

Tibet Oral History Project

Interview #67 – Wangmo
July 4, 2007

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TIBET ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

1. Interview Number: #67
2. Interviewee: Wangmo
3. Age: 78
4. Date of Birth: 1929
5. Sex: Female
6. Birthplace: Toe Dhingri
7. Province: Utsang
8. Year of leaving Tibet: 1962
9. Date of Interview: July 4, 2007
10. Place of Interview: House No. 68, Old Camp No. 6, Lugsung Samdupling Settlement, Bylakuppe, Mysore District, Karnataka, India
11. Length of Interview: 2 hr 40 min
12. Interviewer: Martin Newman
13. Translator: Lhakpa Tsering
14. Videographer: Jeffery Loda
15. Transcriber: Tenzin Yangchen



Biographical Information:

A native of Dhingri, Wangmo's parents died when she was a teenager and she wove carpets and blankets, until she married at age 18 or 19. She moved to her husband, Wangla's, his village, Lhatse, where he was a *lhamo* 'opera' performer. Her husband also participates in the interview and describes *lhamo* and its significance as an integral part of Tibetan culture and tradition.

Wangmo recalls the misery she endured trying to care for her four children after the Chinese forcibly took her husband to Lhasa to teach them Tibetan opera. She describes *thamzin* 'struggle sessions' in her village where monks and wealthy landowners were beaten by poor villagers at the coercion of the Chinese. She recounts that some people were shot, while others became permanently disabled due to severe beatings. Unable to endure these abuses, some people committed suicide either by jumping into rivers or by hanging themselves. Wangmo also witnessed the destruction of many monasteries in her region.

The family's sufferings continued even after their escape from Tibet. They were put in detention and interrogated daily in Gangtok, Sikkim, and later in Kalimpong by Indian authorities, who were suspicious of the refugees and made them explain why and how they had escaped.

Topics Discussed:

Childhood memories, life under Chinese rule, forced labor, Chinese oppression, brutality, *thamzin*, destruction of monasteries, escape experiences.

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Age: 78, Sex: F

Interviewer: Martin Newman

Interview Date: July 4, 2007

[The tape begins after the start of the interview.]

Interviewee #67: Wangmo

Question: What does your name mean?

#67: That was the name given by the lama. It was given by a lama when I was very young. I do not know the meaning.

Q: Do you give your permission for the Tibet Oral History Project to use this interview?

#67: That is fine.

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

#67: Okay.

Q: His Holiness the Dalai Lama requested that we record your experiences so that we can share your memories with Tibetans for generations to come.

#67: Okay.

Q: And also inform the world community and the next generation of Chinese about the true history, culture and beliefs of the Tibetan people.

#67: Okay.

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

#67: Will it take a long time?

Q: If it feels too long to you, tell us and we will stop.

#67: Okay, that is good.

Q: If you do not wish to answer a question or discuss some issue, please tell me.

#67: Okay.

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

#67: You can show it.

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

#67: Okay. Those of us who know the stories of Tibet should tell them. In Tibet the Chinese inflicted much suffering and then we escaped. It has been suffering all the time. It was the grace of His Holiness the Dalai Lama; otherwise I was stranded a whole night on the snowy mountain pass along with four young children. We somehow survived.

Q: I am going to ask you to tell us about that in a little while.

#67: Okay.

Q: But first I'd like to know a little bit about your childhood and life in Tibet before the Chinese came? I'd like to ask you where you were born.

#67: Thoe Dhingri.

Q: Where is Dhingri?

#67: If you traveled from Nepal by vehicle, you would reach Dhingri in one day.

Q: How many people were in your family?

#67: My parents are dead. I am the only child of my parents. I have seven children here.

Q: But in the past when you were a child, how many people were in your family then?

#67: When I was young, there was my parents and I. We were farmers like we are in the settlement here.

Q: There was only one child?

#67: Yes, I was the only child of my parents. I had cousins.

Q: What did your parents do?

#67: Dhingri was a city. We cultivated lands and did some trading. It was like a city.

Q: What kind of business did they do?

#67: They went [to trade] to Shigatse and to a place called Nyenlam. That's what they did.

Q: What did they trade in?

#67: My mother sold *chang* 'home-brewed beer' in the village and my father went to trade in Shigatse and other places. Dhingri, where we lived was a city.

Q: What did you do as a child? Did you go to school or did you play with your friends?

#67: There were no schools. In Tibet the children of the poor families were never taught in schools. Except for the rich families, no one went to school. Who is there to teach everyone in Tibet? Here there is, thanks to the grace of His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

Q: Did you help your mother make brew?

#67: Yes, I used to help. My mother passed away when I was 13 or 14 years old. Then I engaged in doing labor tax for the leaders and also cultivation. In Tibet we had particular leaders under the old system.

Q: When you were helping your mother make brew, do you remember how to make brew? Do you remember how you made it?

#67: No, I do not remember. In Tibet we used grains, while here millet is used. The region was very cold.

Q: Your mother passed away when you were 13 and then where did you go?

#67: I was in my village doing some work and I served the labor tax for the leaders. In our village we spun wool and wove carpets, which were sold in Dhingri and Khambu. We wove carpets and blankets.

Q: Where did you live after your mother died?

#67: I lived in my home in Dhingri.

Q: With whom did you stay?

#67: My father passed away after my mother. Then I lived by myself and when I was around 17, 18 or 19, I met my husband. Then I moved to his village in Lhatse.

Q: But before, after your mother passed away and your father was still alive, you lived in your own home and you served, you were a weaver for a high official. Is that correct?

#67: Yes.

Q: What happened first? Your father took you to Lhasa or you got married?

[Translator to interviewer]: She met her husband when she was 18 or 19 and went to his place called Lhatse.

Q: This was in the town you were in or somewhere else? Where did you meet your husband?

#67: I met him in my village and moved to his village. Then in 1959 the Chinese arrived and [my husband] was taken to Lhasa.

Q: Was this a love marriage or an arranged marriage?

#67: It was a love marriage. I did not have parents [to arrange a marriage].

Q: What did you like about your husband and made you want to marry him?

#67: I did not have parents and I thought he would be a companion for me in my life.

Q: But your father was still alive?

#67: My father had been on a business trip and died in the Changthang in the north.

Q: Then you were left alone and you decided that “I must get married.”

#67: I married my husband and moved to his village, Lhatse. Then my husband was taken to Lhasa by the Chinese and I experienced a lot of difficulties in his village under the Chinese.

Q: We will get to that in a moment. Did you have children right away after you got married?

#67: I had four children in Tibet. When I escaped from Tibet, I had four children with me. I had my first child when I was 20 years old.

Q: What kind of work did your husband do?

#67: He was an *lhamo* ‘opera’ performer. He has performed here, too. He was a performer, which was why the Chinese took him to Lhasa to the Choegyur Dhoekar [a theater group]. He was taken there to perform and I was left behind in Lhatse. I faced a lot of problems because I had four children and we did not have anything to eat. The Chinese destroyed all the monasteries, beat the monks and killed people. When my husband came on a visit from Lhasa, we immediately escaped.

Q: Before the Chinese took him away, did he sing as well as dance?

#67: Yes, and he performed the opera in Bylakuppe too. Earlier, he used to perform in Tibet.

Q: That's a real success story if he can still perform in Bylakuppe. Is he still alive now?

#67: Yes, he is here. He is 77 years old and I am 78. We have seven children.

Q: And he is living here now too?

#67: Yes, he is here at home. All our children are working outside and we live here. Our children are providing for us.

Q: Do you remember how he used to sing? What did it sound like when he sang? Can you show me?

#67: I cannot sing now. Until our old age, we did farming here. I have five acres of land. Now I am old and cannot work in the field, so we have leased the land to others. The children are working outside and they provide for the parents.

Q: [Interviewer mimics a rendition of an opera song.] Could you sing?

#67: I do not know to perform the *lhamo*. I do not know and I am old now. My teeth have also fallen out. In the early days, we Thoepas [people from Thoe] loved singing. Now I can't. I broke my leg and was hospitalized for a long time.

Q: I understand you can't dance, but your leg is not your voice.

#67: I was in the hospital for a long time and now my voice is not what it used to be. I have no teeth, so I can't. I had to have a surgery.

Q: I am sorry.

#67: Earlier I taught the Tibetan Women's Association members the traditional Thoepa songs and dances for several years. Then I broke my leg and now I can't.

Q: You used to teach other women to dance?

#67: I taught Thoepa songs and dances to the members of the Tibetan Women's Association for many years. I am a member of the Tibetan Women's Association. I taught Thoepa songs and dances when I was younger.

Q: How interesting! Let's go back to Tibet. So you and your husband went to Lhatse, which was not far from Lhasa. Is that right?

#67: Lhatse and Lhasa were not close by. These days the Chinese have vehicles. If one started from Lhasa, one had to walk over three to four districts before reaching [Lhatse]. It took a long time to walk in the old days. These days there are Chinese vehicles. It was very far.

Q: You went to your husband's place in Jang Lhatse.

#67: From Lhatse, one reached Phuntsoling District, and after walking over two districts, one arrived at Shigatse. Then from Shigatse, one traveled to Lhasa.

Q: You went with your husband to his home in Jang Lhatse?

#67: Yes, I went to my husband's village. My husband was taken to Lhasa by the Chinese. Then the Chinese made us work and I witnessed them subject [the monks of] the monasteries to *thamzin* 'struggle sessions.' I suffered a lot. I had four young children with me. When he [my husband] came on a visit, we made our escape along with our children. We were stranded there on the mountain pass of Sepobhola. Since we had come with our faith in His Holiness the Dalai Lama, none of us died. Then we were imprisoned in Gangtok.

Q: How long were you in Jang Lhatse before the Chinese came?

#67: That was after the Chinese arrived. The Chinese arrived [in Tibet] before 1959. They occupied Tibet in 1959. Much later after the Chinese came to Lhatse, my husband was taken to Lhasa for three years.

Q: How long were you in Jang Lhatse?

#67: Until I fled, I was in Lhatse. The Chinese made us work for them.

Q: Were you there for three years?

#67: Yes, I was.

Q: When did the Chinese come for your husband?

#67: In 1956, the Chinese told him to teach songs and dances in Jang Lhatse and he did. Tibet was not lost at that time. He taught songs and dances to the Chinese. Then in three or four years, Tibet was defeated. He was taken from Lhatse to Lhasa after Tibet was lost. He was taken to the army's performing unit called *Choegyur Dhoekar* for three years.

Q: The Chinese first came and told your husband to teach opera to which people?

#67: He was told to teach the Chinese.

Q: How long did he do that for?

#67: He taught them for about 10 to 15 days. Then he was taken to Lhasa, to the performing unit of the army.

Q: Why did the Chinese want to learn opera?

#67: They were learning the Tibetan traditions and customs. They would tell him [husband] to teach them very old songs and dances. They would ask such things.

Q: Why when they had their own?

#67: They would ask to be taught very old songs and dances. They wrote down all the lyrics of the songs and took them.

Q: You don't know why they would have that interest?

#67: The Chinese arrived in Tibet and there were a large number of them in Lhatse. They had many theater groups like Choegyur Dhoekhar, Kawuthang, etc. We were a poor farming family, not a *ngadhak* 'leadership position' family. If we were either *ngadhak*, *sadhak* 'land owners' or nobles, they would arrest us. We would not be told to teach. Since we were humble farmers, they told us to teach Tibetan traditions and customs.

Q: Your husband must have been very, very famous and well known.

#67: Yes, he used to be known as Lhamo Wang-la. He performed for many years in Bylakuppe. Then he had problems with his legs and because of advancing age. The children asked him not to perform, so he retired. Now he does not perform because of old age. He is not well.

Q: At what point then did the Chinese take him to Lhasa?

#67: In order to make him teach songs and dances.

Q: When did they do that?

#67: I do not know the years. In 1956, he taught in Lhatse.

Q: How old were you at that time?

#67: About 25, 26 or close to 30 then.

Q: That was your age?

#67: My husband's age. There is just one year difference between us. I am older by one year. That was after Tibet was lost.

Q: How long did they take him away for? Did you go with him or did you stay in your town?

#67: I stayed back. I had four children to look after. I underwent enormous hardships because we didn't have enough to eat. I made rounds of all the villages around Lhatse

selling snuff and knick-knacks that were usually traded in Tibet. I went to the villages seeking *tsampa* 'flour made from roasted barley.' I didn't have food to feed my children. It was terrible.

During the day, they [the Chinese] made us transport stones to build a dam across the river in Lhatse. In the night, we planted saplings and searched for bones to put in the plants, which were counted. I experienced such dreadful sufferings. Terrible *thamzin* were carried out in the monasteries.

Q: Who did it?

#67: Tibetans carried out the *thamzin* on the orders of the Chinese. The Chinese questioned the [Tibetan] people, who were poor or paupers earlier, "How did this one treat you in the earlier times? How did this one treat you during the old system?" Then saying that they were carrying out reformation, they [the Chinese] took away all the gold, silver and brass articles. The lands and other household articles were divided among the poor and the paupers were elated. They [performed] *thamzin* and beat the *ngadhak*, the *sadhak* and other influential families.

Q: Were you [subjected to] *thamzin*?

#67: No, we were not *ngadhak*. We were poor farmers. They subjected the nobles, *ngadhak* and *sadhak* to *thamzin*. They divided the community into many categories. *Ngadhaks*, estate owners, leaders and nobles of earlier Tibet were surrounded and [subjected to] *thamzin*. All their things were confiscated. They couldn't raise their heads up and sat with bowed heads. They had to agree to whatever they [the Chinese] said. The Chinese said, "You have ill-treated the people during the old system." They had to listen to whatever the Chinese said. The *ngadhak* and *sadhak* suffered so much.

Q: Did you see many *thamzin* happening?

#67: Yes, I saw all the *thamzin*. In 1962 the paupers were ordered by the Chinese to beat all the monks of the monastery. The monks were pulled and beaten. The nobles and the people belonging to the wealthy families were beaten and their possessions confiscated.

Q: What did you see during the *thamzin*? Were people beaten? Were people tortured? What did you see?

#67: "What did you do during the old system? Did you subdue the people," they [the Chinese] asked. To whatever the paupers said, they [the people subjected to *thamzin*] had to agree and not answer back. The Chinese had appointed the paupers as *U-yon* and *Tsukdang* [leadership positions].

Q: When the paupers asked these questions, were they beating them?

#67: Of course, they were beaten. In Lhatse there were two women named Mo Yangla and Chey Sonam Dolma. They both jumped into the waters. They were subjected to *thamzin* once and then imprisoned. When they were released, they jumped into the waters and died.

Q: They jumped into the river and killed themselves?

#67: The Chinese put them in prison. Earlier they were estate owners. The sons were also in prison. The mother and daughter were imprisoned, taken out and subjected to *thamzin* and beaten.

Q: Did they own a lot of land?

#67: They were leaders earlier in Tibet.

Q: The mother and the daughter jumped into the river to kill themselves?

#67: They had decided to give up. First, they threw their jewelry in the water and then both of them jumped in. The *U-yon*, the *Tsukdang* and those appointed by the Chinese rushed in and pulled them out of the waters. They were taken away, but Mo Yangla died. Poor thing.

Q: This was in 1962. So the Chinese...

#67: There was a big monastery called Lhatse Choedhe. It was very large. All the monks were beaten and imprisoned. A monk called Kusho Lophon-la was handcuffed and forced to work. Later he committed suicide by hanging himself in the prison. After his death, his body was thrown into the river behind Lhatse and they [the Chinese] fired a gun on him. I saw all that.

Q: This sounds like a horrible period to have to witness.

#67: I saw terrible things. In my village there was a monastery called Shaka Choedhe. The entire monastery was destroyed. There was an icon called Tsipri Samling Jampa, which was nine stories high. The beggars were told to take down the icon using hoes. In Tibet icons used to be filled with precious stones like *dzi* [special beads made of agate stone], corals and turquoises. They couldn't bring the statue down with the hoes, so one beggar went and brought his wife's skirt, which he used to cover the icon's head. Then they used the hoes and all the precious stones of *dzi*, corals and turquoises tumbled out. Later, he [the beggar] turned mad.

Q: So this was a Tibetan beggar that went into the monastery and stole all the jewelry from the statues and brought them home?

#67: He was a Tibetan beggar who normally went begging. The Chinese told him to take a hoe and break the icon. It was called Samling Tsipri's Samling Jampa and it was nine stories high.

Q: So at this time you were along with your children in the village and your husband was in Lhasa. Did you have any communication with him?

#67: He was three years in Lhasa. In those days there was no telephone. We exchanged letters, but there were no telephones then.

Q: How did the two of you reunite? He was in Lhasa and you were in the village, how did the two of you get back together again?

#67: We met in Dhingri, my village. The name of the town was called Dhingri Gangkar.

Q: How did that come about? You were in one place and he was in another, and then what happened?

#67: My husband used to often visit Dhingri as it was a big town. He had many relatives in Dhingri and he used to visit them, so that was how we met.

Q: And Dhingri is where again?

[Translator to interviewer]: Dhingri is the place where she was born.

Q: How did you get back to Dhingri?

#67: Earlier I lived in Dhingri and then I moved to Lhatse, the village of my husband.

Q: You were in Dhingri and then you moved to Lhatse. Where did you meet your husband again?

#67: I met him in Dhingri and moved to my husband's village, Lhatse. From Lhatse he was taken to Lhasa.

Q: You were living in Jang Lhatse and where did you meet your husband again? You met him again, right?

#67: When the Chinese allowed my husband a vacation, we pretended to go to my village and escaped along with our children.

Q: Was it at Dhingri that you met him again? You were living in Jang Lhatse, so when did you go to Dhingri?

#67: We made our escape when my husband came to the village for a visit.

Q: So he told you, "I'm going to go back to Dhingri and you'll meet me there."

#67: My husband was allowed a vacation by the Chinese, for about 20 days. During such a vacation, we escaped.

Q: Did your husband tell you that he had a 20-day vacation?

#67: Yes, he did. He had come on a visit once and then was called back [to Lhasa] again. When he came again, we escaped with our children to India.

Q: Before you left for Dhingri and you were witnessing these *thamzin*, did the Chinese ever make you participate in a *thamzin*?

#67: I was not a *ngadhak*. We were poor farmers. The Chinese called us *yulpong*. Those that were subjected to *thamzin* were the monks, *ngadhak* and *sadhak*. All the wealthy families and monks were subjected to *thamzin*. They [the Chinese] destroyed all the monasteries.

Q: But they didn't make you participate as not the person who is [undergoing] *thamzin*, but they didn't make you *thamzin* someone else?

#67: No, I didn't *thamzin* anyone. They [the Chinese] told us to give any opinions that we had, but I have never had to *thamzin* anyone. How could I do that? There was a lot of suffering in our village. All the monasteries were destroyed.

Q: In Dhingri or Jang Lhatse?

[Translator to interviewer]: In Dhingri.

Q: You saw them destroy the monasteries?

#67: They destroyed all the monasteries. Shakha Choeling was a large monastery near our village. The monks were imprisoned and the monastery rendered to ruins. The high lamas were imprisoned and the ordinary monks forced to labor. They [the Chinese] went to the *tsipri* 'hilltop' and pulled down the roof of the monastery, leaving the walls standing. They tore the Holy Scriptures. In Tibet we had stones with *mani* 'prayers' carved on them. These stones were used as steps for their [the Chinese] shops. They did such things to bring down the Buddhist dharma. I underwent all those sufferings. They were doing that to destroy our religion.

Q: How did it make you feel when you saw this?

#67: Though we wanted to protest in our hearts, we couldn't. They called us for meetings and told us to give suggestions. They questioned us, "What was the old system like? What happened during the old system?" There was no way we could say anything; they did what they pleased.

Q: But what did you feel when you saw what the Chinese were doing to your holy objects of your culture?

#67: In my heart I thought, "How horrific!" When they [the Chinese] made us to work, we had to go to their shops to work. I felt terrible, but couldn't protest. There was a very old nobleman called, Chikyap Gaphel. He was so old that he could hardly walk by himself. He was made to sit down and the people were ordered to *thamzin* him and say, "What did you do during the old system?"

Q: Did you see that?

#67: He was subjected to *thamzin*. There was a lady of the family Simkhang Sarpa who underwent *thamzin* to such an extent that later she couldn't speak and died. In my village of Dhingri, in the old days there used to be 500 soldiers called Dhingri Maga.

Q: Maga?

#67: Five hundred Tibetan soldiers. The leader was called Kusho Tamdin-la. He was a very capable leader. He was captured. The Chinese dug a hole in which he was made to stand and they shot him dead. His wife, a Khampa lady called Kalsang Chodon lives in Dharamsala presently. Their older son Lhawang-la became crazy and died. The wife [of Kusho Tamdinla] is a Khampa, as Kusho was earlier a soldier in Kham. The people immediately rushed them [the family of Kusho Tamdinla] on yaks to Sha Khumbu. In Tibet, the soldiers used to have gold numbers on their caps. His family offered his [Kusho Tamdinla's] to His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the wife and family lives in Dharamsala. Mount Everest is close to our village and if one crossed the Khumbu Gangla, one reached Nepali Territory.

Q: So the wife and children escaped?

#67: As he was the army leader, the people [helped the family]. The mountain pass of Sha Khumbu was very close to our village. The people quickly took them there on yaks.

Q: Did they escape through Sha Lhumbu?

#67: If they crossed the mountain pass of Sha Khumbu from the place where they lived, they would reach Nepali Territory.

Q: These are such terrible things that you saw. When someone was *thamzined*, how did the Chinese make them stand? Do you remember?

#67: When someone was subjected to *thamzin*, they [the Chinese] falsely accused him of doing things that they hadn't done during the old system. They would be accused of ill-treating the people or rendering the poor powerless. The *ngadhak* were thus subjected to *thamzin*. They and the poor were segregated and [the former] couldn't look up to them. All their property was confiscated.

Q: I understand that. I was asking if you remembered how they make the people stand when they were being [subjected to] *thamzin*?

#67: All the people were told to gather for a meeting. A large table was placed there. The person who was to be subjected to *thamzin* had to be like this [demonstrates bowed head]. Then they banged on the table, pulled him by the hair and beat him saying, "What did you do earlier? What did you do during the old system?"

Q: Let's go now to where your husband told you to meet him in Dhingri. What happened after you both met again in Dhingri?

#67: Both my parents were dead and I thought he would be someone who would help me lead my life. I was 20 and my husband was 19 years old at that time.

Q: What did you plan after you met again in Dhingri?

#67: I did not have parents and I moved to his place since I was left alone.

Q: You were married earlier and you met up once again in Dhingri before your escape. When you met him before your escape to India, what did you plan? Did you stay long in Dhingri?

#67: We lived many years in Dhingri. The oldest child, a daughter is now around 50 years old. A son and a daughter are in the United States. All the children are adults. I had my first child at the age of 20. I had seven children in all.

Q: I thought they were escaping from Dhingri. I am talking about Dhingri when her husband came from Lhasa. Okay, you were married at the age of 20. You moved to Jang Lhatse from Dhingri. Your husband was taken to Lhasa and then you met up in Dhingri?

#67: No. When we first met, there were no Chinese.

Q: Your husband was taken to Lhasa and you were in Jang Lhatse. Your husband came to visit you. Where did you meet him on these visits?

#67: Once when he came on vacation, he stayed in Lhatse. I was doing whatever tasks the Chinese made me do. The next time he came on a vacation, we made a pretext of going to my village, crossed over the mountain pass called Gyatsola and escaped.

Q: Did you escape from Jang Lhatse?

#67: From Lhatse we went to my village and from there we escaped to India along with our children. We were stranded in snow on the Sepobhola at night.

Q: How did you go about escaping?

#67: During our escape, we brought our four children and a nun sister of my husband along with us.

Q: Where did you go? Did you have a map? Did you know the route you were going to take?

#67: There was a war in Bomdila against the Chinese. We escaped during that year.

Q: In 1965?

#67: We fled in 1962 and reached here [Bylakuppe] in 1964. We had the children and it was a very difficult journey. We stayed 11 months in Kalimpong. We were imprisoned in Gangtok and faced imprisonment from the Indians several times.

Q: Did you have a map? Did you know the route?

#67: We had two donkeys to carry the load of *tsampa* and our things. We walked all the way.

Q: Did you know the way?

#67: We knew the route in Tibet. When we reached Sepobhola we were stranded in the snow. After crossing this mountain pass into Nepal, they [the Nepalese] handed us over to Gangtok. Again we were not free.

Q: After you crossed the Sepobhola pass, you were handed over to the Gangtok police?

#67: We were handed over to the police and again interrogated. They questioned us in detail about how we came from Tibet.

Q: Was it the Indian army at the Gangtok border?

#67: At that time it was under Sikkim and later it came under India. They [Gangtok police] seized all the things, beat and imprisoned the Tibetans who arrived later. We were imprisoned for one day, including our children in Gangtok. Everyday they took my husband to their leader for interrogation.

Q: Was it at the Indian border?

#67: Yes, at the Indian border. The children and I were locked up. My husband was questioned about how we escaped from Tibet. Then when we arrived at Kalimpong, we were again taken to the lock-up.

[Tape is changed]

Q: The border you came to was the border with Sikkim? Is that the border? You reached Gangtok?

#67: After you cross the Sepobhola pass, you come into the territory of Sikkim. We were jailed in Sikkim.

Q: Why did they put you in jail there? I am sure they have seen many Tibetan refugees before. Why did they put you in jail?

#67: We were among the latter escapees and they [the Indians] were suspicious of us. They did the same to all those who came from Tibet. They asked us questions of how we came and such things. Once we reached Kalimpong, we found officials of the Tibetan government who took care of the Tibetans.

Q: They put your husband in jail too?

#67: Daily he was taken to the leader to describe how we escaped from Tibet while I and the children were kept locked up. We were in this situation for eight days in Gangtok.

Q: Then what happened?

#67: Later, we were sent to Kalimpong. An officer named Kungo Shajang was stationed there by the Tibetan government to receive the Tibetan refugees. A person named Shekar Chanzola came to take us to Kalimpong. From there we were sent to the settlement.

Q: How long were you in jail for?

#67: We were in the lock-up for eight days.

Q: Was that very hard for you and your children?

#67: During that time there was a nobleman near the jail in Gangtok. His wife gave us food because we had nothing to eat. Then we were handed over [to the Kalimpong official]. From Kalimpong we were escorted to the settlement.

Q: Was it very difficult for you when you were in jail?

#67: We were just kept locked-up. There was no difficulty, but I was feeling very sad. I started crying as soon as they put us in the prison. "Alas, we shouldn't have come," I thought, "We would be in a better situation than [being under] the Chinese. Now this is worse than Chinese [treatment]." When I cried, they took us out of the prison.

Q: You did not suffer?

#67: Except for the miserable feeling, there was no one who caused us suffering. They asked a lot of questions. All my four children were small.

Q: And your children must have cried too?

#67: They must have. Poor things. Those Tibetans that came later were subjected to a lot of hardship in Sikkim.

Q: How long did you stay in Kalimpong?

#67: We stayed for 11 months in Kalimpong. We received our registration documents and worked as laborers. There were many Tibetans in Kalimpong and I did some wool spinning. Then one day many paupers from Tibet arrived there. They stole things in the markets of Kalimpong and consequently all the newly arrived Tibetans were asked to hand back the registration documents. Then we were all escorted to the settlements. The escort handed us over to the officials in Bylakuppe.

Q: The beggars robbed other Tibetans?

#67: They stole in the markets of Kalimpong and got drunk and so we were immediately sent to the settlement. We were 23 people.

Q: When you got to Bylakuppe, were you happy to be here?

#67: For a year after we reached Bylakuppe, we received food rations. We received money, wheat and milk powder. Then we were allotted lands and we cultivated them.

Q: I think I recall you saying that at some point you went back to visit Dhingri. Is that true?

#67: Once we left, it was for good.

Q: Have you ever gone back to Tibet or Dhingri?

#67: No. I've never been back after reaching here.

Q: Are there any relatives that you have that are still there?

#67: No, here I am [fine], thanks to the grace of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. My older son served for 24 years in the [Indian] Army.

Q: Does she know anybody who is still there?

#67: I have some relatives in Nepal, but I don't have any siblings.

Q: What are your feelings today towards the Chinese?

#67: The Chinese are the enemy. They are our enemies. They defile the name of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, but we are helpless. Personally I am happy here due to the grace of His Holiness and my children working outside. However, those who live in Tibet are suffering.

Q: What do you miss most about Tibet?

#67: There is nothing good left in Tibet. It is under the power of the Chinese. They [the Tibetans] have to do whatever they [the Chinese] tell them to do.

Q: What advice would you like to give to the younger generation of Tibetans? What do you think is important for them to know?

#67: I prayed to His Holiness the Dalai Lama during my escape. Sometimes I wonder how I managed to walk with four little children! It was thanks to the grace of His Holiness that I reached here and am happy. Each of us carried a child on our back and we begged our way through. We had nothing else with us.

Q: It was a very, very difficult journey.

#67: Yes. In Kalimpong I carried my younger child on my back and went begging all over the hills.

Q: And your children must be very grateful to you.

#67: Now-a-days the children are providing for us. A son and a daughter are in the United States. I have two sons living here at home. Another daughter lives far away. I have four sons and three daughters, seven in all. All my children are very good. We don't have to work as our children provide for us. We have never sought aid from the Tibetan government.

Q: What advice would you like to give to the younger generation of Tibetans? What do you think is important for them to know?

#67: I must advise the school-going children, right? I will tell them to work hard and that such was the story of Tibet and that Tibet was lost. I used to tell my children who are now all grown up and I tell my grandchildren now. The older generation must teach them the traditions and customs of Tibet. I teach them not to adopt the modern way of dressing. The most important is that I pray Tibet regains independence during the lifetime of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. I always watch His Holiness' speeches on the television.

Q: I hope so too.

#67: We are a happy lot; it is those who live in Tibet who are experiencing hardships. Poor things. When we watch television and if my husband happens to see a DVD with Chinese script on it, he screams, "Throw it away." He hates seeing Chinese scripts. Even though we are angry, there is nothing we can do about it. They are the real enemies. Oh, the amount of *thamzin* they subjected the people to!

The *tsipri* 'hilltop' at Dhingri is said to have 108 monasteries. It would take five or six days to go around the rocky mountain. There were so many monasteries and they [the Chinese] destroyed all of them. There are none left. Even when I see the Chinese on the news, I am angry at them. We are very lucky here. If the children wish, there are schools they can go to. If people are able, they can cultivate the lands. If one is unable to, then the land can be leased to others. Children can go abroad or to other places. However, those in Tibet have to live under them [the Chinese]. Kusho Tamdin-la's hands were held so, his feet put in the ground and he was killed.

Q: His feet were underground?

#67: His feet were put in a pit where radishes used to be stored in Tibet. Normally he used to have many soldiers with him. His house was very isolated. His servants told him, "Today the wolves and other animals are howling. What can it be? That is not a good omen. Shall we leave?" But he replied, "No. Even though they are Chinese, they cannot do anything like that immediately."

They [The Chinese] went in a vehicle from Dhingri to Rasam, the place where he lived. He was captured because he was the leader of the Dhingri army. He was immediately killed. His wife is called Kalsang Chodon-la. She lives in Dharamsala. She is a Khampa. She was able to escape. His son was called Lhawang-la. He became crazy and died. In our village, the wealthy families gave half of their possessions to those who owned yaks as payment to transport the other half of their wealth over the mountain pass to Sha Khumbu. Many people from Dhingri are settled in Dharamsala and Nepal.

Q: Did they buy the goods?

#67: No, they feared that the Chinese would seize their possessions. Only yaks could travel on that path. The routes were through snow-capped mountains close to Mount Everest. The possessions were divided, with half given to the yak owners and the other half transported. There are many Dhingri people in Nepal and Dharamsala. Here there are only two families [from Dhingri]. These days if one went from Nepal, he would find the main Chinese office is in Dhingri. The Chinese call it *Chue*.

Q: The main office is in Dhingri?

#67: Yes, from Dhingri to Lhasa. If one went from Nepal, you reached Dhingri in one day and then from Dhingri to Lhasa.

Q: Thank you very much. With deep, deep gratitude, I wish to present this to you for sharing your story with us and for future generations of Tibetans who will benefit great value from hearing your story. Thank you. It's been an honor.

#67: Thank you.

[Translator explains about the release form. Husband of interviewee serves tea.]

Q: Is this your husband?

#67: He is the father of my children.

[Translator to interviewer]: **He was an opera dancer.**

Q: Yes, I want to interview you too. Nice to meet you.

[Camera focuses on husband of interviewee, but there is no audio for a few minutes. From this point Wangmo's statements will be #67 and her husband Wangla's as #67W]

Q: Can we show this interview to others in the future?

#67W: Yes, you can show it anywhere. It is good if it can be shown. How much hardship those Tibetans who were left behind in Tibet have faced! We have suffered so much under the Chinese.

Q: Can you tell us your name please?

#67W: Wangla.

Q: We understand that you were a classical Tibetan opera singer in Tibet?

#67W: Yes, in the Chungba opera. There is none above the Chungba in Tsang region. We used to go to Lhasa for *shoeton* 'festive gathering of operas performers.'

Q: Where did you study and learn this art?

#67W: I learned it in Chungba, but that was not so simple. If we learned it in Chungba, traveling to other places meant paying a tax. If one did not pay the penalty, leave alone performing, your opera costume was confiscated.

Q: Where is Chungba?

#67W: It is at Riwoche at Tsang. That is the highest place of Tsang. That was called Chung Riwoche. That was the best among them all. It is towards the north. The main Chungba had to go to Lhasa for *shoeton*. We learned and paid the tax. We needn't go to Lhasa. At Riwoche, there were 108 *chaksam* built by a lama called Thangtongpa. I have it. Let me show you. [Gets up to point to a picture on his altar]

Look at this. He was 108 years old. He was the lama Thangtongpa, the Dutop Thangtong Gyalpo. He was the best among the *dutop*.

#67: During the *lhamo* performances by the Dharamsala Group, they keep his picture in the center [of the stage].

Q: How old was the school that you studied in?

#67W: It was there from very early times. It was the oldest. There were Chungba, Shangba, Lhakha, Tumongwa, Gyankara.

Q: How many hundreds of years or how old?

#67W: It was about 2,000 to 3,000 years old. The lama lived for 108 years.

Q: Thousands? You are sure?

#67W: Yes, it was about that many years.

Q: How did you get to this school? Did your family send you there or did you say, "Please, I want to be an opera singer. Take me to the school."

#67W: I looked at the performances at Chungba and I wanted to learn it myself. I thought performing the *lhamo* very enjoyable.

#67: His Holiness the Dalai Lama considers *lhamo* very important.

Q: Did you see a lot of opera as a child? Were there traveling groups that came to your town or village? How did you see opera in the first place?

#67W: Anybody could watch the show. They [the performers] were not from anywhere.

Q: Were they from your village?

#67W: Yes.

Q: Where was your village?

#67W: It was Lhatse. There was a *lhamo* group at Lhatse, which comes under Chungba. If you were a fine *lhamo* artist, they took you to Lhasa for the *shoeton*.

Q: When you saw that you thought to yourself, 'this is what I want to do.'

#67W: Of course. It's been about 42 to 43 years since we came here.

#67: He performed with the opera group of Bylakuppe.

#67W: I joined the Bylakuppe Lhamo Association.

Q: You performed for about 40 years?

#67W: Yes, I did.

Q: So I heard. What was the age that you first started to study the opera?

#67W: When I first started learning, I must have been about 15 or 16 years old.

Q: How long did you spent in that school to study?

#67W: One could study it for only about two or three years. If one doesn't know reading, the lyrics of the songs have to be memorized.

Q: You could learn the movements but the voice takes more time.

#67W: The tune is difficult and there are many to learn. It was not just one, there were many tunes. You sang differently for each [actor's] entry. If one joined the *lhamo*, you were told to sing a particular song during an act. There were just five or six words to sing but you needed to have a good voice. You are finished if you did not have a good voice. I do not have a good voice.

Q: Who was your teacher or did you have many teachers?

#67W: My teacher was called Chara Popo of Riwoche. He was the one who taught the singing part. The one who taught the movements was his brother.

Q: Were they very old when they were your teachers?

#67W: They were very old at that time when I was young. Look how old I am now. They are dead.

Q: Yes. So it is. That's how it goes.

#67W: There was a place called Zarinpo, behind Mount Everest, which is close to my wife's village and the Chungba opera came to give a performance every year.

Q: How many Tibetan operas are there? Are there very many or are there just a few?

#67W: Oh, there were many. See how many artists are there in this village's *lhamo* group? There are about 46, both girls and boys including me. There were that many in Chungba, too, when they gave a performance.

Q: What are the stories about? Are they about Gods or regular people? What is the theme of the operas?

#67W: The theme is about history, about the songs of marriage and brides and grooms.

Q: Were there ever any stories about King Gesar, Gesar of Ling?

#67W: No, Ling Gesar is not *lhamo*. That is a story of the Khampas. They are different. *Lhamo* is based on the history of Tibet.

#67: The themes of *lhamo* are many, like Norsang, Zugi Nyima, Dolwa Sangmo, Demay Kundan and Mila Repa.

#67W: Also Nangsa.

#67: Demay Kundan is about sacrifice and Mila Repa about the dharma. Norsang portrays marriage. Each has its own theme.

Q: Did you have a favorite, when you liked the best?

#67: I love all the themes and among them Norsang is the one [I like best].

Q: And what is that about?

#67W: Norsang was a religious king. He was the king of religion. Norsang was getting married and took a bride called Yondok. The theme is based on that and for a detailed performance; it took seven days to enact it.

#67: Norsang took the bride, and just as we have the Chinese who caused us hardship, all the themes of *lhamo* have a villain. That is same in the histories. Each *lhamo* theme had an enemy in it. In the story of Dolwa Sangmo, there is the Hachang Queen who comes to trouble her. Each and every story depicts someone who metes out suffering.

Q: And then they must find a solution to the problem of the trouble. That's a very common story.

#67: The stories are what actually happened in the past. We have the Chinese as our enemy and likewise, each [*lhamo*] theme has an enemy.

Q: If you would, I would be honored to hear you sing as much as you want. I would like to hear something.

#67W: [Sings a *lhamo* chorus]

Q: Thank you very much.

#67W: [Recites the story about King Norsang in verse form]

Q: I can hear how strong your voice is.

#67W: I suffer from hypertension and my voice is hoarse now.

Q: How old are you now?

#67: He is 77 and I am 78.

Q: The two of you have been together for so long. It's so wonderful!

#67W: Oh, yes!

#67: I was 20 years old and my husband 19 then. Now we are old. Our children are also aged.

Q: It's such a wonderful story for the two of you to be together all this time.

#67: Those that came with us are all dead. Ten of them died; those that came to the settlement with us from Kalimpong.

Q: You have survived.

#67: We have led a long life.

Q: I wanted to ask you what it was like when the Chinese said, "You must teach us Tibetan opera?" Can you tell me something about that experience? What happened then? What you did?

#67W: What can I think? It was a matter of the powerful and the powerless. They [the Chinese] deceived me by saying that I must go to China. They had assembled all the people. I was alone in Shigatse. All the people went to eat while I had nothing to eat and nowhere to stay.

Q: Were you taken there by the Chinese?

#67W: Yes, I was taken by the Chinese. I was not the only one, they took away many people. There were people who liked them [the Chinese] and there were others like me who did not like them. Those that liked them were the bad people and the paupers. They [the Chinese] put down the good people, subjected them to *thamzin*, boxed them, put their fist inside the women, hit them on the head and beat them terribly.

Q: They took you to Lhasa instead of China? What did you have to do for them in Lhasa?

#67W: They said that I was to come there to perform, but they did not allow us to perform the good parts of *lhamo*—only bad scenes like hunting, which they liked.

#67: They would not allow enactment of religious parts.

Q: What were the good things and what were the bad things?

[Translator to interviewer]: The bad things were when we sang about hunting and killing animals.

#67W: The good things were about religion. They [the Chinese] didn't like that. They loved it if the performance involved guns and arrows.

Q: Did you just perform for them or were you asked also to teach them how to sing and dance as well?

#67W: Except for [teaching] different songs, they didn't tell me to work. I wouldn't work if asked.

Q: Did they make you teach the Chinese?

#67W: Let me tell you where they stayed. There was this place called Yangpachen. If you went further, you reached an airfield. Still further through Toelung and you reached Lhasa. They didn't allow us to stay in Lhasa, but at Xizang Choegyue Wonguthang. Xizang means Tibet. Wonguthang was the place where they had their army camp and held meetings. That was the worst place, their army camp.

#67: That was the Chinese army camp, Chinese' *Maga Serpo*.

Q: Your job was to entertain the Chinese?

#67W: They drew up a time table and we performed according to that. Then we rested. We were not allowed to go outside, like prisoners. If one went outside, we had to take a permit with us which allowed us to directly re-enter. That was the worst place in Lhasa.

Q: How did the Chinese treat you?

#67W: They would question me. Pointing to the Potala Palace, they said, "Look at that *bangze*?"

Q: What does *bangze* mean?

#67W: A *bangze* was a house. They called the Potala Palace a house! When asked I said, "It is good." Then they said, "How good is the Dalai Lama?" I replied, "I don't know whether the Dalai Lama is good or bad. I have never seen him with my eyes. I am from Tsang. I have never seen him." They laughed. They put everything down in writing.

#67: If we say that he is good, they will treat us bad. It's best to say that one has not seen him.

Q: How long did you end up having to...

#67W: Then they questioned me about the Penchen Rinpoche. They asked me, "How good is the Penchen Rinpoche?" I replied, "If everybody considers him as bad, then I do that

too. As someone from Tsang, I have seen the Penchen Rinpoche." He didn't very much like this answer. I had seen His Holiness the Dalai Lama, but I was forced to lie about it.

Q: Had you seen him?

#67W: Yes, of course I had seen him. That was in 1956 when His Holiness went to India and the Penchen Rinpoche went [to China].

#67: That was when His Holiness went to India on pilgrimage before Tibet was lost.

Q: It sounds like you had to be very clever, so that you didn't get in trouble with the Chinese.

#67W: When I escaped from Tibet, there were four children and a relative with me. I said we should go to India but when we reached India, we faced many hardships. With the Chinese, I did the opposite and spoke what they wanted to hear. However, deep down I hated them. The Lhasa Monlam Festival was going on when I was there. I borrowed clothes from others and went to see the Monlam Festival. That day it was His Holiness the Penchen Rinpoche's *shesay*. There were monks in the Prayer Hall and outside. Later there were no monks at all.

#67: That was the previous reincarnation of His Holiness the Penchen Rinpoche, the one who passed away.

Q: Did you teach *lhamo* to the Chinese?

#67: Yes, I taught the Chinese.

Q: Were they good students?

#67W: If the theme involved religion, they didn't learn it, but they loved those that did not have religion as the theme.

#67: They liked *lhamo* with themes on murders and sufferings.

Q: Did they ever change what you taught? Did they take the *lhamo* materials, the songs and change the words and the tune?

#67W: No, they couldn't. They didn't know how to sing the *namthar* 'songs of *lhamo*.' Since they were demons, they loved performing with guns. They couldn't sing a good song, nor do a good dance. They couldn't sing a word of *namthar*. They did act, but not a word of the *namthar*. Even if they did, they did not have a good voice.

Q: In your opinion, why do you think the Chinese wanted to learn *lhamo*?

#67W: If they had their way, they wanted to destroy the Tibetan culture. They only had the intention of destroying Tibet and not develop it.

#67: The Chinese women learned very easily. They told us to teach old [Tibetan] dances and they performed in front of us. As they danced, they wrote the lyrics in the palm of their hands and learned very fast.

#67W: But they did not know to sing the *namthar*, no matter how much they learned it. They learned the other songs easily by writing down the tune, lyrics and singing it.

Q: You spent sometime teaching the Chinese. Were there any Chinese students that you particularly liked or actually felt friendly towards?

#67W: No, never. I did not like anyone. They do whatever they like.

#67: He had to do whatever they said, but deep down, of course, he was angry at them.

#67W: What do I do when I am angry? What they knew was destroying the Buddha dharma. I pray to the Buddha. I was able to escape. If I had stayed there [in Tibet] I would be dead with not even my bones to be seen.

#67: Forget anything else; we would not have even *tsampa* to eat.

Q: I think that the fact that you are able to escape and bring with you the precious tradition of opera is such a gift for future generations of Tibetans.

#67W: I have had one surgery [gestures at stomach] and a leg surgery. I used to perform *lhamo* well. I had an agile body.

#67: His name was Lhamo Wang-la. His Holiness the Dalai Lama has given him his picture.

#67W: I have performed in Varanasi and Dorjiden [in India].

Q: Do you know where Tibetan opera is being taught now? Is there still an opportunity in Tibet for Tibetans to learn that or is it only being taught in exile?

#67W: Yes, there are. They perform it in Lhasa presently at Showa Lhamo, near the Potala Palace. The opera is very grand.

Q: Do you know any other people who are teaching Tibetan opera? Are any of them still in Tibet; the people you went to school with and studied with or did they all come out with you?

#67W: Those [learning *lhamo*] were students of the Chinese school.

Q: Did you have colleagues?

#67W: I taught the students. They had to remain there until death. They were all Tibetans. Those Tibetans were in the Chinese school. There was no way they could get out of it.

Q: You have come to India. Your colleagues who taught *lhamo* with you, did they manage to get out of Tibet?

#67W: No one. Except for me, none could escape.

Q: Did your colleagues teach *lhamo* there?

#67W: How could they teach when they didn't know?

Q: They didn't know it well?

#67W: No.

Q: Were you the only one who taught in Lhasa?

#67W: Yes, that is right. There were 50 boys and 50 girls; 100 in all. They were within the control of the Chinese. There were no words exchanged, except the lessons. Actually they were Tibetans; Tibetan children who learned *lhamo*, songs and dances. They were students of the Chinese school. They lived day and night in the Choegyur Dhoekar and ate there. They did not have freedom to go out. They did not talk to us. They were kept separately. There was a warden to watch the boys and another to watch the girls.

Q: The Tibetan students in the Chinese school were there to learn *lhamo*?

#67: It was not just *lhamo*. They learned dancing in the night. They were always there [in the school].

Q: Did they learn Tibetan [songs and dances]?

#67W: The students were Tibetan children under the Chinese. They had to learn whatever the Chinese told them to learn. They learned in the day and they learned in the night. They couldn't go out. They enjoyed dancing their whole life. They were children of Lhasa.

#67: There were Sharchok Dhoekar [Eastern Theater] and Nupchok Dhoekar [Western Theater]. The Chinese loved songs and dances.

#67W: We danced as per the lyrics. They [the Chinese] made up their own movements.

#67: There are Chinese cassettes these days in which they mix up all the dances and *lhamo* steps.

Q: Obviously they are not authentic.

#67W: What I have learned is authentic, but they [the Chinese] do not like it.

Q: I mean those cassettes, which have come out presently showing *lhamo* performances in Lhasa by Chinese and Tibetans. Are they authentic or made up by the Chinese?

#67W: They have released false ones, as originals are no more there.

Q: I am so happy that you are here now. I am so happy that you've been able to teach and perform here in Bylakuppe. I am so happy to have met you today. Thank you for sharing your story.

#67W: Thank you.

Q: You know I stop and I think of more questions because I want to ask you. Both of you have led such extraordinary lives.

#67W: [Nods]

Q: What is special about your relationship with each other that has allowed you to be together for so long?

#67: Now we have grownup children and our love for each other will be there until one of us dies.

#67W: Of course, there would be love because she is the mother of 11 children and seven of them are surviving. If that is not love, what is?

#67: We serve each other and live in this way. Our children provide for us.

Q: Did you know that when you met Wangmo that you would be together with her this entire length of your life?

#67W: Yes, and I took her to my village.

#67: We have experienced happiness and misery in our lives. We have been without food in Tibet under the Chinese and at times we have been happy. We have led our lives in such ways and are still alive. Now until one of us dies, we will serve each other.

Q: Yes, I see. What I find extraordinary is that normally in the time you grew up, there would be no such thing as a love marriage, but because of certain circumstances you two met each other and could follow your own feeling for each other and get married.

#67W: I didn't have parents and neither did she. We didn't have a marriage celebration. We met and lived together. To have a marriage celebration, one needs money. Both of us didn't have it.

#67: In Tibet, except for the rich families, people didn't have a marriage celebration. Everyone was poor. Now we both feel happy and we have seen His Holiness the Dalai Lama many times. People of our age are all dying and I think we have led a long life.

Q: Do you remember what he was wearing the first day you saw him?

#67: He was wearing what people normally wore in Tibet those days. [Laughs]

Q: Don't you remember?

#67: No, because it has been so long.

#67W: In Tibet the women wore long *chupa* 'traditional dress' with a *pangden* 'striped apron.' The men also wore *chupa* 'traditional coat' and not just pants.

#67: People in Tibet did not dress like the Tibetans do here in India. They might have changed after the arrival of the Chinese.

Q: Do you remember what she was wearing?

#67W: Yes, I do. She was wearing the same black color dress that she is wearing now.

Q: She is the same woman you married so many years ago.

#67W: As far as her face is concerned she is not the same one because she is old now. What she was when she was younger is all gone now. There are wrinkles on the face and her hair is grey.

#67: The children tell us, "Be happy. Recite your prayers and eat well. Both of you should be happy." It's important to recite our prayers and offer butter lamps because we are close to death.

Q: Did you teach any of your children to sing and dance opera?

#67W: Not one of them.

#67: They will not perform *lhamo* as their outlook is different. Our older son was in the [Indian] Army for many years.

Q: But he didn't dance?

#67: Presently he is in the United States of America.

Q: What are your children doing in America? Are they studying there?

#67: They are working there and earning money. My daughter's children are attending school while our son and daughter are working and sending us money.

Q: What are they studying?

#67: It is difficult to cultivate the lands and earn a living in India, so they went there to work and send money to their parents. We have one son here who serves us and is also employed in a co-operative incense manufacturing unit. The youngest son is a teacher in a Christian school. His English is very good.

Q: I wish both of you many, many more years together. I hope you live an extraordinarily long time.

#67 & #67W: Thank you.

Q: Once again thank you.

#67W: Thank you.

[Questions from videographer]

Q: Do you know about that the Chinese have changed the lyrics of the Tibetan songs from containing the words Dalai Lama and Penchen Lama to Mao Tse Tung and Chow Enlai?

#67W: That is right. We could not sing the correct words [while teaching under the Chinese]. The lyrics were different and the movements were also changed. The costumes in Tibet were simple unlike the ones used in Dharamsala. They [the Chinese] do what they like.

#67: These days all the songs that emerge [out of Tibet] have Chinese scripts on them.

#67W: I do not sing such songs. I hate it when I see anything Chinese. I tell her not to sing.

[Interviewee garlands interviewer, translator and videographer with traditional scarves.]

#67: I pray that we will meet again before we die. We are happy, but not keeping good health. Thanks to our children, we are well provided. It's my broken leg that gives me trouble. Due to the grace of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, every thing is good. Once long back, my husband played the guitar and we danced for an all India radio program. I learned later that they heard it over the radio in Lhasa.

END OF INTERVIEW