

Tibet Oral History Project

Interview #34U – Kalsang Lhamo
April 3, 2017

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TIBET ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

1. Interview Number: #34U
2. Interviewee: Kalsang Lhamo
3. Age: 82
4. Date of Birth: 1935
5. Sex: Female
6. Birthplace: Dhiwu
7. Province: Dhotoe (Kham)
8. Year of leaving Tibet: 1958
9. Date of Interview: April 3, 2017
10. Place of Interview: Dekyiling Tibetan Settlement, Sahastradhara, Uttarakhand, India
11. Length of Interview: 1 hr 09 min
12. Interviewer: Marcella Adamski
13. Interpreter: Tenzin Yangchen
14. Videographer: Tenzin Choenyi
15. Translator: Tenzin Yangchen

Biographical Information:

Kalsang Lhamo was born in 1935 in Dhiwu, Kham Province. In that region crops were harvested once or twice each year, depending on where they were grown. Handmade tools and animals were used in the cultivation process and the families took turns helping each other. Kalsang Lhamo describes the types of barley and products made from it. Water was channeled from the mountains and distributed into the fields by canals. Her family owned three huge copper pots for storing water to use in the house, but they had to carry the water to the pots on their backs.

Kalsang Lhamo recalls the local death rituals—the rich were cremated and the poor were disposed of in the river. In her region there were no schools, but boys could receive an education at the monasteries. There was even a shortage of men because so many became monks. Despite the shortage, it was common for a family to bring home one bride for two or more sons. This resulted in an abundance of unwed women, but there was no stigma for these women to have illegitimate children.

Kalsang Lhamo ran away from home to Lhasa as young woman, working as a laborer along the way to earn food. Because she came from a small village, she was not prepared to survive in a big city and she decided to live with a man so he could take care of her. He brought her to India, where she eventually reunited with her family. Kalsang Lhamo later made two visits back to her hometown in Tibet.

Topics Discussed:

Kham, farm life, customs/traditions, life as a refugee in India.

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Interview #34U

Interviewee: Kalsang Lhamo

Age: 82, Sex: Female

Interviewer: Marcella Adamski

Interview Date: April 3, 2017

Question: Please tell us your name.

00:00:10

Interviewee #34U: Yes?

Q: What is your name?

#34U: [My] name is Kalsang Lhamo.

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?

#34U: [Nods assent]

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

#34U: [Smiles] Okay.

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

#34U: Okay.

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

#34U: I will have no problems.

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

#34U: Okay, and thank you.

Q: *Ama-la* ‘respectful term for mother,’ can you please tell me where you were born in Tibet?

00:02:11

#34U: The birthplace is called Dhiwu, Dhiwu in Ba.

Q: Yes?

#34U: Dhiwu.

Q: How old are you now?

#34U: 82

Q: When you were growing up in Tibet how many people were in your family?

#34U: There were four children...there were six members in the family—six family members...four children...six family members.

Q: *Ama-la*, were you...where were you—you were the youngest or oldest or middle?

#34U: I am the one next to two children.

Q: What did your family do for a livelihood in Tibet?

#34: [We] engaged mainly in farming to earn a living. There were two harvests—two harvests in a year.

Q: Can you tell us which crops you raised at different times of the year?

00:04:25

#34U: Crops were sown in the first Tibetan lunar month and started to sprout to around this size [forms a gap of an inch between palms]. [The crops] grew to this size [forms a gap of an inch between palms] in the first Tibetan lunar month, during the Losar ‘Tibetan New Year.’ The crops grown then were wheat, barley and *sowa* ‘coarse, thick-shelled barley.’ There were three kinds: wheat, barley and *sowa*. Three kinds were cultivated.

Q: And then?

#34U: Then at the start of the 5th Tibetan lunar month, crops were once again sown after the harvest. After the harvest was done, sowing took place once again.

Q: Was that in the 5th Tibetan lunar month?

#34U: Yes, after all the harvest was done in the 5th Tibetan lunar month, sowing took place once again. At that time when I was little, there used to be many types of grains that were sown. There were many different kinds of crops then. There was one called *ti*. *Ti* has tiny seeds with a round ear, a round ear and tiny seeds. This is called *ti*.

Q: In the second round?

#34U: Yes, in the second round.

Q: *Ti* and then?

00:05:46

#34U: There was one called *chizi* that has a big, droopy ear. The ear is white in color. The seeds are white, completely white and tiny and formed in very large ears. This grew very well and if cooked as gruel, it is very tasty. It is used to make gruel. This crop was raised.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: That's the *chizi* that's tasty, *chizi*?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Yes, *chizi*.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: *Chizi* is tasty.

Q: Was that unusual for your region? Did everybody try to produce two crops a year?

00:07:57

#34U: Those in the lower area produced two harvests [in a year], while those living higher up had only small plots of land to raise two harvests. [Land holdings] were small and not very big, and situated only where water was available. [Land holdings] were not big and there was only one crop [a year]. Those of us living in the lower area cultivated twice a year.

Q: Can you tell us what kinds of instruments were used to actually put the seeds into the ground to do the actual planting?

#34U: There used to be large round bamboo baskets.

Q: Were these made of bamboo?

#34U: Made of bamboo in which people carried seeds. There were no machines. People carried [the bamboo basket with seeds] and scattered [the seeds] like this [indicates scattering with right hand] with the hand in the fields—scattered like this [indicates scattering with right hand] in the fields where it was marked. People did the work for there were no machines. Plowing was done using oxen or *dzo* 'animal bred between a yak and cow' or yaks...the plowing of the fields.

Q: How were the furrows made?

00:10:33

#34U: The furrows in the ground were made like this. During the first cultivation that took place in the 1st lunar month, people created the furrows in the ground for there were no machines. There was something that was used to fashion furrows in the ground. Rows of furrows were prepared. Then there was a tool to smoothen the ground. Water must be channeled between the ridges for the winter. Channeling water was necessary for without water, one cannot cultivate. Water must be channeled.

Q: When you said you were using tools, *ama-la*, what kind of tools did they use to make it furrow?

#34U: At the time of harvesting the grain?

Q: No, at the time of sowing. You mentioned that people prepared the furrows in the ground. What kind of tool was used to do that?

#34U: The tool had a wooden handle with a metal head. The metal must be bought from China, from a great distance and metal was very expensive. The metal must be bought and there were people that manually created the tool. People must fashion it for there were no machines. A wooden handle must be attached to the metal after which it could be used to dig.

Q: Where was the place that the metal came from?

00:12:45

#34U: The metal came from China. It must have come from China.

Q: When you would actually do the planting, how many people would work on that at the same time?

#34U: People [worked] in groups. Whether there were two, three or four sons or daughters, [they] went to help someone else and then [the other people] came to help in return. [The work] was done in groups. [People] grouped to work with one family and the next day grouped to work at another family. Such was done.

Q: And the tools that they used to make the furrows were they like short or were they long handles? How did they look?

#34U: The one that was used to dig up the earth was long. It was long with a metal tip and pulled by oxen and such. It was similar to plowing the fields; it was similar to the method of plowing in India. The plowing is exactly the same. [We] used *dzo*, oxen and yaks, and it was the same. The method of plowing is the same as in India.

Q: So if people were helping they would have a *dzo*, oxen or yak behind or in front?

00:15:20

#34U: The animal moved in front pulling the plough that was behind.

Q: How long would it take to plant a field in one day, how long?

#34U: The length of time to plant depends upon the size of the field. Some plots of land where only one harvest was gathered were very large. There was only one harvest due to lack of water.

Q: What does it mean by one harvest?

#34U: The village in the upper region gathered one harvest while those in the lower areas harvested twice. Areas where two harvests could be gathered were not very large. The plots were smaller and must be irrigated. The plots were small and plowing could be done fast. One plowed one plot after the other and it was done quickly. It could be done quickly.

Q: Were the plots of lands in the higher areas larger in size?

#34U: Yes, [plots of lands] where only one harvest could be gathered was large in size. Sowing was done on entire hills. Entire hills were sown and [the plots] were larger. Lower areas where two harvests were gathered were not that large. They were smaller in size.

Q: Did the land belong to your parents?

00:17:26

#34U: Yes, the fields belonged to the parents. Our family owned large areas of land.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: They had large plots, not small plots?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: The plots were small but they had many plots.

Q: Was the wheat and barley produced, was that just used by the family or did you transport it to other places?

#34U: [The produce] was not transported, but for our own use.

Q: Was there enough food to eat in your village? Did your family always have enough?

#34U: There was enough to eat for the lands were very fertile. Everybody grew very good grains in the fields. There were many kinds of grains grown in areas where only one harvest was gathered, in areas where only one harvest was gathered. There were yellow buckwheat and white buckwheat. Bread made from yellow buckwheat looked yellow in color. There was also a white variety. Then there was the grain used to make *tsampa* 'flour made from roasted barley.' There were bountiful crops in our region.

Q: Which grain did you use?

00:19:52

#34U: Barley was used to make *tsampa* and also *sowa*. *Tsampa* made using *sowa* is better and tastier but more difficult. It must be sieved and a lot of work was involved. Barley need not be sieved unlike *sowa*. This *tsampa* was tastier and better.

Q: Were the grains, were they ground at home or did you have to take them somewhere?

#34U: In order to make *tsampa*, you roasted [the grains] yourself while for the grinding you had to visit a water mill. Some [water mills] were located closer while others were at a distance. One loaded [the grains] on mules and donkeys and traveled long distances. The grinding was done using a water mill.

Q: How did you get...if the water mills were far away, how did you get water for your fields after you sowed the seeds? How did you water the fields?

00:21:51

#34U: Take this place for instance...water was channeled from Sahastradhara to this place [a few kilometers?] through canals dug in the ground. There were canals for the water. Water flowed all the time and at times one went to repair the canals. Sometimes they collapsed and must be repaired. Water flowed continuously; water flowed from the upper parts of valleys.

Q: Were the canals coming from higher up in the mountains?

#34U: Water kept flowing from the mountains. It was a large amount of water. Water continued to flow in large amount from the base of the mountains.

Q: Did the family have to go far to fetch water for regular...for tea and cooking or was it nearby?

00:23:13

#34U: In my hometown there was water that was dammed in the fields. Water was dammed to form a sort of pond. To irrigate the fields, a thick wooden pole was fixed in it using rocks at the bottom for the water to pass through. When this wooden pole was moved water flowed into the fields. [We] fetched water for drinking here.

We went to this place to fetch water as young children. These days the Chinese have installed water pipes into the homes. We used to fetch water on the back in the younger days. [We] fetched water from the pond and carried it home. There used to be huge copper pots to store water. Water had to be fetched.

Q: Where did those copper pots come from?

#34U: Perhaps the country of China, but [I] do not know for the water pots were very old. The water pots were extremely large and a family possessed two or three water pots. Some used them to collect rainwater on the roof. [A family] possessed two or three water pots that were incredibly large. There were ladders for the water pots. There were three rungs for the ladder in our house. One climbed three rungs of the ladder to store water. The water pots were incredibly large—the water pots.

Q: So it was like tall, as tall as a person or bigger?

00:26:05

#34U: Yes [as tall as a person]. It was large.

Q: A ladder to climb. Oh, my goodness! Did the water stay fresh and clean once you put it in there?

#34U: The water remained clean. And there were large ladles to take water out of the water pot. You took water from the water pot with a ladle for use at home like cooking. The ladle was hung on the water pot. The ladle to take out water was large and hung on the water pot. It was removed and used to take out water.

Q: And also, did those ladles also come from far away like China and what were they made of?

#34U: It seems our Tibetan people made the ladles—made them. [I] do not know where the brass came from, but [ladles] were on sale in Chating and such places. There were large good quality ladles that could be bought. Tibetans made the ladles.

Q: Came from Chating?

#34U: There were smiths that made ladles there.

Q: You know, if a young person got married and they wanted to have their own home, where did they get all those pots and ladles and farm tools? Did people start their own home or did they always have to live with somebody else in the beginning?

00:28:41

#34U: If you had 4-5 children and one child went away, got married and went to live separately, the family gave [him/her] a share of the land. He/she had a share of the family land that was given. A share of land was given and if there was no house, a house was constructed.

Q: How about the household items?

#34U: [I] wonder how they got the household items. Perhaps they made efforts to find them. Actually these were brought from China. Most were brought from China and as for clay pots, there were those that made them.

Q: How large was your village, *ama-la*? How many people like lived right near your home or were you living more isolated?

#34U: There were around 300 families, perhaps over 200 in the village.

Q: That's a large village.

00:30:26

#34U: It was a large village. There was the cluster where one harvest was gathered and those in the lower area that was formed in a row with water canals. There were many families in the area where two harvests used to be gathered, in the lower area.

Q: So there must've been many rituals to handle birth and marriage and death. So I'd like to ask about some of those rituals, okay?

#34U: I see. It was similar to what happens here when a person passed away. All the neighbors came; all the neighbors came when a person passed away. Monks were invited from the monastery—monks were invited from the monastery when a person passed away. If it was a rich family [the body] was cremated and a big prayer ceremony was held. If it was economically weak...if it was a poor family, [the body] was disposed of in a river or cremated and only a small number of prayers was read. It was like that.

Q: If they disposed the body in the river was the body wrapped up in anything and was it intentionally put in the river at a certain place?

00:33:07

#34U: Our village is located at a high altitude and there is the biggest river called Yangtze flowing in our region. The river called Yangtze is the biggest river in Tibet. It is the biggest river among the Mekong, the Salween and all other rivers. It was an extremely huge river, but it seems to have shrunk a little these days. It was a huge river in the olden days and covered an entire region. It was an extremely large river.

Q: Were [bodies] disposed of in the Yangtze?

#34U: Yes, in the Yangtze. Some were disposed of in the Yangtze.

Q: You said the rich were cremated and the poor were given a river burial, but was your family rich or poor or middle class?

#34U: We had been extremely rich during the time of my grandfather—during the time of my grandfather. Then there was a decline during the time of my father. However, we were a rich family and owned immense land holdings. The house was extremely large—the house.

Q: Yes?

#34U: The house was extremely large.

Q: Monastery?

#34U: House.

Q: House?

#34U: House. It had been constructed by my grandfather. In Tibet you continued to live in the house constructed by your grandfather or father.

Q: So can you describe what does an extremely rich house look like? What would it look like inside?

00:35:46

#34U: There was a fine altar within. We had a fine altar at home. The altar was very big with a grand image of Chenrezig ‘Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara, the patron saint of Tibet.’ These belonged to my grandfather. Such were there, but later the Chinese seem to have destroyed everything. Otherwise, [the altar and image] were there when I was little.

Q: Do you...were you a young girl when the Chinese came to your village?

#34U: [I] was not little when the Chinese came. The Chinese were not there when I left [the village].

Q: You weren’t there when the Chinese came to your village. So what else would be in this beautiful house? There was a big altar room, but what are the rooms in the house, *ama-la*?

#34U: The other thing in our house was the water pot, which I spoke about earlier. It was a huge water pot such that nobody else owned anything like it. It was an incredibly big water pot to store water. There were three of these. Then there were the ritual instruments that were valuable. My grandfather had a good collection. Later, [my] father was not very capable and there was a decline.

Q: Ritual instruments for what?

00:38:31

#34U: These were kept in the altar. There were the cymbal and various other kinds. There was the clarinet and such. Then there was the set of *thing* ‘small water bowls used in offerings’ of good quality. However, there was not any jewelry in our house. There was not any jewelry.

Q: Jewelry?

#34U: There was not any jewelry. My father and others had not been very capable and the family was ruined.

Q: What happened that your father’s financial status changed? What happened?

#34U: They did not work. All the children...being a wealthy family, all the sons were roaming about—roamed about. For a farmer, if one does n’t work there is no income. A farmer must be a hard worker. [The sons] did not work and roamed about. Then things did not work out well.

Q: Did you...you know, you mentioned the burial...When a child was born in the village, how was the name picked for the child? How did they give a name to the child?

00:40:47

#34U: One requested a lama for a name. There was a good monastery. One went to request a lama, requested a lama and the lama gave a name.

Q: I see. How old were you when you had your first children...first child?

#34U: [I] think at age 26.

Q: 27?

#34U: 26

Q: Oh, okay, after you left Tibet?

#34U: Yes.

Q: Is there anything else about your village that would be...that comes out to your memory? What are some things you remember about your village? Were they nice memories, pleasant or was it difficult to live there?

#34U: [I] did not think it difficult because I never got tired when working hard, which was because one was young then. [I] never became tired however hard [I] worked. [I] never became tired.

Q: At what age did you start working?

00:42:40

#34U: There were no schools to attend in the hometown. As a little child, one did any work the parents asked to do. When one was old enough to herd animals, one was send to herd animals. When one was old enough to herd goats and sheep, one did that. One worked in the fields at the age of 10 or 11. From the age of 8 one was sent to work in the fields. You worked according to your ability because there were no schools.

Q: Did you ever want to go to school or not even think about it?

#34U: No, there were no schools that existed. It would have been okay to allow the girls to learn but boys were taught...made monks. The boys were taught but girls were not, which is strange.

Q: Did you wish you could ever learn how to read or write?

00:44:29

#34U: No, [I] did not know anything because there was no such practice. There was no practice of teaching girls to read and write unless one became a nun. There was no practice of teaching [girls] to read and write. Boys were taught.

Q: Did any girls become nuns from your village and was there a nunnery?

#34U: There was a nunnery. Not many remained nuns but there were good ones, too. Some nuns became very good. There were [girls] that became nuns.

Q: Was all the land, like in your village, owned by the people themselves? They owned the land or was there like a landowner or did it belong to a monastery?

#34U: In most cases you owned the land. There were a few owned by the monastery. There were lands that were owned by the monastery. If one cultivated land owned by the monastery, half the harvest was given to the monastery—half must be given to the monastery and half retained for yourself. There were many that followed this. We owned our land.

Q: What about any holidays or festivals? Did you have any when you were growing up? Did you do anything that was, you know, like singing or dancing? For instance, you said a group of people would come and help plow the field, did people have songs that they did for that kind of work?

00:47:11

#34U: Yes. There were singing and dancing and one never felt that work was a struggle. There was a feeling of happiness.

Q: Did you ever go to see like a *cham* festival or a dance?

#34U: Yes, [I] have.

Q: Can you tell where did you go?

#34U: [Speaks before question is translated] However, as [I] look back I had not understood it much—did not understand at all, but watched the show for fun. I did not understand whether it was about deities or things like that. One had not understood anything.

Q: Did you have any kind of instruction in the dharma and Buddhist teachings? Did anybody teach you about Buddhism?

#34U: How helpful would it be had [I] received it. There was nothing. [I] knew nothing and am stupid.

If one had even a little bit of education, it would be good these days. [I] know nothing.

Q: No schools in your whole village, 200 people.

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Families

[Interviewer to interpreter]: Families.

00:49:32

#34U: There were not.

Q: No, nothing.

#34U: There were no schools. Boys had the opportunity to become monks. Not many [girls] became nuns, just a few. So there was no education for girls.

Q: Were girls treated differently in families than boys? Were girls and boys treated differently in families?

#34U: There was no difference in treatment. There was no difference in treatment. However, there were not many [boys] seeking the hands of girls in marriage. There was a lesser number of boys because many boys became monks. Also if a family had two sons, one bride was brought home. If there were two sons, one bride was brought home, which was the custom. One bride was brought home for two or three sons. So there were more women.

It was rare for a woman to be sought after for marriage. Therefore, girls had one or two illegitimate children and continued to live like that. There were some that had two or three illegitimate children. They brought up the children and lived like that. When they [the illegitimate children] grew up, they could become brides and bridegrooms of rich families. There was no stigma. There was no stigma for having illegitimate children for it had become a custom.

Q: I didn't understand why a bride would be brought home so that she could be the bride of two or three boys? Why was that? I thought there was a shortage of boys because they were in the monastery.

00:52:28

#34U: That is right. Some could not get along and fought [when there were multiple husbands]. Some got along well. There were many that could not get along and fought. Because boys became monks there was a lesser number of boys and more girls.

Q: If there were more number of girls, a boy should bring home more brides.

#34U: That should be but there was no such practice. If a boy had two brides, it was considered bad for two women to live together. If a boy had two wives, both the wives would give birth and there would be suffering. It was considered bad. It was not considered good.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: Because she was saying it's the other way round. They didn't...

[Interpreter to interviewer]: But that was the custom.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: Oh, that was the custom. If a man had two wives there would be fighting and discord?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Yes. So they didn't have more...

#34U: That was in the old days. These days nobody follows this: two sons do not share a bride.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: They don't?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: They don't now.

Q: Can a woman have more than one husband when you were growing up?

00:54:23

#34U: There were. There were many.

Q: In your village?

#34U: There were.

Q: Why was that useful in the culture? What was the reason?

#34U: [Speaks before translation] It was said that if there were two sons at home, the family would become rich. From the two sons, one went to graze animals and one stayed home. In case there were three sons, one became a merchant and went to trade; one went out [to herd animals] and one stayed home. It was considered good.

Q: I see. So different tasks were given to different men.

#34U: That is right.

Q: So out of like maybe say 10, maybe 20 families, how many would have multiple husbands? How many women would have multiple husbands?

#34U: There were none that had more than one husband.

Q: No, no, you just told us about multiple husbands meaning if a family had two or three sons...

#34U: I see.

Q: ...and if they brought home one bride, it means the wife has more than one husband. If there were 20 families, how many women would follow that custom?

00:56:22

#34U: There were many such families in our hometown. If there was just one son, that was it. Should there be two sons, both continued to live at home. There were cases when a son did not get along and separated—a son did not get along at home and separated.

Q: What about...what about...did you ever go to Lhasa from your home and how far was that?

#34U: To Lhasa? [I] went to Lhasa.

Q: How far is Lhasa?

#34U: Lhasa is very far away—very far away.

Q: How long did it take you to go?

#34U: It took 3-4 months. [We] did not have anything to eat during the journey and [stopped along the way to] stay as servant harvesting crops. [We] worked in the fields and harvested crops. There were two of us girls and [we] stayed long periods working for others and receiving wages, and then continued the journey and then stopped again.

00:58:13

It takes around a month if one drove a mule. Merchants take a month driving mules.

Q: Why did you want to go to Lhasa?

#34U: We considered Lhasa precious because there are good pilgrim spots in Lhasa. We did not know anything and ran away listening to people.

Q: Did your mother or father know you were going?

#34U: Father had passed away and was not there. [I] fled without the knowledge [of mother].

Q: Mother didn't know?

#34U: [Mother] did not know because [I] ran away.

Q: Was that something kids in the village would do just for the adventure to go without telling their parents, typical, common?

01:00:07

#34U: There were many that ran away. There were many such cases.

There were those that ran away and the parents caught and brought them back.

Q: Did they go all the way to Lhasa and bring them back?

#34U: There was not anyone that pursued all the way to Lhasa because it is very far away and one had to go walking. [The parents] followed [the runaway children] at a day or twos distance and if sighted, brought them back.

Q: You and your girlfriend...what was it like when you got to Lhasa? What did you do?

#34U: When [we] got to Lhasa...what to say...We were completely stupid in our hometown. [We] had never seen vehicles—vehicles. [We] had never seen a vehicle—had

never ever seen a vehicle. When [I] saw a vehicle, [I] wondered what it was! [I] had never seen a vehicle until the place called Tsawa Pondha. [I] saw a vehicle in that place. When [I] saw the vehicle approach from a distance, [I] wondered what the strange thing was that had some sort of a mouth. [I] wondered what was coming! It seemed very strange because we had been living in a small village. Then when [I] saw candies, [I] wondered what these things were that looked like beads. We were completely stupid in our hometown.

Q: What else happened?

01:02:39

#34U: Then I met a man who hailed from my hometown. He brought me all the way to India—all the way to India.

Q: Did you fall in love with him?

#34U: Yes, I lived with him out of desperation because it was difficult in a strange place. It was very difficult to earn a living. I was desperate and helpless and thought that by being with him, he will make a living. I lived [with him] out of desperation and he brought [me] here to India.

Q: That must have been a big contrast to go from Tibet to India. What was that like?

#34U: [I] did not get to see anything in India because [we] lived in a village. [We] lived in a village in India, in Kalimpong—in a village. However, [I] did not get to live there long because my relatives and those from my hometown arrived in Gangtok after Tibet was invaded. Then I moved to Gangtok to be with them. Gangtok and [Kalimpong] are close by.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: To Gangtok in India, right?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Right, Sikkim.

Q: How long did you stay there, *ama-la*?

01:04:59

#34U: [I] was around three years in Gangtok working as a coolie. We were all engaged in constructing roads until the Tibet border—constructing roads at the border between India and Tibet for three years.

All the Tibetans worked as coolies. People worked in small groups based on their hometowns and constructed roads in the places called Lachen and Lachung at the border of India and Tibet. Then another group worked at Nathula Pass, which is on the route to Tibet. There were two divisions and the road crew was Tibetans. Tibetans constructed the roads.

Q: I know Tibetans were invaded, so you probably didn't want to go back, but did you miss your hometown, ever miss it, ever want to go back?

#34U: I do miss it and went back to Tibet, to the hometown.

Q: Oh, really? When?

#34U: Perhaps it has been around 10 years. [I] have been there long ago in the year '83 with my sibling who is here. We went together. He was sick and wished to go back. So [I] took him to the hometown in the year '83. He was sick and later passed away there.

Q: Did you want to stay in Tibet or did you want to come back?

01:07:25

#34U: I did not want to stay back because all [my] children were here. The children were left here. There was no thought of staying back.

Then [I] visited the hometown again around 10 years back.

Q: And what was that like?

#34U: Their condition had progressed at that time, had made very good progress.

Q: Your siblings?

#34U: There was only one sibling left. The others had passed away. There was one sibling who survives now. He has become rich; his condition is good.

Q: Was he living in your hometown?

#34U: [He] was living in the old place, but has now moved to another part of Ba.

Q: I think that brings us up to the present. You came back here and didn't stay in Tibet. *Ama-la*, you gave us some very interesting aspects of Tibet I have not heard before.

01:09:09

#34U: I see.

Q: So I want to say again...just check one more time, if this interview was shown in Tibet or China, would this be a problem for you?

#34U: There will be no problem.

Q: Okay, thank you. Thank you for sharing your story with us.

#34U: [Smiles]

END OF INTERVIEW