

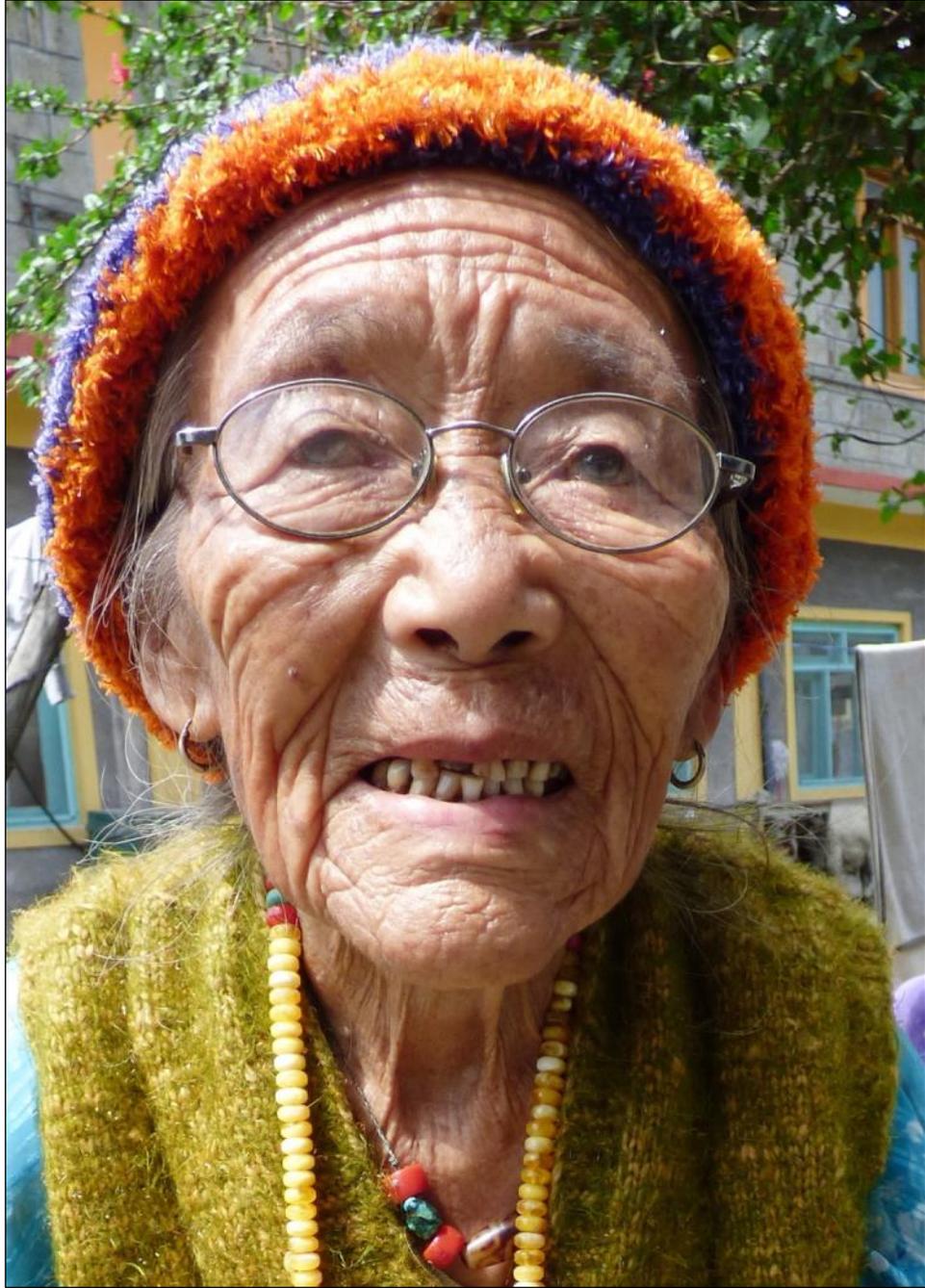
Tibet Oral History Project

Interview #40N – Tsering Dolma
April 14, 2015

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TIBET ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

1. Interview Number: #40N
2. Interviewee: Tsering Dolma
3. Age: 85
4. Date of Birth: 1930
5. Sex: Female
6. Birthplace: Kampo
7. Province: Utsang
8. Year of leaving Tibet: 1959
9. Date of Interview: April 14, 2015
10. Place of Interview: Paljorling Tibetan Settlement, Prithvi Chowk, Pokhara, Nepal
11. Length of Interview: 1 hr 06 min
12. Interviewer: Marcella Adamski
13. Interpreter: Palden Tsering
14. Videographer: Henry Tenenbaum
15. Translator: Tenzin Yangchen

Biographical Information:

Tsering Dolma was born in Kampo in Utsang when her mother was 50 years old. She talks about her family and her own marriage arranged by her parents when she was 17. After living several years in her husband's village and having one daughter, her husband was sent by a government official to work in Lhasa. Her husband never returned to her, but sent permission for Tsering Dolma to return to her own parents. Her in-laws provided her with jewelry and animals so that Tsering Dolma could live on her own with her daughter.

Tsering Dolma returned to her parents' village but lived in her own house. Her family farmed and raised animals as well. She worked in the fields, but she was happiest when weaving aprons and braiding hair to earn a living. She was not interested in marrying again since her first marriage did not work out and she was successfully raising her daughter with the help of her extended family members. Tsering Dolma explains how marriages used to be arranged by the parents and the brides were taken to the future husbands' villages on the pretext of visiting lamas or relatives.

Tsering Dolma recounts seeing Chinese in her village for the first time and her family soon decided to escape. They trekked over mountains and through snowfall, suffering for two months before reaching safety in Mustang, Nepal. She lived in Thakola for 10 years where she earned a living harvesting crops and weaving before moving to the settlement in Pokhara.

Topics Discussed:

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

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Interview #40N

Interviewee: Tsering Dolma

Age: 85, Sex: Female

Interviewer: Marcella Adamski

Interview Date: April 14, 2015

Question: Please tell us your name.

00:00:09

Interviewee #40N: Tsering Dolma.

Q: How old are you?

#40N: Am 85 years old.

Q: *Ama-la* ‘respectful term for mother,’ where were you born?

#40N: My birthplace is the place called Kampo as [I] told you earlier.

Q: Kampo in Utsang?

#40N: Yes, Utsang.

Q: When you were a little girl how many people were in the family?

#40N: In the family as I mentioned earlier, my mother...

Q: Not presently, but when you were a little girl, how many people were in the family?

#40N: Presently there are two older sisters.

Q: Not presently, but when you were little, how many members were there in the family altogether long back?

#40N: Altogether including the *nama* ‘sister-in-law’ there were 11 members.

Q: How many brothers and sisters, *ama-la*, did you have?

00:01:31

#40N: There is not anyone younger than me. I was born when mother was 50 years old.

Q: You were born when she was 50 years old?

#40N: Yes, I was born when mother was 50 years old. [All the siblings] are older than me. By the time I was born, elder sister had already left as a *nama* ‘bride.’ Elder brother had brought in a *nama*.

Q: Altogether three children?

#40N: There were three sons.

Q: Three sons.

#40N: Three sons and four daughters.

Q: Were you the youngest among all, the youngest?

#40N: I am the youngest from among the dead and the living, born at the age of 50.

Q: That’s three sons and four daughters, right?

#40N: Yes.

Q: Was that very common for women to have babies as old as 50?

00:02:45

#40N: Two elder sisters had already left as *nama*. The rest of the family was there.

Q: You were born when your mother was 50 years old.

#40N: Yes, I was born when mother...

Q: Was it common to give birth at 50 in Tibet?

#40N: Yes, the livelihood of the family was good with farmlands and animals. Then the family became poor after elder brother passed away. Elder brother expired.

Q: What would be...maybe that’s why meaning you were...the family was prosperous?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: She didn’t answer at all. Actually like just...

Q: And then *ama-la*, how many...how many children did nomad mothers have in the course of their lifetime on an average?

00:04:11

#40N: Some have two, three, four or five children. Some have one and some one or two. Many children were born in our region. I cannot remember how many children each family had. My parents gave me away in marriage at the age of 17 to the place called Menkham in Nyelam. [I] cannot recall much. As long as one could work there were not any

difficulties in terms of food and clothing. There was no problem if one could work. I cannot recall, as [my] mind is not good.

Q: *Ama-la*, did women want to have as many children as they could or did they use any kind of birth control to limit the number of children?

#40N: There was not anything remotely like that. If children were born, they were born and if children were not born, they were not born. Here [people] prevent birth and do many such things during this era. I have never heard about such things. After coming to this country one heard that some prevent birth; some were prevented from giving birth by the Chinese. The younger ones do such things here. I have nothing to talk about any such being there in my hometown or in Tibet during the past era.

Q: *Ama-la*, you mentioned that you went as a bride. Can you tell us about how you became a bride?

00:06:53

#40N: [I] was sent to Menkhap.

Q: Please speak about it.

#40N: I was sent at 17 and at age 21 the daughter was born. Without any argument or such...the Kungo 'Your Presence' [title of address for government officials] of Menkhap is very authoritative and took my husband to Lhasa.

Q: Husband was taken to Lhasa?

#40N: [My husband] was not allowed to return. He did not come back saying [he] was not being allowed to.

Q: Were there arguments earlier?

#40N: There never were arguments.

Q: Were there arguments after husband was taken to Lhasa?

#40N: Yes?

Q: You said that you and your husband couldn't get along.

#40N: The Kungo of Menkhap took [my husband] on work to Lhasa and then [husband] did not return. There had been no argument or anything like that.

Q: Do you have any idea why he was taken away by a Tibetan Government official?

00:08:30

#40N: His [husband's] paternal aunt was the wife of the Kungo. The Kungo must have had an illegitimate offspring or something in Lhasa. So my husband was taken to Lhasa to work [for this offspring] with the understanding that he would return in 2-3 months. However, [he] never did and I waited for two years.

Q: What did [you] say was the reason?

#40N: [The Kungo] said there was some work. The Kungo [the illegitimate offspring] that lived in Lhasa was called Kungo Sangwa Chenmo. The Kungo in Menkhap was called Kungo Lhasay. He was the father. [I] do not know if [he] had had a wife in the past or it was an illegitimate offspring.

Q: The father's illegitimate offspring?

#40N: Yes, it might be something like that. It seems he [son] was an official of horses that...[not discernible] in Lhasa. That is what was said but I had never seen him. [My husband] was needed to serve him for 2-3 months. So my daughter's father and another relative's son called Penpa were taken.

Q: Taken for work?

#40N: Both of them did not return. It was not like [they] were injured, fell sick or died. [They] did not return from Lhasa.

Q: *Ama-la*, who were you living with if you had no husband? Where did you live?

00:10:46

#40N: I returned home. My husband had gone to Lhasa. His brother who was living there said a letter had come [from my husband] that said, "If she wishes to stay back, [my] parents should not ill treat her. Since a child has been born, please take good care of the child. If she desires to return home, please give her animals and valuables. Please give some belongings to both mother and daughter."

[His brother] said that such a letter had come from my daughter's father, my husband. His parents asked me, "Do you want to remain or go back?" "I will go back. I have waited two years. Now the child is able to walk. Why should I not return? Who should [I] stay back for? I am going back," I replied. "If [you] return [you] will be given some valuables." "Of course. You, the parents, should know whether you brought me as a servant or a *nama*. I will call [my] elder brother and father."

Father was away in Lhasa and [I] asked elder brother to come but he did not. I had a paternal uncle in Nyelam called *Zimpon-la* who was a yak driver transporting salt. I sent a message through someone called Migmar. "Paternal uncle, please come. This is what they are telling me. Who should I stay back for? It is okay to live with them for the time being but my future has to be taken into consideration. If I return to my parents, I will be going

back to my hometown and can do any kind of work...[not discernible] I will report to the leader, 'Please give me work for I wish to return' and will not stay back."

Q: You decided to return?

#40N: They gave me some valuables for the child and for me as well. The mother [in-law] was good. Actually, the family was very good. I was not ever scolded or deprived of food or anything. Sorry for speaking too long. [I] went there as a *nama*.

Q: *Ama-la*, you went back to your own family and what did you take with you as part of your gifts from your husband for leaving you with the baby?

00:14:31

#40N: They dropped [me] back.

Q: They took [you] back?

#40N: They took [me] back.

Q: What valuables did they give you?

#40N: There were valuables, clothes and in Tibet we had the *patu*.

Q: *Patu*, headdress?

#40N: Yes, *patu*, ornaments for the head. [I] was given all of these saying, "You have worked very well." The mother [in-law] was crying, "Please stay back and look after me. We are both old. Please stay back." "I cannot stay back. I have to think of my life. Mother, you are old and once you are gone, who will be there for me? I wish to return to my own hometown. Your son has sent a letter or message [indicating his decision to leave me]. If he can decide, so can I. I am going back." I was given valuables: 45 sheep, a certain number of goats and around 16 yaks and *dri* 'female yaks.'

Q: Any other valuables?

00:15:38

#40: Yes, wealth in the form of animals and *patu* and there was also the *ontha* 'necklace' in Tibet that is worn in Dharamsala [India]...

Q: Were you given these?

#40N: Yes, they were a rich family and owned them. In addition to what they gave [me] there were what my parents had given me like *ontha* and *gawu* 'amulets.' My parents had given me well and so did my husband's family. Although I was young I looked after the aged and helped bring up the older *nama*'s child. In Tibet children were not looked after much. They were given milk and then laid to sleep. The older *nama*'s child lives here presently.

Q: *Ama-la*, were they ashamed or embarrassed that their son had left you and you were pregnant?

00:18:27

#40N: His parents asked me to stay back at home.

Q: [The parents] said that but were they embarrassed?

#40N: Then I went back. I lived in the direction of Yanju Thanka, Martsang Tsangpo and Riwoche. Since then [I] never met [my husband's family].

Q: Were your parents-in-law angry with their son for leaving you?

#40N: [They] were not. [They] never did. [They] had never even spoken harshly [to me]. The family was very good. [They] never did like that.

Q: You didn't follow my question. Your husband left you and lived in Lhasa. Hence, were your husband's parents angry with your husband, with their son?

#40N: [They] were not angry, as they could not meet. He was living in Lhasa.

Q: He never came to the hometown?

#40N: He did not. [He] never did. His relatives were there like the Kungo's wife who might have received the letter. But for letters there were no telephones then. I was never subjected to any suffering.

Q: Then how were you received when you went home? Was your baby already born? How were you received by your family and by your nomad friends?

00:20:50

#40N: [The child] was already born.

Q: What did your parents say when you returned?

#40N: [My] parents wanted to go to file a case...go to file a case. I said, "It is not necessary to file a case. He has sent a letter or a message asking [his parents] to allow me to stay if I wished to and to treat [me] well and allow [me] to return home if [I] wanted to. The husband has said so and I told [the parents-in-law] that [I] wanted to return home. There is no need to file a case since I was given valuables and provisions. I will not live at home. Please let me live separately." I had returned to my parents and they had many houses. So I lived in a house separately with my daughter. Now there was no work and I was free after returning to my hometown.

Q: How old was your daughter at that time?

#40N: [My] daughter could just about crawl when I brought her home after my return as their *nama*. [She] could just about crawl.

Q: When you said your parents had many houses, they were...were they nomads but were these houses...semi-nomads? So were these houses in different areas or all around the same place?

00:23:18

#40N: Semi-nomadic, yes, and there were many family members.

Q: Were the house in one area or in different areas?

#40N: The *nama* and all the children lived together. We were four daughters given away in marriage. Three elder sisters and I were given away. My elder sisters had children and lived at their respective in-laws' places. I was the one that returned.

Q: Were the homes together or at different areas?

#40N: It was one home. My elder brother and everyone lived in the same home. The *nama* and my mother went up the mountain to milk the *dri* and lived in a tent. The younger *nama* stayed home and looked after the land, cows and oxen. The younger *nama* and the little children applied fertilizer to the fields and performed such tasks. Before his death, elder brother used to go to Nyelam on trade.

Q: So were people very welcoming and kind and understanding to you or did they feel pity for you or sadness for you?

00:25:40

#40N: Being the youngest among the children [I] was greatly loved by my benevolent parents and benevolent siblings. Since there were many members in the family, I wanted to live separately. Though I lived separately yet my daughter was with the maternal uncles, grandfather and grandmother and I hardly got to raise her.

Q: Everybody wanted to play with your little girl.

#40N: Everybody did. I was the youngest among the dead and surviving [siblings]. The siblings loved [me] especially the elder brothers. My elder sisters had been given away in marriage to Dhingri, Riwoche and Changthang. [We] met only occasionally. Having being given away to far away places, I hardly saw my elder sisters.

Q: *Ama-la*, did you ever think of remarrying? Would it be possible if you had a baby, a child from another marriage? Would some man be interested in marrying you?

00:28:09

#40N: I never married after separating from [my] husband. I lived with my daughter. When [we] fled from the Chinese there were my elder sister, her husband and my mother who passed away in Zong Sarpa. [I] never married [again].

Q: *Ama-la*, is there a formal way of getting a divorce or do you just collect half the goods or gifts from your husband?

#40N: There was not any need to put anything in writing. The giver gave as they pleased and they did not deny what I wanted. I could not ask for more because they gave plenty. [I] did not want to ask for more for it might hurt them. I was given enough and they sent someone to reach me home and animals to carry the belongings.

[I] have nothing to say against the family. Perhaps it was destined that we not live together. [I] have nothing to say against the husband. I did not remarry as one did not work out and I did not want to do it again. [I] felt happy being single and doing my work.

Q: If you're born in 1930, so you just raised your daughter from say like 1948-49 until you left...did you work as a semi-nomad during that time for your family?

00:31:19

#40N: I cultivated lands and raised animals similar to the lifestyle of the tribal [people] if you have been there. There were animals and farmlands.

Q: How did you raise your child?

#40N: Raising a child was not like it is here now. In the morning you breastfed the child and lay it to sleep in a...[not discernible] and the mother went to work. When you came for lunch you breastfed the child, changed diaper and lay it to sleep. Then it was time for the mother to go. Other than that, one need not carry the child or anything like that.

My benevolent daughter is very capable. When times became bad [we] reached Mustang. She learned the script and the language. We were five in the family including the *makpa* 'son-in-law.' We were sort of happy in Zong Sarpa after coming to know the people and they [daughter and son-in-law] learned the language and the work of cultivation...[not discernible]...Due to the grace of His Holiness the Dalai Lama [we] are happy.

Q: *Ama-la*, who watched the baby when you went out to the fields to work? Was there somebody in the house? Did you have servants or other family members?

#40N: There were my elder brothers and a host of neighbors who watched [my daughter]. I came home for lunch. Most of the time I went to weave *pangdhen* 'striped aprons indicating married status of women' like this [gestures off camera]. During such times I took [daughter] with me. However, while doing fieldwork the neighbors and grandparents at home watched [her].

Q: Did any man in the village, in the settlement, in the nomad area wish to marry you? Did you get any proposals for a second marriage?

00:34:58

#40N: No, rules were strict. Unless your parents or relatives made arrangements, one could not do it. The rules were strict; the rules of the Tibetan Government were strict then.

Q: Exactly. So even a man could not come and ask to marry you?

#40N: No, [he] could not. My earlier marriage did not work and [I] was determined from the depth of my heart [not to remarry] considering my child. If [my] parents and elder brother lived long I had no suffering. I was able to fill my stomach and my relatives were all together. What would I do with a husband? That is what I thought.

Q: You were content?

#40N: That was it. I was determined from the depth of my heart. Having come to a new place [husband's village], one did not know the people. [I] was misled and taken there. It was not just me alone but the same was done to every girl. A girl's hand was requested in marriage and the parents agree. The girl was deceived into believing that she was going to that place [future husband's village] to see a show or meet a lama and then was married and left there.

It was like that in the old days. One was made to believe, "Every girl, all of your friends, went through the same thing. Why do you keep crying? It is not as if you are the only one going as a *nama*." It was the truth. "If you become pregnant with an illegitimate child, will you bear the consequence of lashing?" People said such things. It was best to get married and [I] lived in his home for six years.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: She had no wish to remarry.

Q: *Ama-la*, it's getting late. Is there anything...When you think about being a semi-nomad, do you have any memories that you like that make you feel good when you think about them?

00:39:00

#40N: There were happy times when [I] went to weave; I was alone. There was food to eat when [I] returned home. Food in the sense, there were [no] sugar or sweet tea but in Tibet there was *dri* and [we] made Tibetan tea and drank it. I was happy and mostly used to go to do weaving and very often went to braid hair and fix *patu*.

Q: Is it working for others or your own?

#40N: One must redo the hair [braid]. There is a school in Dharamsala...What is it called...I forget the name. It is located above MacLeod Ganj behind His Holiness the Dalai Lama's palace. What is it called? It is a school for the older ones where they dance and sing. I have forgotten the name. It is in Dharamsala and [I] can almost recall...

Q: That's okay.

#40N: I braided hair, did weaving and worked in the fields and was happy. One receives the best food while weaving and doing the hair. If anybody calls [I] go to attend. [I] lived with the parents and sometimes visited the relatives. [I] was happy and then the Chinese came and it came to an end.

Q: Did you see the Chinese with your own eyes, *ama-la*?

00:41:56

#40N: When we were harvesting crops six Chinese horsemen appeared. They were like interpreters. They looked like Chinese and rode horses that did not have saddles or seat covers. There used to be ducks and other such birds in the Changthang region, which they killed, roasted on fire and ate. They came but did not cause any suffering. [We] did not get to live longer there.

Q: When the Chinese came what did your family do?

#40N: Yes?

Q: When the Chinese came what did your family do?

#40N: [We] were planning to escape. “If [we] stay here the Chinese will kill the old men and women. The little children will be taken to China. There is nothing to do but flee. There will be no happiness.” Prior to that they had taken pictures of the dogs [?] and all the things. “There will be no happiness for they will launch the ‘Liberation’ or some such thing. There are places [to go] like Pokhara and Kathmandu in Nepal. There will be no happiness. We should flee.” So many people from my hometown took flight.

My hometown is a *gerpa* ‘private land owner’ [property] and taxes must be paid at Lhasa after harvest. One must travel through Gyantse, which is close to Lhasa. Money had to be transported on mules. However, there were no other taxes like...[not discernible] since it was a *gerpa*.

Q: How many people went with you into exile from your family?

00:45:19

#40N: I left earlier taking along Mother, child and driving some animals. Elder brother said he would come later. As we trekked beyond Yanju Thanka, the region was filled with escapees and there was a lot of chaos. The Chinese were on the main road while we trudged on the mountaintops, sleeping during the day and hiding the animals in caves. [We] traveled at night for the Chinese were on the road during the day. [We] slept on the mountaintops and suffered a lot then from lack of food. If [we] found something to eat, it was dry and there was no water. However, [we] never suffered beatings or capture.

The interpreters had come among whom was one Chinese and the rest were Tibetans. One Tibetan belonged to our region and was the daughter of someone called Lobsang. Both the parents had died and she was sent to China in the past. Her maternal uncle was there. The girl said, “Maternal uncle, I do not have a father or mother and you made me and my elder brother suffer. Now [I] am able to stand on my feet.” The maternal uncle said something like...[not discernible] but the girl, who was young replied, “No, I am fine. When my parents were no more how did you treat me and my sibling? You may remember it. I do. I do not want anything from you, maternal uncle. I came here as an interpreter and not because I am on the Chinese side.” She has to be on the Chinese side for she cannot spend

her life there. So there was nothing for her to do but be on the Chinese side. Except for these that came [to my hometown] I have not seen any Chinese as we fled.

Q: How long did it take you, *ama-la*, from your home to get to safety?

00:49:25

#40N: It took over two months having to trek over mountaintops and snowfall. [We] fled just after Losar ‘Tibetan New Year’ towards Nupri that was closer. It was snowing at Nupri and we just about managed to reach Mustang.

Q: *Ama-la*, was it only you and your mother and the baby, nobody else in your little group?

#40N: My daughter, elder sister, elder sister’s husband and his child.

Q: There wasn’t anybody else?

#40N: There was not anybody else. Then [we] reached the place called Shilung. Elder sister helped stay with me for two years, but the husband was domineering and they left for Nyelang. Then it was just the three of us. Then my mother passed away. I went to Zong Sarpa, Thakola and lived there for 10 years. [I] was happy.

Q: Where? To Dholpo?

#40N: To Mustang.

Q: Were you 10 years in Mustang?

#40N: Ten years at Thakola and after the Mustang armed organization shut down, [I] came here.

Q: *Ama-la*, how did you...What did you do to have food to work in Mustang? What kind of work did you do?

00:51:40

#40N: There was fieldwork to do in Mustang and also weaving. Then [we] came down here, to Pokhara during the winter and took goods for sale up the mountains. We came down during wintertime and in the summer, around this time of the year went back to Thakola. [We] harvested crops as we returned and received wages. The actual place of stay was at Zong Sarpa. Due to the grace of God... My mother passed away and it was just my daughter and I. Due to the blessings of His Holiness the Dalai Lama soon after mother passed away Taru Rinpoche arrived.

Q: Where?

#40N: At Zong Sarpa. Taru Rinpoche performed the *phowa* ‘purification practice in which the consciousness is transferred to a pure land.’

Q: Did your mother pass away in Mustang?

#40N: At Thakola, Mustang. [Mother] passed away in her nineties.

Q: How old was your daughter when you got to Mustang?

00:53:54

#40N: She was 7 or 8 years old when we arrived in Mustang. Now she is 70-something years old.

Q: How old is the daughter?

#40N: Seventy-something.

Q: Your daughter?

#40N: Perhaps 71, 72 or 75.

Q: Seventy-five? *Ama-la*, it's a very, very interesting story.

#40N: My daughter's birth sign is the dragon. How old is she? I only know the birth sign.

Q: *Ama-la*, thank you for the story. I'm wondering...do you have any...what are your prayers for children and for Tibet? What do you pray for today?

#40N: I offer butter lamps to His Holiness the Dalai Lama's portraits that I possess. I pray for Tibet. "May Tibet gain independence. May His Holiness the Dalai Lama live long. May Tibet become independent." That is my prayer. [I] do not know much and it is not good to boast.

When I was 13 years old I took part in a silent meditation in my hometown during which [I] learned the refuge prayers. Here when we chant the refuge prayers...I do not know the Dolma 'Praises to the 21 Taras.' I know the entire refuge prayers learnt during the silent meditation but forget the rest. Here people chant prayers to His Holiness the Dalai Lama and I do not know a word of it. Isn't it bad? [I] am not blessed.

Q: I think that the Buddha will help you.

00:56:36

#40N: Yes, the Buddha will. I am always falling ill and was in a Nepalese hospital for some days. I told my daughter, "Pema, when you go home, please light a butter lamp. His Holiness the Dalai Lama's portraits will be in darkness and I do not like it. Please light a butter lamp." "Mother, why do you say like that? It is enough for you if you pray." I worry that His Holiness' portraits are left in darkness without a burning butter lamp. I have five portraits of His Holiness.

We do not have many family members and it is just the two of us. The *makpa* and others live in Dharamsala and send us money by doing trade. If I fall sick, she is alone but the neighbors do come to help. Thank God, the Tibetan doctor here is very helpful. The Nepalese doctor says, “Why is it that this mother is sick? Do not worry.” “I wish I would die.” “Who do you have to meet by dying? Is it father, brother or mother? Whom do you wish to meet?” The Nepali [doctor] used to say.

I wish to die. [I] wish [I] would die for it is a burden on the child. She is also advanced in age and not too well. What would I do if she dies? The healthier ones are in Dharamsala. When will I die? I am so old. I used to be able to work. I used to go to roast grains and completed 10-11 measures a night and received tips and wages from people for the work. Now [I] cannot even roast my own grains. So how can [I] work for others? [Smiles]

It is the daughter who has to suffer. The young granddaughter is working. Earlier she was a student; then met a husband and had children. The husband’s elder sister... There is a large house near the library below McLeod Ganj, which His Holiness visits.

Q: Norbulingka?

00:59:17

#40N: [I] forget the name of all places. I have seen His Holiness the Dalai Lama six times during Kalachakra. One was...due to the grace of the Triple Gem...Some people had come from Amdo in Tibet. They were new comers and had escaped [from Tibet]. The wife was pregnant. I had suffered at the time of coming to a new country and thought, “How will she do at the time of delivering the child?”

At that time this type of grain was not available. I had some given me by someone in Yangtse, due to the grace of God. That was for my consumption. The pregnant girl from Amdo who was related to His Holiness the Dalai Lama said, “Mother, is there not any store that sells *tsampa* in this region? “Yes, there is a *tsampa* store. There is *tsampa* made of...[not discernible].” “I cannot eat that *tsampa*. I am pregnant and not feeling well. Where to get some *tsampa*?”

That night I thought, “Oh, the husband is so bad. She is pregnant. Where can I get some *tsampa*?” [I] was about to go to sleep and had finished [my] prostrations. [I] got up and found a little stock of *tsampa* in a plastic container. “Oh, God. She is longing for *tsampa*. I have suffered so much in a new place.” She was a carpet weaver. I had to go to work. “What shall I do?” I thought and could not sleep that night. [I] got up and thought.

Breakfast was at 9 o’clock and lunch at 12 o’clock. “It is okay if I do not have any food. She lived a little distance away. From the two measures of *tsampa*, I took one and half measures and went to give it to her. I felt sympathy because it is very difficult when you come to a new place. It is very difficult when you arrive in a new place and they are so young. I used to take Coke [to the newcomers] though [I] did not know them. How [they] would have suffered to escape the Chinese? I thought in this way and took them beverages.

People used to say, “Grandmother, you do not know the people yet you take them beverages. Do you know them?” “[I] do not know where they come from. I have suffered so much and feel good if I can give something. They must be thirsty and will feel good.” I am always like that. They were happy to receive the *tsampa* I took. They then managed a restaurant and the place suited them well and [they] prospered. Then she gave birth to two children. Other people rendered help and I took them food.

The children call me grandmother and [the children’s mother] say, “You are like my mother.” She is called Tsomo and presently lives abroad and sends me money. “Mother has been benevolent. Grandmother has been benevolent.” She came on vacation during Losar. Her husband lives at Boudhanath in Nepal. The whole family visited and gave me money, “Mother, do not worry. I will do the best I can. Please eat whatever you like. Elder sister Pema looks after you and I will send money. You have treated me well when I was in difficulty. I have only you to look after. My mother is in Amdo.”

01:03:30

Tsomo’s father is His Holiness the Dalai Lama’s father’s elder brother. Last year Lobsang was living in Dharamsala as...[not discernible]. Lobsang’s mother-in-law lives in Dharamsala presently. [She] is called Chonzom and went on pilgrimage and asked [me] to come, “Grandmother, let us go on pilgrimage for the Kalachakra.” One must travel half a day, about three hours on a lake.

Q: You narrated a long story.

#40N: I speak a lot having seen so much of life.

Q: *Ama-la*, we want to...we’re honored that we were able to hear your story and we want to thank you for sharing it with us.

01:05:35

#40N: [Joins palms] I have caused you inconvenience [with a long narration].

Q: No. *Ama-la*, it was an honor to hear your story.

#40N: [Smiles]

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

#40N: Of course, it might be, right? I do not know where my elder brother is. Other people go on visits but I have never done so. [I] did not even try. Even if [I] were to go there [I] do not have a pass like other people.

Q: No, the question is if this interview or your picture were shown in Tibet or China, would this be a problem for you?

#40N: Of course, but one cannot say. Would there be any problem? [The Chinese] may ask “Where have you come from?” I do not know for I have not been there. [I] did not even try.

Q: Thank you, *ama-la*.

END OF INTERVIEW