

Tibet Oral History Project

**Interview #47D – Gonpo Dorjee
May 18, 2012**

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INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

1. Interview Number: #47D
2. Interviewee: Gonpo Dorjee
3. Age: 85
4. Date of Birth: 1927
5. Sex: Male
6. Birthplace: Ganyak Jang
7. Province: Dhotoe (Kham)
8. Year of leaving Tibet: 1959
9. Date of Interview: May 18, 2012
10. Place of Interview: Community Hall, Tashi Jong, Himachal Pradesh, India
11. Length of Interview: 0 hr 58 min
12. Interviewer: Marcella Adamski
13. Interpreter: Tenzin Yangchen
14. Videographer: Pema Tashi
15. Translator: Tenzin Yangchen

Biographical Information:

Gonpo Dorjee was born in a place called Ganyak Jang close to Khampa Gar Monastery. He belonged to a large family and was the eldest of five siblings. His family was nomads and Gonpo Dorjee remembers going to the hills to look after the animals, making curds and butter and spinning wool. He talks about the *ba*, a tent made from yak hair, which was sturdy enough to withstand the snow.

Most of the festivals in his region were connected with Buddhism and Gonpo Dorjee talks about the *cham*, a performance by monks wearing different kinds of masks. There were also different religious festivals where lay people recited prayers. He tells about the various kinds of prayers: prayers for long life, to remove any harm and obstacles, when a person dies and another to bring wealth.

Gonpo Dorjee recounts his marriage that was a love marriage. He describes how boys and girls express their love through songs. He sings a few songs that express a young couple's feelings for each other. He also explains about different types of burials for the deceased and how stars and astrology are used to make predictions. He shares his understanding of Buddhist philosophy, which includes the idea of "cause and effect" and the importance of giving freely to others.

Topics Discussed:

Childhood memories, Kham, religious festivals, customs/traditions, Buddhist beliefs.

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Interview #47D

Interviewee: Gonpo Dorjee

Age: 85, Sex: Male

Interviewer: Marcella Adamski

Interview Date: May 18, 2012

Question: Please tell us your name.

Interviewee #47D: Yes?

Q: Please tell us your name.

#47D: The name is Gonpo Dorjee.

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?

00:01:25

#47D: [Nods]

Q: Thank you for offering to share your story with us. During this interview if you wish to take a break or stop at any time, please let me know. If you do not wish to answer a question or talk about something, let me know.

#47D: [I] have nothing more to tell you than what I told you earlier [during pre-interview].

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

#47D: It is fine.

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

#47D: [Nods]

Q: *Aku-la* 'respectful term for paternal uncle,' please tell me where you were born and who was in your family?

#47D: Yes?

Q: Where were you born?

#47D: [Not discernible]

Q: Yes?

#47D: It is on the way to Khampa Gar [a monastery], a little away from Ganyak. The name of the place is Ganyak Jang.

Q: How many family members were there?

#47D: Yes?

Q: How many members were there in your family when [you] were a little child?

00:03:00

#47D: There were many family members when [I] was a little child. There were father, mother, grandfather, uncle, aunt and many others. I had four siblings; there were five [children] including me. From the lot only I survive while the rest have passed away.

Q: Where were you in that lineup of siblings?

#47D: I was the oldest. I, the oldest survive, and the others have passed away.

Q: How old are you now?

#47D: 85.

Q: When you were growing up what was your family's work in Tibet?

#47D: [We] were nomads and looked after animals. There were horses, mules, *dzo* 'animal bred from a yak and a cow,' *dzomo* 'female *dzo*,' yaks, *dri* 'female yaks,' sheep and goats. These had to be taken to the hills in the morning and brought down in the evening. One prepared curd, milk and butter, and then spun wool. There was something that was woven from the hair of yak and made into a *ba* 'tent made from yak hair,' which is the best material in the world. When a *ba* was set up, one could cook, prepare tea, laugh, sing and dance inside. When it rained, it did not leak and when it snowed—a metal sheet would bend and a tarpaulin seeped—and the snow collected outside of the *ba*, we beat against it from within with a stick and the snow fell down. Such was the tent of the nomads.

Q: So it sounds like a very comfortable home. *Aku-la*, what kind of holidays did you celebrate with your family and your community? What kinds of religious festivals?

#47D: How do [you] mean?

Q: What kinds of festivals and what occasions did you visit monasteries—not now but when [you] lived in the village?

00:06:54

#47D: Like festivals? This monastery [relocated in Tashi Jong, India] is the monastery of our village. During summer there was a great *dupa* [spiritual practice undertaken by a group of people which goes uninterruptedly for seven days] on the 10th day [of the lunar month] when *cham* ‘religious dance performed by monks’ was performed at the monastery, and during winter and autumn there was *Gonpo Dupchoe, Phudup, Kagye* and *Tochu*—different kinds of *dupa*. There were *cham* and prayer assemblies that took place early in the mornings. The monastery was at a distance of over half a day’s journey from our summer location and around two hours down the hill on horseback from the winter location.

Q: You mentioned the *cham* dances. Can you tell us what were the *cham* dances enacting?

#47D: [We] went to see the *cham* at the monastery.

Q: What types of *cham* were performed? What were they?

#47D: Yes?

Q: What types of *cham* were performed? What were they?

#47D: There are different types of *cham*. There are many *cham*. Some *cham* [performers] wear gentle masks and costumes while the wrathful ones wore fierce masks. There are different types of *cham* that are peaceful and wrathful. They are not alike; there are many types. There are many different types of *cham*.

Likewise, there are many different types of prayer recitations. It is similar to that. If a person wants a long life, one could have the *tsedho* and *tsesung* prayers chanted. Performing the *yangdup* and *yongkyap* prayers enhanced one’s wealth. In order not to face any harm during journeys, there are prayers like *barchay lamsel, sampa lhundup* and *tsidhun soldhep* that can be read. If a person died there was the *thardho, namgyal thongchoe* and *shito* prayers. There are various prayers; prayers for the dead, for the living, for enhancement of wealth and for long life.

Q: One of the prayers, the first one you mentioned was the prayer for long life. Is that a very long prayer or is that something you could tell us in words right now?

00:10:59

#47D: There is the *tsedup* prayer with *torma* ‘ritual offerings made of dough’ and such to bring about long life and the *tsesung* and *tsedho* that are the short and long prayers. The *tsesung* is very simple, just a few words. I chant it twice the number of beads on [my] rosary every day.

Q: Is it a prayer he could recite now?

#47D: The short one?

Q: You said that you chant the short one twice over your rosary. Please chant it once now.

#47D: [I] do not think it will help by simply chanting. One must receive instructions and *lung* ‘oral transmission’ from a lama who will teach you how it benefits and how to meditate. Just chanting it is not beneficial. There is a deity, the Tselhanamsum, that one must meditate upon. One must meditate upon the deity.

Q: Please chant the prayer. You chant it twice over your rosary daily. Please recite it once for us now.

00:12:49

#47D: Okay. *Om amarana zimin theyi soha. Om amarana zimin theyi soha. Om amarana zimin theyi soha.*

Q: *Om amarana zimin thayi soha.*

#47D: It is *theyi*.

Q: *Theyi soha.*

#47D: Yes. *Om amarana zimin theyi soha.*

Q: This is for long life...

#47D: Yes. At the start of it you can say *Guru ayi sidhi hung. Om amarana zimin theyi soha.* Some chant it that way. *Guru ayi sidhi hung* is supposed to mean “do not forget me.”

Q: *Aku-la*, where did you learn to say your prayers? Who taught you?

#47D: Yes?

Q: Who taught [you] to chant the prayers?

#47D: We had many lamas. Not just one, we received teachings from many lamas. We received teachings from not just one but numerous lamas. There were lamas that only taught the dharma, but others that were different. Religion is like a round piece of brown candy. Whether you bite from the left or right or anywhere it is sweet. One must have good faith in the lama.

Q: And did the...

00:14:38

#47D: [Interrupts] It is like this. A leader is the leader of many people and not just one person. However, if you approached that leader in [his] house and offered money and spoke sweetly, one day he will acknowledge you. Though a leader is everyone’s leader, the world’s leader, yet if you flatter, you benefit. A leader is like that. A lama is everybody’s

lama but if you have faith in [him], it will benefit you. A lama is everybody's lama. The sun is everyone's and it's beneficial to the world. However, if you have a nice porch in your house where you can catch the sun's rays, you feel its warmth. It is like that. For instance,

*Ponpo kun kyi ponpo re, pho miga dhipung re
Lama kun kyi lama re, dhaypa jayna dhikla re*

**“A leader is everyone's leader but you benefit if you flatter him.
A lama is everyone's lama but you benefit if you have faith in him.”**

Q: What did you say about the leader? The leader is everybody's leader.

#47D: Yes, yes.

Q: However, what should one do to the leader to...

#47D: [Interrupts] One must approach him when there are not many people around and be nice and speak sweetly. Then it will be easy if you have to seek favor someday.

*Ponpo kun kyi ponpo re, pho miga jayna dhipung re
Lama kun kyi lama re, pho dhaypa jayna dhikla re
Nyima kun kyi nyima re, pho rawa jayna dhila re*

**“A leader is everyone's leader but you benefit if you flatter him.
A lama is everyone's lama but you benefit if you have faith in him.
The sun is everyone's sun but you benefit if you build a porch.”**

Such are the stories.

Q: Where your family lived, were you near monasteries and what were their names?

#47D: How?

Q: Were there monasteries near the place where you lived?

00:17:47

#47D: Not close by but at a little distance.

Q: Which monastery?

#47D: It was this monastery [points left to monastery of Tashi Jong].

Q: Can you please say the name of the monastery?

#47D: You must go a distance like Baijnath [from here].

Q: Can you please say the name of the monastery because we do not know?

#47D: Khampa Gar.

Q: Yes?

#47D: Khampa Gar.

Q: Khampa?

#47D: Yes, Khampa Gar.

Q: Was the monastery called Khampa Gar?

#47D: Yes.

Q: How far was it from your...

#47D: Yes?

Q: How far was it from your place?

00:18:12

#47D: It was at a distance from here to Baijnath, a distance of 4-5 miles.

Q: You mentioned a number of traditions and prayers. What was the tradition if somebody died in your region? How did they handle that dead person's body and what ceremonies did they have?

#47D: People have different types of deaths and [the kinds of prayers to be performed] can be observed from the stars. A person dies due to illness and due to old age. Then there is death from fits and shock. Some [people] die from being hit by rolling boulders on the mountains. There is death by drowning for some. Some are fired upon by others and get killed. Each [type of death] has a different star to consult.

The stars in the sky have many names. There are 25 *gyukar* stars [primary planets] and 37 *kethu* stars [comets/shooting stars]. It can be observed that a certain star is seen at a particular place during rains or when flowers bloom. In our region the cuckoo bird is considered precious but one cannot see it here. A star is seen at a particular place when the cuckoo calls. A nomad looks up and says, "Oh, it is time to get up, the star is shining here. It is time to milk the animals" or "It is time to go up the mountains for the star is here."

There are bad stars. There are different kinds of stars. By observing the stars, it is decided whether a person's body should be offered to the birds, to have a water burial or a cremation. These were carried out by consulting the stars. Burying was considered very bad.

00:21:47

When a person dies, his [soul] can see from the sky and is aware of the wind blowing, the body being carried and being cremated. The awareness can travel. When [a body] is buried, the awareness cannot feel the wind, see the sun or anything. One is like an animal, a cow, an ox or a horse when buried underground. They do not have any kind of awareness but just plods along if given a weight to carry. Animals do not have awareness besides eating grass and drinking water. So, burying is considered bad because the person will take rebirth as an animal.

Q: So why would anybody bury their dead in the ground if they had such serious negative consequences?

#47D: That is because being buried means there is no air, one cannot see the sun or the stars or anything.

Q: Why were some people buried under ground?

00:23:53

#47D: That is when someone had a bad death or [died] under a bad star.

Q: That's why they were buried in the ground?

#47D: [Speaks before interpreter] In the case of [death] from being bitten by a rabid dog.

Q: Were they buried under ground?

#47D: Yes. Those that died from rabid dog bites.

Q: *Aku-la*, you mentioned...

#47D: [Interrupts] Those that had sinned a great deal by killing numerous people were buried.

Q: Those that had killed numerous people?

#47D: Yes. Such a person was a great sinner, an unruly person. A person who had killed many people was considered bad.

Q: *Aku-la*, you said that you want to pay attention to the stars, so you make a good choice, but how do you understand the stars or do you ask someone who is more experienced in knowledge of the stars?

00:25:28

#47D: Yes, there is [an astrologer] who can observe the stars. There is a reference book to observe the stars.

Q: A book?

#47D: Yes.

Q: Do you understand the stars, so you could look at them and make a decision about something you're going to do that day?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Everyday life, you mean?

[Interviewer to interpreter]: Yeah.

#47D: Stars are observed to carry out important activities.

Q: Did everybody know how to observe the stars?

#47D: There are people who know.

Q: Do you know?

#47D: Yes?

Q: Do you know how to observe the stars?

#47D: I do not know to observe the stars but one could consult others. It is good to do [important] work on the particular star that you were born.

Q: Were there any times in your life...

00:26:56

#47D: There are good and bad stars. Let me give an example. The road that you walk on every day is good, right? Sometimes boulders rolled down. Sometimes there was a flood. Sometimes a bridge collapsed. Various things could happen. That occurs because of the stars.

Q: And how would you know to ask that ahead of time?

#47D: It could be asked anytime, whenever you wanted to. By observing the stars, [the astrologer] knew [and would say], "Today it is good if you undertake the work" or "Do not do the work for the star is bad." Such could be understood from the stars that were observed.

These days the world has created the rocket, which is fired in the sky. The man that goes in it claims, "I need this much salary. Should I die, I need such compensation. My parents and children should be taken care of." [He] goes up after signing such [agreements] with the country and then he falls into the sea and has to be rescued by boats. Otherwise, when he goes up in the rocket, he has no knowledge if he will come back or not. He does not know how long he will live.

The stars are there from the time of the Buddha. During the period of the Buddha, there were great lamas that had the power to cover the rays of the sun with their robes and sit on it. There were some that could pierce a rock with a *phurpa* ‘three-sided dagger used in rites of subjugation of hostile forces.’

00:29:21

There is this one called Yeshe Tsogyal ‘Guru Padmasambhava’s main spiritual consort’ that is mentioned in the Namthar [biographies of those who attained liberation both for themselves and others]. During the reign of King Tisi in Nepal, when the leader’s son died, he was grief stricken, “What can I do? My son has died. What can be done?” The one called Yeshe Tsogyal said, “What will you give me if I raise [your] son?” There was the Tsongpon ‘Businessman’ Norbu Sangpo who had to be led to Tibet. He was in Nepal. There is an idol of a deity in white marble in the capital of Nepal, which was created by Tsongpon Norbu Sangpo.

Then there was a *damsey* ‘Brahmin’ that had to be invited to Tibet for the purpose of poetry. Yeshe Tsogyal said, “If he [*damsey*] is allowed [to visit Tibet] I can raise the boy [to life].” “I will give you whatever you want if you can raise the boy.” The boy was raised to life. He was saved and Yeshe Tsogyal was able to take Tsongpon Norbu Sangpo and the *damsey* to Tibet. It is mentioned in the sutra and tantra, “*Namkhay nyingpo nyimay zerlay chip, Sangay Yeshe dakla phurpa dhab, Nyelong gyamchok takeng yinshilok, Yeshe Tsogyal serpay miro lang.*” Yeshe Tsogyal raised one from the dead. We are short of awareness and ignorant but the power of the dharma is like that.

Guru Rinpoche has foretold about the loss of Tibet.

*Phakpun nangtuk thago gongne sung
Chowo tupay yarlung maga gyap
Thama bhod dhi gyayi woktu do.*

[Approximate translation:

*When conflicts arise among fathers and sons
A miraculous military installation will appear in Yarlung
And finally Tibet will fall under the Chinese]*

That is mentioned in the prophecy of Guru Rinpoche. Such is the all-knowing ways of the Buddhas. During the period of the Buddhas...Except for the innovativeness of our times...We would die without food in 5-6 days. However, the Buddha remained six years without food at Nalanda in Bodh Gaya [India]. [He] was able to remain for six years. In Tibet, Jetsun Mila [Milarepa] ate only green leaves and sat cross-legged under the snow, naked and did not feel the cold.

00:31:49

There were [sages] that could hold red-hot iron with the hands and lick it with the tongue. There were some that did not freeze to death in the snow. They ate the same food everyday and chanted prayers and practiced. Unlike these days, there was not any choice of food and clothing. These days the sponsors request of the lama, “Please come without fail, someone

has died.” Or “Please come, someone is very sick.” In this way the lama is not left alone and times are bad. There is no feeling [respect for the lamas] like it used to be back in the village. Otherwise, our dharma mentions about those [sages] that flew in the sky and entered the ground. If such things happen now, those uninitiated would say, “They are magicians.” It is like that.

Some amass a lot of wealth and construct houses, however, one has to go naked after death. One must discard the clothes and go. There is no use amassing anything. Having a lot of wealth, one is worried about fire, of theft, of flood or of being robbed by bandits. So one must practice the dharma. In every country, when people grow old and have nothing but wealth, the old people become crazy.

00:34:38

Some people hold their siblings and relatives dear while others do not. In the case of blood relations, you may have a fierce argument today but in the next few days you think, “It is raining today. It is better to go to [my] relative’s place. Though [he] scolded [me] last time, [I] wonder what [he] will say today.” The relative sees [him] and says, “Come in. Today the weather is bad.” That is how blood relation draws you and how precious sibling relationship is.

As for friends, a friend is similar to a churner. Churning tea everyday in a wooden churner will make it waterproof. If left dry for a few months, it becomes useless. Hence, if a friend is given riches and food, [he] will remain a good friend but if not given anything, there are no friends. Friends and churners need to be filled.

Q: Speaking of loving, what kinds of decisions did you have to make around getting married? Did you choose a bride and were you married? And if so, did you choose a bride of your own?

#47D: Yes?

Q: Did [you] get married while [you] were in Tibet?

#47D: Yes.

Q: How did you find [your] wife?

#47D: I got married to someone I loved.

Q: [Your] wife and you fell in love and then got married?

#47D: Yes.

Q: Can you please tell us why was it a love marriage and how did you get married? How was that arranged?

00:37:22

#47D: The boy observes the girl and the girl observes the boy and if [they] think that it is good, then [they] must go and approach for a talk. The talk was not like what it is now. We spoke in a sort of veiled manner.

Q: How?

#47D: The talk was sort of veiled. One would sing a sweet song, which says, “[I] can behold such a [beautiful] scenery. There are many white and red flowers. If I were to select one, would [I] be allowed to?” There are such songs. Then the other side [the girl] would sing, “A flower needs watering. If watered well, it should be okay.” [He] understands that [the response] is positive and then [they] talk to each other and become friends.

Q: After observing each other, what is the sweet song that the boy sings?

#47D: Both the sides sing.

Q: The girl says that the flower needs watering. What does the boy say?

00:38:16

#47D: [A relationship] is possible if [he] waters it.

Q: Yes?

#47D: Then the boy believes that [a relationship] is possible.

Q: What does the boy say to the girl?

#47D: The boy replies, “It rains from the sky throughout the year and there is no end to water. There will come a possessor eventually.”

Q: That it’s going to rain from the sky?

#47D: That there is non-stop rain from the sky and nobody possesses the water. However, it is possible for somebody to possess [the water].

Q: The boy initially says that there is a flower or what is it [he] says? You said something right at the beginning.

00:38:58

#47D: [I] can behold such [beautiful] scenery.

Q: What does it mean?

#47D: Look, there is [beautiful] scenery with numerous white and red flowers.

Q: That there were a lot of flowers?

#47D: Yes. If one wishes to make a selection, it seems possible.

Q: That one wants to make a selection?

#47D: Yes. If one wishes to make a selection, it seems possible.

Q: And then?

#47D: Then the girl remarks that though flowers abound, they need watering. [Laughs] It will be endless to talk about these things. If I were to sing, there are many thousands of such [songs]. Some may say, “You are not capable and [a relationship] is not possible.” *Namla gyachen tsunmo re, Lho yundo gompo nganyi re.* The dragon thunders in the sky, right? *Namla gyakay tsunmo dhi, Lho yundo gompo nganyi re, Go norbu dhila matana, Namla gyachen ghatsuk yoe.* As long as the precious gem on the head of the dragon remains intact, the dragon can go anywhere in the sky. Other countries identify it as lightning but Chinese and Tibetans interpret it as a dragon and based it as an example.

00:40:52

***Dakla khangpa leme dhi, Chichung khala nyengen yin, Lueshodup dhila madak na, Dakla khanchung gale yoe.* You have noticed the nests built by little birds in houses? [A bird] is even able to build nests in the rocks. *Dakla khangpa leme, Chichung khala nyengen yin, Lueshodup dhila madak na, Dakla khangchung gale yoe.* [The song] says, “If this [pair of] wings do not fail, I would be able to build any nest in the rocks.”**

Q: What does it mean?

#47D: It is to signify that one was a capable person.

Q: Does it mean a yes or a no?

#47D: It means a “yes.” *Chula gonga nyamo re, Nyamo sermig nganyi yin, Lue shodug dhila madak na, Chula gonga gathang yin?* Only fishes can lay eggs in the water. There are a lot of such expressions. It is impossible to relate everything.

Q: Do you know how to sing one of those songs?

#47D: Yes?

Q: Please sing a song.

00:41:58

#7D: A song?

Q: Yes, please sing a short one.

#47D: Those are the songs.

Q: Please sing a song.

#47D: I do not have a [good] voice to sing.

Q: The voice doesn't matter. Please sing a song.

#47D: [Takes a breath]. No, [I] cannot sing.

Q: I see.

#47D: [I] have grown old.

Q: [You] cannot.

00:42:29

#47D: [Sings a song but words not discernible]

Q: Thank you. What are the lyrics?

#47D: The meaning of the song is that...There is something called a wolf, like the...[not discernible] here.

Q: Yes?

#47D: There is a wild animal called wolf.

Q: Yes.

#47D: A wild animal in the mountains like the *gidhili* in India. Similar to it was [an animal] called a wolf in Tibet.

Q: Wolf? Animal?

#47D: Yes. Animal. It says, "I do not have wealth. Even though [I] do not have wealth, [I] am not sad because [I] can find meat anywhere." Then there is a bird in the sky called an eagle. It says, "I do not possess a horse. Even though I do not possess a horse, [I] am not sad because I can even go to India."

Q: Beautiful. What was the name of the woman you married?

00:44:21

#47D: We do not normally call aloud the name of the dead.

Q: Okay, I understand. How old were you when you got married?

#47D: [Interrupts] Others put up pictures [of their dead] in remembrance, but we feel that unless you remember them in your mind, it is useless to hang pictures. In fact, putting up pictures would make one sad on seeing it. So, [we] do not hang pictures.

Q: Is there a reason why it is better not to name the name of someone you loved who has died?

#47D: Yes?

Q: “It is our practice not to mention the name of a person that has passed away.” Why is it so? Why is it not mentioned?

#47D: Calling out the name of the dead means that ...[not discernible].

Q: Yes?

#47D: It is said that the soul hears the name when it is called out and feels, “Why am I being called? Am I not in the area?”

Q: [The soul] hears it...

#47D: It is said that [the soul] hears.

Q: What happens if it hears?

00:45:55

#47D: That is after passing away and there is nothing to talk about it in depth.

Q: Why would that be a problem [if the dead hears his name]?

#47D: [Speaks before question is interpreted] Those greedy people succeed in doing any kind of work. The leaders are not able to control them easily. For the humble people [the leaders] say, “You did this and that.” It means that the leaders do not know the difference between a red-mouthed tiger and a monkey’s red bottom. The tiger has a red mouth from the blood of many wild animals that it has devoured, whereas the monkey is like the poor people that sit on the ground on their bottoms. It is supposed to say that there is an owner for the rock but not for suffering. We, the Khampa, say speak about such things.

Q: When a person passes away and his name is called out, it’s said that he can hear it...

#47D: Even if he does not, it is said that the wind element hears it.

Q: What would be the problem if the deceased hears it?

#47D: Yes?

Q: What would be the problem or suffering if the deceased hears his name being called out?

#47D: There will be problems if one does not have dharma. One will fall into the realms of hell and suffer many problems. Having religion will initiate rebirth while without it, one falls into hell. One must practice dharma.

Q: What do you think is the...What is the dharma? What are the teachings that you cherish the most that you received from the dharma?

#47D: Yes?

Q: What do you think is the Buddha dharma?

00:48:18

#47D: Dharma is being compassionate to others, being virtuous and charitable. One must do the best one can for others.

Q: Being compassionate to others...

#47D: Being good to others, donating your wealth and assets, making offerings to the gods and lamas. Such is the practice of the Buddha dharma. If one is miserly and saves wealth, one has to leave it behind upon death. It has not been of benefit to others.

Being good to others is the dharma. For instance, if somebody treats you like an enemy, you get angry. [You] feel it when [someone] takes [your] things. The more good a person does, the more merit one earns.

Q: How would you use the Buddha dharma in relation to the Chinese who have caused many problems in Tibet?

#47D: The use of the dharma...it will gradually become clear, but at the moment one cannot say as to how to use it. One must use [the dharma] by praying to the Gods. His Holiness the Dalai Lama has said, "Do not fight the enemy." There is no other way to use [the dharma]. In the first place, Tibetans did not have the power to fight the enemy.

Q: What do you think about that? Do you think that's a good idea not to fight the enemy?

00:51:25

#47D: [You] mean what have I to say?

Q: What do you think?

#47D: [I] think it is good because His Holiness the Dalai Lama—the Chinese are the enemy—donated money when fields were washed away and many people died from flooding the year before.

Q: To whom?

#47D: To the Chinese.

Q: What happened to... Which Chinese water?

#47D: In China.

Q: Later [after the invasion]?

#47D: Yes. Presently Tibet's wealth has not diminished and one can bring great development to the country by constructing huge forts and bringing in large numbers of troops. Just recently His Holiness the Dalai Lama was offered much money that he gave to the poor people in South Africa. [He] takes into consideration the plight of the poor wherever they are.

For instance, with the money offered to His Holiness, [he] could separate older [students] in the schools, manufacture swords and guns and make an attempt for war. The United States and a few countries extended help to fight earlier. "I do not want to fight and kill people," said His Holiness the Dalai Lama. If it was some other country, they would have done like that.

00:53:37

#47D: Whatever wealth, food or the good things someone possesses now is because of the benefits from his having practiced the dharma, made donations and fed other people in the past life, otherwise nobody possesses wealth at the time of birth; everyone is born naked.

Q: Tell me about past life? Is that what we are talking about—karma—and what do you think karma is?

#47D: [Speaks before translation is complete] If not for the fruits of the past life, there is not much one can find in terms of food and wealth in this life. If one does not earn merit in this life, there will not be much benefit in the next life. In making offerings of incense and flowers, if the offering is not pure, one is not born with a perfect body and beauty in the next life.

One simply talks about "cause and effect" [of Buddha dharma] while we are living, but it is only after death that one realizes the "cause and effect." There are many meanings for the "cause and effect" and someone like me does not know much. The lamas teach about it. Only when death happens and there is nothing one can take with [him] does one realize whether [practicing] dharma is necessary or not, whether the struggle now is beneficial or not. If one makes a donation of his wealth, the [receiving] person is happy.

Q: *Aku-la...*

00:55:32

#47D: [Interrupts] There are many beggars by the roadside that do not have food to eat and clothes to wear. If they are given food, they feel satiated, like it and are happy. If one amasses a lot and when one dies, [the wealth] is left behind and does not reach the [proper] hands.

Q: *Aku-la*, you said that if one made offerings of incense and flowers, one is born beautiful.

#47D: Yes?

Q: If during this lifetime, you made offerings of incense and flowers, you are born with a good body in the next life.

#47D: That is right.

Q: What else did you say on those lines?

#47D: How do [you] mean?

Q: If one made offerings of incense and flowers to the gods, one is born with a beautiful body in the next life...

00:56:16

#47D: Right. One should not think “good things should happen only to me” but must pray for all sentient beings that there be happiness, that there be no illness, starvation and war, that sins be washed away, that misfortunes be taken away and that [they] be born in the blissful realm after death. One must think of all and not only for the good of oneself.

The sadhus say, “I must become great” and for this purpose smear ash over the face and go naked. For a mean heart there will be more and more difficulties and nothing good will come about in the next life.

00:57:38

#47D: [Sings a song] [Translation is approximate; some words are ambiguous]

*Ri yakpo serri dhi gola
Tso yakpo sertso da kyil
Thaga shonkyi loma*

*Tso yakpo sertso dhi khala
Shing yakpo sershing dakay
Thaga shonkyi loma*

*Shing yakpo sershing dhi gola
Ja yakpo serja da phap
Thaga shonkyi loma*

*[Above the great golden peak
A great golden lake rests
Leaf of a youthful walnut tree*

Over the great golden lake

*Stands a great golden tree
Leaf of a youthful walnut tree*

*On the great golden tree
A great golden bird has landed
Leaf of a youthful walnut tree]*

***Ja yakpo serja dhi kyi
Kay yakpo tunggya dhi gyap
Thaga shonkyi loma***

***Kay yakpo tunggya dhi gyapna
Nga nachung sempa da kyi sung
Thaga shonkyi loma***

*[Then the great golden bird
With sweet melodious voice sang
Leaf of a youthful walnut tree*

*When the melodious song spread
My youthful heart is filled with joy
Leaf of a youthful walnut tree]*

Q: Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW