

**Namgang Tsering  
Narrator**

**Tenzin Yangdon and Charles Lenz  
Minnesota Historical Society  
Interviewers**

**Interviewed for the  
Minnesota Tibetan Oral History Project**

**August 20, 2005  
Namgang Tsering Residence  
Ramsey, Minnesota**

**Tenzin Yangdon           - TY  
Namgang Tsering         - NT  
Charles Lenz               - CL**

**TY:** This is August 20, 2005 and we are at the Namgang Tsering residence. The interviewer is Tenzin Yangdon and the secondary interviewer is Charles Lenz interviewing Namgang Tsering.

Namgang, can you, please, spell your name out and age?

**NT:** My name is Namgang, N-a-m-g-a-n-g and last name is T-s-e-r-i-n-g. I'm born in 1959, so I should be about forty-six years old.

**TY:** Can you tell us about where you were born and raised?

**NT:** I was born in Tibet and because of Chinese occupation of Tibet, my parents escaped into India and I was raised in India. I was raised mostly in the school.

**TY:** What kind of work did your parents do in exile?

**NT:** My mom died while escaping from Chinese on the way to India, and my father, while in India, mostly worked as a cook.

**TY:** Do you know of what conditions your mom died or anything?

**NT:** In Tibet, where we live is on the other side of the mountain and it's kind of cold. While escaping into India, the India is much hotter, so she could not withstand the heat and after a little, she died.

**TY:** Where did your family live in India?

**NT:** At so many different places. As far as I remember, first we were in Dharamsala in North India. Then, we are in the central part of India that is in Madhya Pradesh, a place called Pachmarhi. That's a hilly area. After that, my father lived, again, in some other part of Madhya Pradesh, the central part of India, whereas I was in north India in Dehra Dun in school.

**TY:** Where did you go to school?

**NT:** I went to school initially in Dharamsala for a few months, and, thereafter, I was sent to Pachmarhi, where I stayed for close to eight years. Then I was transferred to Mysore. I finished my school from there in Mysore.

**TY:** All the schools that you went to were boarding schools?

**NT:** Yes, all were boarding schools.

**TY:** What level of education were you able to receive there?

**NT:** In those schools, we didn't finish till grade eleven. That is the finish of schooling.

**TY:** Eleventh grade?

**NT:** After eleventh grade, yes.

**TY:** So after that you graduate from school?

**NT:** Yes.

**TY:** Can you tell us what the school's name was?

**NT:** Till the eight grade, I was in Central School for Tibetan in Pachmarhi, Madhya Pradesh, India. My ninth, tenth, and eleventh grade were done in Mysore, Uttar Pradesh in north India.

**TY:** Was there a reason you were transferred?

**NT:** The reason being that my school being a Tibetan school and there being very less Tibetan around in that area, there were not many people coming into our school. So after a little, our school had to be shut down, and all the students left in the school were transferred to various Tibetan schools.

**TY:** What kind of grades did you receive when you were in Mysore, and that was a Central School for Tibetans, as well?

**NT:** Most of the time, I used to receive quite a good grade, around seventy percent or higher most of the time, in school assignments and tests.

**TY:** Seventy percent in India is like, percentage-wise I guess, first or second?

**NT:** That is first division, it's called, yes.

**TY:** And that's the best one?

**NT:** Yes.

**TY:** Was it satisfying for you to receive that kind of grade or did you feel you needed to do better and was there a reason why you were doing so well in school?

**NT:** As far as my school are concerned, they are very, very good schools. I had some very excellent teachers.

**TY:** Can you recall any teachers that gave you really good advice for life, living your life and things like that?

**NT:** Most of the teachers are good. I cannot recount any . . . I cannot pinpoint one particular teacher, but most of my teachers whether they are Indian or whether they are Tibetan, most of them have been extremely affectionate and sincere in their delivery of the duties. They showed us such a concern that it's like the whole time grew [unclear] the teacher and the tot relationship.

**TY:** How many other students received grades like you did?

**NT:** That I can't say for sure, but thirty percent might receive such a grade.

**TY:** Did you feel accomplished, like a sense of pride or anything, because you were able to do so well?

**NT:** [Pauses] A slight sense of accomplishment maybe, but then, that is only transitory because when you go to the next phase or level again, you have to struggle on.  
[Chuckles]

**TY:** What did you do after completing from that school?

**NT:** I went for engineering studies. I did my mechanical engineering from University of Bangalore. That is in South India.

**TY:** And how was the admission process for that school? Did you receive any assistance from Tibetan teachers to get into that school?

**NT:** I had a few friends in Bangalore who told me how to get admission over there. It was kind of tough, but somehow I managed to get admission there.

**TY:** How many Tibetans were there with you going into that school?

**NT:** At that time, I was alone.

**TY:** You were the only one going into an engineering school?

**NT:** No, in that particular school.

**TY:** How was the shift to college then for you?

**NT:** I didn't find much of a big difference from a school to the life of a college. Only difference being while in school, you are mostly with the Tibetan students and while in college, I was the lone Tibetan in that college, so I would mix up with the Indians, which I can easily do it, because I'm brought up in India.

**TY:** So you didn't have any problems integrating or anything?

**NT:** No. No. No, absolutely not.

**TY:** You were seeking an engineering degree when you went in?

**NT:** Yes.

**TY:** Did you graduate from that school?

**NT:** Yes. I graduated in thermal engineering of this mechanical engineering.

**TY:** What division did you get?

**NT:** First division. That is above seventy percent, I think.

**TY:** After graduating from college, what were your aspirations? Like, did you want to go work for the Tibetan government or anything like that, which most Tibetans do?

**NT:** Yes, I had aspiration to work for Tibetan government, but then, at that time, there was no job available, so I worked for many Indian companies.

**TY:** Did you apply to the Tibetan government?

**NT:** Yes, I applied and I got a response that there isn't anything available for me at that time.

**TY:** How did you feel about not being able to work for the Tibetan government?

**NT:** That is okay. I mean, it's not available, then it is not available. There's nothing you can do about it. [Chuckles]

**TY:** When you were working for Indian companies, did you have any problems integrating in those?

**NT:** No, absolutely not.

**TY:** And you enjoyed your work?

**NT:** Yes.

**TY:** How was the work environment like there?

**NT:** I worked for so many different companies. Mostly the same thing, to integrate—I mean, that's no question of integration. Because I was brought up in India, so I'm almost like an Indian.

**TY:** Why do you feel that you're almost like an Indian? Is it just because you were brought up in India? Because you are a Tibetan as well.

**NT:** In India, too, there's so many cultures, so many different people, like from north to south, the food, language, everything changes. And Tibetans like all food and language and may be different but then there's so many diversity in India itself, so that isn't a problem at all. [Chuckles]

**TY:** How were you able to come to the United States?

**NT:** That was because Congress, I think, passed a resolution to allow 1,000 Tibetans to come to the United States. So I happened to be one of those 1,000 Tibetans.<sup>1</sup>

**TY:** Did you choose to come to Minnesota or were you assigned here?

**NT:** I was assigned to Colorado, but then one of my friend happened to live here in Minneapolis, so he advised me to come over here. So I came here.

**TY:** You didn't go to Colorado at all?

**NT:** No.

**TY:** You came just came here, straight to Minnesota?

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Tibetan Resettlement Project, a program that became effective under the 1990 Immigration Act passed by Congress. 1,000 Tibetans were granted Visas to come to the United States.

**NT:** I came straight here.

**TY:** From where were you coming from in India and what kind of work were you doing when you left India?

**NT:** I was working for an engineering company making oil exploration equipment while in India. I came over here and I worked for company making medical accessories.

**TY:** And in India, where did you live when you were about to move here?

**NT:** Just before coming over to United States, I was working in Dehra Dun for that oil exploration equipment.

**TY:** When did you arrive in Minnesota then?

**NT:** In May of 1993. I leave there in 1993.

**TY:** That was right when summer was coming. Did you find the weather suitable for you at that time?

**NT:** Yes, it was pleasant at that time.

**TY:** Did you arrive here alone or like with a group of Tibetans?

**NT:** I was alone. I came alone, I think, here from New York. Till New York, we were so many people together, but from New York, I think, I was alone here.

**TY:** How did you feel about moving to the West and leaving your family behind?

**NT:** It was a little tough, but . . .

**TY:** Can you describe like maybe some feelings that you were going through at the time when you decided that you wanted to move to the U.S.?

**NT:** There were so many times away from my family while even in India that that wasn't kind of a big change for me, actually. [Chuckles] I was working all over India and my family mostly lived where my father lived in Dehra Dun. I was working sometimes in West India, sometimes in South India, so my family was most of the time away from me. On vacations, I go there and meet them.

**TY:** But moving to the West was so far away from just being and moving in India. How was that like? Did you feel that maybe you weren't going to be able to come back so soon or anything like that?

**NT:** I thought of in case of emergency, we should be able to meet. It shouldn't take such a long time.

**TY:** Did you have any expectations or thoughts about how the West was going to be like or anything like that?

**NT:** I thought that the West would be much more advanced than where we lived. Technologically, I mean. Otherwise, the spatial dynamics are altogether different. I don't want to touch that though. [Chuckles] But, technologically in the West, I figured it would be more advanced, and it is. They're more advanced.

**TY:** Were you satisfied when you came here?

**NT:** I'm happy.

**TY:** You're happy.

**NT:** [Laughs]

**CL:** Why did you decide or what was it that made you decide that you wanted to leave India and come to Minnesota or come to the U.S.?

**NT:** Actually, being a Tibetan when Chinese occupied our land, and the people in Tibet being under such a reign of terror and carnage by the Chinese government. Most of the Tibetan, the intent here is that advice from here, from America, the most powerful and richest nation in the world, would be more powerful, would be more effective. So it's mostly for political reasons.

**CL:** Did you talk to your family at all before you decided to come? Did you talk to your wife or to your father about your decision?

**NT:** Yes. Yes.

**CL:** Were they very happy when you got accepted and were going to be allowed to come?

**NT:** My father was indifferent. My wife was happy.

**CL:** How long after you came did your wife arrive here?

**NT:** Four and a half years, yes.

**TY:** What kind of work were you able to find here when you first arrived?

**NT:** I worked for a job shop company at Golden Valley.

**TY:** Was that work related to your educational background or equivalent work in India?

**NT:** Yes. Yes.

**TY:** Can you describe your work a little bit for us?

**NT:** That shop manufactures medical equipment accessories. While back in India, I was engaged in manufacturing like from tools, oil exploration equipment, or at one time, I was engaged with powder metallurgy. Then also I worked sometimes with a watch company, hand watch, so basically, the place where I worked in India are all manufacturing and the first place where I worked here in Minnesota is also a manufacturing company, so there's not much difference. Also, the equipments are also not very much different. The equipment there are CNC computer and numerically controlled machines and over here in United States, also similar equipment same as best in India. The toolings are all familiar.

**TY:** Were you surprised to find such similarities?

**NT:** No, I thought it would be similar.

**TY:** Were you satisfied with the work and the pay that you were receiving here?

**NT:** Yes, I'm fine.

**TY:** Fine.

**NT:** [Laughs]

**TY:** Where did you live and how far was your work from, like, where you lived?

**NT:** I lived in South Minneapolis, and the first place where I worked in Golden Valley is about ten miles away from where I lived.

**TY:** What method of transportation did you use to go to work?

**NT:** In the beginning, I used to take bus. I used to work in the second shift so while coming back from work I would have to come back by taxi. I did one year like that and the second year, I bought a car.

**TY:** So, for the first year, when you had to take a taxi, was it expensive for you to do that?

**NT:** Yes, I had to pay over one hour worth of work to the taxi cab.

**TY:** Why were you working so far away from where you lived?

**NT:** That's not so far away. [Laughter] It was only ten miles away, so . . .

**TY:** When you were living in Minnesota, like where you were living at that time, were you living alone or did you have any roommates or anything like that?

**NT:** Yes, I had roommates. We lived with roommates and we shared the rent.

**TY:** Was that, like, for a purpose?

**NT:** Not on purpose. From the background, we kind of want to live with friends or live together with some few people. Living by oneself kind of feels lonely.

**TY:** So, basically, you felt that living by yourself you might miss your family or something like that, so that's why you wanted to live, like, with roommates?

**NT:** Not exactly for that reason. Just to have some company.

**TY:** Living like with roommates, you shared some money. You saved some money on rent and things like that. So you were able to save some extra cash?

**NT:** Yes. It was economical, too, yes.

**TY:** Were you able to, like, help your relatives and things like that in India with that extra cash?

**NT:** Yes, but most of the little money I saved went into that old car I bought. I had to do a lot of maintenance work. Most of the money went into that, though I sent some money to my family back in India.

**TY:** What kind of neighborhood were you living in? Was it a good neighborhood?

**NT:** I always felt that it was a good neighborhood, but some people may differ on that. But I feel that's a good neighborhood.

**TY:** Can you tell us where you were living, at that time?

**NT:** I was living in South Minneapolis, Twenty-Fourth Street and [South] Pleasant Avenue.

**TY:** Were there a lot of Tibetans around at that time over there?

**NT:** There were a few, maybe about twelve. Maybe slightly more than that Tibetans living around that area.

**TY:** Most Tibetans who came to Minnesota, were they living around that area?

**NT:** No, not most of them. Only a few of them around that area.

**TY:** Did you have any other friends in the neighborhood other than Tibetan people?

**NT:** Yes, I had.

**TY:** Can you tell us what your relationship was like with them?

**NT:** My friend, Carl, he lives about, maybe, six to seven miles from where I lived. So he has been very helpful when I was new in the United States.

**TY:** Going back to when you first arrived in Minnesota, you lived with a sponsor, right?

**NT:** Yes.

**TY:** Can you name your sponsor and how long you lived with them? And how was that transition period like for you?

**NT:** My sponsors were very good with me. Carl, I mean, he has been always very helpful. I was with him for close to three months. There wasn't any particular thing adapting to the situation. I don't know whether they are adapting to me or I am adapting them, but it was fine. Yes.

**TY:** From where you were living then, what kind of neighborhood do you think you were living in now? Can you tell us the address where you are living?

**NT:** From the safety point of view, it was about the same, but here, the place where I live now, is a bit more tranquil. Right? Less noise.

**TY:** How long have you lived here and how's your experience been like living in this neighborhood?

**NT:** I never had any bad experiences living anywhere whether back in India or here in United States. [Chuckles]

**CL:** You talked about going to college, going to school, to the university with Indians and then working for companies that were owned by Indians. There wasn't really a big issue integrating because you lived in India so long.

**NT:** Yes.

**CL:** When you came to the U.S. then, were there any problems or any issues that you had trying to fit in, you know, here in the U.S. or meeting new people, things like that at all?

**NT:** In the manufacturing company, we spent very less time talking with each other, way less time. Most of the time, we were busy with our own machine or with the technology we are involved with. As far as the technology is concerned, in India and in United States, technology is the same thing. Like the machinery involved, they're almost same. The toolings involved almost same. The language used in India, also in all the manufacturing companies, is English. Here also English is used, though the intonation may be a bit different from India to United States. Otherwise, basically, the same thing.

**TY:** So right now you're currently living with your family?

**NT:** Yes.

**TY:** Did you feel like you needed an adjustment period to like move in with your family when they moved here?

**NT:** As far as my family members, coming for them is very easy to adjust because I am already adjusted to the area, so through me, for them, adjustment is not a big problem . . . should not be any problem.

**TY:** How many kids did you have when you were in India?

**NT:** When I first came over to United States, I had one kid left in India. After our four years being here in United States, I went on a vacation and then I have another kid. My family moved over here and now I have a third kid.

**TY:** So your last kid was born here?

**NT:** Yes, last kid born here in the United States.

**TY:** Can you name your children?

**NT:** Kunga is the eldest one. Daga, about seven and a half years old. And Dorjee, three and a half years old.

**TY:** How do you feel about raising your children in America?

**NT:** Whether they raised totally in Tibetan community or in India or in United States, all sort of influences will always be there. Most depends on the family how to bring them up. So I have to be careful.

**TY:** You don't feel that because you're so far away from the Tibetan community that your kids are missing out on learning Tibetan traditions and cultural things?

**NT:** On the cultural aspect, the most important one is the spiritual aspect of any culture, and the spiritual aspect, that's what we, the parents, must impart to them whatever they

can. And that is up to the parent whether they miss out or not. If parents are being careful to impart that part of the education, the other physical part of the culture, they can learn any time.

**TY:** So you don't have any Tibetan family living close by that your kids can go to?

**NT:** No. No. No.

**TY:** Why did you choose to live here, so far away from where most of the Tibetans population is concentrated?

**NT:** Only reasoning is kind of close to work.

**TY:** How do you feel about your kids' education here, like comparing to your education in India?

**NT:** We used to do a lot more work after school. [Chuckles] And here, the kids do very less work at home.

**TY:** How do you feel? Do you make them do more work or anything like that?

**NT:** We try to, but then we can try only to some extent. Otherwise, they are busy with the TV or maybe with the computer. Whereas when I was growing up, we don't have, forget about TV and computer. We don't even have a radio. So we are without those most of the time.

**TY:** You said that because there are so many things here, like materially, is it a good influence or a bad influence to have all these things?

**NT:** [Pauses] That I cannot say. It can be good; it can be bad. Like if you watch a very violent picture on your TV, it would depend on the message you take away, I mean the violence. If you see that the violence has lead to such a bad situation altogether and if you keep yourself away from violence, learning the lesson, then that violence on the TV may not be such a bad thing. But then, if you see that violence in kind of a glorified way, then it can have a very bad effect on the viewer. So I do not know. It will depend on the way you absorb the message.

**TY:** Do you let your kids watch mostly what they want to watch or do you put some censorship into what they watch and things like that?

**NT:** I'm not censoring anything so far. Yes.

**TY:** In general, how do you feel about raising your children here, like in legal terms? Like back in India, you mostly lived in your school and you were raised by the school.

So, basically, you didn't experience very much from the parents' perspective. So how do you feel about being a parent in America?

**NT:** [Pauses] I don't know. Parents, whether you are in India or in America, the parents, they love their kid and they want the best for them, in any case. As far as the control is concerned, maybe among the Tibetan community or in India, may have better control on the kids than here, because, here, they're legal and suing and that kind of problem. Many a time, I think parents are in jail because actually the kid misbehaved.

**TY:** Is that an issue in your home?

**NT:** In my home, there is no issue at all.

**TY:** No. You don't have any problem controlling your kids or anything like that?

**NT:** Controlling in the sense of making them do home work, I mean, takes kind of effort. Otherwise, they're not much . . . [Chuckles]

**TY:** Going to your community work, you were the president of regional Tibetan Youth Congress (TYC), Minnesota.

**NT:** Yes, for two years.

**TY:** Can you tell us the dates of the terms you served?

**NT:** I think I served 2002 and 2003.

**TY:** Can you give us a brief background on TYC in general, the kind of work they do, the purpose that they're there for?

**NT:** TYC is, basically, a non-governmental organization struggling or fighting for the total independence of Tibet from China. TYC believes, and it is a fact, that Tibet is not a part of China. Whatever so many world leaders for their own convenience, whatever they might say, the fact remains that Tibet is not a part of China. So the TYC's main goal is to fight for the total independence of Tibet.

**TY:** The full form for TYC is Tibetan Youth Congress?

**NT:** Yes, TYC is Tibetan Youth Congress.

**TY:** Can you talk, when it was started in India and when it was started in Minnesota, like the regional one?

**NT:** Do you mean when it started in India initially?

**TY:** Initially, yes, Tibetan Youth Congress.

**NT:** I'm not sure about that. I think it started in the late 1960s or maybe early 1960s. Here, in Minnesota, it was started around 1998 or 1999, somewhere around that year.

**TY:** What was the purpose of having a regional Tibetan Youth Congress in Minnesota? What kind of things were people in the community looking for to, like, organize this organization?

**NT:** That is to guide the young and the newborn Tibetans into what Tibet has been through the illegal Chinese occupation of Tibet, our own culture, Tibetan culture or background or Tibetan spiritual background, the religion and to let the younger generation in touch with the realities of Tibet on a day-to-day basis.

**TY:** How did you get involved in regional Tibetan Youth Congress?

**NT:** Being a refugee, to fight for your own country is natural, so I was a member twenty years [of] Congress, since early or maybe mid-1970s.

**TY:** So you were involved in TYC activities in India, as well?

**NT:** Yes.

**TY:** Were these in your college days or—?

**NT:** In college days, yes. I started in the college days.

**TY:** What kind of activities did you do in India, and how were they different from the activities that you did in America, in Minnesota?

**NT:** While in college, like a Tibetan Youth Congress member, like so many Tibetans will come to like the place where I am in Bangalore. They'll come. They want to join college, but they don't know how to go about it, and we then guide the Tibetans coming in Bangalore for whatever help we can give to them. And also, we organize demonstrations against Chinese dignitaries visiting Bangalore. Also from time to time, we distribute pamphlets to the public in general to let them know about the conditions in Tibet, the Chinese illegal occupation of Tibet, and the current, at that point of time, situation in Tibet. Yes, in United States, not only we organize gatherings wherein we just try to impart whatever we can to the younger generation and also we write a lot of letters to the members of Congress, to the White House, for their help.

**TY:** How do you feel about doing this kind of work, in general? Like, are you really inclined to do it? Is it doing it out of patriotism or—?

**NT:** When you see people in Tibet demonstrating against Chinese at gunpoint, what we do here is a walk in the park. [Chuckles]

**TY:** Do you feel that it's your responsibility?

**NT:** Yes, a sense of responsibility.

**TY:** What kind of support do you have in the community for this organization?

**NT:** Support is immense. Whenever we organize anything, the people, the Tibetans, will always be there behind us to support us.

**TY:** Can you describe maybe a kind of work that you did and a situation? Can you describe a particular situation where you organized something and—?

**NT:** Like once, we had to go to Washington during George [W.] Bush's first visit to China and we needed close to \$7,500 for the bus we rented. We requested the Tibetans for donations and we got all of the support.

**CL:** I know that the TYC chapters from all over the country meet once a year.

**NT:** Yes.

**CL:** How do you think the support here in Minnesota is compared to other chapters throughout North America?

**NT:** As far as Tibetans in general are concerned, I mean a Tibetan living here in Minnesota or one living in Ontario or maybe somewhere in Texas, they're feeling for their own country and their feeling how Tibetans are being persecuted in Tibet, that feeling is always there. So to fight for justice, that is innate in any human being, I think. If when they get the message across, the support should be invariably the same.

**CL:** Do you find, because there are so many more Tibetans here in Minnesota than just about everywhere else in the country, that just having more Tibetans in the community helps the organization?

**NT:** Oh, yes. Yes, because we are stronger and bigger and stronger in numbers. Yes.

**CL:** Does that allow you to be more active or—?

**NT:** Yes, it allows to be more active and more . . . I mean, we can engage in more activities because of the support base we have.

**TY:** What kind of support do you receive from, like, the wider community, non-Tibetan community?

**NT:** Non-Tibetan community, they have supported us a lot. Yes. Initially, like about 150 Tibetans came over to Minneapolis/St. Paul area, and there were only 2 Tibetans here at that time, so most of the 150 Tibetans, at that time, were supported by non-Tibetans, and they have been extraordinarily helpful. And besides the fact, when you sponsor a Tibetan coming from somewhere in India, you have no idea of the person you are going to help, you are sponsoring. I mean, keeping this in mind that they're volunteering to help, itself is such a . . . what you call it . . . altruistic kind of attitude.

**TY:** I mean, for this organization, how has the support been like from non-Tibetans?

**NT:** On which?

**TY:** For the Tibetan Youth Congress.

**NT:** Non-Tibetans, yes, we had invited non-Tibetans on few occasions. At that time, they have been very receptive and responsive to what we had to say. Like we invited two Tibetan nuns to talk about their trials in Tibet, and we held that somewhere in St. Louis Park, in a community hall, and there are a lot of non-Tibetans.

**TY:** Do you feel that the response that you get from the American government in terms of, like, the support for the Tibetan cause is good?

**NT:** [Pauses] Support of the American government has been very steady, has been good, but not to the extent that we would expect from the most powerful and richest nation of the world. I mean if, I just mentioned the economy is still the main concern, then it's very difficult to expect any help from any other poorer nation. Their economy is also at stake. But barring such things like economy, government of the United States has been very, very supportive of the Tibetan cause.

**TY:** You said that you had written letters to, like, some politicians?

**NT:** Yes.

**TY:** What kind of response did you receive from them?

**NT:** They've been very supportive of our Tibetan causes, and they have been very steadfast in what they can do. Much depends on what the Tibetans can do for themselves though.

**TY:** Do you feel that we're doing enough for the Tibetan cause? Do you think we can do more? How do you feel about that?

**NT:** So long as Tibetans are under the occupation of China, there's always room to do more. Yes.

**TY:** How do you feel about the Tibetan community center, having that building there?

**NT:** That's a good thing. We need a community center where people can get together.

**TY:** Has it served that purpose?

**NT:** It is some purpose to some extent and in future, I think it will do a lot more to serve the purpose. Right now, we are at the very initial stages of establishing ourselves.

**TY:** Are you a regular attendee of community activities?

**NT:** I attend most of the activities.

**TY:** You mentioned that the most important part about raising your children and sort of minimizing the loss of like having them miss out on cultural things is the spiritual aspect. So how do you feel that plays into your parenting role when you are raising your children here at your home?

**NT:** That, number one, is the parent must educate themselves in that particular field. If the parents are uneducated on that aspect, then there's no way they can educate their kid. So here in Minnesota, we have resources to educate oneself. We have always great teachers over here at the Gyuto Center and Sakya Center. In both places we have very good teachers, and if you go to them and listen, you get education from them, from those teachers, and we impart those teachings to our own kids that you have.

**TY:** You mentioned Gyuto Center and Sakya Center. The fact that they're here in our community and they're active and they're teaching like the teachings of Buddhist ways, do you feel that the youngsters, the younger generation, is able to get more out of it or is it being neglected by the younger generation?

**NT:** I think that in here, I don't think there's a question of neglect here. The parents have a bigger role to play here to get their kids to those centers and get them educated. Unless they get kind of a basic knowledge of their spiritual or their religious background, the religious, especially the Buddhist way of life, unless, we as parents make the kids know them or teach them or take them to those centers of education where they can learn, there's no way they will learn themselves.

**TY:** How often do you take your children there?

**NT:** I have taken them on few occasions and whenever His Holiness, the Dalai Lama, pays a visit, either in Wisconsin or here in Minnesota, I always took them, took my kids.

**CL:** One of the things that is very apparent in India or Nepal or even Tibet is that the spiritual aspect of things, just Tibetan culture, there isn't that separation between, you know, the way we live. Like in America, there's a big separation, oftentimes, between

the way we live and how we act and then religion. It's something else we do. For Tibetans, it's very integrated. It's all one thing. Because of that, there are all these very cultural things all over the place that have a huge religious value whether it's decorating on the outside of a house or a monastery close or a sacred site. There seems to be a real lack of that here in Minnesota. Do you notice that or how do you deal with that, with raising your children in a spiritual way?

**NT:** What do you mean, here among the Tibetan community?

**CL:** Many people in Minnesota might have prayer flags outside their house or a Tibetan flag or something. But it's just so much more prevalent in India or Nepal because there's so many more Tibetans. Then, of course, things like monasteries are much more prevalent and there are sacred sites people go and visit. Do you think that the lack of those here in the United States is a hindrance to raising children?

**NT:** The lack of those may play a role, but I think the role they would play would be very insignificant, because they actually act as a reminder of what we have to do, but if we remind our kids of what they have to do and we have a reminder at home, like an altar or like a picture of your teacher or the picture of His Holiness, the Dalai Lama, which is in every Tibetan's home, they should be a reminder to your spiritual values. So . . . so long as, one has not forgotten and one lives with the message of our teachers to be altruistic, to be non-harming, and if possible to be helpful to other beings, if that message remains with us, then such lack of outside things should not be such a big influence. Their main purpose is to remind us of our values as human beings.

**TY:** It seems like you've adjusted really well to American culture.

**NT:** Oh! Yes. Since born, I was a refugee, so . . . [Laughter]

**TY:** When you were in India, you were an Indian refugee, right?

**NT:** Yes.

**TY:** But when you came to United States, you were actually a U.S. resident and then are you now a U.S. citizen?

**NT:** Yes, I'm a U.S. citizen.

**TY:** How do you feel about being an American in United States and losing the refugee status?

**NT:** Being an American, I mean being a citizen of a country, I feel great . . . especially to be citizen of United States. But then, the fact remains that the people in Tibet, they are suffering. If I was not lucky enough to suffer, I mean, lucky enough to escape from there, then I would be meeting the same as other Tibetans there in Tibet. So keeping this

in mind, you have to be cognizant of the facts of life and keep from changing, changing the facts of life.

**TY:** How were you able to adjust to Minnesota weather, like especially the snow in the winter and things like that?

**NT:** That wasn't any problem at all. I don't remember making any adjustment. I think it was kind of natural . . . except for the question that car. If the car wouldn't start in the morning during that season, that's kind of a headache. [Laughter] Otherwise, I don't remember making any adjustment.

**TY:** That's all the questions I have. Is there anything else that you'd like to add that you think we missed out on?

**NT:** I don't have much to add, although your interview was very long. [Laughter]

**TY:** Okay. Well, thank you for participating in this interview.

**NT:** Oh, you're welcome.

**CL:** We want to thank you very much for being a part of our project and helping us out here.

**NT:** Yes.

**CL:** Thank you very much.