

BIOGRAPHY OF SONAM DORJE

(by Sonam Dorje, 2006)

Family Background

My name is Sonam Dorje. My father's name was Tsering Paldan and mother's name was Dolkar. My parents expired. Mother passed away when I was 4 years old, so even I did not remember her face. And father nourished me up. I belong to a poor family that depends on farming and animals. The family had a very limited amount of food and clothes. My father brought a stepmother to look after me. Father was illiterate and stepmother too. He used to go up the mountains to keep the cows and yaks for pasturing. She worked in the fields and home.

My stepmother sent me with the sheep and goats for pasturing in a day. She always kept me busy in working in the fields and home. Sometimes, she sent me with a big basket on the mountains to fetch the fuels for cooking and making fire.

Village Background and Conditions

My village's name is Yulchung. My house name is Khalangpa. I was born in this small village. My village Yulchung hails from Trans Singela Area/Lingshed Area. This area consists of eight villages like Lingshed, Kartse, Dipling, Skumpata, Gongma, Neraks, Yulchung and Fotoksar. Trans Singela Area is the remotest and most backward valley in the entire region of Leh district of Jammu and Kashmir State in Northern India. The entire area remains cut off from other part of the region in winter and spring seasons. They can neither work in the fields in winter nor cross the passes because of snowfall and coldness.

Over the centuries, these villages are still undeveloped as compared to other villages. There is neither a link road nor a better pony trek, nor a post office and no communication facilities. It takes a four-day trek from the joining main road Wanla. The people are farmers with limited crops: barely, peas and wheat. Except the farming and animals, they have no other recourses to make sustainable development. They have to carry their edible supplies and domestic requirements on their backs and ponies.

Education

The general level of education in my village is poor due to economic poverty and other factors. The parents are illiterate and could not afford to send me in a good school. Fortunately, there was a primary school in the village, but for me it was unfortunate, because of my parents sent me for pasturing the animals on the mountains instead of sending me to the school. I liked to go to school and didn't like to go for pasturing the animals. But my father acted always in favour of my stepmother, so I was helpless for my school.

In the year 1979, I ran away from my village to Leh. I luckily got admission in the Central Institute of Buddhist Studies, Choglamsar. After 5 months, my father came to Leh to take me back from the school. I refused to go back with him to the village, because I wanted to study and stay in the school. I studied very hard day and night. I studied Tibetan, English, Hindi, Sanskrit, Mathematics, Social Studies, Economics, and Comparative Philosophy and did sports. I know the languages Ladakhi, Tibetan, English, French, Hindi, Sanskrit and Urdu. I got a scholarship from school and managed with this scholarship for mass, book, pencil, notebook and uniforms. My parents, relatives and nobody helped me financial requirements for my education.

The school principal and teachers all loved me. They always encouraged and guided me to study well. They teach well and instruct to build up good education, character and mind. I studied up to 10+2 class in this school. They didn't want to give me away from the school. The principal told me to stay in the school and offered me a teacher job in the same school. But my aspiration was different. After that, I did my higher education in Jammu. And I studied stenographer and computer in ITI Chandigarh. I could study my higher education with the help of my own earning by guide and trekking during summer vacation. I got the opportunity to study Buddhist Philosophy and computer in Bangalore.

Aspiration

A thought came into my mind during my studies in school and college. Over the centuries Lingshed area villages are remote, backward and undeveloped in all sectors. So I think often for my villages and its people. After my education, I will help and work for my village, my people and their children with my body, speech and mind to develop the villages, even though I cannot financially help them. Especially for the children, I want to help them in developing the education to make their bright future.

It is therefore, that I am still bachelor/single, because of my reason is to work for my village. I think if I am a single, I am free from my partner and family. I have no burden on my shoulder to take care of my wife and children. So I can easily and freely work for my village and its people.

I realize and understand the education is the most important key factor in human life for any kind of positive development for long-term benefit. I have spontaneous aspiration and interest to work voluntarily for the welfare of the community and its people. To guide the children and students in developing the education to make fruitful their lives for their communities is my best aspiration and thought.

Aim and Object

To make literacy development in the Lingshed area villages and literate all the boys and girls are my best aims and object in my precious life. I want to promote spiritual and modern education standards to benefit the community. I want the parents to send their all children to the school. My aim is to get better and higher education for the children that they will become educated persons to help the remote villages. I want them to study in the schools, colleges, universities and institutions. After complete their education, I like to have them to return to their villages in offering service to their parents, families, villagers and the community. I love the students to have positive knowledge and thoughts for the welfare of living beings. My best aim and object are for development, peace, success, love and compassion for all sentient beings in family, village, city, country and world.

Activities of Intention

Service to others in human life is the best activities. Good mind for others is the valuable intention in human life. My intention is to help and work for the community. After having completed my education, I returned to my village. Since 1995 I have been voluntarily working for the welfare of Lingshed area villages and its people. With the help of Buddha's kindness and blessings, my activities and service have been successful and benefited the villagers and especially the students. I do social work and social service in Lingshed area for the nunnery, the school, the monastery, the traditional Amchi and the culture troupe to promote and develop these sectors.

Achievement of Friends of Lingshed Solar School

Education is the great achievement in my simple life. Education lighted in my mind. This big opportunity of my volunteer service for students in the school, people in the village and nuns in the nunnery is the tremendous achievement in my precious life that what I feel.

I got another golden chance to offer my best service to the villagers. In the year 2000, I met Christian Hlade from Austria and we discussed together to work for the school project to benefit the Lingshed area villages. Since 1993 the friends of Lingshed have been working the school project in Lingshed village. The friends of Lingshed proposed me as a coordinator of the project. Since then I have been voluntarily working and cooperating together with friends of Lingshed to benefit the community. The friends of Lingshed awoke the villagers and made them literate. They encouraged the parents and people to send their children regularly to the school. Now the children are inspired and encouraged to go to school.

Over the centuries, the education in the entire villages have been poor. This is a golden achievement for children and villagers. They have really improved compared to the before status. Today the achievement is incomparable and fantastic. More than 100 children are studying in Lingshed School and it has upgraded from primary class to middle class. And many other students are doing higher studies out of Lingshed area in different schools, colleges and universities. Their intentions are to return and work for their own villages and its people. These education achievements for the villagers are being successful with the help of collective efforts and supports of friends.

As a coordinator of Friends of Lingshed, I voluntarily work in the school for the children and villages for people. I organize and manage the activities of the project in mobilizing the winter tuitions, educational tour, scholarship for higher studies, school uniforms, encouragement assistance for Taleem teachers and mothers and cooperation of school's requirements for strengthening and promotion of the better education for the children and community. My true dream is still to achieve the Lingshed School will be extraordinary among all other school in Ladakh as a MODEL SCHOOL.