the destruction during the *lha-dey dhonkhay* 'chasing out deities and spirits' were going on, I was a child then and I used to wish I could see His Holiness the Dalai Lama in the sky. Even though I was a child, when the sky was blue, I used to wish that I could see His Holiness in the clouds. I used to feel that even as a child. I wished I could see His Holiness. I wished there was a miracle in the sky. Other than that, I did not think anything.

Q: And why would that be a miracle for you? I mean why would that be important to see His Holiness in the sky?

#56M: We were subjected to so much suffering that I wished in my heart that His Holiness would come in the clouds and show that to the Chinese. [Emotional] I was very anxious. I was a child and it was a child's thought.

Q: And what would you like him to show to the Chinese?

01:19:51

#56M: If the Chinese saw that [His Holiness in the sky] they would be surprised and realize that the Tibetans have something to show. That was what I felt at that time. I was anxious and thought like a child. Other than that, I did not wonder anything. Whenever the sky was blue, this thought came into me.

Q: What would it show them about the Tibetans?

#56M: I was a child and I thought if we could show them that [His Holiness in the sky]! Of course, the Chinese would think nothing of it, but when I went to work in the mountains and saw the blue sky, I used to wish His Holiness would appear in the sky and show them something. I used to think like this when I lived in Phari.

Q: But you were more than a child when you were 19, 20, 21. So what gave you courage to go on?

01:21:36

#56M: We were subjected to misery after misery. We could not err even in speech. At one time, the Phari *chue* was being constructed.

Q: What is *chue* construction?

#56M: That meant the office; the construction of an office for the officials in Phari. It used to be called as Phari *chue* in Chinese language. The office was being constructed and we were given the task. We were not even allowed to speak. In Tibet, foundation stones have different names, like *sordho*, *chapla* and various other names. I was a child and did not know it. So I once said carelessly, "The Phari *chue*'s foundation needs everything. It needs a horse's head and a man's head." Oh my, the Chinese almost subjected me to *thamzing*, even though I was young.

Q: Why did it need a horse's head and a man's head?

01:22:46

#56M: The stones have different names and I said that carelessly as a child. I had remarked, "The Phari *chue* needs too many things. It needs a horse's head, a man's head and many other things for the foundation." They [the Chinese] said, "Such things are not done these days. Who is selling a horse's head and a man's head? In the olden days, under the old system, such were done when monasteries were built. People were killed and their heads buried [under the monastery foundations]. These days nobody does that." I was scolded and just about escaped *thamzing*.

When I was young, I never had any courage nor did I think that I should do this or do that. That was because the region was secluded and there were no [opportunities] at that time, during the great Cultural Revolution. There were no opportunities.

Q: And what about your mother? Can you tell us how she was doing?

#56M: My mother was well at that time. Though the Chinese subjected her to a lot of *thamzing*, she was relatively fine. After my mother was released, she and I strived for the family.

Q: Were traders still coming to your town from Bhutan and India and other places? If they were, were you allowed to interact with them?

01:25:38

#56M: They did not come, never at all. After the appearance of the Chinese, traders from Bhutan or...did not come. During those glorious days of Tibet, traders used to arrive from Bhutan and India. After the Chinese' arrival, there was no trade from Bhutan and no trade from India, never at all. The Chinese had blocked the borders.

Q: Because they had closed the borders...Let me restate it. Was there any thought in your head and in your mother's head about escaping since you were very close to the border?

#56M: For my mother to escape, my father was in the prison at Shigatse. [She] could not escape leaving father there. I had reached India by then and after father was released, they planned to escape. They felt that since I was in India, they should not stay back. However, the Chinese ordered the sister younger to me to take up the job of preparing medicine at the Medical Center in Shigatse. So they could not manage to escape.

Q: Did you get to see your father at all when he was in Shigatse prison?

01:28:01

#56M: No, I never met my father. I have not set eyes on my father since I was 15 or 16 years old. Since the time he was taken to Shigatse, I never saw my father to date and now he has passed away. It has been four or five years since my father passed away. My mother has also passed away. I did not see anyone.

Q: Is there anything else that you would like to tell us about your life at that time in your town from the time you were 16 to 23? Is there anything else that we should understand about the conditions, about the people, about families?

#56M: From the age of 16 to?

Q: Until 23.

01:29:36

#56M: Those were the difficult times that I told you about. As I lived in an isolated region, I spent my life looking for cow dung, picking medicinal plants and such. I had not been to nor seen any cities. I lived in that isolated place. So I cut wood for the Chinese, picked medicinal plants and immersed myself in work and nothing else.

Q: Can you describe how your family decided to escape? Is that something you feel free to talk about?

#56M: I would rather not speak about that.

Q: That's fine. Maybe we can ask a few things about...What do you think people should know about Tibet? Do you have any thoughts if they understand about your country, what would you like people to know about Tibet?

01:31:35

#56M: You mean to [the people in] Tibet?

[Question is repeated.]

#56M: You mean to the present generation?

Q: To anyone.

#56M: I do not know what is good to talk to today's children. I do not have any experience or education.

Q: What do you hope will be preserved about Tibet for your children or children's children?

01:32:22

#56M: We should preserve the good behavior of the Tibetans. The children of today hardly have good behavior. Earlier, we respected the old people. For example, in my region we always addressed the elders by [terms like] *acha* 'older sister,' *chocho* 'older brother,' *po-la* 'respectful term for grandfather,' or *mo-la* 'respectful term for grandmother.' It is important to retain that, the good behavior of Tibetans. That culture has been prevalent in Tibet since long ago.

Q: It's very important that they respect the elders. Anything else?

#56M: When I think about it, though I am not educated, but when I watch television these days the climate is getting hotter and the snow is melting. When they talk about that on the television, my main concern is that if the snow melts and the climate becomes hotter, the water supply will be exhausted. Once the snow melts, there will be no water. If people do not have water, there will be problems. Sometimes I feel very disturbed about such things.

There used to be a lot of snow in Tibet in the early days. Now the snow is melting. The Chinese have cut innumerable forests. I heard that long ago in the region of Dromo, one could not see the sky [due to the dense forests]. Now all these forests have been cut and one can see the barren mountains. I think it is due to the excessive deforestation that the region has become hotter. [I fear] that later there will be water problems. [I am concerned] for the environment. That is my opinion.

Q: When you were a girl, were the conditions very serene and was the environment good? And then from the time you were a little girl until you were 23, did you see changes in the environment where you lived?

01:35:40

#56M: Since the time I was 16-23, the Chinese denuded the region of trees. The Chinese cut all the trees. I saw this during my time. The mountains were denuded of trees except at the very top where the Chinese could not ascend. Roads were constructed and truckloads of wood from different regions were carted away. I saw many mountains denuded of trees in Dromo. Not only was the region of Dromo stripped bare, but they constructed a new road leading to another region and that region was rendered barren, too.

I never thought about it when I lived there [in Tibet] that deforestation caused problems. When I think about it here, such a huge number of trees were cut in Tibet and if it rained a lot, the region is in danger of being washed away because it has been laid bare. The Chinese cut the trees and took them away in trucks. The trees in Tibet were many years old. They must be thousands or a hundred or two hundred years old. The trees were huge. They were cut and taken away. The mountains of the region were laid bare.

When I think about it now, that would have had a big impact upon the environment. It is only now that I understand. Earlier I had no knowledge. Of course, there is no way the Chinese would bring progress, except making [the country] bare.

Q: What do you think should be done to help Tibet?

#56M: In my opinion, even to this day I feel a great loss for the trees that were cut and taken away. If we plant a tree in the future, in how many years can they grow to be like that? In general, we need help with schools, hospitals, for the environment and everything in Tibet. Most important is the environment, the forests, without which it is a difficult situation for people. I see these on the television and I feel a great loss for what the Chinese have done.

When I lived there, I did not know it. The Chinese were so powerful and if they ordered "cut" it was cut. The Tibetans have not been able to preserve [the environment] earlier by voicing our dissent and I think that has been a great loss for us. At that time we did not have the power to say so. What a great loss it has been when trees that are thousands of years old were cut. I feel such a great loss.

Q: Are you aware of any changes in the [wild] animal population?

01:39:52

#56M: In our region of Phari, there were no wild animals like tigers, leopards and bears because of the severe cold. When there were no wild animals except deer and fox, I suppose the Chinese killed these animals near the forests. Due to the intense cold, there were no other wild animals in Phari.

Q: What thoughts and feelings do you have about the Chinese, given what your family has gone through?

#56M: I feel very strongly against the Chinese [laughs], but there is nothing I can do about it. I have suffered so much under them that when my parents, when they were alive asked

me to visit them, I dare not go, for fear that they would face problems. Even now, I dare not telephone them [siblings] for fear that they will face problems. I have suffered terribly at the hands of the Chinese. They [the Chinese] are blatant liars.

Q: The last thing I wanted to ask you is, when you had the wish of seeing His Holiness in the blue sky, can you tell us, why is His Holiness so special to you?

01:42:16

#56M: I was being self-centered but that was because of the great suffering. The Chinese were causing misery to my parents and everyone. Our family was facing problems with our livelihood and when I was alone working on the mountains, I felt that way. I wished there was a miracle and if His Holiness the Dalai Lama could be seen, what would the Chinese do? It was like a story that came into my mind. I always thought of that when I was working and the sky was blue—of seeing His Holiness in the sky. If the Chinese could see that what would they do, I wondered. Actually that was a desperate wish from the result of immense suffering.

Q: Today, what does His Holiness the Dalai Lama mean to you? What does he represent to you?

#56M: My parents used to tell me in Tibet that he is our king and he is the Chenrezig 'Avalokitesvara, the patron saint of Tibet' in flesh to whom we can seek refuge. I remember my parents telling me that everything is in his hands and that he is our root guru and the Chenrezig in flesh. Today, for me I have no one but His Holiness to pray to. He is the manifestation of the Chenrezig.

Q: Before we conclude, I want to say I thank you very much for your interview and I wanted to know, what was it like to take time today and review your history? How was this experience for you today?

01:45:02

#56M: It has been very good.

Q: Do you think it is important for Tibetans to record the accounts of their lives and what they have seen and why is it important?

#56M: Yes, I think it is important. In the early times, we could not see or hear them [the testimonials]. However, these days one can listen to the U.S. news about the life experiences of people and about the confrontation with the Chinese in Tibet in 1959. Listening to such stories stirs our hearts to know that this man has done so much; this man had left his mark and done so much. Then we realize that these testimonials are so important.

Q: Just to review this because we have covered so much, if this interview were shown in Tibet or China, would this be a problem for you?

01:46:45

#56M: There will be no problem because [I have spoken] the truth.

Q: Thank you for sharing your story with us.

#56M: [Nods] Okay.

END OF INTERVIEW