

# **Tibet Oral History Project**

**Interview #5C – Dhundup Tsering  
May 3, 2013**

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# TIBET ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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## INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

1. Interview Number: #5C
2. Interviewee: Dhundup Tsering
3. Age: 65
4. Date of Birth: 1948
5. Sex: Male
6. Birthplace: Tsona
7. Province: Utsang
8. Year of leaving Tibet: 1963
9. Date of Interview: May 3, 2013
10. Place of Interview: TANC Community Center, Richmond, California, USA
11. Length of Interview: 1 hr 18 min
12. Interviewer: Marcella Adamski
13. Interpreter: Tenzin Tsedup Wangdu
14. Videographer: Jeddadiah Emanuel
15. Translator: Tenzin Yangchen

### **Biographical Information:**

Dhundup Tsering describes Tsona, his birthplace as a large town with about 1,000 families. His family earned their livelihood from farming, rearing animals and trade. He describes the different games he played as a child. He states that his family annually moved to Arunachal Pradesh, India during wintertime when it became too cold in Tsona and spent 5-6 months in Mon Tawang in the summertime.

Dhundup Tsering's family heard about the escape of His Holiness the Dalai Lama into India in 1959 and decided not to return to Tibet from Mon Tawang that summer. Dhundup Tsering talks about attending his first school at the age of 13 at the Transit School in Dharamsala, India and then the Tibetan School in Mussoorie. After finishing school his first job was the construction of the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives in Dharamsala. Subsequently he served as assistant accountant and assistant secretary for the Library and then the Handicraft Center, serving the Tibetan Government-in-exile for 20 years.

Dhundup Tsering believes that Tibetan culture is unique in the way it is interrelated to Buddhist dharma. For him the most important teaching is "If you cannot help someone, do not cause harm." He also explains the Dalai Lama's advice that by "cultivating relations, gradually there will be a change of heart" between the Chinese and Tibetans.

### **Topics Discussed:**

Utsang, childhood memories, education, Buddhist beliefs, customs/traditions, life as a refugee in India, Tibetan Government-in-exile.

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**Interview #5C**

**Interviewee: Dhundup Tsering**

**Age: 65, Sex: Male**

**Interviewer: Marcella Adamski**

**Interview Date: May 3, 2013**

[Interviewee speaks in both English and Tibetan throughout interview.]

Question: Please tell us your name.

00:00:14

**Interviewee #5C: My name is Dhundup Tsering. Dhundup Tsering, yes.**

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?

**#5C: I think it is a yes.**

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

**#5C: My pleasure.**

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

**#5C: [Nods]**

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

**#5C: Okay.**

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

00:01:44

**#5C: I think for me it won't [create] any trouble, any problems.**

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

**#5C: [Nods]**

Q: Can you please tell us where you were born and what year?

**#5C: I was born in Tsona, Tibet. Tsona in Tibet is one of the eastern—I mean central part of Tibet.**

Q: And what year was that?

**#5C: It was, I think it was 1948.**

Q: 1948.

**#5C: Yeah, but I do not remember exactly the date and the month.**

Q: Okay.

**#5C: Because we have not that experience about, you know our parents, so that is why I just made my date of birth for the document in India [as] January 1, 1948. [Laughs]**

Q: General.

**#5C: January 1, yeah.**

Q: That is how you do it.

**#5C: It is easy to remember. That is why I made it.**

Q: In the place where you were born, can you describe it? Was it large or small? What was it like?

00:03:05

**#5C: Yeah, the place where I was born, it is not that quite large but is big enough.**

Q: About how many families lived there?

**#5C: I think it is more than thousand families.**

Q: Who was in your family?

**#5C: By that time [there were] my parents, my sister, my brother and that is all I have. I do have another brother but he was in the monastery.**

Q: Where were you in the children? Were you the first or second or third?

**#5C: I am actually the third one.**

Q: The third one. So you had a brother in the monastery.

**#5C: Yes.**

Q: What monastery was he in?

**#5C: It was in Dhagpo.**

Q: Dhagpo?

**#5C: Yeah. It is this same, I think... The district is different but comes under Lhoka. Generally Tsona comes under Lhoka.**

Q: What age did your brother become a monk?

**#5C: I think at the age of 13 or something.**

Q: Can you tell me a little bit about your life as a child growing up in your household? What was it like for you?

00:04:54

**#5C: Yeah, when I was [in my] childhood, I mean I am the youngest. So, I have not that experience because I left my country even, I mean when I was about 8 or 9 years old. So I have not that experience but I am the third, I mean the third kid in my family.**

Q: Do you remember any of your activities when you...before you left your country? Before you were age 8, what kind of things did you do?

**#5C: We were actually [engaged in] agriculture and nomads. We were *samadok* ‘farmers and herders.’**

[Interpreter interprets as: They are like; the family does trader and farming.]

Q: So tell me about that. Your parents did trading and farming and did they travel very far in their trading?

**#5C: Yeah.**

Q: Where did they go?

00:06:01

**#5C: There are so many places to go, to buy things, to sell the things. All these kinds of things, you know.**

Q: What kinds of things did they buy and sell?

**#5C: I mean, you know, any kind of new product. You know, farmers’ stuff and then so many things. It is hard to remember particular names, you know.**

Q: [Your] father was engaged in trading. What did [he] deal in? For instance, [he] went to Kalimpong. What types of goods were taken from Tibet to India and from India to Tibet?

**#5C: All those things are not brought from Lhasa and other parts of Tibet but mostly we try to bring those from Arunachal Pradesh.**

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Arunachal Pradesh, India.

**#5C: Yes.**

Q: So your parents were traders and nomads. Did you go to school before you were 8 years old anywhere?

**#5C: No. No school, no monastery.**

Q: Do you remember what kind of games you used to play as a child?

00:07:40

**#5C: We used to play *aptho* that is two or three balls we throw [looks up]. This kind of game and then also we used slingshots and bow and arrow. And then [we] played *boli*.**

Q: *Boli*?

**#5C: *Boli*.**

Q: A game? Football?

**#5C: It is not football. *Boli* means we make a hole in the earth, right? Make a hole about coin size. We collect three or four, five or more kids playing together and when they first throw, who is the nearest, I mean, close to the hole, he is the first one playing and then the others line up. We put all those five or six coins in that hole and he has won. That kind of game, you know, it is a very interesting game.**

***Boli* is also played in India.**

Q: Can you please tell us something about your parents? What was your mother like and what was your father like?

00:09:30

**#5C: Yeah, my father is kind of skinny like me, I still remember and mother is little fat enough. But my mother is not...my mother is not from the same, you know Tsona, Tibet. [She is] not [from] Tsona, Tibet. When my father [was] travelling somewhere to sell the things and all this, then they, you know they married, I mean like...**

Q: He met your mother.

**#5C: Yeah, he met my mother. My mother is actually from—I think the eastern part of Tibet, something like that. Mother is from Horpo in Kham.**

Q: What happened you said when you were 8 that you left Tibet? Why did you leave?

**#5C: I am not 8 but 9.**

Q: Why did [you] leave Tibet at age 9?

**#5C: The reason I left Tibet...I did not leave my country before 1959 because I told Tsedup-la [interpreter] last time that we used to live in different places during summer and winter. During the summertime we stayed in our main land in Tsona, Tibet because we have to prepare for the agriculture or something. During the wintertime it is kind of cold in our country, in the place where I [was] born. So we go to Arunachal Pradesh, to Mon Tawang.**

**[To interpreter] please say that we lived in different places in summer and winter.**

**It is because of better temperature.**

Q: How far of a journey is it from your house to Arunachal Pradesh?

00:11:55

**#5C: I think...we have not any, I mean by that time any driving system. Just we ride on the horse or the yak or people traveling by feet. So I think it takes about three days or something.**

Q: Three days and you would go...

**#5C: I do not remember exactly.**

Q: You were very young. So you would go there every winter when it got cold in your area.

**#5C: Yeah.**

Q: And you would go...

**#5C: ...to Arunachal Pradesh.**

Q: So you spoke how many languages?

**#5C: When?**

Q: When you were growing up?

**#5C: Just one language.**

Q: Just Tibetan?



**#5C: Yes.**

Q: Okay. And then how did things change in your family and when did they change?

**#5C: No, it was not change. It was because of the weather change and then we used to go to the, during the wintertime we go to the, I mean hotter place or something.**

Q: A warmer place, of course. And then tell us more about your story. What happens next?

**#5C: And then, you know, we used to go every year and spend about five or six months during the wintertime to the Arunachal Pradesh side. There are several places we go and especially during the...I am sorry during the summertime we go back to our own place.**

**So lastly after 1959, my father used to go back to prepare [the land for] agriculture for the farmers, to prepare and to tell the other people to do because he is one of the, I mean [not discernible] to do. He went for a while, it was about a day and half long and unfortunately His Holiness the Dalai Lama is coming from not discernible]. He did not see [but] heard about it that the Dalai Lama is coming to India or to the western country or something.**

Q: Why was he coming?

**#5C: Uh?**

Q: Why was the Dalai Lama coming?

00:14:40

**#5C: As a refugee, because of the critical situation in Tibet by the Chinese Government.**

Q: Before, when you were still in Tibet, did you notice any changes because of the Chinese involvement in Tibet when you were even around 8 years old? Did you notice anything?

**#5C: I do not remember because we are living as a, I mean you know, we even do not hear about what is [happening]. We only know after 1959.**

Q: You didn't even know what was going on in Tibet?

**#5C: No.**

Q: There was no telephone, no communication?

**#5C: No communication.**

Q: No television.

**#5C: No, nothing.**

Q: No Internet.

**#5C: No Internet, nothing, any kind of high technology, nothing.**

Q: What is the first time you heard about the Chinese being inside of Tibet?

**#5C: I heard about, it was 1947 or '49, 10 years before 1959.**

Q: And what did you think about that?

**#5C: By that time I was not born.**

Q: Oh!

**#5C: I just been, I mean just one year old.**

Q: So when did you begin to hear about the Chinese coming into Tibet?

**#5C: How many times?**

Q: When was the first time [you] heard?

**#5C: It was, I think it was two months after 1959. [I] did not hear until then.**

Q: The first time...?

**#5C: The first [I] heard.**

Q: What did you hear?

00:17:10

**#5C: What one heard was that the Chinese arrived in Lhasa, Tibet and were suppressing [the people]. They planned to capture His Holiness the Dalai Lama.**

Q: And you were 12 years old around then?

**#5C: '59...I think two years old or something like that.**

Q: Around 12?

**#5C: [Nods]**

Q: Since you were born in 1947 and this is '59. So, did you have any concern about that happening or did your parents, were they concerned?

**#5C: I did not have any such feelings.**

Q: Because of [your] young age?

**#5C: Yes, because of [my] young age.**

Q: So, how does your life change after Tibet, the Chinese enter Lhasa? Does anything happen differently to your family?

**#5C: By that time, right?**

Q: What were the difficulties and changes that took place after the Chinese arrived?

**#5C: You mean in Tibet?**

Q: Whether in [your] region or in Tibet. [You] can talk about the region.

00:18:43

**#5C: Yes. Yeah, you know I mean, it has been changed a lot because we, actually everybody knows about the situation about Tibet, you know. We have no independence and it is not free to talk and it is hard to make communication.**

**They [the Chinese] are oppressing.**

Q: Was there anything happening in your family at that time?

**#5C: Nothing occurred. Nothing happened in our home.**

Q: So how long did your family stay in Tibet?

**#5C: My immediate family stayed about two years.**

Q: After Lhasa was invaded?

**#5C: Yes, around two years.**

Q: And then what happened?

**#5C: And then after that, I mean after the occupation of 1959, which you are talking about, right?**

Q: Right.

**#5C: At that time my older sister was living there [in Tibet]. My real sister, she is still there. After a year of 1959, she came to the place where we live in Arunachal Pradesh.**

Q: In 1960?

**#5C: Yes, in '60.**

Q: You were living in Arunachal Pradesh when Lhasa was attacked?

00:20:42

**#5C: I was in Mon Tawang. Mon Tawang is part of Arunachal Pradesh.**

Q: How long did you live in India?

**#5C: By India you mean Mon Tawang, right?**

Q: Yes.

**#5C: Arunachal Pradesh, I think we stayed about two years, I guess.**

Q: And then what happened?

**#5C: After that we are getting worse situation in Tibet and then we followed the Dalai Lama and we came to India.**

Q: When you say you followed the Dalai Lama, how soon after he left did you follow him?

**#5C: It was not a long time. It was not just us but many people from Tibet followed His Holiness into India.**

Q: How many years?

00:22:01

**#5C: Around '61. For instance, [we] were living in Mon Tawang in '60 and before the start of '61. The situation was getting worse and many Tibetans were leaving for India. Hence, we too came away. His Holiness was already in India.**

Q: What were the conditions like when you went, when you fled Arunachal Pradesh? Why did you have to flee? What was the problem?

**#5C: [Silent]**

Q: I wanted to understand. Where did your family, did they leave and then went somewhere else? You said they were following the Dalai Lama. Where did they go?

**#5C: As mentioned earlier His Holiness passed through our region. Did [I] not mention this earlier? [I] do not think I recounted that.**

Q: No.

**#5C: [I] think [I] mentioned it. [To interpreter] We might have discussed it.**

**You know, I think it is a story about...**

Q: Take a break.

[Discontinuity in video]

Q: When did your family hear that the Dalai Lama or find out that the Dalai Lama was leaving Tibet and what did they do?

00:24:10

**#5C: Two months after '59 when His Holiness left one heard much news.**

Q: And what did your family do?

**#5C: There was nothing in particular the family could do. [They] had heard the news. When [they] heard the news and until His Holiness left [Tibet], [we] were living in Tawang. When father went [to the village] to cultivate the fields, he heard about His Holiness' escape. Hearing this, [he] turned back.**

[Interpreter interprets as: My family was moving to Tibet and when they heard the news, they came back to India. ]

Q: And they came back to India. Were you with them when that happened and what happened? Were you with them?

**#5C: Yes.**

Q: Did you see the Dalai Lama?

**#5C: No, not even my father. [We] did not see [His Holiness], just heard the news.**

Q: Your family was going to move to Tibet and then they heard His Holiness had left. What did they do next?

00:26:13

**#5C: There was nothing particular and going there [to Tibet] was futile because those living there were trying to leave. We were in Tawang and going back would mean facing problems. Other than that there was nothing in particular.**

Q: How long did you live in Tawang?

**#5C: We were going back and forth between Tawang [and Tibet] for two years before Tibet was occupied. After His Holiness left [Tibet], we lived there for little over a year.**

Q: What were you doing at that time in your life? What was happening?

**#5C: While living in Tawang, [I] did not attend any school. However, along with the children of Tawang, I have been to cut wood, to cut bamboo and have made fences using bamboo.**

Q: Did you ever go to school?

**#5C: [I] have not been to school except after coming to India.**

Q: So your family left Tawang and where did they go?

00:28:22

**#5C: From Tawang we arrived in Delhi after passing through Bomdila [Arunachal Pradesh], Siliguri [West Bengal] and Guwahati [Assam]. It was not just us but there were many people. There were a number of families with us.**

Q: Did you...What year...How old were you when you and your family moved to Delhi? What age?

**#5C: Perhaps [I] was 13 years old. Thirteen or end of 12, something like that.**

Q: What was it like for you? Delhi is so different...

**#5C: Yes, it is.**

Q: ...than Tibet. Tell me what was your experience?

**#5C: Upon reaching Delhi, the conditions in Tibet and India are very different. [I] had different feelings but what to do? One cannot explain because where transportation and likewise resources are concerned...in general Tibet has everything with a good environment but in terms of resources, India is better.**

Q: Did you like Delhi or was it very weird and uncomfortable?

00:29:58

**#5C: There was nothing [I] disliked. There was no dislike. I like the place Delhi in India but unfortunately, you know, I left my country. That is the main problem.**

Q: Did you miss your country?

**#5C: I do. [I] miss [my] country. I still remember my country.**

Q: Did your family think that someday they would go back to Tibet?

**#5C: Definitely. [A day] will certainly come. You cannot say the time.**

Q: What was your family doing to earn a living in Delhi?

**#5C: Initially when we arrived in Delhi there were many people. Then the Tibetan Government formed three categories of us children based on age and sent to school from Delhi.**

Q: Which school did you go to?

00:31:34

**#5C: When I first go to school, it was in Dharamsala. I was sent to the Zursok 'Transit School' in Dharamsala where all the children were being collected. [To interpreter] You know the Zursok School? Yeah, we all got together and were sent to the Zursok. That is the...**

[Interpreter to interviewer]: It's in lower Dharamsala.

**#5C: They collect all the Tibetan new arrival kids and then from there they try to send to other different schools in Mussoorie [Uttarkhand], Darjeeling [West Bengal] and Dalhousie [Himachal Pradesh]. [The children] were selected like that and dispatched. Among these the younger ones were sent to TCV [Tibetan Children's Village, Dharamsala].**

Q: At that point you are how old?

00:32:32

**#5C: What was [my] age then? [I] was 13 years old.**

Q: Was this the first time, Dhundup-la, that you went to school when you were 13?

**#5C: Yes, the first time.**

Q: Tell me about that experience. What was that like?

**#5C: Generally based on today's standard, at the age of 13 one should have reached Grade 7 or 8 but we were just starting. It was easy to learn what the teachers taught because it was that way when you were older. I attended school in Mussoorie, Tibetan Home's School in Mussoorie. That was in the year '64.**

Q: And what did you do at Mussoorie Homes?

**#5C: Mussoorie Homes is a school, right? It taught the same syllabus as CST [Central School for Tibetans].**

Q: What was the treatment of the Tibetan people by the Indian people because you were refugees in this country?

00:34:33

**#5C: Do you mean how the Indian people looked upon the Tibetan people?**

Q: Yes.

**#5C: There was nothing in particular. [The Indian people] did not treat us badly because of the benevolence of His Holiness the Dalai Lama.**

Q: And then tell us a little bit how your life developed. You go to school and do you graduate and get a job afterwards?

**#5C: I see. I did not complete the *yigtsi* education.**

Q: What's *yigtsi*?

**#5C: *Yigtsi* is, you know the major education. Because they made a selection in which the older ones were sent for TTC to an institution in Pachmarhi [Madhya Pradesh]. I was there for around three years. Generally [I] did start school from Grade 1 but there was a provision for older students to cover two grades in a year, which [to interpreter] Tsedup-*la* would know called S2.**

Q: What kind of work did you do when you finished school?

00:36:14

**#5C: After attending the institution, you mean?**

Q: Yes, after training at the institution.

**#5C: Okay, I see. After training at the institution...I forgot to mention a few things. There were a few trades [taught] at the institution like, fitter, welder, turner and carpentry. There were these. However, when we joined there were no vacancies. [I] mentioned this earlier. Since there were no vacancies, they began a new trade - building construction. I was admitted into this. There was no choice.**

Q: And then what happened to you?

**#5C: After I finished my institutional training, they sent me to Dharamsala to build the Tibetan Library of Archives [Library of Tibetan Works and Archives]. [I] was sent to construct the Library building.**

Q: Wow!

00:37:53

**#5C: When I first get there, the library [building] was already...they already made the foundation but we are the ones who complete the Tibetan Library [building].**

Q: That's very interesting. What year would that have been about?

**#5C: That was after we left the institution. That would have been in the year '70.**

Q: 1970.

**#5C: Yeah, I stayed there until 1972.**



Q: That's quite interesting. The Tibetans leave Tibet; 80,000 with His Holiness when he leaves and now, it's like '59-'60 people were leaving and 10 years later you're building a Library of Tibetan Works and Archives in Dharamsala. What do you think of that?

**#5C: [I] felt it was fortunate. Yeah, fortunate for me.**

Q: Do you know why they were building that library? What was the...Why did they want to build a library? Only 10 years in exile. Why were they building this Library of Tibetan Works and Archives?

00:39:47

**#5C: Is it not built in order to preserve and promote our culture and traditions?**

Q: What do you think about that idea?

**#5C: I think that is good.**

Q: What do you think are the most important things that need to be preserved about the Tibetan people and history?

**#5C: The most important thing that needs to be preserved is culture.**

Q: Explain what you mean by Tibetan culture.

**#5C: To explain culture, it is not just culture but it includes religion and your traditions. Everything is included in culture. I mean, it is like a tradition.**

Q: What do you think are some of the valuable, the most valuable aspects of Tibetan religion?

00:41:27

**#5C: The most beneficial and valuable aspect of the Buddha dharma is *tse chema* 'next life.' It depends upon whether you believe it or not and practice it or not. If you do there is a result.**

Q: What's *tse chema*?

**#5C: By *tse chema* I mean future life.**

Q: That there is *tse chema* and...

**#5C: The meaning is that if you practice dharma, it will help in the next life.**

Q: If you practice...

**#5C: Yes, if you practice dharma, it will help in the next life.**

Q: What are some of the things that you think we need to be practiced in Tibetan Buddhism? What are the qualities that you want to develop in yourself or you wish the next generation would develop?

**#5C: You mean if one practiced the dharma?**

Q: As a Buddhist practicing the dharma, what are the qualities needed?

00:42:46

**#5C: The main quality of someone practicing the dharma should be, “If you cannot help someone, do not cause any harm.” That is the main principle of the dharma and His Holiness the Dalai Lama gives this guidance.**

Q: What do you want your children and the children of Tibet to practice about not harming other people? What do you want them to do?

**#5C: Implementing [the principle] depends upon each individual. However, it is the responsibility of the elders, and the lamas to teach the people and the parents to tell the children about it. It depends upon you whether to implement it or not.**

**Really, if one could cultivate it as a habit, it would bring about result. However much you talk about it, it would be worthless if this were not cultivated into a habit.**

Q: We left you, you were building the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives and you were a new worker. Tell me about that work. Was it physically hard; was it dangerous? What was it like?

00:45:05

**#5C: Generally, it was not me alone but there were many; there were many old workers. Actually the work was difficult. The work was really difficult [because] one must use big rocks for the construction, do the cementing and flooring. However, [I] did not feel it was hard work in [my] mind. That is what I felt.**

Q: Was it not difficult because you were so proud to be building a place to save the culture and the history?

**#5C: Yeah.**

Q: Was that the reason [you] didn't feel the difficulty because an important library was being constructed?

**#5C: Yes, exactly.**

Q: Did you know what were people bringing out of Tibet? What were they carrying out to save, any objects or things to save them from being destroyed and were they bringing them to this library?

00:46:46

**#5C: Well, donations to the Library...it was like a donation. There were no particular things of importance but holy statues, different statues that were offered because the Library is where all things are collected.**

And in particular there were Tibetan *ngul* 'money/silver' and such that they brought there.

Q: *Ngul*? Silver?

**#5C: Not silver. I mean like a dollar.**

Q: How long did it take to build the Library?

**#5C: It took quite a while to build the Library because when I arrived the foundation was laid and it had already been a year. And when I left the Library hadn't been completed. It would have taken around three years.**

Q: Would you be surprised to know that this interview we are doing, we are going to give a copy to the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives?

**#5C: I see.**

Q: We have already given them 67 interviews from Bylakuppe.

[Interpreter interprets as: We have offered 67 from Bylakuppe as donation.]

**#5C: I see. By 67, what does 67 mean?**

Q: Interviews.

**#5C: I see. Okay.**

Q: Do you think it's...Why do you think it's useful for us to interview the older people of Tibet?

00:49:04

**#5C: It is definitely useful. However, I do not have much of an experience but many others are there with experiences of working for the government. These will surely be of benefit.**

Q: Can you tell us your story a little bit more about what happens when you leave Dharamsala or you finish building? You leave when the building...when you're done and the building is still going on. Where do you go or what do you do?

**#5C: The Library construction wasn't complete but it was nearly done. It took another year.**

Q: Where did [you] go?

**#5C: What happened when I worked for the Library was this. Later they appointed me as the supervisor. Otherwise, I have chiseled stones; erected walls, cemented and many other things for the Library. However, then they appointed me as the accountant's assistant at the Library, responsible for keeping the salary register for the workers. Then there was the head of the Library called Amdo Lekshay. Then there was Apo Rabgay, head of the *Nyamlay*. They have both passed away. Apo Rabgay and [Amdo Lekshay] were friends and since they said that an assistant secretary was needed, I was sent to the *Nyamlay*.**

Q: What's the *Nyamlay*?

**#5C: Tibetan Handicraft Center. [I] went there in the year '72.**

[Interpreter interprets as: In 1972, I was asked by the Handicraft Center, the leader of the Handicraft Center Amdo Lekshay to work at the Handicraft Center as a book keeping assistant.]

**#5C: It was not exactly book keeping. It was like an accountant assistant.**

Q: That was a big change from building a building to keeping books!

**#5C: [Laughs]**

Q: How did you learn how to keep books?

00:51:40

**#5C: Generally I had great interest in accounts. [I] was quite good in mathematics while at school.**

Q: Did you do that job for very long or what happened to you next?

**#5C: I worked there for around two years. It was not just that one [job] but in many different capacities because I was appointed as store manager. Likewise [I] was appointed assistant to the secretary in making documents and such, and then manager of the shop. I did a host of jobs during that period.**

Q: Can you tell us a little bit about what was the Handicraft Center and what was it doing for the people of Tibet living in India?

**#5C: The Handicraft Center belonged to the Tibetan Government. It came under the Home Department then. Earlier I mentioned [working there] for two years but it was not two years. Altogether I was 20 years working for the Handicraft Center and the Library. The Handicraft Center's aim was to provide a facility for craft for older Tibetans. The carpet-weaving center was established for the older ones who did not qualify for school. [They] were admitted into the Handicraft Center, which became a source of livelihood for them.**

Q: Dhundup-la, what was the feeling? We're talking about now 1972, somewhere 1972-73 in there and you are about 25 or 26, 27. What was the feeling of the Tibetan people? They were in

exile now and they had to leave around like say 1960s. So they are in exile 10, 12, 15 years. What is the attitude, the feeling, the hope, the dreams of the Tibetan people in your community?

00:54:47

**#5C: In general that was it. Some people were engaged in trade, some worked in factories, some went to sell sweaters; each one must earn a livelihood. Otherwise, there was nothing in particular and I am not able to say more.**

Q: Were they sad about having to leave Tibet?

**#5C: That was for certain.**

Q: What do you miss about your country?

**#5C: It is your environment. The environment was good. It was unusual. That is one and then the temperature was good, especially the snow.**

Q: It must have been quite a contrast to go from this beautiful mountains and weather and then to live in India. What was that like for the Tibetan people to go from wearing warm clothing and then to be in India where it's very warm?

**#5C: I did not feel anything in particular. The reason [I] did not feel was that [I] had not arrived in India all of a sudden. Having spent around two years in Mon Tawang, it did not have that great effect upon [me].**

Q: Yes, I see. It was easier for you than for some people. You are now 25-26, do you get married around this time or are you still a single man? What's happening to you?

00:57:29

**#5C: After I joined the Tibetan Handicraft Center in Dharamsala I met my wife. I was 24 years old when I married.**

**Right, I was 24 years old and my wife was 25. There is a difference of a year between us.**

Q: And do you have any children?

**#5C: I do.**

Q: How many?

**#5C: I actually had nine children...**

Q: You had a total of nine children.

**#5C: ...but currently I only have four children, 4 kids. All of the five passed away a long time ago.**

Q: What kind of things caused the passing away of those children?

**#5C: On one hand it is health related and on the other...the main reason is health related. Many children passed away in one particular year in India. It was not just ours but many children that passed away.**

Q: Do you know what factors led to their passing away? What caused it?

00:59:13

**#5C: The reason was not something bad but just health related.**

Q: What were the living conditions like for you and your wife and your children in Dharamsala?

**#5C: The living conditions were good. When we initially arrived as children, our parents were sent to work as road crew and we met each other through our parents. There was nothing specifically bad.**

Q: I understand roadside construction work was very difficult?

**#5C: Yes, it is.**

Q: Was it? Can you tell us about how it was for your parents? How did they survive that kind of hard work?

**#5C: Well, [they] endured the work. When we first arrived in Delhi, the children were sent to school and the parents were grouped and some sent to Kulu and some to Chambal [Himachal Pradesh]. Our parents were initially dispatched to Chambal and then to Kulu.**

Q: Dhundup-la, how long did you live in Dharamsala and in India before you came to this country?

01:01:24

**#5C: I lived for around 20 years.**

Q: So you came here when you were around 45 or something like that?

**#5C: Yes.**

Q: How many children came with you?

**#5C: Just from aside, when I first get here I came here on a legal status, immigration through the Tibetan Government and U.S. Government.**

Q: I see. You came first by yourself?

**#5C: Right after I came, I petitioned all my family and they came here on legal status.**

Q: Good, okay. You know, you have this wonderful set of children that have survived. Can you tell me what would you want your children to remember or know about Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism? What are the things you want your children and all the children of Tibet, like...?

**#5C: Exactly.**

Q: What do you want them to know and remember about the country of Tibet?

01:02:46

**#5C: [The young people] must study about the country and pay heed to what the older people teach. [They] must pay attention to the advice of the lamas, leaders or whoever it may be. One develops the habit after paying attention. [To interpreter] Tsedup-la, you know about it.**

Q: What do you think is important about Tibetan culture that we could—the rest of the world—can learn from? What could we learn from Tibetan culture?

**#5C: All countries have their own culture. However, our culture is one that is interrelated to the dharma. That, [I] think has a unique impact.**

Q: What do you think are some of the most important teachings of the Tibetan Buddhist culture?

**#5C: The most important aspect of the Buddha dharma is as recounted earlier. His Holiness the Dalai Lama advises the same thing, “If you cannot help someone, do not cause harm.” The thought of helping others should be considered of importance. That is one and secondly, some people lament, “[I] am not happy. [I] feel sad.” One must have a good heart. The main thing is the mind. This has a great relation with the dharma. That is my opinion.**

Q: What would you tell? You’re the father of many children. What would you want to tell the children of China who may not know anything about Tibet? What message would you like to give them or tell them?

01:05:58

**#5C: Actually there is no specific need to because the Government is telling the children. It would be good if the children would listen to what the parents say, for there is not anyone who does not tell it. Everyone says, “Protect your traditions; protect your culture.”**

Q: No, the Chinese...

**#5C: [The children] know about the situation of the Chinese in Tibet.**

Q: You mean the Chinese children?

**#5C: No, our children.**

[Interpreter to interviewee]: Her question is “What message do [you] have for the Chinese children?”

**#5C: I see. The message for the Chinese children...even among the Chinese there are different kinds. There are some who are greatly interested in the Tibetan dharma and some who are not. However, it is very important to tell the stories to those that you know, work together or are friends with.**

Q: What stories would they...?

01:07:10

**#5C: By telling them stories about the happenings between Tibet and China, they [the young Chinese] will feel, "It was like that. There is a reason." The majority is in opposition to us. This will gradually...His Holiness says that one should engage in relations; especially the younger generation must develop relations. By cultivating relations, gradually there will be a change of heart.**

Q: There were much problems going on in eastern Tibet. What is your thought and feeling about the Tibetan monks who have immolated themselves in protest to the oppression they are experiencing? What do you think about that?

**#5C: This is very difficult. The news is [not discernible]. The reason why they are immolating themselves is [to demand] that His Holiness be escorted to Tibet. We cannot believe one hundred percent if that is their objective or not. However, what is clear is that they want freedom and peace in Tibet, for which they are sacrificing their lives.**

Q: Are there any karmic consequences for taking your own life?

**#5C: In terms of the cause and effect?**

Q: Yes, in regard to the cause and effect.

01:09:51

**#5C: That is difficult to say. Those that died have done so for a cause because of the Chinese oppression and having no freedom. However, how should one explain about the cause and effect? Dying from an illness, one could say that is destiny. However, they have sacrificed their lives.**

Q: Are there any things that we did not ask you today that you would like to say in this interview? We are going to conclude the interview now and I wondered if there are some thought or story or something you wanted to tell us?

**#5C: I think it is mostly whatever I suggested but you know...Did [I] talk about His Holiness the Dalai Lama staying one day at Tsona during his initial escape journey?**

**And then [he] left for India through Mon Tawang. After arriving in India, [His Holiness] first went to Mussoorie.**

Q: His Holiness?



01:12:03

**#5C: His Holiness went to Mussoorie to live there and during this period, His Holiness and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru [former Prime Minister of India] met and had a talk. The first school was started in Mussoorie with 20 children, 20 students. And then it was increased to 50 students. Thirty [students] were added to the 20. That was the school that used to be known as the school for 50 students. It happened that way.**

**Those [students] were aged older. By older I mean older than 20.**

**And later the C.S.T. [Central Schools for Tibetans] were established. Actually the school with 50 [students] came under the C.S.T. but that was expanded to admit young children. Then the Tibetan Homes Foundation was formed.**

Q: So His Holiness really made sure the children got an education.

**#5C: [Nods] Right and even these days he says so [that education is important].**

**I forgot to mention that there was a highly revered lama in the Tsona Monastery of our region. At the time of His Holiness' arrival the lama was not there. He was in Mon Tawang. Every year there was a *cham* 'religious dance performance by monks' in the 10<sup>th</sup> Tibetan lunar month. [To interpreter] Is it okay to relate this? Can I talk about it or not?**

[Interpreter to interviewee]: You can.

01:14:26

**#5C: The *cham* was performed continuously for three days: on the 28<sup>th</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup> and the 30<sup>th</sup>. The monks of the Tsona Monastery performed it. In addition monks from Mon Tawang, Lego and Pangchen also came and performed for a day. In all the performance lasted for three days.**

**And on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day was the *thorgya* 'offerings of pyramid-shaped dough.'**

Q: What's *thorgya*?

**#5C: *Thorgya* is when *thorma* 'ritual dough offerings' are burned. [To interpreter] Normally we do the *thorgya*, right?**

[Interpreter to interviewer]: He's talking about something I don't understand.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: Okay.

Q: Did you have more you wanted to share with us?

**#5C: [I] do not have anything to say in particular. I will just go through [looks down] to see if anything is left out.**

**[Looks through notes] This is not worth mentioning.**

Q: Okay.

**#5C: A fair used to be held annually in our region, a fair for two days.**

Q: A meeting?

**#5C: Something like a fair.**

Q: Fair?

01:16:18

**#5C: Yes. Different types of goods would be sold and purchased.**

Q: For two days?

**#5C: Yes, for two days. It took place near our monastery and also at Yangwa. What is it in English for *zong* ‘district’? Is it governor? It [the fair] was held close to that [district headquarters]. The fair took place for two days. There was no currency but goods were bartered.**

**It took place in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Tibetan lunar months. No, no, three times; May, July and November. It took place [once] in three months. So that is about it.**

Q: Shall [we] wrap up?

**#5C: Yes?**

Q: Shall we stop?

**#5C: Everyone knows about *choekor*, right? Every 4<sup>th</sup> of the 6<sup>th</sup> Tibetan lunar calendar, we took a pilgrimage carrying scriptures on the back and circumambulating [the fields]. That is called [*choekor*].**

**This [happens] not only in the place where I live but [in] all [parts] of Tibet; they used to do [it]. That is there in our history, in our religious history as well. That is the *choekor* festival and must be carried out officially.**

Q: Thank you so much...

**#5C: My pleasure.**

Q: ...for taking the time and effort.

END OF INTERVIEW