

3 Siblings' Story

Collected by Dr. Sonam Dradup

Left to right: Metok 14, Tashi 27 and Norbu 16



The uncle, Chilu Dorjee, brought Tashi, Norbu and Metok to the camp for cataract surgeries. They drove 80 kilometers to get here and the road in Chamdo is famously dangerous and bumpy. 80 Kilometers may require a day of drive. Three of them seemed to be a bit of disjointed from the trip and to be in the new place. They are siblings and diagnosed to be bilateral cataracts. They were holding

hands and standing still in the hospital hall and try to present the best themselves in front of all the people. Their frozen emotions shown on their faces, however, gave me a sense that they were feeling nervous, shameful and timid.

Tashi blames himself for not fulfilling his fatherhood. He and his brother, Garup, 30 years old, are married to one woman, and they have three children. Garup works different places as a construction worker to make money for the family so he barely is at home. Tashi is supposed to be at home to be a good father and husband. A year ago, his oldest son died, and now he has a daughter and a boy at home and they are 5 and 2. His wife, Ngawang, 29, has been raising the children and herding the animals herself. He comments himself as “a burden but nothing.” Sadness



covers his face when Tashi talks. He is trembling and wanting to hold back the things he wanted to say many times, and finally spits out by saying. “ I...I ...I have lost many things over the years, but most of all I have lost my dignity for being blind. Every morning I woke up with the feeling of hopeless and worthless inside and with trying to figure out how I should kill the time for the day.” All his family and particularly Tashi were permeated with pain when Norbu and Metok became blind because they knew what both were going to go through. Both of them were sitting at home with the dream of going to school and becoming a Thanka* painter.

Their visions were restored to 6/9 on the next day, and they insisted doing the other eyes. On the second day, their other eyes were operated. Their sister (the woman with yellow coat in the picture), Tenzing Dolma who lives with her husband's family in other part of Chamdo and normally has no time to visit her own family, made a special trip to the camp to visit her siblings and congratulate them. Uncle Chilu Dorjee (the first one on the left in the picture) burst himself into happy tears and thanked Seva for bringing a hope for the three patients and the entire family. Tashi was committed to be productive by taking care of the kids and collecting cordyceps* to generate some income for the family. Norbu decided to learn painting to become a Thangka painter. Metok planned to go to school.



Note:

* *Cordyceps sinensis*: a dried and precious medicinal herb belonging to the fungus category. It grows mostly in nomadic places in Tibet. Nomads can make a good living with collecting and selling to the market.

* *Thangka*: the Tibetan art of painting mainly the images of Buddha, or reflection of life stories of eminent monks and folk customs.