

Tibet Oral History Project

Interview #11U – Wangmo
April 4, 2017

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TIBET ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

1. Interview Number: #11U
2. Interviewee: Wangmo
3. Age: 83
4. Date of Birth: 1934
5. Sex: Female
6. Birthplace: Sakya
7. Province: Utsang
8. Year of leaving Tibet: 1959
9. Date of Interview: April 4, 2017
10. Place of Interview: Sakya Tibetan Settlement, Puruwala, Himachal Pradesh, India
11. Length of Interview: 1 hr 11 min
12. Interviewer: Marcella Adamski
13. Interpreter: Tenzin Yangchen
14. Videographer: Tenzin Choenyi
15. Translator: Tenzin Yangchen

Biographical Information:

Wangmo was born in Sakya in Utsang Province in 1934. Her father was a well-known doctor, but Wangmo's mother was like a mistress to him and he lived elsewhere. Wangmo grazed cows and combed wool when she was a child. Although she preferred spending time playing, a relative taught her how to read.

At the age of 17 or 18 Wangmo began working as a nanny for the two children of Dagchen Rinpoche, revered leader from one of two families heading the Sakya school of Tibetan Buddhism. She talks in detail about her responsibilities as a nanny of such a high-ranking family, who required that the children remain very clean and pure. Although she had many duties, including assisting Dagchen Rinpoche's wife with childbirth, the children also had tutors, playmates and attendants.

As part of the household, Wangmo travelled with the family and their retinue to Nangchen and Derge in Kham to visit the monastery of Dagchen Rinpoche's former incarnation. Later the family was forced to leave Tibet due to the heavy Chinese presence. After reaching India and moving several times, the Dagchen Rinpoche's family received sponsorship to travel to America, but had to leave Wangmo behind in India.

Topics Discussed:

Utsang, Kham, childhood memories, customs/traditions, escape experiences, life as a refugee in India.

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Interview #11U

Interviewee: Wangmo

Age: 83, Sex: Female

Interviewer: Marcella Adamski

Interview Date: April 4, 2017

Question: Please tell us your name.

00:00:11

Interviewee #11U: Wangmo, Wangmo.

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?

#11U: Yes.

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

#11U: Yes, and thank you.

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

#11U: Okay.

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

#11U: Okay.

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

00:01:55

#11U: When the Chinese invaded Tibet we came here and did not face any problems during the journey to India.

Q: We are doing an interview now. If this interview in the form of book or anything were to be seen in Tibet or China or anywhere, would this be a problem for you?

#11U: There will not be. I am just an ordinary woman and not a government official. So there will be no problem.

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

#11U: Okay, thank you.

Q: Wangmo, can you tell us how old you are?

#11U: 83

Q: Where were you born in Tibet?

#11U: Sakya.

Q: What was the nearest temple?

#11U: That was the Sakya Monastery. We lived near the Sakya Monastery.

Q: *Ama-la* ‘respectful term for mother,’ what did your family do for a living, your mother and father?

#11U: My father was a doctor, a Tibetan doctor. We owned lands on which mother worked and at times she did weaving—weaving woolen cloth like this [points to dress].

Q: Was he a doctor for many generations? Where did he learn to be a doctor?

00:04:36

#11U: My father lived separately. Father lived in a different area called, Shap though it is a part of Sakya. I was born in Sakya because mother lived in Sakya. Father lived in a different region, in his region of Shap. Being a doctor, Father had to travel to many places.

Q: Do you remember what kind of illnesses he treated?

#11U: He checked the pulse of the patient because we did not have like this [touches ears to mean stethoscope] in those days. [Father] checked the pulse, the pulse of the hand [touches right wrist]. My father was smart and did eye operations and checked pulses. [He] did everything and was a big doctor.

Q: Why did he live away from Sakya?

#11U: In Tibet...what to say...men had many women. Hence, my mother lived in Sakya and his earlier home was in Shap, in the place called Shap.

Q: And he had a family there?

00:06:38

#11U: Oh, there were many...sons and daughters and the real wife. [My mother] was like the mistress—that used to be practiced in Tibet. He hailed from a rich family.

Q: I see.

#11U: [Father] had to visit different places and was held up for very long periods at each place.

Q: When you were a little girl, what chores did you do?

#11U: I had an elder brother. There were just the two of us. I was made to comb wool as a child. Do you know wool—wool to make like this [gestures off camera]. It was the wool of sheep that [I] combed, and other than that there was not any work but to play. They did not give responsibilities until one grew older. It was just playing about.

Q: And when you were given responsibilities, what did you do then?

00:08:27

#11U: We were sent to graze cows—sent to graze cows and as there was not any [fire]wood, one gathered cow dung and also played. It was not a lot of work. Here, cows are not let loose, but in Tibet cows were let loose in the open and one had to herd them. One grazed the cows.

Q: Did you have any kind of education?

#11U: [I] did not get any education. In Tibet but for the boys, girls were not given much attention. Girls had work to do while boys...some girls were going to go to school but my mother did not send me.

Q: Some girls attended school?

#11U: Yes, but I was not allowed. However, a monk relative taught me and I know a little bit of reading but not writing.

Q: Did he do that in your home or did you go somewhere?

00:10:14

#11U: At home—at home. [The monk relative] said “Even if you do not know much, at least you will be able to read the prayers” and taught the alphabet. However, being a child then one did not show much interest and went off to play. [He] did teach [me] though.

Q: Did you like learning to read?

#11U: Though [I] did, yet there was not much time because there was a lot of playing about. [I] went off with friends and did not study.

Q: What happened to your brother? Did he study or go to school or anything?

#11U: Elder brother was a monk and studied.

Q: As you grew older, what kind of work did you do as a young lady?

#11U: There was not much work but grazing the cows—we owned cows, as one cannot survive without cows in Tibet—and playing. Then at the age of 17 or 18 [I] went into the service of the Phuntsok Phodang. There was not much work in Tibet, but children were taken along to the fields.

Q: How did that come about that you went to work there? Who arranged that?

00:12:31

#11U: For us the [residents of the] Sakya Phuntsok Phodang ‘ Palace’ and the Sakya Dolma Phodang are our lamas and leaders. I asked my parents to let me go to serve them and that is how [I] went.

Q: Sent by mother?

#11U: It can be said that Mother sent [me].

Q: What kind of work were you given to do at age 17?

#11U: At the Phuntsok Phodang?

Q: At the Phuntsok Phodang.

#11U: There was not any other work. The *dhungsay* ‘sons of the clan’ were born to the *dhagmo* ‘wife of one of the two head lamas of Sakya, Dagchen Rinpoche’ of the Phuntsok Phodang and I became the nanny.

Q: Can you tell us about what your duties were as a nanny?

#11U: No other work was assigned except for serving the *dhungsay*, helping with the toiletries and clothes. No other work was assigned nor was it allowed. The *dhungsay* were special, being high caste, and we were not allowed to touch anything dirty outside. [I] must remain clean in their service. [They] must be brought up like our children and it was not simple.

Q: Before you went there, *ama-la*, what kind of house did you live in with your mother in Sakya? Was it a poor house, middle income or a big house?

00:15:11

#11U: We were not the best nor the poorest, but among the middle class farmers. [We] were fairly good—fairly good.

Q: Can you tell me about the house you lived in with your mother?

#11U: We owned two houses. One house called Thonmon was located in a village, a large village. The other one where my maternal uncle lived was in Sakya. It was a government

house like the one where officials lived. It was not a great house, [I] have to be honest. Our real house was located in the village.

Q: Thonmon?

#11U: It is called Thonmon. It was a great nomad site.

Q: Did you live in maternal uncle's house in Sakya?

#11U: Yes, at maternal uncle's. Being siblings, mother was serving maternal uncle who was a monk. Mother cooked and we lived with maternal uncle in Sakya.

Q: Can you tell us a little bit about your life as a nanny? What you did everyday and how you took care of the children?

00:17:16

#11U: As a nanny one looked after the children like your own children. It entailed playing, feeding and dressing. There was not any other work nor was it permitted to assign [me] with any work. One was not given just any kind of work because then you would not be allowed to touch the *dhungsay*. The kitchen supplied food, tea and water. There were workers in Tibet and it was not any problem.

Q: How many children were there? What were their ages?

#11U: Whose? The Phuntsok Phodang's?

Q: The Phuntsok Phodang's.

#11U: Only the eldest son was there then. The others were born abroad. No, there were two. One was born in Lhasa and the other in Kham; there were two.

Q: What were the ages then?

#11U: Who? Me?

Q: No, the two children.

#11U: Yes?

Q: The two children.

#11U: The two children were babies whom I served.

Q: How far apart in age?

#11U: There was not much difference, just two years.

Q: Were you the first nanny that they had?

00:19:24

#11U: Yes, the first one.

Q: How did you like that job?

#11U: Oh, it was enjoyable. Of course, [the father] was a lama, and the *dhagmo* was very good and gentle. I was more in authority. However, [I] did my duty correctly. I was one that performed beautifully.

[Discontinuity in video – change in interview location]

Q: *Ama-la*, what kind of duties did you have as a nanny besides, you know, helping feed them? Did you play games with them? What kind of games did they like?

#11U: There was not much playing. There were only sons and no daughters. They had tutors and other attendants to play with, other attendants. I was a nanny that cared, fed and changed [them] when they were little. There were attendants for different [activities].

Q: Were the actual attendants teaching them to say prayers or read at that early age?

#11U: The one that taught prayers was a different person; he was an abbot. The attendants escorted [them] around and chanted prayers with [them] at home when [they] were little. Otherwise, there were abbots...separate teachers to teach the prayers.

Q: Since this was a rather well off family, very special family, what kind of toys did the children like to play with?

00:22:10

#11U: As for toys they had everything in Tibet, different kinds of Indian ones, toys that had been purchased in India.

Q: What kind of toys?

#11U: There were all kinds of toys...What to say...You know those toys from India. I do not know the names.

Q: What did they look like?

#11U: The playthings were those that came in pairs and such that are available in India, different toys that are made of plastic. They were like the ones that are available in India these days.

Q: I see.

#11U: Of course, there would be toys for theirs was like a kingdom.

Q: Were the children easy to manage or did they get naughty sometimes and how did you handle that if they did?

#11U: [The children] were easy to manage, as I was authoritative. Through experience [they] were scared of me, knew everything and obeyed...to speak in colloquial language. [They] were obedient. If [I] said, “Will you not sit down?” they said okay and sat down, and were polite.

Q: Was their mother very busy with other duties that you were there as a full-time nanny? Like why wasn't she dressing them and feeding them and doing that? What were her responsibilities?

00:24:37

#11U: The mother was the *dhagmo* of the Sakya and spent time in prayers and also received visitors that usually came to see people in high position. [She] did not have any other work. The food and everything were served by attendants and it was good in Tibet. [She] did not have any work and was good in chanting prayers.

Q: Were the children brought out to meet visitors or were they kept more separate lives?

#11U: [The visitors] were not allowed to meet [the children]. [The children] lived in a separate area. In case some people from Kham arrived and wished, in particular to meet [the children, they] were allowed to. Otherwise, the palace is large and there were different living quarters...each had separate living quarters.

They had separate living quarters and attendants.

Q: Were they able to play with other children maybe that were friends of the family or did they play mostly with each other?

00:26:31

#11U: When the children were around 3 years old, there were little monks and sons and daughters of attendants in the palace and they played together. There was a separate play area called *tuwang*, a large garden to play in. [The children] did not need to go outside.

Q: That's nice. So there would be a number of children and some of them would be little monks and some of them would be the children of the attendants, right?

#11U: Yes, there were. In Tibet we played *apdho* ‘a game played with five pebbles,’ hacky sack and skipping. There was a large ground in which [the children] played.

Q: Children sometimes can get sick from colds and other things. Were there ever times when the children became ill?

00:28:17

#11U: In general everything was neat. [The children] were kept clean. In case of cold, in Tibet we had the blessed pills. The blessed pills were soaked and given [to the sick child].

There were not many medicines. In the event of a bad illness one was taken to Gyangtse but there were not many such. Sakya was very clean.

Q: What about the Sakya Trizin, the father? Did the father come and visit the children at all?

#11U: Except occasionally, [the father] did not visit often since each had his own living quarters. However, the meals were partaken together. There was dinner and breakfast and such that were eaten together. The *dhungsay* must be taught prayers. In Tibet each had his individual teacher, individual living quarters and individual attendants.

Q: But the family ate their meals like, did they eat breakfast and lunch and dinner together?

00:30:30

#11U: I do not know about dinner at the Phuntsok Phodang earlier. When I was serving there they ate dinner together but breakfast separately. It seems that was not the case earlier, [meals used to be eaten] separately. During the time of this Dagchen Rinpoche, dinner was together, which was mostly *thukpa* ‘noodle soup.’ Practice used to be different in earlier times.

Q: Were there any events that you remember happening that were... I don't know...that were exciting or scary while you were a nanny?

#11U: Nothing of that sort happened. One of the *dhungsay* was born in Lhasa and it was a *dothum* birth. I faced a tough time then. A *dothum* is when one is born encased in the amniotic sac. There is a kind of birth called *dothum*. Normally when a child is born, it emerges headfirst while in the case of a *dothum* it is born encased in the amniotic sac. That had to be cut open which was a problem for me. Other than that, I did not face any problems. I served well. In Tibet it's said that a *dothum* birth is fortunate. [The amniotic sac] had to be cut open and I wondered how to do it, and gave it a lot of thought.

There were not any hospitals in Tibet.

Q: Which child was that? Which one?

00:33:19

#11U: It was the eldest child.

Q: The eldest?

#11U: It was not the eldest but the second.

Q: Was there any danger to the baby as a result?

#11U: There was danger if one did not know how to cut open [the amniotic sac]. I gave it a lot of thought. Other people were not allowed [to the birth]. After some time—the sac was soft—I slowly cut it open with a cloth diaper. It ruptured. I had readied a cloth diaper and some blessed pills. Then [the child] started to cry and [I] gave some blessed pills and the

birth was all right. Then one must take care of the umbilicus. That is the most important thing. The size of two fingernails should be left [at the navel]. Otherwise, air rushed in and [the umbilicus] became swollen. That was the only experience I had as a nanny.

Q: So you were there for the birth of the baby?

00:34:57

#11U: Yes, and until [the children] grew older. Then they left for India—fled to India. Then they left for the United States and I got left behind.

Later my child migrated [to America] and took me there, my son.

Q: Did that make you sad to be left behind, *ama-la*?

#11U: Yes, I had taken care of the children like they were mine and when they were leaving, they scratched on the window pane of the airplane trying to reach me. I felt very sad then, missed them. “I want Wangmo,” [they] said and scratched on the glass.

Q: Why couldn't you go to America with them?

00:36:40

#11U: If the sponsor does not take me, I cannot go. They got a sponsor who prepared all the documents in Kalimpong and was invited there. I could not go. Their whole family left.

Q: So in the family, who went? The husband and wife and the two sons, was that it?

#11U: Yes, and two children. There were only two children. The rest were born there.

Q: *Ama-la*, before the family left for America, did they travel through Tibet? Was there a time when you went with them to other places in Tibet?

#11U: Me?

Q: You too...

#11U: We came through Lhasa, went to Lhasa and then fled from Lhasa.

Q: No, before that. Did you travel to other places in Tibet?

#11U: Yes, we went towards Kham, went towards Kham.

Q: You traveled once to Kham?

#11U: They took me along to Kham.

Q: Why did they go there?

00:38:38

#11U: His Holiness [Dagchen Rinpoche] was a reincarnation of a lama from Kham and was invited to visit the monastery. It was in the place called Yiglung in Derge. It is Yiglung in Derge.

It is a beautiful place.

Q: It was very beautiful. So he was a reincarnation of...

[Interpreter to interviewer]: ...of a lama of Kham.

Q: Was that lama of Kham in Sakya tradition?

#11U: [The lama] was a Khampa and belonged to the Sakya tradition. Before passing away, the Khampa lama had said, "I am going to die and will be reborn in Sakya." So Dagchen Rinpoche is believed to be that reincarnation. That is the story.

Q: Do you remember what it was like to visit Kham and how was it different from Sakya?

00:40:40

#11U: [Kham and Sakya] are not similar. Theirs was a different region. In Sakya our mountains are brownish and the houses built against the hills.

Q: Close to the hills?

#11U: Yes, built against the hills. The main part of Sakya is built against a hill. The great Sakya Monastery is located on the opposite side on a plain. It was good. The Phuntsok Phodang and the Dolma Phodang are large palaces located on a plain.

Q: *Ama-la*, in Sakya all the houses were built close to the hills...

#11U: The town was close to the hills, but Phuntsok Phodang and Dolma Phodang are located on a plain as also the Sakya Monastery.

Q: How was Kham different?

#11U: Kham is totally different. In Sakya we did not have forests. The ground was plain. The region of Kham is beautiful. There are mountains, forests and lakes.

Q: How did the family travel to go all the way to Kham from Sakya?

00:42:22

#11U: At that time there were no vehicles. We went to Lhasa and towards the Changthang 'Northern Plateau' on horseback. Except for horses, there were no vehicles. One must travel for many months.

Q: So the children were on horseback, too?

#11U: Yes, on horseback. Everyone was on horseback. There were no vehicles. Masters and attendants, everyone was on horseback.

Q: Were the children riding their own horses or did they ride with somebody?

#11U: When younger, they rode along with attendants. One cannot ride as a little child.

Q: The younger one was on horseback?

#11U: Older ones like 7 or 8 years old can sit on horses, but others must ride in the lap of attendants. Little ones cannot sit [on horses], right?

Q: And it took months, you said?

00:44:04

#11U: Yes, it took months. [We] could travel only slowly because there was snowfall and one had to journey by horse or on foot. In one day one could cover just the distance from here to Ponta or a little further. Even if one traveled the whole day not much ground could be covered because of the plain terrain. Then one must set up camp and pitch tents.

Q: Was it exciting or was it a hard thing to do or both?

#11U: It was not hard because we were many in number, masters and attendants. If traveling alone, there were many bandits that side. Because of the large number, masters and attendants, it was not hard. Also being young in age, it was fun walking and riding horseback.

Q: How many people were in the caravan, about how many?

#11U: We were many people. We were nearly 30-40 people. In the plains each one pitched individual tents. The cook pitched a large tent, which was the kitchen where food was cooked; food came from the tent.

Q: A kitchen tent?

#11U: Yes, a tent must be pitched for the kitchen to cook food in. We had to pitch tents when in the Changthang, but in other regions the Khampas made arrangements in monasteries.

Q: Were there many Sakya monasteries or temples in that...you saw along the way?

00:46:57

#11U: There were not any until one arrived in Nangchen. There was a monastery, a Sakya monastery in the place called Nangchen. [We journeyed] through wilderness where there was nothing.

Q: Is there a Sakya monastery in Nangchen?

#11U: There was a Sakya monastery in Nangchen, a big Sakya monastery. There was one at the place where the King of Nangchen resides and another Sakya monastery called Tsangdhagon.

Q: What kind of a...was there a welcoming celebration? Can you describe it?

#11U: Because a lama was coming, they were in *siwa serdeng* ‘procession.’ Do you know that? *Siwa serdeng* is when monks line up and the people come to the monastery. At the monastery they served sweetened rice and then [the dignitaries] left for the palace.

Q: Sweetened rice?

#11U: That was for the celebration.

Q: That must have been wonderful. And then you had to make the whole return journey and at what point does the...do you see any Chinese influences in your travels? Does it feel dangerous like you’ve got to leave the country?

00:49:05

#11U: We stayed a long time in Derge and there were not any restrictions on the way back. At the place called Nyitri in Kongpo there was a large Chinese camp and they stopped and asked questions like “What are you carrying?” and such. Otherwise, [we] managed to come back from Derge.

Q: You mean on the way back from Derge?

#11U: Yes. One reached the area of Kongpo.

Q: At Kenpo?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: At Kongpo. At a place called Nyitri in Kongpo.

Q: What did you have with you that the Chinese were asking about, *ama-la*?

#11U: There was not anything except our clothes and such. There was nothing, nothing dangerous. There was nothing but clothes and such.

Q: Were there many Chinese...first of all, shouldn’t we say what year we’re doing this? *Ama-la*, what year was this or how old were you when you made this journey if you don’t remember the year?

#11U: I was 18 years old.

Q: At that time?

#11U: Yes.

Q: So this was like 1952.

#11U: Yeah, around that time.

Q: About 1952. Were there many Chinese visible in the area?

00:51:23

#11U: Yes, there were. Lhasa was full of Chinese.

Q: At that time?

#11U: Yes, there were Chinese in Lhasa then. Did the Women's Association not protest in Lhasa, in Tibet? When the women protested in Lhasa, I was among them.

Q: Were there Chinese visible when you went to Derge in 1952?

#11U: There were. The country was full of Chinese, in Derge, too. The country including Kham was full [of Chinese].

Q: Do you know at what point did the Sakya family decide they should leave, that they should leave Tibet? When did they come to that decision?

#11U: At that time we were in Lhasa with Gongma Rinpoche. Knowing the Chinese would do no good, Gongma Rinpoche said that we should leave. At that time we were in Lhasa. The Sakya Phuntsok Phodang was in Lhasa then and fled from there towards Phenpo.

Q: And what year was that that you left?

00:53:15

#11U: Me? We?

Q: Yes, what year was it when you left?

#11U: Fifty...when was it? Did it not happen in '59? Maybe it was around '52. We came around the time they protested, fled from Lhasa.

Q: Who protested? The Women's Association?

#11U: The Tibetans protested against the Chinese.

Q: Was it after or before that?

#11U: That is when we left. Many Tibetans fled; His Holiness the Dalai Lama left. We came later...when it was heard that His Holiness the Dalai Lama had reached Tsona, we fled through Phenpo.

Q: So did your family...with the family did you leave from Lhasa? Is that the place you left from?

#11U: That is right. I fled along with the family from Lhasa.

Q: Do you remember how you felt about leaving Tibet? What your thoughts were?

00:54:50

#11U: One was young and there was not much thought. All the masters and attendants were fleeing and it was scary because the *dhungsay* were small. All of us: the masters and attendants were young in age. Then we came through Samye in a boat and just about managed to reach Labrang.

Q: Did you say you fled through Samye?

#11U: Yes.

Q: Phenpo and then...?

#11U: From Phenpo...[we] came through Phenpo. The place called Phenpo is on that side of Lhasa [raises left hand]. Then we journeyed through Samye where [we] took a boat ride.

Q: How did you get from Lhasa to Samye?

#11U: Walking. There were no horses. The villagers offered small horses to the little *dhungsay* but we were on foot. Otherwise, there were no horses, poor things. Anyway, everyone was young. However, due to the extreme fear it was not tiring to walk.

Q: You were so afraid that you didn't even get tired walking.

00:56:41

#11U: From Samye we crossed in a boat. One must ride a boat.

Q: What happened at Samye, *ama-la*?

#11U: To go towards Lhoda from Samye one must ride a boat, cross a river. A boat, a boat, one must ride in one...the Kyichu [River].

Q: What kind of a boat?

#11U: The boat was one made of wood that is found in Tibet. There were not like the ones in foreign countries but were good wooden ones that could hold horses and loads. Such were found there.

Q: What did you cross? Was that a river?

#11U: Yes?

Q: Which river was it, *ama-la*?

#11U: The river was the Kyichu. The Kyichu of Lhasa was the one to cross. One reached Lhoda after crossing the river.

Q: Can you see from one side to the other? Is it...?

#11U: It was very large, but one can see one side to the other. [We] were crossing the river in a boat. In Tibet there used to be coracles and boats. Do you know a coracle that is made of animal hide? It can hold horses and loads.

Q: What happened when you got to the other side?

00:58:52

#11U: Then we crossed the river and reached the edge of Lhoda. After leaving Lhoda there was the border called Tsampa between Lhopa and Bhutan. It is called Tsampa and here many thousands of Tibetans had been stopped by the Indian Government. We arrived here and spent—we did not have to spent months but around 15 days. Many monks passed away here. Then the Indian Government granted permission for everyone to go where they wanted. The Bhutanese helped people reach their destination.

Q: Why were people dying?

#11U: Yes, monks and lay people.

Q: Why?

#11U: Because there was no food! We had reached the border called Tsampa and carried no food for [we] were fleeing. Eating nettles resulted in a swollen face. Many monks and lay people passed away. After sometime the Indian Government granted permission and the Bhutanese allowed passage. The Bhutanese were very good to the people and started providing food. The Bhutanese are very beneficial. They carried the aged and the children on their back, owing to the King of Bhutan.

Q: You didn't stay in Bhutan. Where did you keep going to?

01:01:48

#11U: After leaving Bhutan [we] reached Assam, the place called Assam. Here the Indian Government gave vaccinations and one was required to provide [your] name and the name of [your] father for record. One was required to give the correct name of [your] father. We had a couple from Kalimpong [India] that acted as interpreters and said, "Be careful today [to say the names correctly]. Passes will be made." The Indian Government issued passes, vaccinated and sent [us] to Buxar [India] for some time.

Q: Then where did you finally settle?

#11U: Then we were in Buxar—reached Buxar. The aunt of Phuntsok Phodang Dagchen Rinpoche is the one called Banyak in Gangtok [Sikkim].

Q: Whose?

#11U: There was a wealthy family in Gangtok called Banyak, in Sikkim.

Q: Banyak?

#11U: Yes, Banyak. They helped us and then we went to Darjeeling [India]. His Holiness stayed in Darjeeling.

Q: Where were you when you got separated...When did the...How long after the family escaped before they went to America?

01:03:47

#11U: It was quite a while, perhaps 3-4 years. I have forgotten and cannot say clearly. [The family] stayed in Tongsum in Darjeeling, India.

Q: Darjeeling?

#11U: [The family] stayed with a Sherpa family in Tongsum. Then they found an American sponsor and left for America. And we were left behind.

Q: What happened to you? Where did you go next when you got left behind?

#11U: I continued to live in Darjeeling, live in Darjeeling. There was the factory belonging to the Yabshi, Gyalo Thondup where [I] worked as a nanny.

Q: How does one become a nanny in a factory?

#11U: The factory workers had children that [I] took care of.

I was a nanny for 18 years.

Q: Did that feel good to be working with children again?

01:05:35

#11U: Yes, I like children and worked as a nanny for 18 years. Then [my] son was selected in the Tibetan United States Resettlement Project and I resigned and he took [me] to America. [Laughs]

Q: But you didn't stay in the United States. Why did you come back here?

#11U: We Tibetans are Buddhists. In general, it was very enjoyable and the country good. However, an aged person needs to chant the *mani* 'mantra of Avalokiteshvara' and a monastery like this. Also I have relatives and friends here and wished to return. So I came

back. [My son said,] “Mother, stay wherever you wish.” “I wish to live in the settlement,” [I] replied. My family members are there in America. It is like that.

Q: Why do you like monasteries?

#11U: Yes?

Q: Why do you like being where there are monasteries?

#11U: We are Buddhists and each of us has the need to chant *mani*, circumambulate and practice the dharma. The Christians have their own practice and it is similar for everyone. See, how enjoyable it is here chanting *mani* and practicing the dharma. One can spend time conversing, too. There are many from the same village [in Tibet] living together here.

Q: That makes for a happy ending.

#11U: Thank you.

Q: I guess the one question I...final question I have is, did you get to see the two little boys that you were the nanny for and when's the last time you saw them?

01:08:39

#11U: That was when [my] son took me to America. I cannot recall the year; it was a few years ago. Must have been four, five or six years. The worst thing is I tend to forget. I went to Seattle when [I] was in America.

Q: Did they seem familiar to you? Did you recognize them?

#11U: [I] did. They came to visit me in California, which was the first time. They came to see me in California. They know me because except for breast-feeding by [their] mother I did everything else.

Q: That must've been a very happy reunion.

#11U: Yes, we were. All of them came to see me. Actually I am nothing but from a young age as a nanny...Dagchen Rinpoche used to say, “Except for the *dhagmo* breastfeeding [the children], you have to do everything else.” Permission was granted and I was the one in authority.

Q: What a lovely story you have shared with us, *ama-la!* Thank you so much for telling us about...thank you so much for telling us about your wonderful life as a nanny.

#11U: Okay, Thank you. This is very fortunate.

Q: Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW