

Yangchen Dolkar
Narrator

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Minnesota Historical Society
Interviewers

Interviewed for the
Minnesota Tibetan Oral History Project

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Yangchen Dolkar Residence
St. Anthony, Minnesota

Tenzin Yangdon - TY
Yangchen Dolkar - YD
Charles Lenz - CL

TY: It is August 26, 2005 and we are at Ama¹ Yangchen Dolkar's residence. This interview is recorded in Tibetan and the primary interviewer is Tenzin Yangdon and secondary interviewer is Charles Lenz. We are interviewing Ama Yangchen Dolkar.

How old are you, Ama Yangchen la²?

YD: Fifty-five years old.

TY: Where were you born and where did you grow up?

YD: I was born at a place called Dingri in Tibet and I was grown up there.

TY: After Tibet, did you live in India?

YD: First place I went to and where I lived in is Sharkhumbu³ and then I moved to Nepal. At Sharkhumbu, I was a weaver and made carpets. In Nepal, I managed to make a living. With the kindness of His Holiness⁴, my name came up⁵ and came to the United States.

TY: When you came to Sharkhumbu, how old were you?

¹ Ama or A ma in Tibetan means mother. The Interviewer is using out of a sign of respect.

² La, is added to the end of a name as a sign of respect.

³ Often referred to as Solakumbu. Sharkhumbu/Solakumbu is in Nepal, close to the Chinese border.

⁴ His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

⁵ US Tibetan Resettlement Project, a program that became effective under the 1990 Immigration Act passed by Congress. 1,000 Tibetans were granted Visas to come to the United States. Names of applicants were selected in lottery.

YD: I was nineteen years old.

TY: Did you come direct from Dingri to Nepal?

YD: We traveled at night and slept during day. We slept in the snow.

TY: At Sharkhumbu, how were the living conditions of the Tibetans?

YD: At Sharkhumbu, the Nepalese did not let us go. They said they would hand us over to the Chinese. We again left Sharkhumbu at night. From upper Khumbu, we came to Shorong Delekling, a place where there was a Tibetan settlement. We were taken care of by the Tibetan Settlement. They taught us weaving.

TY: While escaping from Tibet, did any worth remembering things happen to you?

YD: In Tibet, Chinese did not provide education to small children; they made us work here. We remained illiterate. That is why, when I came to Sharkhumbu, I was nineteen but did not know how to read or write Tibetan or English. That was the plight. Chinese made us work very hard. They did not let us mingle with the common people labeling us as Ngadak⁶. They harassed us very much.

TY: When you came to Nepal, you did not go to school? What did you do in Nepal?

YD: I worked for others making yarns and weaving carpets. That is how I made a living.

TY: I am sure you faced problems like financial problems. Could you tell us something about those problems?

YD: I worked hard as I had financial problems. I wove carpet during day and went home in the evening with wool and made yarn out of it for others. That is how I made a living.

TY: How was your living house?

YD: During those days, there were not many Tibetans in Nepal. We rented small rooms from Nepalese paying Nepalese currency 50⁷. I bought daily ¼ kilo of meat and a couple of potatoes for food. That is how I lived.

TY: When you came from Tibet, you were nineteen years old. Did you come alone or were you with the parents?

⁶ Tibetan term for landlord. The term was a negative term used by the communist Chinese to label land owners or wealthy individuals.

⁷ Rupees.

YD: My parents passed away very early; I even don't know when they died.

TY: Did your relatives help you escape or how did it happen?

YD: I came with some relatives. Chinese made us do hard work. They would not let us do the work of our choice. I did not feel like staying in Tibet. With some relatives, I traveled five, six days. We slept during day and traveled at night and at the end, we came to a place called Namche bazaar in upper Sharkhumbu.

TY: From Nepal, you came to America?

YD: I spent eight years at Sharkhumbu working at a carpet center. The government⁸ was very helpful.

TY: Was it a Tibetan government carpet center?

YD: Yes, it was Tibetan government's. They gave us the job and also paid for the accommodation. Then I came to Nepal like many other Tibetans. I did not return to Sharkhumbu.

TY: How many years did you live in Nepal?

YD: In Nepal, I...may have lived over ten years.

TY: While in Nepal, did you get married?

YD: While in Nepal, I met with my children's father although we did not have a marriage ceremony. We formed a family. Cost of living was better in Nepal and so we lived there. Life was quite hard!

TY: In Nepal, you worked at carpet center?

YD: I worked at other people's carpet center and at night I made yarn at home. That is how life went on.

TY: How was the pay? Was the pay enough for life?

YD: We just managed buying food and paying rent with the money made. We lived in a house covered with metal sheet.

TY: After you formed a family, how many children did you have?

YD: I got three children.

TY: Three children. How old are they now?

⁸ Central Tibetan Authority (CTA). The Tibetan Government in Exile.

YD: The oldest is twenty-nine, second is twenty-five and youngest is twenty-one.

TY: In Nepal, how did you hear about the chance to go to America?

YD: At a public meeting. The Tibetan government official announced that the list going to America is coming up. Everybody started filling up the form. I also filled a form with prayers to His Holiness. Everybody said life was good. For a year, there came up nothing. After that, I heard people say that names of so and so have come up. I enquired about my name and one day, it came. It must be due to the kindness of His Holiness; it was a blessing from God.

TY: When you filled the form, was the form in Tibetan or English? Did you fill up the form or somebody helped you?

YD: A government⁹ official helped.

TY: Was it in Tibetan or English?

YD: I did not know whether the form was in English or Tibetan.

TY: Did you do it yourself or you were with your husband?

YD: I decided myself and filled up the form. To fill up the form, one should have the Tibetan freedom Green Book¹⁰. Without this, one could not fill up the form. At nineteen, I left Tibet and at twenty I made the Tibetan freedom Green Book. I felt like I was receiving blessings and directives from Him. While in Tibet, I had heard the name of His Holiness but did not see a single picture.

TY: When you filled the form, did your husband not raise some objection?

YD: I never expected my name to come up. And when my name came up, honestly speaking my husband and two children did not like going very much. Later, my husband said I must go. Then came the money problem; there was no money. When I asked people about money, they said the Tibetan government¹¹ would advance the money for air ticket; while money for other expenses had to be arranged/managed by individuals. Tibetan government had been very kind as it helped me with air ticket money and regarding other expenses, I borrowed from relatives and friends.

TY: Your husband said you should go. What did your children say?

YD: They were small; one was nine and the other was seven.

⁹ Central Tibetan Authority (CTA). The Tibetan Government in Exile.

¹⁰ The CTA has a volunteer tax system. People who make payments have these payments recorded their 'Green Book.'

¹¹ Central Tibetan Authority (CTA). The Tibetan Government in Exile.

TY: Your children were small but didn't they say, "Mother, do not go?"

YD: Children were sent to school on the day I left. They did not know about it.

TY: Didn't you talk about your leaving at home with the family?

YD: We did talk about my leaving. Children knew about it but they did not know when mother was going to leave. Children were sent to school in the morning and mother left at noon.

TY: Did you know anything about Minnesota before your arrival here?

YD: Thupten Dadak¹² was at Dharamsala and it was he who helped us get to Minnesota. We needed to have a sponsor and it was Thupten Dadak who worked on that. My name came up quite early but I could go only in the twelfth batch; it took quite a while.

TY: What was the reason for that?

YD: They could not find a sponsor, as I was not literate. At the end, I got a job at a flower shop and the owner of the flower shop agreed to be my sponsor. I stayed two months with the sponsor.

TY: The reason for not able to come early was that you did not have a job ready here?

YD: Yes, that was the reason. If there was no job and no sponsor, then we could not come.

TY: Where did you hear the news that you were going to go to Minnesota? Was it in Nepal or in Dharamsala?

YD: It was in Nepal that I knew about this. In Nepal, we have our government office that received information from Dharamsala and then Nepal officials informed us. Before confirming a person, they verified the information. Your name and freedom Green Book number should tally in order to confirm.

TY: Once you arrived here in Minnesota, did you feel sad thinking of the family you had left behind?

YD: When I first left Nepal, I didn't feel that very much. But once I had arrived here, after sometime I felt sad as I did not know the language, the directions. I could not talk to the sponsors. I missed family very much. I faced great hardships. Later it became quite ok. I recalled the audience we had with His Holiness who so kindly gave each of us an idol of Lord Buddha and asked us to pray to Buddha when faced with problems. I prayed to Buddha and gained strength. I was with no job for twenty-five days. Sponsor

¹² Thupten Dadak, a Tibetan who arrived in Minnesota several years prior to the Resettlement Project.

gave me a job for two months. After two months, the sponsor took me to a tailor shop but I didn't know sewing. I stayed there for an hour and called Thupten Dadak to get me. I stayed at Thupten Dadak's house for one month free. Then Thupten Dadak ran up and down and managed to get a housekeeping job. That was in St. Louis Park, pretty far away. I worked very hard. I had to make seventeen rooms. Thinking that if I lost that job, I would not get one, I worked very hard at times weeping.

TY: When you first arrived at the airport, did your sponsor come?

YD: My sponsor and his wife came.

TY: What is your sponsor's name?

YD: Kathy Rose. Thupten Dadak came and other Tibetans I knew before also came. They were Ngawang Samten, Kunsang Wangmo and Nyima Sepa. I did not see other people. The sponsor took me and I did not know where.

TY: When you came, were there any other Tibetans with you?

YD: When we first came from Nepal, we were thirty-five Tibetans together.

TY: Did you all come together?

YD: Yes, we all came in one airplane. We went to a couple of places and the number of Tibetans who came to Minnesota was five.

TY: Do you remember who these five people are?

YD: They are Ngawang Khechoe, Ngawang Sichung, Pema Lhamo, Samphel Sangpo and myself.

TY: Do you still have relationship with these people?

YD: It is so and so. When we meet, I say, "Hi, hi."

TY: When you lived with the sponsor, did you find any similarities between their lifestyle and your lifestyle?

YD: We were two Tibetans at the sponsor's house. The other Tibetan named Tsering Dolkar is from India. The next day of my arrival, my sponsor asked me to stay with Tsering Dolkar; probably to take rest. And the next day, she went to work, but I had to stay twenty-five days with no work. I just waited. Every car coming, I thought, was coming to see me. If I went one side, there was water and if I looked the other side, there was an old house. There was plenty of food but like other Tibetans I waited for the sponsor to tell me to eat food, which never happened. So till Tsering Dolkar came, I ate

nothing. Every time they came, I wept. When they left, I quietly cried. Remembering children, I cried.

TY: At that time, besides the Tibetan staying with you, weren't there other Tibetans?

YD: There were no Tibetans close by. We had to go two hours. We were in the country.

TY: What is the name of the place?

YD: I don't know the name.

TY: So you stayed twenty-five days there?

YD: Twenty-five days without a job. Then I received a call from Thupten Dadak's sister Anila and I told her that my sponsor was asking for a work permit/paper. It looked like it was the Social Security number which my sponsor could not prepare as she was too busy. She was a good person but she was very busy. She had a leadership role; she just ignored making my Social Security number.

TY: In that case, how did Tsering Dolkar get her job?

YD: She was here before me and had a job.

TY: Oh.

YD: Her sponsor gave the job. Thabkhe cried for not getting a job and he would not get a job, as he didn't have legal papers. Thupten Dadak's Anila came to get me with an American named Steve driving two hours. A woman whose name I don't know helped me to make Social Security Number. I got Social Security number in seven days; it didn't take long at that time. Then I requested Thupten Dadak to keep me in his house and find a sponsor nearby, and not send me to the sponsor. But it did not happen like that. I had to go to my sponsor. I spent two months working at a flower shop/farm. It was pretty hard with flies/mosquitoes biting and snakes around. In Nepal/India, we did not see snakes like that. And every time I saw a snake, I screamed. I was told not to scream as other people were sleeping. Like that I worked very hard and made money to payback the Tibetan government advance money which was thousand something. That happened in two months time. I returned the Tibetan government money before I could send some money to my family.

TY: After that, what sort of job did you do?

YD: After that I did housekeeping.

TY: Did you do housekeeping in St. Louis Park?

YD: After doing housekeeping in St. Louis Park for one year, I received information that my husband was sick. I arrived here in 1993 and in 1994, my husband passed away.

TY: What month of 1993 did you arrive here?

YD: It was May 10, 1993.

TY: You arrived here May 10 1993. And after a year, your husband became sick?

YD: My husband became sick and in September 1994, he passed away.

TY: Did you go back to Nepal?

YD: I worked sixteen hours doing two jobs...housekeeping during day and office cleaning in the evening/night in order to make a trip. By nature, I like singing. When I do work, I quietly sing songs. I sing no matter whether there is enough money for the family at home. After my husband's ailment, I stopped singing. A Vietnamese woman in the office asked me what country I came from and I said, "I am a Tibetan". And she asked what my religion is and I said, "I am a Buddhist." I knew how to say Buddhist. Saying that we follow the same religion, the Vietnamese woman named Vimla was very kind to me. There was a Russian woman whose name I forgot, was very kind to me. These two women at the office cleaning building told other employees that my husband had lung cancer and requested money to pay for air ticket.

TY: Was he sick with cancer?

YD: Yes, he was sick with lung cancer or liver cancer. It was not curable. They did not tell me about this till it was late in the stage close to die. When I left Nepal, my husband was strong and healthy and in one year's time, things happened like that. He did not drink alcohol nor did he smoke. This must be his karmic fate. People at the office cleaning building wanted to pay for the air ticket, which was \$1,600. They said that my daughter was over twenty-one and if two sons could come with me, they would help. I talked about this with Thupten Dadak and he said my sons could not come due to legal reasons. I left alone for Nepal. Americans helped me a lot. They reached me to the airport and did everything. In Nepal, I was with my husband for one week. He was very sick; he could hardly talk. That is my story.

TY: After a week of your arrival, did he pass away?

YD: My husband died after one week of my arrival. He could hardly recognize people.

TY: Was he in the bed?

YD: He was in bed. We have a small group of friends and these friends called doctor and had glucose¹³ procedure done on him. I thought he was going to die. He was in Khentze Rinpoche's monastery. From early times, my husband had been a close attendant of Khentze Rinpoche serving him for many years. After I had met him as life partner, the monastery looked for a dwelling place for us and helped us in many ways. When I visited Nepal, I had some money with me. I worked many hours but the pay was \$5 an hour. It was nothing.

TY: You had to go to Nepal after one year?

YD: I don't know for sure whether it was after one year.

TY: You had to go back to Nepal to see your ailing husband and kids and family.

YD: Kids were small. I had met the family and kids. My daughter was there to look after her father. My small kids did not know that the daddy had died. When asked where the daddy was, I simply lied saying, "Daddy is in the hospital".

TY: Over there when a person dies, there are some religious rituals performed. Could you tell what are they and how are they performed?

YD: According to Tibetan tradition, soon after a person dies, a high religious teacher performs 'Phowa'¹⁴. We offer butter lamps daily. More you offer butter lamps, better it is. Once every week we have a monk or monks at home, performing rituals and prayers and this goes till the seventh week or the forty-ninth day. Had I not come to the United States, I would not have done all the things that I did for my husband. Money I took from America when converted into Nepalese currency turned out to a huge pile. I spent all my money. I admitted one son in a monastery and other in a school. I spent six months in Nepal.

TY: You spent six months in Nepal?

YD: I had to stay that long because of my children's schooling. I wanted my sons to join Songtsen School, as it is our government school and only one child got seat. So I had to admit the other in a monastery. I wanted both my sons to be in the school but it did not happen. I admitted my second son in the monastery of Khentze Rinpoche, the monastery where kid's father stayed.

TY: During six months of stay in Nepal, did you experience any marked differences between the life in America and in Nepal?

YD: There were differences. Place is dirty and I fell sick. I felt ashamed calling place dirty as I had lived there. Just after arrival, I had a bad cold but I could not complain, as people would not like it.

¹³ IV, Intravenous therapy procedure.

¹⁴ Transference of consciousness at the time of death. Ensures a smooth exit of the soul.

TY: So you spent six months with the kids?

YD: Six months passed worrying and grieving. They just went by.

TY: How did you feel when you arrived here after 6 months?

YD: People at the office cleaning building helped me with air ticket paying \$1,600 but I did not know that it was both ways. The return ticket had expired and I had to buy ticket again in Nepal.

TY: How did you manage the money to buy ticket?

YD: I borrowed money from the monastery.

TY: After returning to America, what job did you do and where did you stay?

YD: I was happy that on my return, I got both my jobs and did both the jobs working sixteen hours. And the very next year, I went to Nepal to see my children, as they were small. After 1997, I did not go.

TY: You arrived here in 1992 or 1993?

YD: I arrived here in 1993, May 10.

TY: So, you made trips to Nepal every year from 1993 to 1997?

YD: Not every year. I went in 1994, '95, '96 and 1997.

TY: What is the name of the hotel you worked at in St. Louis Park?

YD: Name of the hotel I worked at in St. Louis Park is Hotel Inn. I worked for over two years. In order to continue working there, I needed roommates. I alone would not stay there even if there were jobs. So I moved to Minneapolis and lived with four roommates. I got a job at Hilton Hotel where I worked for seven years. Tibetans helped me find the job. Tibetans knew where the openings are and helped me. During those days, it was not difficulty to find a job even if you did not know English. These days, it is difficult to get job if you don't know English.

TY: When you were working at Hilton Hotel, were there Tibetans working? If yes, how many?

YD: There were over thirty or forty Tibetans.

TY: Was it much happier when you had Tibetans working with you?

YD: Yes, it was much happier; we keep talking. We did not find work that hard. I really worked hard thinking I would not find one if I lost that job. By nature, I enjoy working hard.

TY: Did you do one job or two jobs?

YD: Yes, I did two jobs.

TY: What was the second job?

YD: The other job was with Marsden. It is building cleaning company.

TY: How did you manage with your food?

YD: At Hilton Hotel, food was free. At the previous hotel too, food was free.

TY: When did the family come to the United States?

YD: My family came to America in September of 1998.

TY: Who helped you to fill the forms/file the papers to get family here?

YD: A lawyer named John Lunquist and Mary Ann helped us to file the papers.

TY: When you lived with the sponsor, how did you like the food?

YD: I did not like the food but I ate because I was hungry. Later, my sponsor took us to a shop...looks like it was an Indian grocery shop...and we bought food items and cooked rice and meat and ate. I stayed only two months.

TY: After two months, did you move to Dadak la's house?

YD: I stayed one month at Dadak la's house.

TY: How was your experience at Dadak la's house different from the sponsor's? **TD:** Food was different but there was the constant worry of not finding a job. Without work, life was worrisome, as I had to make money to pay for the loans and help family. Good food was not enough. I prayed to His Holiness that I might get a job soon.

TY: After family arrived, did you face any problems registering children to school?

YD: No, I did not face any problem. Mary Ann helped me with everything.

TY: Having lived in Nepal all their life, they are now in a new country. Did they like or dislike their new life?

YD: They are kids and they liked life here.

TY: Did they not miss Nepal?

YD: They did say that they missed Nepal. After enrolling children in school, I faced great problems with my older son.

TY: What was the problem?

YD: They could not discover that my son had TB. He came home from school very sick. He stayed home for ten – fifteen days. Doctor was not able to diagnose the disease. One day they said he had TB and the other day, they said he didn't have TB. One day, a doctor at Hennepin county clinic said there was water in his lung. He wanted to find out/treat the disease. At that time, I did not have health insurance. From Hilton Hotel, I got insurance free for myself but family coverage was not allowed.

TY: Was it not allowed?

YD: Family coverage was not allowed. It was not that they did not give. So, I didn't have insurance. At that time, I simply did not understand. There was family coverage of 80% that I could buy. I told doctor and nurse that I did not have coverage. They ran up and down and got 80% coverage. One visit bill came to \$3,000.00; I got very worried. With help from Kura Penpa, I paid only \$1,000.00. Medicine for TB was free.

TY: Child became sick and you were going live here in this country. What was the plan?

YD: I lived in an apartment and I became sick with leg problems and could not work for six months. I was scared that I would lose my coverage but luckily, I did not. I was able to have coverage paying \$6.00 a month. There was also some money coming for not working due to health reasons.

TY: It may be the worker's compensation money?

YD: Yes, they said it was something like that. During that time, Gyen Wangyal la also helped me spending hours free. He helped me two three times without money. That was good.

TY: At that time, children were small. Now they must have grown up?

YD: Older boy completed twelfth grade and smaller boy was killed. My story is sad.

TY: Would you like to share something about your second son?

YD: From my perspective, my son was not a troublemaker; nobody told me that he was a troublemaker. His friends called and he went. That must be his karmic fate. I don't

blame his friends. It is my prayer that his death would take away the 'obstacle' of our community. He died for no cause. I miss him very much but there isn't anything I could do. Last summer, he went to Massachusetts as I have a relative there who asked me to send my son there. He was there for five months and returned home with \$10,000.00. He gave all that money to me. He looked for a job here. Two days before death, he went to work and on Wednesday, I could not see him, as our schedule was such. Tragedy happened the next day. It must be the karmic results of our previous deeds.

TY: You have three children; two children joined you earlier and third one was left behind.

YD: My daughter was left behind. Daughter came year before last. It was in 2002

TY: Did your daughter go to school?

YD: First she went to school. Later she became a nun.

TY: When she arrived here, what kind of job did she get?

YD: When she arrived here, she got a job at the Allina laundry.

TY: Are there many Tibetans at the Allina laundry?

YD: There were many Tibetans.

TY: Were you working at the Allina laundry?

YD: I was also working at the laundry. I had two jobs.

TY: Where was your other job?

YD: The other job was at Hilton Hotel. I first work at Hilton and then I went to do the part time job at laundry.

TY: How long did you work at Hilton?

YD: At Hilton, I worked for seven, eight years.

TY: At Allina, how many years?

YD: At Allina, I worked six years.

TY: Was the job at laundry very physical and hard?

YD: Yes, laundry job is very physical; it was very hard. You have to make/reach certain number. Although hard, I did not feel that way very much. For me job was not difficult.

What was difficult for me was that I did not know the language; I could not speak the language.

TY: In America, when you go grocery shopping, you have shops that have everything. It is not the same as in Nepal.

YD: America is a super power. We have grocery shop that has everything.

TY: How did you feel when you happen to be in such shops?

YD: I felt happy but my family was not with me. So, in my mind, there was no happiness.

TY: In America, many Tibetans got the opportunity to buy their own homes. You have also bought a home and moved from apartment. Your home is big with lots of empty space. How do you use your space?

YD: Empty space will remain as it is. It is good to have a home. On the other hand, you have mortgage money to pay. We are lucky to be in a position to buy home. It is all due to the kindness of His Holiness. Some people don't think that way. I always feel that it is all due to the kindness of His Holiness.

TY: In Nepal, there are monasteries that children and adults both can easily go and pray. In Boudha, there are monasteries close by and people go and pray. We don't have such things here. In your mind, do you wish to have such things here in America?

YD: I do wish to have monasteries here. When I am not working and if time permits, I go to Gyuto monastery¹⁵ and pray. It has been the advice of His Holiness that we recite the sacred mantras. That is for our benefit.

TY: In America, there are organizations like the Tibetan community, Tibetan Youth Congress (TYC), Tibetan Women's Association. And when these organizations organize political activities like street demonstrations, do you participate?

YD: Yes I do. Last year, I went to New York, despite difficulties. I did so not for the sake of name but I did it sincerely keeping in mind what the Chinese are doing in Tibet. I have first hand experience of life under the Chinese rule. I have participated and will continue to participate in street demonstrations and hunger strikes in future. I am ready to make sacrifices. I will go for two, three days if the Youth (TYC) calls me or asks for \$10, \$15 as donation. I will happily make such contributions for I strongly feel that what I have is due to the kindness of His Holiness.

TY: The Tibetan community has a community center. Do you have anything to say with regard to use of the center?

¹⁵ Gyuto Wheel of Dharma Monastery.

YD: I don't have much to say. But I want to say that when I was asked to contribute \$200.00 for purchase of the center, I paid the contribution. I pay the freedom Green Book contribution every year. I pay any contributions the community asks from me. For I always believe that what I have is due to the kindness of His Holiness; I am able to come to this great country due to the kindness of His Holiness. This feeling is real and true, and it is in my heart. This year, I could not participate in the birthday of His Holiness¹⁶...because of the tragedy...and I told my friends that I could not sing or dance for sometime. By nature, I like songs and dances very much.

TY: What sorts of songs do you like?

YD: I like toeshey¹⁷ very much. I don't know other songs.

TY: Toeshey means...

YD: Toeshey means Toe Dingri¹⁸ songs.

TY: Are all toesheys same or they are different?

YD: They are not the same. They are very different in tones and body movements. There are 108 songs describing from the top of the snow mountain and 108 songs describing the mountain from its base. Wordings and steps for each of the songs are different. Those who don't know might find them same, but they are not. Keeping one's culture is very important. His Holiness, like our parents, always advises us not to mix with other ethnic groups. Keeping culture means practicing one's language, dress and religion. As you get up every morning, you must recite the sacred 'mani' mantras.

TY: It is July 26th 2005 and this is the second tape of Ama Yangchen interview. Primary interviewer is Tenzin Yangdon and secondary interviewer is Charles Lenz. Interview is recorded in Tibetan.

Do you have any concerns about the youth?

YD: Yes I do. I am not happy with the way they dress, go about and their life style. Not only for my kids but also, for others too even if I don't know them. Looking at the dress of some kids, I get worried and think of the parents of these kids. When I see kids well dressed and behaved, I think of the parents and start thinking that the parents must be happy and proud. It is a great concern for me. I speak to my kids and tell them that if they don't do well at this time, the very name of Tibet will vanish during their children's time. I tell my kids to recite offering prayers before food, prostrate three times every morning and three times before going to bed. I try to teach them. If they don't do well during this time, they will do well during their time.

¹⁶ Tibetans celebrate the birthday of His Holiness the Dalai Lama on July, 6th.

¹⁷ A kind of song.

¹⁸ Songs from Dingri. A town in Tibet.

TY: The Tibetan community has programs like Tibetan language classes, dance and music during the weekend. Do you send your kids to these programs?

YD: I do send my son. He goes there to learn songs and music. I don't see him dance. He likes music very much. One should have choice to decide whether to participate in dance and music programs. We can't force. One has to pay attention in order to learn anything.

TY: Your older son has completed high school. Is he going to college?

YD: He went to college for one year. When he started the second year, he decided to help me at home. I still tell him that he should continue his education and he says he will.

TY: The reason for not going to college is that he wants to work and help you?

YD: He is helping me, as I alone can't pay mortgage and other bills. Although I have my daughter. He is going to continue his education.

TY: Did he tell you what he wants to learn when he goes to school?

YD: I didn't try to know about it.

TY: When you lost your son in that tragedy how was the support of the Tibetan community and its members?

YD: They supported me very much. New Year comes once in a year and the community celebration of the Tibetan New Year was also cancelled to express solidarity with my family. I was very happy although it did not help my deceased son. Community collected donation for my son and the money was given to me. Donations are welcomed, but according to Buddhist tradition, they are a liability that you have to repay. Donation received was over \$1,000.00. Community really helped and supported me. During those tragic days, it was clearly stated in the media that Tibetans were not involved in any gangs nor did any member possess any guns. When there is hearing and I have to stand in the court, it is my hope that the community will help me. If I lose, it will be a loss not only for me but also for the Tibetans. It is my hope that we will win because we did not commit any crimes. According to our traditions, we don't keep guns and resort to violence. Tibetan community helped me and am looking forward to continued help and support.

TY: That evening when you lost your son, guns were used. In Nepal, it is hard to get a gun for people. What do you have to say about that?

YD: Are you talking about Tibetan kids?

TY: Not about Tibetan kids. I am talking about guns in America.

YD: America likes guns very much. From our perspective, guns are not needed. Stealing and fighting are bad. As Buddhists, we will not commit homicide. My son met with such a tragedy due to my bad luck or karma. I pray to God every morning and evening. Law will take its course. It will further tighten as investigations go on. People have seen my son killed but no one comes forward to speak about it. I can understand that they are not coming forward in order to weaken the case and hurt me. They are doing so because they want to be cautious, as life is very precious. When he could be taken out from my house, they have the responsibility to bring him in. Since I am a Buddhist, I am not stressing on this. But things are happening in the right way. A Hmong woman, when asked, at first said she did not see anyone shooting at my son but now she says that as she drove the car, she saw my son being shot. God is forcing her to say the truth.

TY: I have no more questions to ask. Are there important things that I didn't ask and you want to say?

YD: I have nothing much to say except that after coming to America, life has been good and also, it has been sad. I do not blame any one for the sad/bad things that happened to me. I always pray that no child may face the same fate that my son had faced. My son died a tragic death and I always pray that my son's death may carry away all the bad karma or obstacles of our community. My son's life was very precious and I miss him very much. But there isn't anything I can do except praying.