

Tibet Oral History Project

Interview #63 – Wangyal
July 3, 2007

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TIBET ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

1. Interview Number: #63
2. Interviewee: Wangyal
3. Age: 66
4. Date of Birth: March 15, 1941
5. Sex: Male
6. Birthplace: Samada
7. Province: Utsang
8. Year of leaving Tibet: 1960
9. Date of Interview: July 3, 2007
10. Place of Interview: House No. 9, Old Camp No. 5, Lugsung Samdupling Settlement, Bylakuppe, Mysore District, Karnataka, India
11. Length of Interview: 1 hr 35 min
12. Interviewer: Marcella Adamski
13. Interpreter: Tenzin Yangchen
14. Videographer: Tsewang Dorjee
15. Transcriber: Tenzin Yangchen



Biographical Information:

Wangyal was born in Samada in the Gyangtse district. As a boy he operated the water mill for grinding barley grown on his grandparents' farm. They had many laborers working on their farm, who received wages and food for their work. Wangyal says that no one in his village was in need of work; the traditional relationship between landowners and laborers was beneficial to both.

Wangyal had been taught to read and write so when the Chinese occupied his region they assigned him the duty of recordkeeping at the Farmers' Commune Office, and later appointed him Secretary of the Commune Office. Wangyal speaks of Buddhist traditions and how the Chinese destroyed Tibetan religion and culture. He explains that the Chinese deceived the Tibetan people, acting nicely towards them and paying high prices for goods between 1951 and 1959. But Wangyal heard of sufferings inflicted by the Chinese in other parts of Tibet and was worried about the future. Then in 1959 the Chinese began arresting and subjecting many influential people and lamas to *thamzin* 'struggle sessions.'

His Holiness the Dalai Lama inspired Wangyal to write a book entitled *Stories of Life Experiences* in which he narrates the situation before and after the arrival of the Chinese in Tibet.

Topics Discussed:

Childhood memories, first appearance of Chinese, life under Chinese rule, destruction of monasteries, brutality, *thamzin*, life as a refugee in India.

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Age: 63, Sex: Male

Interviewer: Marcella Adamski

Interview Date: July 3, 2007

[The video starts with the camera focused on a book written by the interviewee. The interpreter describes the book which is about the life of farmers and nomads from the central Tibetan region of Gyaltse.]

Question: Please tell us your name?

Interviewee #63: My full name is Rinchen Wangyal.

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

#63: You can use it. Allow me to say a few words on that.

Q: Please.

#63: I am very happy that you are taking interest in the Tibetan issue by recording Tibet's oral history. I would like to thank you. I think it was the 33rd anniversary of the March 10th Uprising Day that His Holiness the Dalai Lama said, "This generation of Tibetans are very dear and important because they have suffered many things. It is very important to record and preserve their general and personal experiences. If this generation of Tibetans' experiences is not made clear, later when they pass away these stories will be lost. That is why even if one is not literate, at least record your experiences in a cassette, as it is very important to do so."

Keeping this advice in mind, I wrote down my life experiences and it is in the process of being printed with the help from the Department of International & International Relations [in Dharamsala].

Q: What was the day that His Holiness said to do that, please again?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: He said that on the 33rd Uprising Day.

Q: Wangyal-la, can you please tell us where you were born and what your village was like?

#63: The larger area where I was born is called Samada. If one went a distance of a kilometer and a half—where my house was—there was a small village. It was called

Samaphu. There is a monastery and it is the one there [points to a picture of monastery on the wall]. That is the monastery and the house on the side is my home [points to a white building in the picture]. I did an outline of it by recalling from my memory and my son drew it.

Q: How did your son know how to draw that?

#63: First I drew it. My son cannot draw it, as he has not seen it. I drew the whole thing first and though I could do a good drawing of the monastery, I couldn't draw the hills. I got a photograph of the hills and my son copied the drawing I had done on it. The hills are actual pictures.

Q: It's a very beautiful drawing. About how many houses were in the village?

#63: There were only about seven or eight families.

Q: How many people were in your family?

#63: When we escaped in 1960, there were only four members in my family. We were four siblings.

Q: What about your parents?

#63: My father was there then, but he lived separately from us. Our mother died when we were very young.

Q: Who were they?

#63: They were my two sisters who are older to me and one younger sister.

Q: When you were born, you had a mother, father and how many children in total?

#63: There was one more child besides the four, but he was sent to live with relatives and was not with us at that time.

Q: And your parents?

#63: My mother passed away when I was 7 years old. After my mother's death, my father remarried and he lived separately.

Q: When father lived with his second wife, did you go with him?

#63: The children did not go with him.

Q: Where did you go when your father remarried?

#63: We lived at home. At that time our grandfather was alive, but he passed away soon.

Q: Do you know what caused your mother's death at such a young age?

#63: She died at the age of 35. She died due to childbirth.

Q: I am sorry to hear that. How many children did your mother have besides you?

#63: She had five children.

Q: When your father moved with his new family, your grandfather took care of all five?

#63: Yes, that is right.

Q: No grandmother?

#63: My grandmother was living when my mother passed away. However, she died a year later.

Q: Two very big losses in a short time.

#63: Yes. My grandfather lived for several years after that and then passed away. At the time the oldest child was 16 and the youngest was 3 years old.

Q: At the time of your mother's demise?

#63: Yes.

Q: That was a lot of work for grandmother and grandfather.

#63: That is right.

Q: You must have been very sad when your mother died?

#63: Yes, though I was young at that time, I felt very sad.

Q: Do you have any memories of your mother?

#63: Yes, I can remember. My mother was very nice. Everybody used to praise my mother; she was such.

Q: What made her popular?

#63: She was very cordial with everyone. She was kind and helped everyone. She took very good care of her children.

Q: And the grandparents that you stayed with were the parents of your mother?

#63: Yes, that is right.

Q: Was that typical that if a man remarries, he goes with the new wife?

#63: Yes, our father went to live with his new wife.

Q: Did that happen often in the village?

#63: Yes, it does happen.

Q: Did you miss your father when he left?

#63: Yes, we missed him. Though we were little children then, we felt very sad in our hearts. My father was also helpless because at home he was not on good terms with our grandparents and also being young he needed to get married again, so it happened that way.

Q: After that what was your childhood like from the time you were 7 years old? What was your life like from 7 to 14?

#63: In general my family was a middle class family. Our family owned quite an extensive area of farmland and we had to hire many laborers. I used to look after them. At that time, our family owned two water mills for making *tsampa* 'flour made from roasted barley.' Mostly I took care of the water mills.

Q: You were only between 7 and 14. How did you look after laborers?

#63: I used to do that along with my older sister who was the main person.

Q: I think you must have grown up very fast?

#63: Yes, that is right. When I was around the age of 6, my parents taught me reading and writing at home, but I forgot everything since the time my mother passed away when I was 7.

Q: Did you ever go back to school again?

#63: I resumed my studies at age 13. Except for being taught by my uncle and my older sister, I did not attend regular school as such. They taught me, but mainly it was mostly self studies.

Q: What kind of things were you learning at home?

#63: I was taught Tibetan reading and writing.

Q: Can you remember if somebody said what kind of a boy were you? How would you describe yourself?

#63: I was a very simple and well-mannered child, as people used to say. I respected the elders and was kind to the younger ones. I was cordial with everyone. That was what people thought of me.

Q: You sound like a very nice brother.

#63: [Laughs]

Q: What would be a typical day in your life, say when you were around 11 to 12? What would be a typical day?

#63: I was taking care of the water mills most of the time. I also tended the horses and donkeys at home. At the same time, I did some studies.

Q: Can you explain the water mills? What were they?

#63: The water mill was two stones attached together with the upper-stone having a hole through which the roasted barley was poured. The stone rotated and between them [the grains were ground]. The upper-stone rotated while the lower one was fixed. The stone rotated with the help of a wooden contraption with wings on the lower floor of the house. The [force of] water on the wings rotated the stone.

Q: The roasted barley was poured through the hole?

#63: Yes. There was a container called *dhing* for the barley through which it passed into the [hole in the upper] stone and it was ground between the stones. Then *tsampa* came out.

Q: Did you like doing that work?

#63: I liked that work. There was no one who taught me particularly, but I knew it naturally.

Q: Was this part of your grandparents' farm that they owned before you were born, before your mother got married?

#63: Yes, that is right.

Q: Do you have any idea how many generations of people from your family, your mother's family lived in this place?

#63: I don't know how many generations. I don't know how many generations it has been from my grandparents' time. Basically, it was a very old family.

Q: When you were about 14 to 15, what kind of dreams did you have for yourself? What did you see yourself doing when you became a man?

#63: At that time I never had any particular thoughts about what I would become. However, whatever work there was at that time, I did them well. I never thought at that time about what I would become in the future.

Q: Did you have time to play with all this water work and horse work and studying? When did you play and what games did you play?

#63: There was time to play. Among the games in Tibet, children of the same age would run races and we played a game with stones called *dhokhor*. There were different games to play.

Q: Did you have any favorite pets?

#63: We had animals like horses, donkeys and cows at home.

Q: Did you have pets like dogs or cats?

#63: We had dogs and cats. We had all those animals. We had a few cows, horses, donkeys and yaks. Yaks were used for ploughing the fields.

Q: In terms of the heavier work, was that done by servants on the property? How many servants were there?

#63: We had a regular servant who tended the yaks and another one who helped with the cooking at home. During autumn and spring we had 10, 15, 20 laborers working in the fields.

Q: Where did they come from?

#63: They were from other families who came to work for wages. Generally, the family and those that worked for the family ate the same food; there was no difference. We ate good quality *tsampa* and whatever else we ate, the same was given to the servants. They were also satisfied living with us. They received wages and food for their work. They liked it and were happy.

Q: Were they from other villages far away or were they nomads? What were they?

#63: They were also farmers.

Q: But you had a much bigger farm, so you needed more help?

#63: Yes, that is right. The Chinese say that there was feudalism; that the poor had suffered a lot and that the rich families caused them immense misery, but as I remember, that was not so.

There is a saying, which goes: "Why do you cultivate a wide and long field? I cultivate a wide and long field in order to feed the laborers. Why do you feed the laborers? That is in order to cultivate the wide and long field." So it goes round and round in a circle. Therefore, it was not the landowner alone who collected the farm produce, but it was divided among the laborers, too.

Q: When you were growing up, did your village stay peaceful? What began to change or what began to happen?

#63: People of my generation can relate experiences prior to the arrival of the Chinese, experiences after the arrival of the Chinese and the experiences of escaping. When the Chinese first appeared, our village consisted of economically diverse families. However, there were none who were not able to survive on their livelihood. So everyone was happy. People enjoyed doing their work and sang songs while on the job. There was plenty of *chang* 'home-brewed beer' and *pa* 'dough balls from *tsampa*' to eat. There wasn't anyone who faced livelihood problems or who was starving.

I was about 9 or 10 when the Chinese first started to appear. We heard that Red Chinese were coming from Dhotoe and Dhomay [the eastern parts of Tibet]. We heard that they were people who did not know the law of karma, had no kindness for other beings, did not accept religion and were extremely bad.

Q: Do you remember what kind of stories you heard that would make them bad people?

#63: At that time no one had seen the Chinese, but we heard that they did not accept religion and that they did not abstain from committing sins. Then gradually the Chinese appeared and we had the chance to see them.

Q: What kind of religious practices did you have when you were like 9 or 10? What were you learning about spirituality?

#63: Practicing the Buddhist dharma is beneficial for this life as well as the next. It gives peace to the next life. I knew these things from listening to the lamas and monks at that time. Since I learned about these, I considered them to be it [the truth]. However, other than that, I did not have the time or opportunity to be fully well-learned in the dharma. I have faith in that.

Q: Perhaps you didn't have time to learn deeply, but what would you say, even as a young teenager, what were some of the truths that you believed from the Buddhist dharma? What were some of the important teachings that shaped your life in your beliefs?

#63: To tell you about the Buddhist dharma: the main points are that one should believe in the present and the previous births, the present and the next life and the law of karma. If one believes in the present and previous births and the law of karma, one will know that it is beneficial to earn merit and that the result of sin is suffering. At that time I believed such and that is a fact.

Q: What were the kinds of things you were supposed to do that you would be living well? What kind of behavior...what kind of actions...what kind of thinking did you have to have to earn a good life in the next life?

#63: If you want to have a good life in the next birth, you have to be helpful to all sentient beings in this life. You shouldn't harm any of the sentient beings. There are many ways that are mentioned in the dharma, but that is the gist of it.

Q: I ask this question because it's a difficult one. How do you do good to people on this earth like the Chinese when they are trying to take away the dharma?

#63: People like them [the Chinese], they must think over the advice of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, understand it and try to be good. Besides giving them this message, there is nothing to be done. If they do not understand the message, that is their contemplation. It is up to them whether they want to consider the message or not. From our side, we can tell them the way of the Buddha dharma and the advice of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Other than that there is nothing.

At present His Holiness is advocating the “middle way” for the betterment of both the sides, which is that the Chinese need happiness just as the Tibetans do. I think there is nothing more that His Holiness can try for the happiness of all concerned. If the Chinese would ponder over this—the Chinese need happiness, the Tibetans need happiness and the world needs peace—for the sake of these, if the Chinese take a positive consideration that would be good for all.

Q: If we could use you and your voice to talk to the Chinese and tell them from your heart, what message would you want to tell them?

#63: If I were to talk to them from my heart, I would say that they must believe in the law of karma and understand that everybody needs happiness. If they could consider these, it would be beneficial to China and to Tibet. If they do not think over these but do otherwise, then except for suffering for everyone, there is nothing. Therefore, if everybody needs happiness, they should be aware of the Buddhist dharma and its importance to think in relation to that.

Q: You said that you learned that the Chinese did not have religion in 1951. Did any changes happen in your village after that?

#63: At that time when the Chinese first appeared, everyone was worried as to what the Chinese would do in the future, whether they would overpower Tibet and cause immense

suffering. Everyone was worried. That was why initially people did not have any contact with the Chinese.

On one hand, the Chinese invaded Tibet with their military might and on the other hand with deception. In order to deceive the people, they spoke sweetly and they paid exorbitantly for the hay and firewood they bought from the public. That was how they tricked us. However, the majority of the Tibetans saw through their tricks and thought their deception as only deception and nothing good.

As for the Tibetans, since thousands of years Tibet was an independent country. It was only China who invaded Tibet. Tibet was a country which had never been invaded by other countries in earlier times. Tibet as a country had her own national flag, likewise, Tibet had currency and different coins [shows coins and currency note to the camera] and a national seal. So we had all these to prove that Tibet was an independent country. At that time the people were worried that if Tibet was invaded by the Chinese, they would cause a lot of misery.

Q: What began to happen in Tibet after the Chinese paid highly for hay and firewood? What happened next?

#63: After that from 1951 to 1959, the situation remained the same in the villages. However, it was different in Lhasa and other places. In the villages, they [the Chinese] paid well for the hay and firewood and, except for the movement of their troops, they did not particularly inflict any misery on the people. From 1959 onwards, they [the Chinese] caused a lot of suffering.

Q: Did anything change in your life between 1951 and 1959?

#63: There was no particular change. However, between the time before the Chinese' invasion in 1959, His Holiness the Dalai Lama took temporal and spiritual responsibilities and it was a joyous time in Tibet. People were relaxed and happy, but deep down they worried as to what the Chinese would do.

Q: What were you worried would happen?

#63: I was worried that, as per the Communist policy, [the Chinese] would not accept religion and that they would cause a lot of suffering on account of that. We heard such things because in Dhotoe and Dhoday, they [the Chinese] were capturing the lamas and leaders and destroying the monasteries. We also heard about the destructions and the miseries within China. Our worries were, "What would happen to Tibet which had been an independent nation for thousands of years? If China overpowered it, what would be the consequences?"

Q: And then when did things change in your village?

#63: The main change happened in 1959. Prior to that there were not many changes. In 1959 there was turmoil in Lhasa, shells were fired and destructions galore. His Holiness the Dalai Lama and many others fled. After that the Chinese occupied the whole of Tibet and the Chinese did whatever they felt like doing. At that time there was a lot of suffering.

Q: What kind of suffering did you have?

#63: In 1959, the Chinese said that the Dalai Lama had been forcefully taken away by the rebels. The Chinese lied about it and did not mention that His Holiness left of his own accord. They said, "[The Dalai Lama has been] forcefully taken away. The Chinese will bring reformation. The rebels are destroyed for good and they cannot rise again. However, those [rebels] that are secretly around, you must reveal them." Saying that, they started the reformation.

What they had said earlier was, "The Chinese have come to Tibet to serve the Tibetan people. We have come to bring progress for the Tibetan people. We will not inflict suffering on the Tibetan people." All these things changed and when they said they would bring reformation and that we [the Tibetan people] were to rise against the rebels, people were greatly alarmed in their minds. Of course, the wealthy families and the lamas of the monasteries were naturally afraid that they would suffer, but even the common people were sad and uneasy.

Q: When did you find out that it was not true that His Holiness was captured and that in fact he escaped?

#63: We learned about the truth after about a few months. We heard that His Holiness had escaped to India of his own accord and that he had already reached India. We heard it gradually from one person to the other. When we heard this, the people thought that it was very good that His Holiness the Dalai Lama could reach a foreign country and that he did not fall into the hands of the Chinese. Once His Holiness was in a foreign country, all the people hoped that with the help from the United Nations and others [countries], the cause of Tibet would not be lost.

Q: Did the village make any decisions about what they should do next?

#63: There were no plans at all. The reason was that the Chinese army had arrived. At that time in the year 1959, the officials of the monasteries and the prominent people of the villages; they were all captured and imprisoned. There was nothing one could do...[when several hundreds of soldiers were stationed in the small village]. [This part is missing from the interviewee's statement and is taken from the translation.]

To the bad social elements, the poor and those low down thoughtless people of the village, the Chinese instructed them, "Now the happy sun will rise for you people. You must protest against the rebels. If you listen to us, you will find happiness," those people were being deceived by the Chinese. They were misled and they sided with the Chinese. At that

time, no one dare reveal what one was actually thinking in his mind. It was best to remain silent lest one faced the danger of being arrested and imprisoned.

Q: And then what happened?

#63: All the people were very unhappy. No one could relax, the food one ate had no taste and one did not feel like working. Such was the time.

Q: You were very scared and very worried?

#63: Yes, that is right.

Q: Very, very uneasy.

#63: Very uneasy. When we ate, the food had no taste. When we worked, there was no satisfaction. We wondered what to do. We felt such a terrible period had begun, but there was no release and we did not try to seek a solution to get out of it.

Q: So what happened next?

#63: Then after that from 1959 onwards, [the Chinese] captured many influential people. Some of them were prominent people, while others were falsely accused as having connection with the rebels. In this way, many people were imprisoned and were subjected to a lot of misery. They were subjected to *thamzin* 'struggle sessions.' Those who ordered the *thamzin* were the Chinese and those that executed it were Tibetans. However, it was the Chinese who did the planning.

Carrying out *thamzin* meant that they [the accused] were beaten the whole day. They were pushed down and trod on. They were pulled by the hair on their head. They were slapped and their teeth broken. They bled from the mouth. They suffered a lot.

Q: Which family were you? Were you considered among the wealthy?

#63: At that time in 1959, we were among the middle-class farming family, but [the Chinese] claimed our family was above middle-class. So we were a type which could not be classified. We were three families which were in a similar situation. In 1960 [the Chinese] started the reviewing committee and the three families were destroyed. One family was falsely grouped among the higher-class and their house was sealed and the father of the family imprisoned. The other family fled in three groups. Then after a few days, we escaped. In 1960, the three families, which were grouped among the upper-class, were completely destroyed. We were not able to stay on.

Q: When did you decide to escape and who went with you and where did you go?

#63: We made the decision within a few days and fled because at that time in 1959, I was quite well versed in reading and writing, and because of that the Chinese gave me work

and the people of the village also supported me. At the time of the revolution, I was working at the Farmers' Commune Office, keeping record of the quantity of seeds used in the fields. I was appointed to the Farmers' Commune Office by the people, because I was a farmer, and I knew the correct estimate about the quantity of seeds to be sown in the fields.

At that time I was 18 years old. All my colleagues were in the ages of over 40 or in their 50's, but none of them knew to read and write. I was the only literate [one] and they had faith in my ability of assessment. Then for a few months, the Chinese made me work as a shopkeeper. After that, in the Samada area, there was an office called Shang Mimang Sishung and I was appointed as a secretary in this office. When I escaped in 1960, I held the secretary job.

Q: Did you escape by yourself or with your family? How did you escape?

#63: My family was with me. We were three families and 11 people. We lived in the same neighborhood. The three families planned to flee together.

Q: At night or winter time or when?

#63: It was in the fourth Tibetan month corresponding to the beginning of June. We escaped suddenly and the reason being that I was going to be captured. At that time I was the office secretary of the Shang Mimang Sishung. The previous office secretary was from a wealthy family and highly educated. He was captured and taken away by the Chinese and later imprisoned at Samye, where he is said to have died. Now they [the Chinese] were going to do the same to me.

Q: Where did you go?

#63: If I were to relate my escape experiences: when we left our home, we journeyed facing towards Lachung in Sikkim. The flight took us around seven days and seven nights.

Q: How did you travel without the Chinese seeing you?

#63: We traveled only during the night and never in the daytime. We came during the night and when dawn broke, we climbed higher up and hid among the rocks and boulders. Never mind food, we were without water for about three days. We were without water for a whole day on three occasions.

Q: Just to go back, when you were forced to work for the Chinese and keep the records of the farmers' seeds, what were they trying to do?

#63: That was done to bring reformation to the farmers. Earlier the wealthy families owned large areas of land while some poor families had small areas or none at all. So they [the Chinese] kept a record to find out the area of land based on the usage of seeds a person was entitled when they divided the lands. That was during the time of the land division process.

Q: After you left your village, you had 11 members, do you know what happened to your property? Did the poor Tibetans take it over or did the Chinese come and take it over? What happened to it?

#63: I heard that our land and house was taken over by other people. The few cows and yaks were given away; sort of lent [by the Chinese] to others saying that those were to be given back to us when we returned.

In the meantime, I'd like to say something. The book that I wrote took me many years to write. It will be ready in two or at the most three months. It is in Tibetan and if it could be translated into English, it contains all the facts prior to the Chinese invasion, what happened during the Chinese invasion, the poor-treatment by the Chinese, the problems during the escape; all the details are there.

Q: Have you found anyone who can translate it into English? Is that what you would prefer?

#63: I have not found anyone as the book in Tibetan is yet to be published. The book in Tibetan will be out in two or three months.

Q: Congratulations.

#63: [Nods and smiles]

Q: That was a lot of work.

#63: Yes. If it could be translated into English, it contains a lot of information.

Q: I think that your education paid off. Your family would be very proud of you.

#63: Yes, that is right.

Q: And I think His Holiness would appreciate very much.

#63: Yes. As I said earlier that was one part of His Holiness' advice, "This generation is very important. It is very essential to put into writing the events that occurred during the lifetime of this generation. If this is not done, then from the time these people die, their experiences are lost. It must be written." I have kept this advice of His Holiness in my mind and have done accordingly.

Q: What do you hope will be preserved about Tibet for future generations?

#63: This is very important. What we have to preserve is that Tibet is a country and in the country there are different people, and tradition, which is connected to the Buddhist religion, costumes, and customs. If all these are not preserved well, it is very critical. In order to preserve these, His Holiness the Dalai Lama has given advice and it is also

mentioned in the news media, but the main point is for the youngsters to remember the advice [of His Holiness the Dalai Lama]. Unless they [the younger generation] work hard, it is a perilous situation. I, for example, regard the advice of His Holiness and consider Tibetan religion and tradition as very important and have studied the Tibetan script.

Q: Question is repeated.

#63: Tibet is a country and this country has a tradition which is connected to the Buddhist religion; it has its language, costumes and culture. In order for these to not be lost and to preserve them, His Holiness the Dalai Lama took a profound thought and started Tibetan schools and settlements. It was so that the Tibetan religion and traditions would not be lost in the settlements. All this the young generation must reflect on, lest our religion and traditions be lost, which would be a great loss. One should at least see that the Tibetan language is spoken in its pure form.

[The following is missing from the interviewee's statement, so it is taken from the interpreter.]

[In 1963 when I came to the settlement in Bylakuppe there were many youngsters in the age group of 25 to 30, who could not get admission into schools because they were quite old.]

So from 1963 to 1975, for about 12 to 13 years, I volunteered my service for the Adult Education Program, so that the Tibetan religion and culture could be preserved.

Q: That was a wonderful service.

#63: That is why if we cannot preserve the Tibetan religion and culture, the Chinese will do their best to destroy it. I see the preservation of these as very important.

Q: What advice or message, maybe you feel you have already said it, but do you have any additional advice or message for the next generation of young Tibetans?

#63: If the younger generation would preserve the very important Tibetan religion and culture, they will turn out to be good human beings. In the early days [in Bylakuppe] the Indians would have great faith in the older Tibetans just for being Tibetans. The Indians would have total faith in the Tibetans. So much so that at the railway and bus stations where there are thousands of Indians, they would entrust their belongings to a Tibetan when they saw one. They did so because of the influence of the Tibetan religion and culture. So the younger generation must work hard to preserve the Tibetan religion and culture.

Q: We have one question about what inspired you to keep learning and educating yourself. You were one of the few people who was doing that in your age group.

#63: For one it was because I considered the Tibetan Buddhist religion and culture as very important. His Holiness the Dalai Lama established separate settlements for Tibetans so

that the Tibetan religion and culture are preserved and promoted. So I think we should all try to fulfill that wish of His Holiness, which is beneficial for all concerned. Presently I am a Tibetan teacher at the Sakya Monastery for three years. I am always eager and happy to work towards the promotion of Tibetan religion and culture.

Q: How many of your children who came with you are in Bylakuppe?

#63: My children were born in India. I wasn't married in Tibet.

Q: How many children do you have now?

#63: I have three children.

Q: And grandchildren?

#63: I have four grandchildren. My oldest child has two children, the middle one has two while the youngest is not yet married.

Q: Are you encouraging them to study?

#63: Yes, I do. My oldest and the youngest have done well in their studies. The oldest child completed her Acharya Degree from the Tibetan Institute of Higher Studies in Varanasi. The youngest child completed all his college degrees. The middle one was made a monk for sometime and he did not receive a good opportunity, so he is not very well educated.

Q: I wish to thank you so much for this very wonderful interview. We have learned a lot.

#63: When we talk about Tibet, it is for ourselves. I am happy if I can talk about it. You are a foreigner and a different people, so I would like to thank you for working for the cause of Tibet.

Q: You are very welcome because we want to learn about the dharma from the Tibetans.

#63: That is very good. His Holiness the Dalai Lama says that every country has its religion, be it Christianity, Jainism or Islam and it is good to follow the religion of one's parents. However, if one studied the Buddhist dharma, the Buddhist dharma is very profound and these days it is considered a religion which is scientific. So it is good to study it.

Q: May we ask about this now. This is the final release.

[Interpreter explains the release form and gifts are presented to the interviewee.]

#63: I would thank to thank the interviewer, photographer, interpreter and videographer. Please have some tea.

[Interviewee shows the picture of a temple from his book.] This temple is very holy. It used to be said in Tibet that it was built during the reign of Chogyal Songtsen Gampo in the seventh century. Before the Tsuglakhang [main temple] was built in Lhasa, four *dhangdhug* were constructed in Tibet and this was one of them. In order to overcome the demons in Tibet, four *dhangdhug*, four *yangdhug* and other temples were constructed. This one [pointing to the picture of temple in the book] was one of the four *dhangdhug*. It was called Chungpo Lhakhang or Pema Lhakhange or Dolma Lhakang.

Q: When did you go to Tibet? I didn't realize you'd been back.

#63: I went back twice to Tibet, in 1985 and 1994.

Q: Do you plan to go back?

#63: Though my relatives ask me to visit them, I have no intention of doing so because I have done such things [like writing the book] in which I have criticized the Chinese for all the destructions. I cannot go back.

Q: What's the other monastery [in the picture]?

#63: That is the monastery of my village. That [picture in the book] is a drawing because I didn't get this photograph earlier. [Holding a photograph] This is the original picture of the monastery before it was destroyed. [The original picture of the monastery and a present picture are shown to the camera.]

Q: So it's disappeared! I'm so sorry. And that was built in the eighth century.

#63: It was built in the seventh century. There is no one other than me who knows more about the religious articles that were housed in the temple. I inquired about it from people who lived in Tibet and from those who have come into exile, but no one could give me an account of the icons and objects that were in the temple. Whatever religious objects were there in the temple, I have documented everything in this book.

Q: The only survivor.

[Interpreter to interviewer]: The only survivor who can talk about the treasures of this temple, which was completely destroyed.

Q: Was it bombed or torn down? Do you know what happened?

#63: It was torn down. It was destroyed and I have written the details in this book. [Turning the pages of the book] This is another picture [of a temple]. This is also a drawing because I couldn't get a real photograph. [One more drawing of a temple from the book is shown to the camera.]

Q: Can you tell me where in Tibet was your village—central, east, west or south?

#63: The village was Samada and it came under Gyangtse District. It was about two hours drive from Gyangtse town.

Q: Gyangtse has a huge prison.

#63: Yes, there is a prison.

Q: It is now used for political prisoners.

#63: Yes, that is right; for political prisoners. During 1959 and the beginning of 1960 there were no politics or otherwise, they [the Chinese] put in whoever they wished.

[Interviewee presents a signed copy of his book to the interviewer.]

Q: Have you given this to the Tibetan government and is there anyone there who can translate this for you?

#63: Yes, I have. There is a foreword by the Department of Information and International Relations. The book was printed in Dharamsala and they also presented a sum of 2,000 rupees. The printing cost is quite a lot because of the drawings of the monasteries in it. I sold each book for 20 rupees and so I just about recovered the costs.

Q: We hope to take this interview and all of our interviews and give them to the Department of Information and International Relations, so they will be there for your children and your grandchildren to see. We also hope to send a copy to the camp area, so that you can watch it here.

#63: Yes, I would like that.

Q: And then you can write another book.

#63: [Laughs] This book that I wrote is small. The one I am writing has about 400 pages.

Q: Is it a development of this book or another one?

#63: It is a completely different one. This one is only about the monasteries.

Q: What will it be about?

#63: The publishers said that the title I had earlier planned for the book was too long. So it has been changed to *Stories of Life Experiences*. In it I have narrated the situation [in Tibet] before the arrival of the Chinese. The reason why I wrote about the situation was because the situation in cities like Lhasa and other big towns are widely known. However, the majority of the Tibetan people lived in small villages. Since the situation in the villages is very important, I have written about that.

Then there is the story about the deception of the Chinese and how they sweet talked the Tibetans. Next I have written about the happenings after the Chinese invasion of Tibet in 1959, like the [Chinese policy of] “Three oppositions and two leniencies,” the division of lands, the Cultural Revolution and about the extreme hardships suffered by the Tibetans.

Then the story concerning my personal experiences of escape into exile, which is also the story of every Tibetan in exile. There is a chapter about returning to Tibet to meet relatives. When I spoke to my relatives [in Tibet] I heard extremely sad stories, which will bring tears to one's eyes when they read them. Then about what the Tibetans in India are doing to resolve the Tibetan issue. And lastly, there is a chapter about my hopes and prayers for the resolution on the Tibetan issue.

In all, there are about seven chapters in the first division of the book. The second division contains the complete story of the first settlement in India, the Lugsung Samdupling Tibetan Settlement of Bylakuppe. This [chapter] was requested by the office of the International Relations. Its office secretary, Mr. Thupten Samphel, advised me to write the story about the settlement, which is very necessary.

Q: A long story. How long did it take you to write it? It sounds like a lifetime effort.

#63: I didn't write full time. Writing on and off, it took me around four to five years. I completed it in December 2005 and sent it [to Dharamsala]. However, the staff of the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives was busy and they couldn't do the work sooner. I now hope that it will be published in two or three months.

Q: That's very fast actually. For such a long story, that's amazing. Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW