

Tibet Oral History Project

Interview #60 – Samdup
June 28, 2007

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TIBET ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
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INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

1. Interview Number: #60
2. Interviewee: Samdup
3. Age: 77
4. Date of Birth: 1930
5. Sex: Male
6. Birthplace: Gyashing
7. Province: Utsang
8. Year of leaving Tibet: 1960
9. Date of Interview: June 28, 2007
10. Place of Interview: House No. 37, Old Camp No. 4, Lugsung Samdupling Settlement, Bylakuppe, Mysore District, Karnataka, India
11. Length of Interview: 2 hr 5 min
12. Interviewer: Rebecca Novick
13. Interpreter: Tsering Dorjee
14. Videographer: Ronny Novick
15. Transcriber: Tenzin Yangchen



Biographical Information:

Samdup gives a vivid account of his early idyllic life in Porang, a land surrounded by Tibet's snow-capped Himalayas. The traditions in Porang differed somewhat from the rest of Tibet, such as celebrating *Losar*, the Tibetan New Year, two months ahead of the official date. The celebrations lasted for many days with Tibetans from the whole district coming together for songs, dances and horse races.

Samdup recites a story that has been passed orally from generation to generation about the Khochar Jowo. It is the tale of how the Jowo [icons] of Jamphelyang, Chenrezig and Chakna Dorji were created. Samdup also describes the custom in his region of sky burials—leaving the corpses to be eaten by vultures.

When the Chinese arrived in Porang, they labeled Samdup a rebel because he worked for the monastery. Fearing capture, his family fled from their village, hiding some of their possessions with the hope that they would return to Tibet in a year or two.

Topics Discussed:

Trade, yak/sheep herding, religious festivals, first appearance of Chinese, life as a refugee in India.

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Age: 77, Sex: Male

Interviewer: Rebecca Novick

Interview Date: June 28, 2007

[Questions are asked by either interviewer or interpreter. In Interview #60, the interviewer directs questions to the interpreter, who then asks the questions of the interviewee.]

Question: First of all, I'd like to ask him about his district, his region. We are very interested in what life was like in Tibet before the Chinese came, particularly for the young generation of Tibetans to understand what that was like and for anyone else who wants to know what Tibet was like before the Chinese occupation. We are very interested in this kind of aspect of his story.

Interviewee #60: Okay.

Q: First of all, can he tell us where is Porang?

#60: In the west of Porang is India across a mountain pass. You can see the range of snow-capped Himalayan Mountains. There are around 13 mountains. To the south is Nepal and to the east is a range of snow-capped mountains and a lake. There are seven or eight mountains and I have been there. Toe Porang is a vast region.

Q: He has been to Nepal around eight times?

#60: The route we took on our business trips was over those mountains. The mountain passes were never blocked for long durations throughout the entire year. We could see the tents of the Indians who came to Beri Thang for business. From the 5th Tibetan month to the 10th, the Indian businessmen remained in Tibet, in Porang. From Bumlo in Nepal, the businessmen came around the 11th month. The closest mountain pass is called Kyangla and the one nearest to our region is called Jang Laoche. Then there is Kotela, Shaola, Nyidhila, Kyonamla, Kyatoela, there are a host of mountain passes you can cross.

Q: Did he go eight times on business trips to Nepal?

#60: Yes, on business trips. Annually we used to go two or three times to Nepal; twice in autumn and then at other times. What they [the Nepalese] needed was the northern salt, which was plentiful in Tibet. We would take salt and bring back grains like rice and buckwheat from Nepal. We cultivated only peas, barley and a little bit of *pekang*, from which oil is extracted, in Porang. Most of the people were farmers. We loaded all the goods on sheep when we went on our business trips.

Q: Was he a businessman?

#60: That was how we lived our life in Porang. There were farmers and there were others who reared animals. We did not have grasslands in Porang; you had to buy site from others to graze your animals. Most of the people were farmers.

Q: So they exchanged goods. And do a lot of the Nepali traders come over into Porang to trade their goods?

#60: I told you that in the 11th Tibetan month all the Nepali traders came into Porang. Just like they came to Porang to trade, we went to Nepal. It was the same kind of goods that we traded in. The Nepali merchants used *dzo* ‘animal bred from a yak and a cow’ to transport their goods. Jaggery [unrefined sugar] and cloth came from India as we did not have them in Porang.

Q: Was it like a settled agricultural life or like a nomad also? The salt traders were nomads?

#60: The nomads would come to Porang bringing salt with them and in exchange they took grains. The nomads that came to Porang [to trade] were the Gergay, Runtor, Sengor, Shongpa Mazi, Khorwa, and Driji. All those nomads came twice a year, once in summer and again in autumn with the salt supplies which they exchanged for grains. We in turn took the salt to India and Nepal, since we lived close by those places. We did not have rice or wheat in Porang. There was no cloth of any sort. India was located in the north of Porang. Nepal was called Womlo.

Q: Was there a different dialect in Porang from the rest of Tibet?

#60: No. The script is the same as the Tibetan script and so is the religion. In Porang we did not have the Nyingma sect but the three other sects of Buddhism, Gelug, Kagyu, and Sakya, were there.

[Question is repeated.]

#60: No, the language is the same. The language I am speaking now is the language of Porang. I came to exile when I was 30 years old and there is no change in my language.

Q: Who lived in his house with him as a boy?

#60: There were many members in my family, around 45.

Q: In one house?

#60: Yes, in one house. We were from one of the bigger families who reared animals. We lived together with my uncle’s family and servants. It was like this: our uncle’s son would bring in a wife, then their son would get married and bring in a wife. So the head of the

family was my maternal uncle. Around six to seven members of the family were *sokrang*, those who went to graze the animals.

Q: Sokrang?

#60: *Sokrang* meant those family members who went with the sheep and yak to graze them. I told you Porang did not have grasslands; we had to buy land from others for the animals to graze. Those family members would bring home butter, cheese, and wool and they took back their food items from home. We belonged to the same family.

Q: So a family consisting of 45 members would include the father, mother, paternal uncles, maternal uncles and others?

#60: Yes. It included cousins, nephews, nieces, and their children. Some would be given away in marriage. Taxes were high in Tibet in the old days. We were levied taxes in the area that we lived in. Then there was the tax [paid] to the monastery, besides of course the government and district taxes. In Porang there were six headquarters.

Q: What kind of food did he eat? What does he remember eating as a child?

#60: The [staple] food in Tibet was *tsampa* ‘flour made from roasted barley.’ What you ate in the morning or noon was *tsampa* and *thukpa* ‘noodle soup.’ The rice and wheat flour were not in plenty since we had to get them from India and Nepal. We cooked rice only occasionally. There was no white flour like the one we have here. It was not available then. We did not have many spices like here. But onions and garlic grew wild on the hills and we dried and used them. There were no potatoes or radishes. The custom of growing those vegetables was never there. When the Chinese came, they planted vegetables and they [the vegetables] grew in Porang. The lentils had to come from India and Nepal. The oil which came from the *pekan* planted in our fields was just about sufficient for our consumption. The oil extraction was done manually and it was a very difficult task. In Tibet we never had any machinery; we couldn’t even make a matchbox.

Q: I just wanted to know if there was anything, a really special food, that came from Nepal or India or somewhere else, that came very rarely and he really enjoyed. Something like a real treat?

#60: The special food was rice and wheat flour. From the wheat flour, we made a dish called *baktsa markhu* with oil and jaggery which came from India. We did not have sugar at that time. Sugar candy was brought from India. Other than that there was no other special food that came from India or Nepal. When the nomads came we had plenty of meat to buy and eat, though not during winter because at that time the nomads did not come to Porang. At times a cow might be purchased and killed for its meat; otherwise meat was scarce in Porang itself. There were two types of *tsampa*. A *tsampa* made from peas called *tsormo* and the one made from barley was *phay*. *Tsormo* was of inferior quality and eaten by the servants, while *phay* was of superior quality. The special foods were butter, meat, *momo* ‘dumplings filled with meat or vegetables,’ and other vegetables.

Q: *Momo* did not come from India.

#60: The wheat flour used for making *momo* came from Nepal. We did make flour from the barley to make *thukpa* ‘noodle soup,’ but the flour from wheat was considered better.

Q: Can he describe his particular village—what it looked like? Can he describe the landscape—were there mountains? Just give us an idea what it was like for somebody who’s never been there?

#60: Pilgrims from India and other places came to Porang to see the holy Mount Kailash. There is also another holy site called the Koshar Jowo in Porang, where there are the three icons of Jowo.

[Question is repeated.]

#60: There is a river which runs through Porang. Some parts of the region, like Tedhe, Shedhe, Lok, Salang, and Dhog, are on the other side of the river. Most parts are on the opposite side. There is the Marpham Lake and if you went down, you reached Ringgong, Rongdham, Toe, and finally Porang Samnay. This is at the base of the Taklakhar Mountain, called so because of its resemblance to a tiger. The district headquarters, the Sakya Monastery, and the Gelug Monastery, are located on the top of the Taklakhar Mountain.

Q: There are three Jowos?

#60: Yes. The three Jowos are Jamphelyang, on his right is Chenrezig, and on the left is Chakna Dorji. There is a legend attached to the making of the Jowo Jamphaelyang and this is mentioned in the Holy Scriptures. The legend goes that when the Jowo was in Kardong Gadennang, God in the form of seven Indians came to this place and left some items for safe keeping with the temple caretaker. When they didn’t return for nine years, it was opened, and it contained seven silver bowls.

So this was commissioned to a [silver]smith in Womlo Zomlang to make an icon of the Jowo. It was said that before the smith could complete the statue, it automatically completed itself; it naturally came into being. When it was being brought to Khochar on wooden wheels, at a certain point the people were just not able to move it further. So a temple was erected right there. And that was how the place became known as Khochar, which meant that the Jowo would live always in that place.

Q: And Jowo, what does that mean?

#60: The Lhasa Jowo sits cross legged; I have seen it. The Khochar Jowo is a standing Jowo. The second Jowo [on the left of the Khochar Jowo] asked the temple caretaker not to open the door of the temple for seven days. However the caretaker, whose duty it was to daily clean and make offerings to the deities, was unable to wait for seven days. He opened

the door of the temple on the sixth day and that is why a part of the hand of the second Jowo, Chakna Dorji is missing.

Q: What are Jowos?

#60: They are statues [of gods] like Jamphelyang, Chakna Dorji, and Chenrezig.

Q: Can he describe some of his earliest childhood memories?

#60: The things that we did in our area were what had been done since long ago. There was nothing special that we did apart from what the tradition was. When a child reached the age of eight, he had to look after the yaks; and at nine he had to care for the sheep. The ploughing in Porang was done by one single *dzo*. A child had to lead the *dzo* by its nose as it ploughed the field. In other places people used a pair [of animals to plough], but not in Porang. Except for the work I did, there is nothing new to say.

Q: That was his personal memory as a young kid?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: For most of the kids life was normal that way.

[A discussion takes place regarding games.]

Q: Is that one of his earliest memories working with the *dzo*?

#60: Yes, that was it. And as you grew older—about 15 years, then you took on responsibilities. There’s a saying which goes: “A male at the age of 15 should do business and a female at age 15 should be well versed in milking.” It was all work and we did not have schools. And when you grew older then you performed different kinds of work.

Q: What did they do for fun as kids when they were not ploughing? What games? What things did they do to entertain themselves?

#60: We worked the whole day. However, in Porang we had no work in the winter, from the 11th month through the 12th, 1st and 2nd. We just fed the horses, *dzo*, donkeys, cows, and ox. In spring we had to take the manure of the animals to the fields to be used as fertilizer. We ate three times a day and worked the whole day through.

Q: So they were free in winter. What games did they play?

#60: There is a part of the bone of a sheep or goat’s leg. We gave different names to different directions, like sheep, goat, *tsebgay*, horse, and donkey, and throw the bone around to play. We got walnuts from Womlo with which we played, and there were bows and arrows. The girls played with little stones.

[The game with the leg bone is explained on paper and on the ground.]

#60: The winner takes the bone as the prize. Since there was no money [in the village], there were no bets.

Q: Did they ever hunt?

#60: No, we used the bows and arrows to play. We played target shooting and the winner would take the arrow. So if one was not a good a shot and if he didn't have many arrows, soon he would be out of the game.

Q: Was he good at this game?

#60: No, I did not have good aim. I lost my arrows many times. There is another game that we played with needles. A small hole was dug in the ground and from a distance a needle is thrown. If it falls in the hole, you win the game. If it falls somewhere close by the hole, then you had to try hitting the needle with a stone. If you succeeded [in hitting the needle] you won, else you had to give the needle away.

[Discussion among the interviewer, interpreter and videographer about fairs and festivals in Tibet.]

Q: Did they have gatherings or picnics?

#60: Yes, we had picnics. Little children would enjoy having parties— not elaborate with tents or so. The monks celebrated what we call Yadhong. The monks lived in the monasteries, which were higher up on the mountain. During the 5th month of the lunar calendar, they would come down to Chushul, to the pastures, put up tents, and have fun for about five days.

Q: And the lay people?

#60: The people did not have outdoor picnics with tents, but children would have fun in the houses during the New Year. Boys would form a group and have a party and the girls would do the same. In winter we would also trap birds. The birds were caught using snares and then the little boys would go around the village with the birds, collecting food stuffs, and they would have a party. There were festivals like Lhapsol and Dhunjang. There was one gathering in a year, around springtime, when we put up tents. Then by the 3rd month, the field works would begin. At that time the snow melted and the water flowed down.

Q: What did they do during the gatherings?

#60: During that time we had horse racing. There were archery contests and songs and dances called *gar-shon*. People dressed in their best clothes and were adorned with jewelry. There are said to be 18 types of *shon* and nine types of *gar*. Those were very elaborate songs and dances.

Q: Can he describe the horse races a little more?

#60: A rider would ride on his horse and targets were placed at two points. He came riding on his horse, armed with his bow and arrows or a gun. Then he took aim and shot his arrow at the first target, reloaded an arrow in his bow or gun, and fired at the next target. This was not a horse race. It was difficult to hit the target.

Q: Did he ever do this?

#60: I never rode and shot at targets. But I would do the Tongjur. Here we would ride on the horse and do simple acrobats. We dragged the whip on the ground; some would remove their hats and pass it from one hand to the other.

Q: Can he remember certain traditions around Losar, things that the family would do? The traditional things they would do at Losar. Can he recall any of those?

#60: In Porang we celebrated Losar [Tibetan New Year] in the 11th month. The official Losar was in the 1st month. At Berithang, the District Administrator organized a contest. Many games would be played in this month, so almost the whole of the 1st month was spent in fun. On the second day of the 1st month, the district would have a horse race. The horse race was similar to the one I described earlier and so were the songs and dances.

However, the specialty in this festival was the contest for the distance traveled by an arrow. Each arrow had the owner's name on it. Not everyone was allowed to participate in this contest. A member from each of the six areas took part. Then from the 5th day, the prayer festival started. On the 15th day, we visited the monastery to have a glimpse of the Jowos, the beautiful dough offerings and the *cham* 'religious performance' performed by the monks. In Porang the local Losar was celebrated in one's own home. Early on the 1st day we would have a *lhapsol* 'incense burning' ceremony, and on the 2nd day, the children with a parent who originally came from a different part of the region would go to their mother or father's home to pay obeisance there. The people of Porang have the tradition of doing prostrations during Losar. First it is performed to the gods and then to the family members, calling out their names.

Q: In his family were special things made to eat and special things that happened?

[Interpreter describes the prostrations done to the Gods and all family members.]

Q: It must have taken a long time in his family?

#60: Yes, forty five times for the 45 family members.

Q: Did they go up to the monasteries at all? And if they did, on what occasions?

#60: On the 15th day of Losar, that is called Chonga Choepa [Great Monlam Festival], the people went for pilgrimage. There is the *cham*. That was in the 1st month of the lunar

calendar. On the 29th day of the month before Losar, there was a *cham* performed by the monks in the monastery and special fire offerings conducted. This happened every year.

Q: Could he talk about the relationship between the monks and the villagers? How the monks lived and are involved in the life of the villagers? In what situation they would get involved? And did he ever personally seen this happen?

#60: There were around 350 monks in the monastery. The main administration of the monastery was conducted by the *datsang*. The *nyartsang* was responsible for looking after the lands of the monastery. The *dosar* received the offerings [from the people] and the *labrang* took care of the discipline.

Q: What is the relationship between the monks and the lay people?

#60: The relationship between the monastery and lay people is a continuous process. The people of Porang, who came under the [control of the] monastery were called Chushi and they had to transport water to the monks. It was a very long distance of about three to four miles from the river Tidhay Tsangpo up to the Taklakhar Mountain.

There were some people who had to perform transport work for the District Administration and they were known as Shongpa. After the Porang Losar in the 11th lunar month, many of the monks went into retreat in the 12th month. So families who had any friends going into retreat went up to offer them food. It was only personal friends or relatives that the people went to see, not all the monks.

Q: Did the monks provide services for the villagers?

#60: When we visited the monastery on those festive days, the monk friends would invite us into their rooms and offer us tea and food; not *chang* ‘home-brewed beer,’ because that was not allowed in the monastery. Other than that there was no special relationship.

Q: Did they ever do *poojas* ‘rituals of worship’ or ceremonies for the villagers for difficulties that people were having or somebody passed away? Would they come to do *pooja*?

#60: Yes, we had monks come over to do *shapten* ‘read of scriptures’ at home. We invited them to perform the annual *shapten* and then we did the monthly *shapten* too. If somebody fell ill or died, we either invited the monks home or made offerings to all the four monasteries, irrespective of the sects. The Sakya Monastery was situated high up on the mountain and the Geluk Monastery was located lower. We never discriminated among the four sects of Buddhism. The family deity was a separate matter; each sect has its own particular deity to worship. All the different types of prayers were performed in the houses. The Nyigma Monastery, Nangpa Khyonzom, was established much later by Kusho Dhegyal in a cave a little further away from Porang.

Q: The Nyingma Monastery was started later? It was not there earlier?

#60: It was started much later. The founder was a much revered lama. [However] his reincarnation was not successful as a monk. The previous lama was a very holy one and it was believed that when he lived in Tibet, even sicknesses feared him. I can remember hazily when he passed away. Until then there wasn't an actual monastery—just a tent—and only later the monastery was constructed. The lama's body was brought to India in 1959. It is in Orissa now. The Indians could not believe that this was a corpse. They checked it by drawing out some blood and blood did come out of it! So they built a structure for it at Sendheo [?]. We were there in Sendheo from 1959 to 1965, before we were sent to different settlements.

Q: Did he ever witness a death in his family where the monks came to do *poojas*? Did he ever see that happening?

#60: Yes, I have, because my uncles passed away. First, we request the monks to come to our home. Corpses were taken to the cemetery at Dhorukruk, beyond the Taklakhar Mountain. There were two cemeteries; from the superior cemetery you could see Mount Kailash. The body is taken on a *dzo* or a horse, as the crematorium was at a distance.

We performed the weekly *pooja* [for the dead] either with one, four, or eight monks, depending on the economic condition of the family. Poor families would have one monk do the *pooja* while the more well-to-do would invite four monks once every week for seven weeks. Until the 49th day after the death, irrespective of the number of monks, the *pooja* had to be performed.

In Porang there were three or four men who did the job of taking away the bodies. In Lhasa they had a certain group of people called Rokyalwa who took away the bodies and butchers called *shenpa*. We didn't have such people in Porang. The corpses were fed to the birds. The body was cut into pieces; even the skull was crushed and given to the birds. We did not burn the bodies like here [in Bylakuppe]; nor did we bury them. Perhaps, though I don't remember, one or two who died from certain diseases might have been buried.

Q: Where is the other cemetery located?

#60: One was at the base of the Taklakhar Mountain and the other at Dhorukruk, near Mount Kailash. That was very far away and only people from wealthy families or holy lamas' bodies were taken there. I have to say sorry for a mistake in my narration. I should have first described about the disposal of the bodies and then the *pooja* in that order, not the other way round.

Q: How far up did they go up Mount Kailash? Was it on the lower slopes of Mount Kailash?

#60: No, not on Mount Kailash. I said you could see Mount Kailash from the cemetery. That cemetery was about a mile away from the Taklakhar Mountain. Mount Kailash is about three days' journey away. I have never seen anyone being taken there during my time. My uncle's body was taken to Dhorukruk and *pooja* were performed there by monks.

Q: Did he see himself this happen?

#60: I have seen one at the common cemetery. That was a man who had no family, so I had gone to offer my help. My uncle's body was taken to the other cemetery at Dhorukruk and I haven't seen the process there.

Q: What was it like for him to see that as a young boy? How old was he?

#60: I was around 23 years old.

Q: What was it like?

#60: When we take the body to the cemetery, they say that if the vultures arrive immediately, that was a sign of the goodness of the dead person and that his next rebirth would be as a human being. For this particular man, it took a long time for the vultures to come. We leave once the vultures start hovering around. I felt that this was the way we have to go when we die and everybody must die one day or the other. However, we were not able to live in the land where the bodies are fed to the birds. Instead we are here [in India] where bodies are burnt. Now I am close to that.

Q: Is he okay with that, to be cremated? Is that alright with him?

#60: I have been many times to the crematorium. I have no fear. I have lived a long time. I wish to have a look at my country, even if I were to die the next day. There is a saying that goes: "However happy you are in a foreign land, one's own country is the world." I had hoped that I would die in my land, but now it seems impossible. I think my destination is the Sakya Monastery [the local crematorium is located close to the Sakya Monastery].

Q: Is it an Indian cemetery?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: It is a Tibetan cemetery. Even during rains, there is no problem as a structure is constructed there. There are separate rooms for the monks to perform *pooja* and to keep things.

Q: Did he notice the Chinese presence in his region? And how did he first encounter that? And how did he first experience that? What changes did he experience? Or did he come out before it happened?

#60: It was in the year 1949 and the 4th month of the lunar calendar. I had gone north to India for a business trip. The trip would take us seven days—three days to reach there, three days back, and a day for business. When we returned [to the village], we saw a whole sea of green. People said that those were the Chinese. Their language was different. At first they were very kind to the people. They paid high wages for any kind of work we performed for them. Up until 1959, they were very good.

Q: Did he see this during a business trip?

#60: I had been on a trip to India, taking the sheep with me, and when I returned I saw the Chinese in Porang. They were stationed there at a sort of crossroads, leading on one side to Taklakhar and the other to the Jowos. Later they set up their camp at Gyaltheckhar.

Q: Gyaltheckhar?

#60: That was where the Gyalwa Norsang [a legendary figure] was born long ago. The place is in ruins but we called it Gyaltheckhar.

Q: Can he just describe what he experienced up until the time that he decided to leave? What led up to his decision to leave?

#60: The reason I fled was because the Chinese planned to arrest me. I had served the Gyadang Ladang of the Digung Kagyu Monastery for two or three years, acting as their businessman. The Chinese labeled me a rebel and I was ordered to come to Senarandi. I told you earlier that my family was a *sokrang*, which meant we reared animals. We owned about 600-700 sheep, 30-40 yaks, and a few horses. Word came from the village to the *sokrang* place. A friend of mine, Chonphel, came and told me that the Chinese planned to capture me and that I must flee. The village is called Gyalwo and the region is called by the name Geejing. I told my family that I must leave. My mother said she would go with me and so did my uncle. And that's how we fled with our animals. All of us escaped.

Q: The reason [for the escape] was that he would be captured? Why would they capture him?

#60: When I was in the service of the Gyadang Labrang, perhaps some people might have judged some of my dealings as unfair. It was a position with certain powers. When we fled, many of our neighbors also fled with us.

Q: Was it a fairly easy journey as they knew the trade routes?

#60: Yes, we didn't face any trouble on the way. From Porang, it would have taken just an hour to cross the Mangola [a mountain pass]. However, we went over the Kodayla [another mountain pass] for two days because if we took the route towards Porang, we might encounter the Chinese. So we crossed over from Kodayla. We were many families together. I never thought when I fled [my village] that it would be for this long. We had hidden some of our things, thrown some away, thinking that we'd be back in a year or two. We never thought we would be away this long.

Q: Thinking that they'd be back in a year or two, they had hidden things?

#60: Yes. Later they [other members of the family] were able to find the things we had hidden.

Q: Were there family left? Didn't the whole family escape?

#60: No, not all, only those of us who were living at the *sokrang* area could flee—those seven family members engaged in looking after the animals. The other family members at the proper house were all left behind.

Q: What kind of things was hidden?

#60: We hid the tents and huge vessels in which we cooked and other copper items. They were too heavy to be moved, and thinking that we'd be back soon, we hid them. We didn't have any precious things there [at the *sokrang* camp].

Q: So he came and went to Uttar Pradesh. Is that a settlement? Was that a refugee camp? And Sendheo? Can he say a little bit about arrival in India?

#60: It was in the 4th Tibetan month that we arrived at Koday. We requested the Indian authorities to allow us to remain there until around the 10th lunar month, as India was very hot at that time of the year. We stayed here for about three to four months. Then we sold our sheep and yaks and came further down, and around the 7th month of the lunar calendar, we arrived at Sendheo. Here with the grace of His Holiness the Dali Lama we found shelter, food and clothing. The able-bodied worked on road construction sites, and those who couldn't lived on food rations. So until 1965, we worked at constructing roads.

Q: What advice does he have for the younger generation of Tibetans?

#60: The older generation believes in this life and the next life. We think it is very important to practice one's religion. However, I am not learned enough in religion to give advice. As for education, the younger generation received the opportunity to study while we are illiterate. However my advice to the younger generation is never to forget your country. I told you earlier that I would want to die in my country. The reason is the many pilgrim sites, the holy Mount Kailash, and the holy lake. The youngsters should not forget their country.

Q: How did he hear that His Holiness had left Tibet and how did that make everybody feel?

#60: In those days in Tibet, we never had radio or any communication system. We heard the news in 1959, which was passed on from one person to another. I don't know the names of every person who relayed the news. In exile, through His Holiness' grace, India has provided us food, clothing and shelter.

Q: Thank you so much. This is really one of the most fascinating interviews we have done so far. Thank you so much. You have an incredible memory and hopefully this will be very educational for the Tibetans and others who want to know about life in Tibet.

#60: I would like to thank you for taking interest and doing so much for the cause of Tibet. From my side, I will try my best to advise the youngsters and abide by the words of His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

Q: Tell Pa-la that we have been doing Tibetan things for fifteen years, but talking to him I learnt a lot of things we never knew.

#60: I thank you very much that you have done so much for Tibet for fifteen years. I am especially grateful to you. As for us, we cannot do anything but abide by His Holiness' words, as I am uneducated. I thank you once again.

[The release form is signed and gifts from the project are presented.]

#60: Thank you very much from the bottom of my heart and as a Buddhist, I will pray for you.

END OF INTERVIEW