

INTERVIEW 8 - PART 1

- Q. Where is your home Province? How many brothers and sisters do you have? What rank are you in your family?
- A. I was born in *Prek Kroech* village, *Norriin* district, *Battambang* province. We are five brothers and sisters; three girls and two boys. They all passed away except for my oldest sibling and me, the middle child. One of my younger sisters passed away, one of my younger brothers did too, so did my older brother. There are only two of us. I am the third child.
- Q. What did your parents do for a living?
- A. My parents were farmers. They bought rice and stocked it in the barn. When the rainy season came, they sold it. My mother also farmed along with my father.
- Q. What was your family's status?
- A. My family was middle class.
- Q. When you were young, did you encounter any hardship in your life?
- A. When I was young, I had no hardship. I was just living with my mother, and my father went to do some farming. I stayed at home and helped my mother care for my younger siblings. I did not get to go to school like other children did. I only studied with a teacher at home. After studying for nine months, I was able to read like other children did. My younger siblings did have a chance to go to a real school like other children. My younger sibling passed away. He was 32 years old when he passed away. My father farmed the fields. I stayed at home. He bought a sewing machine for me to sew some clothes for people, as a seamstress. I also cared for my younger siblings. It didn't look as though I had any hardship when I lived with my father. He did the farming. I had no difficulty.
- Q. What did your mother do?
- A. She just stayed at home. My father was the only person who went to do the farming. If the field was nearby, then I would also go and help him farm. I would help him transplant the rice seedlings, pulling them, harvesting the rice, you know; he also hired some helping hands. We had some servants to help us. We hired them annually to help us. We had them do the harvesting. My father went to the rice fields and my mother just stayed home. She stayed at home and took care of the children. If my father worked in a nearby field, she would cook some foods for my father to eat. This is a kind of farm that bordered a village. If it

were a kind of unfarmed field, he would go and build a hut there, and would cook his own meal there. As for my mother, she just stayed home. She never went to the rice fields.

Q. At that time, why did you not go to school like other children? Wasn't there any school in that village?

A. Yes there was, but my father said that I should be made to stay home and care for my younger siblings. It was like, well, it was better to use your own child than using the servants to do the job. When I stayed home, I could help to care for my younger siblings. I stayed home to cook some meals, and he would not let me go to school. Later on, he realized that he was wrong. He said, "I am wrong for not letting my daughter go to school." If I had gone to school, I would be educated like other people, you know that? But he did not let me go to school. I studied just enough to be able to read, like, I was able to read Dharma books and other books, if I was not able to go to school like other people. As for my younger siblings, they were able to go to school.

Q. Do you regret this later on?

A. Yes, I do. I regret very much not being allowed to go to school like other people. If I had gone to school at the same time other children my age did studying with *Phorn*, who later was a teacher herself, I would be a teacher too like other children who went to school and were teachers. Teacher *Phorn* was a teacher, you know? She was the one whose sister was called *Pheen*, and Auntie *Kar*'s daughter. If I had gone to school, it would be that same generation. But I had not gone to school like other children did. I regretted this very much, and my father regretted this later on. He said: "I am extremely sorry that my daughter did not go to school, I am wrong; I want to use my child. If I had just used the servants, it would have been all right." He said that he wanted to use his own child, because it was better than using the servants; well, he trusts me. I could care for my younger siblings, cook the meals, boil water, and care for the house.

Q. Do you feel sorry for yourself because of the fact that your father did not send you to school?

A. No, I did not resent him; it was too late, and he did not let me go to school. He wanted to use me . . . I regretted it. Later on, he said himself that he was sorry, my father said that. He said: "I am very sorry that I had not sent my daughter to school so she could be educated like other people."

Q. Are your parents Buddhists?

A. My parents are devout Buddhists. They have contributed some money to build a

monk's quarter at *Prek Kroech* pagoda, a toilet, and a road. They built many things. They bought a crematory to cremate the bodies. Toward the end, when he was near death, he built a stone monk's quarter, and it was not finished yet when he passed away. My mother was still alive, and she finished building it along with all the children. She finished it and she held a religious ceremony to inaugurate it. That quarter still stands today in Cambodia. *Pol Pot's* clan did not destroy it. They kept it to use as a stock room for some things.

Q. How old were you when your father died?

A. He was 58 years old. I had some children then. Yes, I already had a child.

Q. Please tell us in details about your family's faith in Buddhism?

A. My father believed very much in Buddhism.

Q. Why did he believe in Buddhism? What was the reason?

A. He always explained to the children that they should pursue the religious merits like other people. My mother said this. When she was old, she went to the pagoda to meditate. On Buddhist Saint Day, she would go to the pagoda to receive the Buddha's precepts. She would spend one night there. In the morning, she would come home. She believed in the merits very much. Whatever she was doing, she always adhered to Buddha's precepts vigorously. She would join the *Ben* during the rainy season, when the monks can not go out to beg for foods, they stay at the pagoda, and the faithful take turn to cook for the monks during the *Phcum* season (memorial ceremony for the dead ancestors), the rainy season. She also loved to join the *Kathen* (fund raising for the pagoda). She loved religious ceremonies. She would give us some guidance saying: "My children, believe in the merits, in Buddhism." You know, she made me hold a *Kathen* for my mother-in-law once, you know, my mother, she did this. She said, "Go ahead and hold one for her. She never held any *Kathen* ceremony at all; dear, go ahead and hold one for her." I held one for the *Khdol* pagoda. She made me hold one ceremony for my mother-in-law once. If she had only studied some like I have . . . well, she was a real believer, and she had the merits. If we believe in the *Dharmas* and Buddha's precepts, we would be good people, even tempered. When someone said something to hurt us, we would not be so angry and our heart would be cool according to Buddhism. Buddhism makes us aware that the Buddha's precepts make us cool in the heart; they also help us to live in peace. I always believe in Buddhism ever since my mother taught me about it. She always meditated and adhered to the Buddha's precepts all along, and so I always followed her example; even holding religious ceremonies . . . well, I have a lot of faith and I believe in the precepts and the *Dharmas*; I have a strong faith.

Q. Did your younger siblings go to school?

A. Yes, all my younger siblings went to school. My older brother also went to school. My oldest sister, *Haang*, did not go to school either, just like me. She just studied with the elders, such as the old monk who would teach us, or my father would hire someone to teach me at home. I hired someone to teach me for one *Riel* a month. The old monk taught me and after nine months I was able to read the Buddhist Sutra, and other books, all the boys went to school. My younger sister went to school. Those who went to school were my younger brother, my younger sister, and my older brother. My older sister and I were the only two who were educated outside the school. We were not educated at the schools like other children.

Q. Did you stay at home to serve all your brothers and sisters?

A. Yes. This was because father did not want to hire a servant, so he made me stay home and serve the family instead.

Q. Why did your father decide that you should be the one to stay home and serve everybody? Why not make either your older or younger sister do it?

A. My younger sister went to school. As for my older sister, my father gave her away to another family to his older brother's family because he had no children. She was given to my father's older brother who stayed all the way to *Mongkol Borei*. When she got older, she came back to stay with us. After she came back to stay with my mother for about two years, I guess, she got married.

Q. How close were you to your parents and your brothers and sisters?

A. I stayed home and served my mother until I got married. When I got married, she let me live away from home. I was very close to my parents. When I got older, they let me handle the money. I was the one who handled the money when they bought the rice and other merchandise, or when they had to pay to rent for the ox carts. They let me handle the money and keep the keys. I handled the money for the hired hands or to buy the rice. They let me handle the money. They said that they trusted me. I stayed close to my parents for a long time. My older sister went away to live with my uncle. I was the only one at home to handle the money. Before they bought anything, they always discussed it with me first.

Q. Did your parents have the idea of not wanting the daughters to attend school?

A. They said that they would let the daughters study only so they were able to read letters, Dharma books and other books, and that was enough.

- Q. What was the reason behind this?
- A. No, I really don't know what they were afraid of. I don't really know what their reason was behind this action. I was not resentful toward them either. I only studied so I was able to read some books and that was enough. It could be that they thought that it was not necessary for the daughters to go and work outside the house. They bought me a sewing machine to sew some clothes for money at home.
- Q. Have you ever had a chance to discuss with your parents about the reason why they did not send you to school?
- A. I have never said anything to them about it. It was all right when they did not send me to school. I just stayed home, and just let my younger brothers and sisters go to school.
- Q. When you were young, what were the kinds of fun that you had?
- A. I did not have so much difficulty, because my parents had average earnings. Whatever I wanted to have they would buy it for me, but I usually did not have so much opportunity to go out like other children. They did not allow me to go out so much.
- Q. Why did they not let you go out?
- A. I don't really know why they did not let me go out and visit some friends at their homes. They just let me stay at home. When I had something to do outside the house I just went and did it. When it was the harvest season, I would go to the fields. I would go to transplant the rice seedlings and pull them out, but I did go with them and the servants. I never had a chance to go anywhere. I did not even dare go to the market by myself. Going there by myself made me kind of scared.
- Q. Did they not allow you to go?
- A. No, they let me go; but every time I went there, I got scared, you know. I didn't dare go there by myself.
- Q. Did you ever have a chance to go see the movies or the plays?
- A. Yes, I did. For example, the villagers held some religious ceremonies, and they would hire a group to stage a play and I would go to see it once in awhile; but I had never gone to see the movies in the city. I never went to see the movies that were played in the city. Some girls called me to go with them, but I never did. I enjoyed being at home. I never went out like other girls.

- Q. When you were young, did you ever worry or feel sad about matters?
- A. No, it doesn't seem that I had difficulty with anything at all. I did not think about anything that was a hardship to me. That is to say, whatever I wanted to have, my mother would get it for me. The only thing was that she did not let me go out so much.
- Q. Did you ever feel sorry for yourself for not being able to go out and have some fun?
- A. No, I did not feel sorry for myself. It was just like my heart found my mother's actions acceptable all the times. I have never gone to see the movies at the movie theater in the city. I have never gone to the city, and besides, this was the time when I was a bit older too, when I already had children, I went to see the movies, but I just went to look at the drawings about the movies which were displayed in front of the movie theater, those beautiful drawings outside the theater, you know; yes, I went to see the movies, but only the drawings about the movies. I was asked if I wanted to go in and see the movies, and I replied: "What more do I want to see if I have already seen these drawings here?" That was all that I did and I went back home. I have never spent any money seeing any movie.
- Q. What kind of guidance or words of advice did your parents give you?
- A. They did not let me go out to any place that was far away from home. They just let me stay home, do the housework and sew some clothes. They taught me to have faith in Buddhism, because they were faithful and always holding religious ceremonies. They would let me go to the pagoda should there be some religious ceremonies, yes I did go to the pagoda. They would let me go to the pagoda on Buddhist Holy days when the monks shave their heads (14th and 29th day of each month), to make some sweets for the monks. The only thing was that I have never traveled to another city far away from home like other girls. They were devout Buddhist and adhered strictly to Buddhist precepts. They said that I should adhere to Buddha's precepts, and have charitable spirit, that I should build up the merits and give to charity. They loved to hold religious ceremonies. They told me that as long as I adhered to Buddha's precepts, I should have peace in my life in the future. They said that I should not be mean, and that I should be generous. I will have a peaceful life if I adhered to charity, Buddha's precepts and *Dharmas*. This was their advice. My father gave me some advice about being good, and not wandering around aimlessly, whenever I spoke, I should speak the truth and not tell lies. He did not like it if I were to tell him fabrications. He wanted me to talk about the truth, the real facts. This was his advice.
- Q. Between your father and your mother, whom did you feel the closest to?

- A. I was a child, I loved my father more than my mother.
- Q. How close were you to your father?
- A. I was also close to my mother. I also loved her; it did not mean that I did not love her. But, when I was young, I loved my father more than my mother. My father pampered me more than my mother did, therefore, I loved him more. When I grew up, I loved both of them equally.
- Q. Why did you love your father more than your mother?
- A. My father pampered me very much. For example, when he came back from working in the rice fields, he took the children for a swim, you know; when he had some sweets, he would give them to us first. My father loved us. He loved me the most. I have never done anything wrong to upset him; this was the reason why he loved me, you see.
- Q. At the present time, where are your brothers and sisters?
- A. My parents are in Cambodia and both of them passed away. There remains an older sister, *Haang*; my younger sister passed away too; my younger brother died here. My older brother passed away in Cambodia; he is *Chan Than's* father, you know. My father passed away a long time ago, he was only 58 years old when he died. As for my mother, she was 84. She was 84 when she passed away, before *Pol Pot* took over our country. My older brother was only 46 years old when he passed away. My younger sister was 32 years old when she died. She had four children.
- Q. Do you still remember some memories that you shared with your parents?
- A. The sister who was 32 years old, that sister died; I mourned her death, oh . . . I mourned her, I felt sorry for her; she was only 32 years old and her children were orphans. I raised her daughter. Right now, I am raising my sister's children. I am living with my niece you know. She was born 26 days before her mother died. I brought her up. She is living with me right now. When I was young, I never did anything to offend my parents. I was good to them. After my father passed away, I went back to live with my mother again. After I got married and had a baby, I moved into a separate house and had a small grocery store. I lived far away from home, in *Preak Krouch*, you know. My husband had an iron barn, which was converted into a shop. I went to live there, and sold groceries for a couple of years. When my father was sick and passed away, I went back to live with my mother. I felt sorry for her, you know. All my brothers and sisters left home. I went back to live with my mother in the old house. When I went back to live in

the old house . . . My old trade was selling groceries, sewing some clothes for people, selling everything; when I went back to live with my mother, I stopped the business. I went back to live with my mother and did some farming. I stayed with her, I felt sorry for her, you see; all my brothers and sisters left home, so I went back to stay with her, in that house.

Q. Did you ever dream about your parents? Do you recall some souvenirs with them?

A. There is nothing. All my brothers and sisters never had any quarrels. My brother and sister were good. I minded sister *Haang*. I was also very good to brother *Chaay*. My brothers and sisters never had any quarrels. As for the 32-year old sister who passed away, she also loved me very much. I never had any quarrel with her. When she passed away and whenever I recalled her death, my tears came down. I mourned her death for two or three years. I took her daughter and brought her up at the present time. She takes care of me as though I were her own mother. When I was young, I didn't have such a hard life. I just sewed some clothes for some people. My father farmed the fields and I just helped him. I always helped him when the harvest season came and when I needed to transplant the rice seedlings. Right now, when I come to live here, I would say that I have a peaceful life, because I received some financial aid.

INTERVIEW 8 - PART 2

- Q. Who was the one who arranged the marriage for you? Did you know your husband to be? Your parents arranged the marriage for their sons and daughters; what kind of persons did they choose?
- A. Yes, my parents were kind of picky. They were looking for a good and decent person, and not the person who, let us say, was a gambler or a womanizer; the person should be educated. They also looked for a person with a good family background. He would be of equal status, and not too much higher or lower than ours. My parents arranged my marriage. Before my marriage, I did not know my husband-to-be. He lived far away from me. I lived in *Praek Kroech* and my husband lived all the way to *Doun Teov*. I never met him. I did not get to see his face until the wedding day. That was the time I met him. But my parents knew him before. They had contact with one another before. The groom's parents asked for my hand. They did this for a couple of times. First, they said that they came to our home to visit us, well, like both parties were acquaintances; my mother and his knew each other before, and they were good friends. They came over to visit us two or three times. Then they asked for my hand in marriage. They came to visit us, and they also wanted to see me.
- Q. What did people do when they asked for a girl's hand in marriage?
- A. In my time, first, I just saw my future mother-in-law coming to our home. I always saw her coming quite often. When she came she talked with my parents and she knew that my parents agreed and that our birth dates were compatible.
- Q. What did they do to find out that your birth date and the groom's were compatible?
- A. They had a fortune teller read them. They took our birth dates and had them read. They had a fortune teller read them and were told that the birth dates were compatible. My parents then agreed to the marriage. The parents from both sides then set the wedding date.
- Q. Who was the one who went to the fortune teller?
- A. When this happened, my mother-in-law said that old man *Buo* said that the birth dates matched. He lived in *Prey Doun Teov*. He was a lay man, not a monk. He was an old man. My mother said that if they matched then she would agree to the marriage, because our relatives said that if the dates matched, then my mother should agree.

- Q. **To find** out whether or not a man and a woman are predestined to be husband and wife, when one goes to a fortune teller, what does the person need to bring and how is this done?
- A. Well, I don't know about this at all. My mother went to have my fortune read. The fortune teller did not require much. In the old days, he/she required a pair of candles, and I don't know whether or not the person gave any money to the fortune teller. I don't really know. When the fortune teller confirmed that our birth dates matched, my mother agreed. Both sides then would decide on the wedding month to hold the wedding ceremony. In order to ask for a girl's hand in marriage, first the groom's parents would try to find out whether or not she is available. When everything goes well, the girl is available, and the girl's parents like the groom, both sides would inform the *Moha* about the date, you know, about the provision day. Some people held the provision day two months before the wedding day, while others held it long before it, such as a year or so, for instance. Others, on the other hand, did not want to have a hectic time, so they waited until the wedding day to bring the wedding provisions to the bride's house, until the day the groom went to stay in the groom's hall. The day the groom went to stay in the hall, the groom's side brought a lot of provisions. The groom's parents would then bring the provisions to the bride on the day the groom stays in the hall. In the afternoon, the monks would recite the *Dharmas* to bless the newlyweds; the next morning, the wedding ceremony was held, the newly weds would pray to the ancestors to inform them of the wedding. In the old days, there was no table like nowadays; we had to use the mats, which were spread on the floor, and put the foods in the trays; there was no table in my time. When my younger brothers and sisters got married; people would put the foods on the tables.
- Q. In your time, how did the old folks choose the wedding day.
- A. The way they chose it, well, it all depended on the fortune teller. He/she would tell the parents about the auspicious day, this day and that day. For us Cambodians, we choose any month that is even, any month that has 30 days; for example April, May; they do not choose April which is uneven, May-June is not chosen; they choose.. June-July are not even chosen in Cambodia. The Chinese would not have minded and go ahead and get married. The Cambodians would not choose rainy months to get married. They get married in December when the rainy season ends. They do not get married in January. They choose February, March. They do not choose February either. They choose March; they do not get married in April, but they do in May. They get married on certain months. They do not get married in uneven months in Cambodia by using the lunar calendar. In this country, people would just get married any month; they get married any month. Just look at them, they get married this rainy season, you see, incredible; they don't consider whether or not it is a rainy or a dry season. In the old days, in

Cambodian, the people were choosy and superstitious. They only chose even months.

Q. How did you feel about the way that your marriage was arranged in such manner?

A. I was concerned, but my father agreed to it, and my mother did too; so, I just complied to their wish. In the old days, the parents did not even ask for their children's opinions; you know, in my generation; the groom's side just need the agreement from the bride's parents. The bride's parents did not tell her about any fact in great details. They did not ask her anything. In the old days they did not ask the girls anything at all. When they decided to give their daughters' hands in marriage, they just did it. Then...well, it was like this, the children complied to their parents wishes. Whomever the mothers wanted the girls to marry, they always complied. They did not dare disagree, you know, the old folks in the old days. But, nowadays, the girls would choose whomever they want to marry. At that time, I was kind of concerned. Well, once my parents agreed to the marriage, it did not look good if I refused and made a scene. There was a saying, "children always comply to their parents' wishes;" it was not right if they refused. Yes, I was always concerned. I thought, "After I married him, what kind of trade can I do?" I did not know what to do. Further more, I was worried and thought, "What kind of a person is he? Is he a good person or not?" But, my parents agreed to the marriage, and I did not dare say anything about the marriage. They did not even ask for my opinion. In the old days, they did not ask for their children's opinions. Nowadays, they did ask for the children's opinion. At that time, nobody asked for my opinion. It was up to them, when they agreed, it was final.

Q. How old were you when you got married?

A. I was 19 years old.

Q. After your marriage, where did you live?

A. After my marriage, I lived with my mother for two or three years before she allowed me to move away and live in a separate house. After I moved to a separate house, my father passed away, and I moved back to live with my mother.

Q. In your generation, how was a wedding ceremony conducted?

A. In the morning, the groom goes to stay in the hall. That same day, the groom's parents brought the wedding provisions in a procession. When I got married, they did not bring the provisions before the wedding day; the provisions consisted of clothes and gold jewelry. The provisions were brought the day the groom came to stay in the hall. After the ceremony (in which the bride's side received the provisions), the parties involved would treat their guests that morning. In the

evening, they held another reception. When I got married, our wedding ceremony was conducted according to the Chinese tradition. They closed down the rice-threshing yard; they had big candles. Each candle weighed one pound or 600 grams. They were big wax candles. In the morning we prayed to our ancestors. After the prayer, the guests were offered foods. We did not have any tables; we only had trays. My wedding only lasted for two days. For example, one day, in the morning the provisions were brought; in the afternoon the monks recited the *Dharmas* to bless us. The next day in the morning we prayed to our ancestors, and it was finished. This was all that we did when I got married. When I think about it, we had three meals we served foods to the guests three times. In the morning, when the provisions were brought, we served some foods to the guest; in the afternoon after the monk's prayers, we did it for the second time. In the morning we prayed to the ancestors. We served foods again and the wedding ceremony was finished. The monks came to recite the *Dharmas* at about 6:00 in the evening. The groom was sitting in one side, and the bride was in the other side. In the old days, in the morning, they fixed the teeth. They used a dab of local dyes to wet the bride's teeth as a symbol to remind her to be virtuous. Dye is *Leak* in Cambodian, and work virtuous is *Krup Leak*, meaning full or complete dye. *Leak* is homonym for the word excellent character. The next morning we had the ceremony when the bride and the groom sat side by side, then hands joined in prayers, resting on the same pillow, in the morning, we had a praying ceremony, when we prayed to our ancestors, and when the guests and relatives tied raw threads around our wrist to wish us good luck. After the prayers, the foods that were offered to the ancestors were taken outside; afterwards the groom and bride were sitting side by side and blessed and given guidance by the *Acha*, the wise man, then the people threw the areca flowers. The relatives were called to the raw threads on the young couples' wrists. This concluded the wedding ceremony.

Q. What were the wishes and guiding words to the groom and the bride?

A. They wished the bride and the groom: prosperity and good health, and the three wishes which were: longevity, beauty, peace and energy; they wished them a long life, strength and beautiful bodies. Every one of them would just wish them with and they tied the raw threads around their wrists. They tied the threads around the wrists; then they sprinkled some water on them too. They used white thread for the ceremony. The Chinese used red threads to do it. The Cambodians always used white thread. Afterwards, they would throw the areca flowers. After this they turned the *Popils* around. There were also what we called, little turtles, "girl turtles", and "boy turtles." The people were sitting in a circle, and *Moha* would start the *popils*.

Q. What kind of people would fit to be chosen as the "little turtles?"

- A. The people only chose those who were legally married with the consent of their parents to be the "little turtles." They did not choose the widows or widowers, or those who were not married. In the old days, the people were careful and choosy. After the ceremony of tying the threads around the wrist and wishing well, in the evening, they gave a reception to conclude the wedding ceremony. In the old days, the morning when the couples prayed to the ancestors was considered the most important of all the ceremonies. In the generations that followed, the wedding ceremonies were conducted differently. In the evening, the guests ate at the halls. After the prayer ceremony, the guests ate until the evening; this is what happens now, it is kind of different you know.
- Q. In your generation, what kind of a wedding ceremony was yours?
- A. Well yes, in the old days, mine was kind of big. At that time, my wedding only cost 400 *Riels* (Cambodian currency). I also received 400 *Riels* worth of gifts. I got the same amount of money that I spent.
- Q. Who was the one who paid for the wedding?
- A. The groom's parents paid for the wedding. The bride's parents did not pay for it. The groom's parents paid for everything. The provisions included some *sampoots* (skirts), blouses, towels and gold jewelry. For my wedding provisions, I got a gold chain that we wear across our body and a bracelet. All together I don't think they even weighed two *damleng* (gold measure). The gold chain weighed about one *damleng* and one half, and the bracelet weighed about two *cees*. The gold jewelry was like gifts to the bride for asking for her hands. They did not give money; they only paid for the wedding. They did not give any money like some people do nowadays. Nowadays they give money, you know. In the old days, I only saw that they gave some clothes and gold jewelry, and not money.
- Q. After your marriage, what did you do for a living?
- A. At the beginning, my father gave me some money to buy some rice and kept it in the barn. I bought some rice and kept it in the barn in the dry season. For example, we bought it during the months when it was time for us to go to the rice threshing yard. We bought it and kept it in the barn, and sold it in the rainy season. When I lived with him, I would help him farm in the rice fields, you know, I did it; at the time, I lived with him. I lived (with my parents) until I had a baby, then I left home and had a business in selling materials, groceries, and running a variety store, you know, like running a small variety store. I ran the store for a couple of years and came back and lived with my mother.
- Q. What did your husband do?

- A. My husband ran the business with me. I sewed some clothes, and he did that too. He helped me sew the clothes. He bought some merchandises and ran a variety store; he also bought some materials to sell. When someone wanted to have some shirts or blouses tailored, we would just tailor them for him/her. This was my trade. Later on, we went back to live with my mother, and I went back to farm the fields.
- Q. What did your parents do for a living?
- A. The only trade they had to do with rice. My mother-in-law also bought some rice and stocked it in the barn. She did not do the farming. She just bought some rice and stocked it in the barn. She would sell it in the rainy season.
- Q. When you first got married, how close were you with your husband?
- A. After I got married I stayed with my mother. I helped my mother farm the rice fields. I also sewed some clothes for the people. After living with my husband, I got to know him; after living together, I got to know him; at the beginning I did not know him at all.
- Q. Did you love him? Did you trust him?
- A. Well, yes, I got to trust him, (laughs) you know, that was all right. We were husband and wife; my mother arranged the marriage for me; so I just lived with him to go along with my mother's wishes.
- Q. You and your husband never knew each other at all. How could you live with your husband when you did not know him at all? How did you relate to him? You never knew him at all.
- A. Well, you know, that was all right. At first I did not know him. After living with him for a while, I knew him and got to like him (laughs). At first I was worried. But after living together as husband and wife, we never quarreled, my husband and I.
- Q. How long did it take you before you got to trust him?
- A. Well, about one year, you know (laughs)...before I could trust him.
- Q. Before the *Pol Pot* regime, how was your life and your family's?
- A. Before the *Pol Pot* regime, my status was middle class; for example, I would do the farming. We had a tractor; we bought a tractor and farmed the fields. We farmed hundreds of *raeys*, each *raey* is 1,600 square meters. We hired servants

helping hands to do it. Just before *Pol Pot's* regime, we had a good business. We made money from the vegetable and fruit farms, and from the rice, because the rice's price was high. We got millions of *Riels* from the rice, you know.

Q. Therefore, your family was wealthy, was it not, for being a farmer?

A. Yes, I had thousands of...rice in the barn you know. I built a house. I dismantled the old barn and built a new one, the one that I inherited from my father. I dismantled the old house and built a new barn. But I did not have enough time to finish it when our country fell.

Q. When you think of the period before the *Pol Pot's* regime, what were the moments when you were the happiest?

A. Before the *Pol Pot's* regime, it looked like I was doing fine. We had rice; we had money. It seemed like we were kind of well off. In my entire life, before *Pol Pot's* regime, I had never taken a trip anywhere at all. Even after I got married, I had not taken any trips. Yes I did go somewhere, such as going to a nephew or niece's wedding. I took a trip once; I went to *Phnom Penh*. I only went somewhere when a nephew or niece got married, to their weddings. Even when traveled, I never went there together with my husband. I usually traveled with my brothers and sisters. I have never taken a trip alone with my husband like other people do now a day. I usually took a trip by myself, because I always let him stay at home and take care of the business. If he should go with me, then he would leave the house unattended. I have never traveled together with my husband. Everywhere I went to, I always went with my brothers and sisters. This means that when one traveled, one would stay home. My mother was elderly, and one of us should stay behind to care for her. I traveled alone; when I wanted to go somewhere, I would go alone. But for me, at the beginning, when I was young, I had such a hardship because I worked very hard. Farming is a hard work a very hard work, farming and growing vegetables are. When I lived with my father, it seemed that I was happier than after I got married because I did not have to do such hard work, you know, I depended on my father. Then I got married and I had to do an extremely hard work like farming, growing vegetables, and I had such hardship, I worked extremely hard. When I came over here, it looks like I have an easy time, because I have been provided for.

Q. Before the *Pol Pot's* regime, what were the times when you were the saddest, and had the hardest time?

A. Yes, there were times when I was sad and had a hard time then, before *Pol Pot's* regime. It had something to do with our business. At that time, there were the *Issarak*, the freedom fighters against the French, you know. We were fleeing our home, and it was a hardship. Every time we heard gun fires, we were kind of

worried at the time. During the *Issarak's* time, I was more than 20 years old. My child was still small. When my child was only 2 years old, we had to flee because of the *Issarak*. We had to flee by boat, and it was kind of hard then.

Q. Were you afraid that you might be killed?

A. Yes I was. After the *Issarak* episode, the Thais came in. They stayed for a couple of years before they left.

Q. When the Thais went inside Cambodia and controlled in *Battambang* province, what kind of hardship do you have?

A. It was a difficult time for me when the Thais came in. They gave us the money...For 100 *Riels*, they only gave us 61 Bahts, Thai currency in exchange, because we had to change our money. At the time, I considered it to be good enough for me. In this last regime, *Khmer Rouge*, what do you know, no matter how much we had, it was as though we had none at all. It was the year of the dragon when the Thais came in, and my child was still small. At that time, I was still managing a variety store. Come to think of it, I have hard feelings toward the Thais, and this is the reason why I don't want to speak Thai. You know, I know how to write Thai, and I can also read it. From the time the Thais took over our town, and after that time, I was angry with them. They came over and lowered our currency. For each *Satang*, Thai penny, they wanted two *Cens*, Khmer pennies, you know, that was what happened then. They lower our currency to the lowest rate. At that time, it was kind of a difficult time.

Q. When the Thai's took over the territory, what did they have the Cambodian people do?

A. You know they made us study their language. They made us wear their national skirts. They forbid us to wear the *Cang Khben*, Khmer national skirt, Ghandi's style. At that time, in the old days, we would wear the *Cang Khben*, which was made from *Khien* material. When they came in, they made us wear the skirts like they did. They made us study Thai language, but at that time, I did not study anything.

Q. Did they mistreat the people, and if so, how?

A. No, they did not mistreat us. It was just that, if we wore the *Cangkhben*, they would fine us. They forbid us to wear them. We were not allowed to chew beetle chews either. They counseled us not to chew beetle and the areca nuts. Those who did spit them everywhere. They made us wear skirts. At that time, we, the Cambodians wore the *Cang Khbens*. For this season, we had to wear the skirts like they did. Every time we went out, we had to wear a hat. I seem to have

forgotten about everything, I don't know how they mistreated us. But it seems like I don't like the Thais at all, period. I did not study (Thai language); even though they made me study it, I did not do it. They made me speak the language, but I did not do it.

- Q. At the time, were you allowed to travel from one province to the other?
- A. I never had a chance to travel at all. I never went anywhere. Oh, when the Thais left our town to go back to their country, I went to Bangkok once. My older brother accompanied me there, brother *Chay* and, my older sister, *Haang* also went.
- Q. Why did the Thai's go back to their country?
- A. At the time, the Japanese came to our country, yes? When the Japanese came in, I didn't know why the Thais went back to their country. Ever since I was born and when I was young, there were many change of events, I didn't really know what was happening; there were also the *Issaraks*, you know what, well, there were many changes. First, the Thais came in; after the Thais, the Japanese came in, well, there were changes of events. The Thais left. Thais stayed for about 5 or 6 years.
- Q. Did the Thais just take over *Battambang* province?
- A. The Thai's controlled up to *Svay Doun Keo*, not up to *Pursat* province, up to *Siem Reap* province. They controlled those provinces for about six years and they left. The Japanese came in and they left. After the Japanese came in, the Thais left all of a sudden. It was kind of in turmoil then.
- Q. So then, it seemed like there was a bitter war between the Japanese and the Thai's, right?
- A. No, it did not seem that they were engaging in any war at all, you know, between the Japanese and the Thais. I only saw our people and the *Issaraks*. At that time, when the Thais came in, the place in front of the railroad station was bombed. At that time, I saw the bombing. My child was small; he was about two years old.
- Q. When the Japanese came in, did they mistreat the Cambodians who were in the *Battambang* province?
- A. No, I did not seem to hear anything about it. I didn't really remember it at the time. The only thing I remember very clearly was that the Japanese came in, the Thais left. I didn't really know what the reason was for that event. I didn't really know about this too much; I seem to have forgotten about it.

- Q. Were the bombs dropped at the train station?
- A. No, that was the time when the Thais came in. The bombs were dropped in front of the train station, then the Thais came in, you see? When the Japanese came in, the Thais left. I seem to have forgotten about it, I don't really know what side won and what side lost. All I knew was that the Japanese came in. I didn't seem to hear about the Japanese mistreating the Cambodians.
- Q. How many children do you have?
- A. I only have a child, a boy. I had two children, but one of them died. Right after she was born she died. She was born in the year of the Goat. The one who lived is 50 years old now. He is living in France right now. I like to go and visit him. I have applied for the visa, but I don't really know whether or not I will get it. I plan to go visit him next year. I have a son, and an adopted daughter.
- Q. Did you let your son and daughter go to school?
- A. I let my daughter go to school in the sub district, which is *Praek Krouch*. She attended *Praek Luong* school. As for my son, he went to study in *Battambang* city. He got to go to study in *Phnom Penh* too. First, I let him study Chinese, you know. He studied for quite a while, until he became a teacher. Later on, he went to live in Hong Kong. When he went to Hong Kong, he studied English. Then he knew English too. He studied for a couple of years in Hong Kong. Before he got married, he studied for quite some time. His wife is a Hong Kong resident. Right now he has two children: a boy who was born in the year of the horse, and a girl who was born in the year of the goat!
- Q. How was your family's way of life?
- A. Well, it was all right. I had children, and everything was okay. My family was well off.
- Q. As far as family life went, what were the times when you were the happiest?
- A. Well, it was fine; we just tried hard to make a living. But, making a living for me was a plight, like growing vegetable or fruit gardens, you know. We made just enough to have some rice in the barns to sell. Later on, I bought a tractor. We farmed the rice fields, hundreds of *rayes* (each *raye* is 1,600 square meters). We farmed, and made more than 1,000 *thangs* (bushels) of rice a year. Right before *Pol Pot* took over, I was well off, I had my barns full of rice. When the opportunity was right, I even kept my rice up to two years. For example, if this year the price of the rice was low, I would keep it for another year when I could

sell it for a higher price. I was well off; but then, when I was well off, our country was in such a state, and everything was gone automatically.

Q. Your daughter did not get to study very long, right?

A. This child got to study up to grade 6 to 7th grade. I would have let her continue her study, but there were two grandmothers who were quite old. I took care of an aunt who was living with me. This aunt was *Sarenh's* mother-in-law. As for my mother she was about 82, 83 years old. When she was 84, she passed away. As for my aunt, she didn't pass away until she was 89 years old. I did not know what to do when I needed to go to the rice fields. I had nobody to make the foods for my mother. I had my daughter quit school. Her teacher came over and asked me to let her go back to school. She was sure to pass the examination. She was promoted to a higher class. The teacher always begged me to let her to go back to school. So I said: "How can I let her go back when there are two grandmothers at home? "There was no one else to take care of them, so I took her home from school. She studied very little. She is not as educated as *Chhiv Lee*.

Q. Before the *Pol Pot* regime, what were the times when you felt the saddest, when you had the most worries?

A. I did have some difficulties. Sometimes, I did worry about my trade. I had a hard time with the rice fields, you know, it was difficult. I went to the rice fields alone. My husband went there once in a while. He only went there when the tractor broke down. He stayed home to take care of my mother, because she was very old. He did not dare leave her alone. In the morning, he went (to the market) to buy some fish and some groceries for our daughter to cook for her to eat. I always went to the rice fields. As for him, once in awhile he would go there, to the rice fields, most of the time, he would stay home. When I went to live with mother, we stopped managing the variety store. I went back to do the farming and vegetables and fruits gardening. I grew juts, beans, rice, and did the farming. I did not manage the variety, store any more. I quit.

Q. So then, you had some servants to help you farm the rice fields?

A. Yes, I went to the rice fields and gave them all kinds of orders and I also helped them. I knew how to sow rice, juts, beans, yes, you know, I did all kinds of farming jobs.

Q. Did you have time to be close to your children?

A. My son wanted to live with my older sister in the city. He went to school there. Later on, he went to study in *Phnom Penh*. My son did not get to live with me very much. Yes, my daughter lived with me all the time.

- Q. Besides worrying about your business, did you have any worries about any other matters?
- A. Yes, I did have some worries. At that time, it was quite difficult to have a business. I had no other worries except for the business. Sometimes, I would grow rice, do some farming, you know, and for example, one year, all my rice was flooded. All the rice was flooded and I got nothing, and I had a hard time. Another time, there was one year when the rice was being trampled on in the threshing yard; there were about 600-700 bushels. Then the rain came, and all the rice was flooded. We then tried to gather the rice and piled it up. The rice at the bottom would sprout, and we had to take some hoes and break the sprouts; we took some areas to do the same thing, and all the rice was ruined, about 100 bushels of rice were ruined. I guess I am just talking about the rice at the bottom of the pile. Yes, I did live in the country, it is all right for me. I am very happy because the state takes care of me. There was no one to take care of me in my country.
- Q. What was your family's faith?
- A. I believe in Buddha, and his *Dharmas*. I have believed in Buddha ever since I was young. My parents educated me to believe, to like Buddhism all along. I firmly believe in Buddhism nowadays; I strongly believe in Buddhism. Before this, I only believed in Buddhism to a certain degree; but now, I strongly believe in Buddhism, very much so.
- Q. Why do you believe in Buddhism? What importance do you see in Buddhism?
- A. Well, this means that adhering to Buddhism, makes me an educated person, I learned to recite the *Dharmas*, and I could receive the Buddha's precepts. If someone held religious ceremonies, I would contribute some money to them, as though I gave to charity along with these people. I would have a "pure heart", and I feel calm and serene; you know, Buddha's *Dharmas* are serene. As long as I learned the *Dharmas* well, I would learn them, I understand them very clearly that they are very good and are incomparable. This means that I love the *Dharmas* and the precepts as much as I love my life.
- Q. What did Buddha teach us?
- A. We want to receive Buddha's precepts teaching us the "*Panha*" which is being interpreted as saying: don't kill the animals, the "*Aktekmea*", meaning: don't take other people's belongings, if they did not give them to you themselves or giving you the permission, the "*Kamae*", meaning: don't commit adultery with other people's wives or daughters, the "*Muksaa*", meaning: don't talk behind people's

backs, the "*Su Raa*," meaning: don't drink liquors, these are the five precepts. About the Eight Precepts", we should... We can eat anything from the morning until noon, but we cannot eat anything in the evening. We can not eat anything after noon, we can only drink water; we can not eat food; "*Nachetei*," teachers as: not to use anything that's fragrant, such as putting on fragrant cologne or perfume, not to use garland of flowers, not to go and watch dances, or gambling, whatever that is included in the "*Nachetei*", such as music band, movies, and plays, we can not see them; we can not use garland of flowers; we abstain from these commodities on the Buddhist Holy day, the Eight Precepts day, the Buddhist Holy day; we are taught to avoid. The Buddhist's *Dharmas* taught us not to sit on high seats; these *Dharmas* forbid us to do it. The reason I firmly believe in Buddhism, and I practice it, and I use reasoning, so I know that *Dharmas* are very good, and they make me a non-violent person, and I don't have much anger, or rage; for example, whatever anyone says to me, I am not so mad at him or her; I am thinking about the *Dharmas* or sorrows, the "*Anek Chang*" meaning ephemeral, the "*Anek Ta*", nothing belongs to us. "*Tuk Khang*" means all the sorrows; the "*Anek Ta*" means that our body does not belong to us. "*Anek Chang*" means nothing last forever. I have faith; I went to receive the Precepts, and to learn the *Dharmas*, and give myself to serve the *Guru*, teacher. Buddha taught us... I cannot tell you about this Dharma, I only know it for myself. I understand it when I went to learn it. The Dharma teaches us to be calm and serene, not to let your mind wander; it teaches us to meditate. Meditation teaches us to be serene, and to understand it meaning for yourself; I should understand my own breathing, what level are my breathing in and out, and I should know this rhythm myself, I know my own breathing, in and out. After I learned everything, the monk wanted me to give myself to serve the Buddha. He told me to shave my head when I went back home. I was told not to loan money and get the interests, not to play the *Tongteen*, money game, not to gamble, all kinds of gambles are forbidden; we are forbidden to wear gold jewelries because they are considered as ornaments. I followed the monk's teachings ever since then, and these are all the things that the monk taught me. He told me to give myself to serve Buddha by being a faithful, and to receive the precepts on Buddhist Holy day, to receive the Five Precept, and the Eight Precepts. I follow his advises. When I adhere to these principles, it seems that I... it seems like I have hope in my heart, a kind of expectation in my mind. When I have a faith, and I give myself to serve Buddha, I consider the *Dharmas* as my own life. We love the *Dharmas*, and the precepts that teach us not to commit bad deeds, you know.

- Q. What is your status in Buddhism?
- A. I am a faithful; I consider myself a faithful person; I have given up myself to serve Buddha. I went to learn the *Dharmas* in Long Beach.
- Q. What advice are you going to give your child?

- ourselves from bad deeds; we should try to do anything so that prevent sins from
- A. Well, for my daughter who is no living with me, I advise her to listen to me, to learn the *Dharmas* and to adhere to the precepts, and to be a good girl. When we receive the precepts, we should control our body and our mind, our heart, the whole bit, we should be humble. We should not use harsh words, which are useless; we should not use bad words; we should only speak the truth. Buddha's *Dharmas* teach us, the dogmas are numerous. There are many kinds of *Dharmas*, about 84,000 kinds, but how can one learn all of these? We can only grasp the main *Dharmas*, such as the *Dharmas* through which Buddha taught us: "*Sappa Ba*", "*Papak*", "*Kak Puk Nang*", which mean, do not commit sins, "*Kosal So Sampak Tea*", means we should hold religious ceremonies. We should avoid only three things, yes, we should avoid only three things: "*Satek Parek Yo Teakhe Neang*", meaning we should make our heart serene; these are the only three things that we should remember. Buddha taught us these three main ideas: not to commit sins, to hold religious ceremonies, and to make our heart and mind serene; we should just adhere to these three teachings. We have learned the *Dharmas*, and the precepts; Buddha taught us to be gentle, and to be orderly, meaning we should learn to control our mind and body in the ten *Kamabat*, deed or action): three "*No Mo Kam*", four "*Chey Ya Kam*", and three "*Kayak Kam*". If we are able to adhere to these ideas, we are able to adhere to Buddhism. Buddha's teachings are excellent if we believe in Buddha. Well, he did not teach us not to make a living. He wanted us to make a living, yes, but to do it in an honest manner; for example "*Ak Khang Khet Tameak*", all eight of these are the ways to "*Preak Arey Yeak*". These taught us about the ways to earn a living. We should also use sweet words, which are called "*Samma Veachea Samma Tik Thek*". First, the words "*Samma Viecha, Samma Kam Moan tao, Samma Achivo, Samma Vie Cheamo, Samma Satek, Samma Samathik*", all of these taught us to have a good conduct, a proper behavior; if we should make a living. We would do it in an honest manner, "*Ak Khang Khik Keameak*", all eight of these are the ways to "*Preak Arey Yeak*". Good conduct would always lead us, lead our body to the path to *Nirvana*. "*Samma Tik Thek*", makes us see the path; that is the four "*Preak Arey Ksath*". Yes, there were people who saw them; they saw the *Nirvana*, they saw the well-being and almost no sorrows. As for "*Amk Samma Sak Khak Bao*", which is an education about perseverance, which makes one's heart willing to resist the desire, to want to avoid lust. "*Samma Viecha*", means we should not use untruthful words, nor should we use slandering words; we should not use nasty words to hurt people, and take the opportunity to use words that hurt. We should utter words that are good, and sweet. "*Samma Kam Moantao*" means we should not want to be capitalists; we should not try to be sly and steal other people's wealth. "*Pana*", means we should avoid killing the animals. "*Samma Achivo*", means we should maintain our mind to be honest, and to make a living in a wary manner; we should not make a living by having any business that deals with people and animals, to avoid the five kinds of trades. "*Samma Vie Chiamo*" means that we should adhere to doing good deeds, and not to be greedy, we should be careful, and to shield

ourselves from bad deeds; we should try to do anything so that prevent sins from happening. We should try to avoid committing sins; we should to indulge in sins that will give us problems; we should persevere in the pursuit of the merits, because they will enable us to prosper to the utmost. "*Samma Satek Tang Satthea*" means we should meditate, and keep meditation in our mind. "*Samma Samathik*" means we should maintain our heart to be good, to adhere to the "*Kammathan*", analytical meditation and to persevere in adhering to the "*Chhean*", contemplation by using the intelligence. So that we will achieve the "*Aek Kata*" or the supreme state which is the main goal. If we just follow these teachings, the "*Ak Khang khik Kemeak*" will take us to Nirvana, if we are able to avoid those vices. If we make a living, we can use honest means to do it, and we adhere to the "*Sammathik*", meditation so that we... We should adhere to the "*Sammathik*" after we learned the *Dharmas*; the "*Sammathik*" teaches us to control our mind... So that our heart won't be emotional, and to be serene. If we are able to adhere to the "*Sammathik*", our heart's desires will subside accordingly. You know, greed, anger, and rage can lead our heart to anything. These can make us be blind to sorrows, to the ephemeral state of being, and rage shields the fact that nothing belongs to us. If all we can think about is that "*Amik Ta*" means that our body does not belong to us and we would not realize that at all, and all we know is that, everything belongs to us, right? Besides we also adhere to the "*Khan*", the five "*Khans*," the senses; if we are not tolerant in terms of our five senses dictating us what to do, then we can not tolerate anybody who said anything to us at all; then we do not understand that the "*Khans*" are empty, they have no meaning, and that our body does not belong to us, that (the *Khans*) do not belong to us. We do not understand this concept yet, you see. For those who understand this, and who knows what a right path means, they are fine. Then they would not get angry at anybody who said anything to them. They would not use harsh words to provoke quarrels with other people. For those who adhere to the *Dharmas*, they do not have so much anger or rage. Even if anger and rage happen to them, they are able to control them. Those who do not adhere to the *Dharmas* are not able to control them. Every time they heard someone say something to them, they would get enraged; this is comparable to the fire of hell, which is burning, the fire of rage is burning, you see. Right now the *Dharmas* teach me to abandon rage, anger, greed, not to do bad deeds, and to do only good deeds. If we are able to maintain our heart in such a way that we are able to consider other people's children as your very own, and other people's mothers as your very own, if we are able to do just this much, then we are fine, right or wrong? Nowadays, we are not thinking along this line of philosophy, you know. We think that our children are good, and other people's children amount to nothing. If we are able to control our way of thinking, then we are fine, and we would not have so many problems. But, you see, when we observe people's behavior, we can understand something about them too. For example, my older sister, from the very beginning, it seems like, she is orderly, and humble. But you know, is it not true that those people who adhere to the *Dharmas*, the Precepts, and who are generous are this

INTERVIEW 8 - PART 3

- Q. When did the *Khmer Rouge* control Cambodia? What did they do to the Cambodian people and your family?
- A. At that time, when I got home, my brothers and sisters were all gathered there. At the time, the *Khmer Rouge* put me in charge of the elders and made me leader of the groups. They made me dig the ground and build canals. The *Khmer Rouge* controlled Cambodia in the New Year month, in 1975, which was the fourth month. First, my brothers and sisters who fled *Battambang* went to live with me. Later on, the *Khmer Rouge* chased them out and would not let them stay with me. They chased me out and made me stay in a house just behind my house, but that house was kind of nice too, you know. My children came to live in the house with me. I don't quite remember how many months we lived in that house, I don't remember, but when a "friend" came over, he/she proposed: "Auntie, go and live in that house until I can get a place and I will let you come back and stay in this house." They chased me out of my house, so that they could use it as a clinic, such as for treatment and a place to make medicines. They made the sick people go and stay there. Those who delivered babies were made to go and stay in my house too. After I lived there for a couple of months, they found a place and they moved the clinic to the temple. The patients went to stay in the monks' quarters, which my father built. The clinic was moved to the pagoda in *Prek Krouch*, you know, to the stone monks' quarters. They converted the quarters into a hospital. They moved the hospital to the pagoda, you see. When they moved it to the pagoda, they gave my house back to me. They called me to stay there. They said: "Auntie, come back and stay in this house. We let you stay in my house." They let me go there, so I just followed their orders. My husband and I kind of discussed this problem. We said: "Should we go back and stay in our house?" My husband said: "O.K., it is a good thing that we can go back and live in our house. It is near a river, and it would be convenient for us to draw the water; it is also easy for us to bathe ourselves." When we lived in a place that they designated for us, we had to use the water from a well for bathing. So, we went back to stay in our house. After living in our house for a couple of months, they evacuated us again. They did not let us stay in our house one more time. They made us live in a small house, that was made from tin roof. So we went and lived in it. They made us go and live there, so we did. As for our belongings in the house, the *Khmer Rouge* confiscated them. There was nothing left. They took our stuff, the dishes, the pots and pans, to the tractor's tires. They took everything; they took the tires to make the shoes. They "proposed" took my tractor. There was nothing left that was ours; they took everything. They took all the belongings in the house, and there was nothing left. They only left one dish for the house, and another one for the wife, just a spoon and a dish, you know. Later on, they forbid us to keep anything. They took those spoons and dishes too. They made us go and eat in the

cooperatives. They had cooperatives, you know. When it was time to eat, they would beat on a bell, a piece of iron. Whenever they beat it, my husband and I led ourselves to the cooperative. We led ourselves to go and eat there like everybody else. As for my daughter, they took her away. *Mee Ngaa* was told to go and baby-sit the children. She went to the rice fields, somewhere, and she was gone. They forbid us to live together. They separated us. As for me, I went to dig the canals. Later on, they said: "No, you don't dig the canals." They told me to work as a cook for the children. I worked there for quite some time; after a couple of months, they moved me to another job; they wanted me to work as a cook for the adults; they had cooperatives. I went to the cooperative and cooked there. There, I cooked rice, and made soups for them. After staying there for a long time, they changed my work again; they didn't want me to cook anymore. I was a cook for quite a while, you know, almost a year, I guess. Then they made me in charge of the vegetables. Whatever I was doing, it was always an important position. I never held a minimal position. When I worked in the children's units I was made a chief cook. When I worked in the adults units, I was also chief. There were kitchen aids. Later on, they made me grow vegetables, and even with this job, they made me a leader too. I was in charge of storing the seeds. I was in charge of all the vegetables that we grew. They would make us grow everything, O Lord, from the lemon grass, peppers, cucumbers, watermelons, you know, everything, tomatoes, gourds, to the *ronongs* (kinds of green squashes). They made us grow all kinds of vegetables, from the *rumdengs* (spice), the *Kjieys* (spice), scallions, mints, to the *speys*, *bok choys*. We grew everything; they made us do things and work as they pleased. They wanted me to baby-sit the children, but I refused. They did not make me baby-sit for just a child. They made me baby-sit four children, you see. Who in the world can stand baby-sitting four children? I could not do it, so I said: "Who can baby sit four children at one time?" The children were ranging from: a year old, two years old, a year and a half, and some children were four or five months old. They were small children. I had to baby-sit four children at a time, who can do it? It was very difficult. I could not bear to watch them; I rather go and tend the vegetable gardens.

Q Since you were the cook, you probably had enough food to eat, right?

A No, it was not enough; the amount was like for everyone else's' what are you talking about, what rice? It was a ladle of porridge for each person. Whenever I saw a person who had children come over, I would feel sorry for him/her.

Q Is a ladle enough for a rice bowl?

A No. If it was a plate, a ladle is enough for two platefuls. A ladle is enough for two plates. I just ate a plateful and I was full. For those with infants or newborns, they would not have enough to eat, so I just gave more to them. At that time, it was such a hardship, and this is the reason why I learn a lesson. Some people said that they want to go to Cambodia. I kind of want to go there too. I only want to go there and visit then come back. If I were to go there and stay, I would not go; it seems like it

is such a hardship. What hope do I have left when I go there, since all my belongings were confiscated? Talking about the farm, the gardens, and the house... The house is still there; I had a person stay there and take care of it; but I guess it is run down because it was left unattended. This is what I am saying, at the time, it was such a hardship. They always evacuated me; they evacuated me many times; after I left the little house I went... In August, 1978, they evacuated me all the way to *Mak Khlieu*, *Prey Khpueh*, around *Bavel*. From *Thmar Koul*, I went to *Bavel*. (The area from *Bavel* onward is called *Prey Khpueh*. The area from *Prey Khpueh* onward is called *Mak Khlieu*.) When I got there, Gosh... But, you know, if I had not gone there, I would died had I stayed in my village, because here the porridge was watery. When I went to live there, they would give us thick porridge sometimes. Over there, they made me clean the grass, grow vegetables, strip the jutes, you know, they made me work; they made me weave the mats; they also made me work on the strings for the mats; they made me do everything; it was real hardship.

Q At the time, did they separate both of your children from you?

A No, my son already left to go live in Hong Kong. During *Pol Pot* time, it was only my daughter and me. They separated my daughter from me and made her the children's mother. They made her teach and guide the children. They made her teach under the trees, you know. She taught the alphabets. They also made her take them to gather the husked rice. When the people transplanted the rice seedlings, she was made to take the children there to clear the grass. They had to be in the mud, and the water, you know. They had to clear all the grass so the people can transplant the seedlings. It was a real hardship. Then, the Khmer Rouge made her wade in the water, my Lord; it was up to her waist, and she would go. At night... listen, they made her work there. They would make her go and eat the food, and she had to walk for about two or three kilometers to eat rice or the porridge; my daughter had such a hardship. They mistreated her to the utmost.

Q What are some other ways that they used to mistreat her?

A They would make her wade in the water at night. When they evacuated the people, they would make her leave and she had to wade in the water, she was soaking wet and choking. They would make her go and pull up the rice seedlings while she was soaking wet. By the time she got to the cooperative... She had to go to a separate place to eat, then walked back to the working site; it was such a hardship. They mistreated her very much. Later on, they made her go somewhere else. She was told to go and catch some fish somewhere, close to the river bank, all the way over there. She had to pull up the *Kak*, plants used to make the mats, and catch some fish. They made her do everything; they also mistreated her. They evacuated her to this side of the area.. They mistreated her over there, they evacuated her to this side; she was able to survive. They evacuated us to a village called *Mak Khlieu*. We were able to get a much thicker porridge. Lord, I had such a hardship. After I was evacuated from that place, I did not get to go home, you know; I went to live in

Thmar Koul after I left *Mak Khlieu*. Well, by then, the Vietnamese arrived. I lived in *Thmar Koul* for one month before I went to live in *Svaay Sisophon*.

Q During the *Pol Pot* regime, were your brothers and sisters and parents still alive?

A No, they passed away two or three years before that. My mother passed away about three years before this regime. Later on, my aunt passed away. She was as old as 89 years, you know. One year after her death, *Pol Pot* took over the country. My sister had her arm, leg, and half of her body paralyzed. She was paralyzed and could not walk. My younger brother was able to come to the United States, but he died here, in Lowell; as for another younger brother, he died a long time ago. *Chhiv Hun's* husband, my nephew in-law who was a teacher was taken away and killed. None of my brothers or sisters were killed. If they died, they did before the regime was in power. Those who died in the *Pol Pot* regime were my nephews and nieces. If I had not exchanged some of my belongings for the rice and ration, I would have died. Whatever little I had left, I always exchanged it for food until everything was gone.

Q Did you and your husband stay together?

A Yes we did. Wherever we went together. We only went to do different labors separately. At the time they made me the cook, and dig the canals, you know, I just did my job in my unit and my old man, my husband, was made to work on carpentry. He made the dining tables and beds for the hospital. He made some chairs and tables for the hospital; he made furniture from wood you know. Among the 26 carpenters, all have died except for three men.

Q Did the *Khmer Rouges* have your daughter teach the children?

A That's right. They made her take care of the children, cook for them to eat you know, those small children. In each group, there were about two or three "mothers", you know, the "nannies." I don't know how many children there were, but there were a lot of them, I would say there were about twenty of them you know. Then she was made to go and clear the grass around the areas where the people transplanted the rice seedlings. During the harvest season, they made her go and gather rice stalks. If they wanted the children to study, they would make her teach them under a tree. I have no idea how in the world they could learn anything. They only let them study for a short while about only an hour. They only let them study a little bit, and they would make them go work again.

Q During the *Pol Pot* regime, how was your family life?

A During the *Pol Pot* regime, if I did not have any gold to exchange for food, I would have died because they just gave me watery porridge, you see; but I always exchanged my gold for food without their knowledge. A *damleng*, gold

measurement of gold could only get 28 tin cans. Whatever little gold I had, I always cut a piece of it and exchanged it for food a little bit at a time, like, one *chi*, gold measurement each time, sometimes, I would exchange one *damleng* for it, while some other time, I use eight *chis*. I even exchanged it for salt, and for sugar for consumption. If I had not exchanged my gold, which I happened to have a little bit left of, I would have died. The people who came from *Phnom Penh* died, a lot of them died. Most of them were Chinese people who had gold, and they were not able to exchange it for food. A lot of them died.

Q Did you have enough gold for the exchange of food to last you until the end of *Pol Pot* regime?

A The gold was all used up. First, I had husked rice, you know. I had both sweet rice, and regular rice. They put (both kinds) in their cooperatives. First, when the *Khmer Rouges* just took control, it was all right; I tried to mill the rice and store it in the water jars without their knowledge, and I was able to have some. So then, they confiscated all of my rice that was stored in the barns. When all the rice was all used up they gave us bran. O, Niece, they rationed bran to us, and that bran was kind of stale. I didn't know how many years ago they had it, or from what generation; I didn't know what mills they took it from. It smelled stale and it stunk. They would bring it and ration it to us, to every family. As for me, I heard the people say that the *Khmer Rouges* rationed the bran, and I just could not eat it. So, I exchanged my gold with whatever food that was available, and I just took it. At first, rice was still plentiful and things were not too bad. When it was difficult for us to live, to the point... In 1975, things were all right, because we still had plenty of foods. We had barns full of rice. It wasn't until 1976 that food was scarce, around 1976-1977. Then, by the time 1978 arrived, it was serious situation. That was the reason they evacuated me to *Mak Khlieu*. With one *damleng* of gold, I was able to exchange from some foods to supplement a small amount of porridge. I always exchanged some gold with some food, I mean my daughter's gold. In 1978, I had no more gold left, I only had about two *chis* left. The amount gold left was so little. When I got to Thailand, I had no more gold left. The only jewelry left were some diamonds, and some rubies. I gave them to my daughter to keep. When I got close to *Nang Chan*, the robbers posed themselves as Thai and Thai soldiers, and they robbed all of my jewelry.

Q In 1975-76 where did you live?

A In 1975-76 I was still in my village. They had not evacuated me outside of it yet. The only thing is that they did not allow me to live in my house. They made me live near my house, you know, all the way to the front of the pagoda in *Prek Krouch*. I had to draw the water from a well to bathe myself. Later on, they let me go back and live in my house again. After living in the house for a couple of months, they moved me to a small house. You know, this happened two or three times; they chased me out. When I lived in the small house, they were not satisfied, and they

chased me out of there and made me go to live all the way to *Mak Khleu*, all the way to near the *Mongkul Borey's* river. This place is beyond *Prey Khpuh*, going beyond *Bavel*.

Q How was your life in the *Mak Khlieu* village?

A It was all right for me there. They rationed us some porridges that were thick enough for us to live on. They had enough husked and husked rice. I went there to live in August, 1978, for about only two or three months. I did not get to live there too long. I fled the place in the harvest season. The labor there was very hard. They made me cut the jute stalks and cut them up, they made me clear the grass in the vegetable gardens of gourds, pumpkins, and you know, tobaccos. Then, later on, they made me weave the mats and the mats' strings. They made me work on every possible things. My old man, my husband, was made to tend the sugar canes fields.

Q How did they mistreat you?

A They did not mistreat me. As soon as they came in, they confiscated all my belongings. They did not leave anything for me. They even took the scissors and knives. They confiscated all the silver *Riels*, old Cambodian coins. There was nothing left. I really don't know why they even confiscated such worthless things. They did not mistreat me. They only made me work, that was all. They did not beat me up, because I was always very afraid of them. I did not give them time to beat me up. When we were asked to weave the mats, when other people wore two mats in a day, I would weave three of them. Whatever I did, I did it very fast for them, because I was quite afraid of them, you know. Whatever, they told me to do such as stripping the jutes, I just did it. I would wade in the water, in the mud. The water was as high as my hips. I waded in the water to cut the jute's; it was quite a situation.

Q How many of your brothers and sisters died?

A My brothers and sisters who have died, did so before *Pol Pot* time. But in *Pol Pot* time, it was all right. Only nephews and nieces died. My children did not die at that time.

Q How do you feel about this fact: why were you luckier than other people, in that none of your brothers and sisters, and children died?

A Well, there are only three brothers and sisters. Two of them died before *Pol Pot* time. Many of my nephews and nieces died. I kind of have faith. I did not think about anything though. I only thought about the merits of Buddha, the *Dharmas*, and the *Sangha*, monks. I always prayed to them. I always thought of the merits of any religious deeds or charities which I have accumulated in the past. I was generous to other people, and they would be generous to us right back. My distant

nephews and nieces died, many of them have died. *Hun's* husband died. Then, my niece *Chea*, my cousin *Sen's* daughter, who was a young lady, died. Her husband, *Kim Som* also died. He was also my nephew. Then another one, yes, I really feel very sorry for that one. He studied medicine, and he almost finished it when he died in *Pol Pot* regime. His books were thick. Even when he was evacuated, he still opened his books and read them. You know, his legs were all swollen up. His illnesses were swelling, diarrhea, and dysentery, and he died from them. I guess he was about twenty years old, or may be twenty- one or twenty two. He almost finished his school; I feel so sorry for him, O Lord. The whole household died; there were four members; a daughter, a son, her husband, and *Chea*, they all died. Right now, she lives in *Norea*. She is not coming.

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Q Did you ever see the *Khmer Rouges* kill the people in your village?

A Yes, there were people who were killed. They screamed and I could hear them. Some were taken away, were beaten to death, then dragged and thrown into the water. They screamed and could be heard all the way to my house. Many of them were killed in one day. They took them away quite often. They would take a person away, and one person would be missing; sooner or later, they would take away another person, and one person would be missing. Talking about dead people, I cannot begin to count the number. Then for those who were just the assistants to the chief or a sub-district, in the old government, you know, for example, if they would be in the chiefs of a village with 50 houses, and they would be taken away to be killed too. If they were these assistants, they would be killed too. They were good people. Some people were the *Achas* for the pagodas, and they too were killed. Many people were killed. Many people died so that the village was empty; the people of my village were almost all gone.

Q When you saw the *Khmer Rouges* kill the people this way, how did you feel and what did you think about?

A I was frightened, I was afraid. I was very frightened; I had nothing but Buddha's grace. I was so afraid of them that I always prayed to Buddha and recited the *Dharmas*. I prayed to Buddha, the *Dharmas* and the *Sanghas* (monks). I was very afraid. I heard the victims scream ha..., all the way to my house. It happened very close to my house. They arrested the people right near my house.

Q What were the circumstances in which you were in, and which gave you a hardship or which made you feel horrified more than anything else?

A (Sigh) When I saw that, I was very afraid. We would be going someplace to work all together, and they would come and take one of us away and kill him/her. They would take him a little bit further, when there was just something that could block

our view, and they would kill him. As for my daughter, she witnessed the killing with her own eyes. She went to baby-sit for the children. She went to the fields. During the harvest season, she was sent to help do the harvest. She was in the helping group; she helped with growing leafy cabbages before she was sent to the fields. She was sent to help with the harvest. After the harvest, she went to wash herself up. When she went to the place, she saw the killer hacked the victim with an ax, bang, bang, from behind, and the victim fell with a thud. The killer used a knife to cut off the liver to fry. O, My Buddha, I am so frightened. Apparently someone probably reported on him and said that he said offensive words, or that he said something wrong. Seeing this, my daughter could not eat at all; she was getting to the point of being sick, of passing out; she was frightened. They killed people right in front of her. O Lord, I am very afraid. In my village, so many people were dead. They killed them, you see. There was a man named *Hay*. He was a *Cham*. O, he said: just go to his house, and you will see many livers hanging around. He was the village deputy in my country, you know. He was the executioner when he was given an order. He killed people. Every time he killed someone, he cut off the liver and fried it to eat. I have not seen it with my own eyes, but my daughter has witnessed it with her own eyes. She said that she was very frightened, this was the time she went to the rice fields. Right after he killed the victim, he cut off his liver to fry, then ate it right away, right in the rice fields, you see. My daughter saw that. She said: "Oh, mother, I could not eat, I could not swallow rice." She was frightened. She witnessed a murder, and it was right before her very eyes. She could see that. It could be seen from the huts, too. She saw that they hit the victim, bang and he fell with a thud. I have never seen anything like that. I only heard the victims scream when they were being beaten.

- Q In *Pol Pot* regime, was there any time when people were happy?
- A Oh! what was there anything for them to be happy about? I always thought to myself: "If I go on living under this regime, this society, I will probably die, I will not survive; it looked as if nothing will ever change; things will be the same; it will not be long, and I will die in the near future." It was such a hardship. But you see, things do change. This is why I say that things are not at all permanent, they change.
- Q In *Pol Pot* regime, which one was more seriously inflicted on you, physical or mental mistreatment?
- A Talking about labor, yes, they did make us work hard. We were not able to open our mouths and protest. When we went out, they would come in, search our huts, and took all our belongings. They said that they provided us with things! They called us names saying that we were nothing else but capitalists, or whatever. Therefore, they mistreated us both physically and mentally; they mistreated us. In my house there lived a Chinese family. There were two people who died: the father, and his son you was a young man. They were being worked to death. These two people lived in my house. They brought them over and put them in my house. For example, they

made two or three families together to live in one house. How could I not let them stay? I always let them stay. Two members in that family died, the father and a son; there remained two or three other children and a mother.

Q. Which one was the most seriously affected, the physical or the mental?

A. They would make us do the labor; it was this mere fact that was the most serious blow of it all. What else can I say when they made the people do the labor until they died?

Q. Why did you say that they mistreated the people more physically than mentally?

A. Well, how about the fact that they made the people do hard labor? Mentally, we suffered, yes, because of the fact that we were exhausted and hungry. We were sad and nobody had a happy face. All of us were bony. We were starved, therefore, how could we have a happy face? All of us would have a sad face respectfully.

Q. What did you do to be able to flee the *Pol Pot* regime?

A. I was not able to flee our country until the Vietnamese invaded it. It was the time when the Khmer Rouges evacuated me to *Mak Khlieu*. I fled and stayed in *Thmar Koul*. I left *Thmar Koul* and went to stay in *Svay Sisophon*, then in *Au Ambel*. I stayed there, and spread my mat under the *tik doh ko* tree that belonged to someone. The owner did call me to go stay inside the house, but I said that he/she already had many people staying in the house. So, I stayed outside. When it rained I ran to take shelter under their house on stilts, spread my plastic sheet and slept there. When it was sunny, I would get out of there and live under the shade of the *tik doh ko* tree. I lived there for quite some time you know. When I got close to *Nang Chan* pagoda the thieves robbed me and took all of my belongings. I only lost precious stones, I had no gold, I only had precious stones. I fled to Thailand, and I stayed there for one month then the Thai soldier forced us back to *Dangrek* mountain range. I stayed there for exactly one month when the Thai soldier came and took me away. I went to the *Dangrek* mountain range. My family and I were taken to the *Dangrek* mountain range, and it was a hardship. I walked from the *Dangrek* mountain range until... I finally got to *Svay Sisophon*, you know. I had to walk for almost one month and a half, you know; it was about 40 some days until I got to *Svay Sisophon*. Then, I went back to my own village, my own house. After I got to *Nang Chan*, I was being sent to the *Dangrek* mountain range. I thought that I would not live, I was not at all familiar with that town. I was not familiar with that town, with that *Dangrek* mountain area. I only heard about it, but I have never seen it before. When I asked people around, no one seemed to know about it. They told me that it was *Sisaket* province.

Q. Were the old village people's status and that of the new village people the same?

A. Oh gee, the old people had their own vegetables which they could eat. The new

people did not have any; they only had collective vegetables. The people went and picked some vegetables from the vegetable garden and the food ration they give to us in the cooperatives. The old village people had their coconut, banana, and orange trees.

Q Did they consider you as an old villager or a new villager?

A They considered my family and I as new village people.

Q What were the old village people and the new village people?

A The new village people were those who were evacuated from their villages to live in the new villages after April 17, 1975. As for those people who had lived in those villages before April 17, 1975 were called the old village people.

Q Were all of those village people the *Khmer Rouge*? Were they the *Khmer Rouge* supporters?

A No, they were not the *Khmer Rouge*. They were the town's people, you know. The *Khmer Rouges* were entirely a different kind of people. But, the people who lived there supported the *Khmer Rouges* because these *Khmer Rouges* controlled the villages before April 17, 1975.

Q Were there any *Khmer Rouges* in your village? Were there any old village and new village people?

A How could there be any people of that category? There were only the people who came from *Phnom Penh*; they were all new people.

Q There were no *Khmer Rouge* in your village before 1975, right?

A No. The *Khmer Rouges* came in my village, *Prek Krouch*, last. They went into *Phnom Penh* first.

INTERVIEW 8 - PART 4

- Q During the *Khmer Rouge* time what kind of labor did they make you do?
- A They made me transplant and pull rice seedlings, and dig the canals, just about everything. Oh, in the morning, they already told us to go out, to dig the canals. After digging the canals, later on, they had me cook for the children. I was a cook. After this they made me cook for the adults, in their work sites, you know. There were many workers there, and they wanted me to be the chief cook. There were separate people who cooked rice. I was only making soups. After this, they transferred me from being a cook to growing the vegetables. I grew all kinds of vegetables, from the leafy cabbages, onions, mints, cucumbers, eggplants, chili peppers, beans *rumdengs*, *khcieys*, spices, to the lemon grasses. When I went to grow those vegetables I was able to keep the seeds. During the planting season when they sowed the leafy cabbage's seeds, they would make us grow the leafy cabbages; during the cucumber season, they made us grow cucumbers, pumpkins, the *trakuons*, morning glory etc..
- Q Did they give you enough to eat?
- A Oh, it was only enough in the beginning. Later on, they gave each one of us a ladle of watery porridge; how could it be enough? This was the reason why so many people died. The porridge was very watery. In a huge wok, they only gave us a couple of tin foils of rice. They put quite a bit of water and the porridge was very watery. The majority was water. They would ration the porridge for us by the ladle. I would strain the porridge, discard the liquid, and just keep whatever little grain of rice I had left. After straining the liquid, I only had about two or three spoonfuls of rice. The majority was just water. It was just impossible for us to eat it, and that was the reason why many people died in my side of the family. They died from starvation. When people were sick, there was no medicine to treat them and they would die. Many people who came from *Phnom Penh* died. So many of them died to the point that the villages were empty. The *Khmer Rouges* made them go and live in the pagoda, and the crematory. They would build some houses in a row for the people. They built small thatched roof houses for the people to live in. They just lived there, and they were made to do hard labor to the point that they starved so they all died. So many of them died that it was so quiet around us, you know, to the point that almost all the people from *Phnom Penh* were gone. There were just a few people who survived. Things were very bad in the years 1976 and 1977. First, in 1975, there was still plenty of food to eat, you know, because we still had some stock of rice left from the old times. But later on, there was no rice, so a lot of people died. In 1976-1977, we did not have any rice to eat. After awhile, when there was no rice around, they gave us rice bran.

They gave all of us some rice bran, a can of rice bran for each person. How could anybody eat rice bran, tell me? Listen, it smelled moldy and stale; I didn't really know how many years it has been kept. They went and took it out of the milling machine and rationed it to us. It smelled very bad. I was never able to eat it at all. After I brought it home, I just gave it away to other people. The reason I was able to survive was because I had some gold left. I would exchange it for food, you know. I would exchange it for some rice to make my own porridge. When they gave me some rice bran, I would take my rice and make some porridge and eat it. That was how I was able to survive. If it had not been for my gold I would have not survived; I would have died.

Q Did they let people eat the vegetables that they grew?

A Yes, they did. They grew cucumbers, and watermelons. They picked them and stored them at their work sites where they cooked rice and the soups. The people picked them and gave them to the *Khmer Rouges*.

Q Under that regime, did they let the people have some days off?

A No. We had none. There were no Saturdays, no Sundays. They made us labor everyday. They had us working in the morning starting from about 6 or 7 o'clock, and we had to leave our huts until 11:00 a.m. when they let us go to have lunch.

Q This was designed for you because you were an elderly person, right?

A Oh, we were all the same, young or old people. They made us do very hard labor. Take me for instance; they made me carry the water in buckets suspended from a wooden pole across my shoulders to water the vegetables. But, I took small buckets to carry the water. I could not carry water in the big buckets. I never had any days off at all. After lunch, they made me go to do more labor. They did not let us rest at all. They made us work a lot.

Q Did the husbands, the wives and their children live together? How close were they to one another?

A No, they did not. They were all separated. My daughter was made to go teach the children, and to baby-sit for the small ones. During the harvest time, they made her go and gather the sections of stems, just below the spike of rice plants. During the season when people had to transplant the seedlings, they had her clear the grass. Baby-sitting small children was another job for her. As for me, I did the vegetable gardening. First they had me dig the canals. Later on, they had me work in the vegetable fields. When I worked in the vegetable fields, ugh.. my old man was made to be a carpenter, making some chairs, dining tables, and the beds

for the people at the hospital, you know. There were all together 26 people. All of them died except for only three people. I am talking about just my old man's group alone. They died because on one hand, there was not too much rice or porridge, on the other hand, people were sick and there was no medicine. They all died except for my old man. One person was called *Som*, he was a little bit younger; another one who was older was called *Trec*. There were only three people left. Out of 26 people, only three were spared, and all the others died. Twenty three people died. These people were ordered to be just the carpenters.

- Q So then, husbands and wives did not get to live together, right?
- A No, they went to do labor at different sites, and when they returned in the evening, they stayed together. As for the children, they were not allowed to come home. The children were sent to places that were quite a distance from home. As for the elderly people, they were sent to do some work nearby their homes. They worked at the *Prek Kroch*, pagoda. I lived and grew some vegetables for the *Khmer Rouges* at the *Prek Kroch* pagoda too. In the morning, I would leave for the labor, and come home in the evening.
- Q Were there any discussions or tender loving care between the husbands and wives?
- A No, there weren't. There was no time. Each one of us just did anything to survive. When we had arguments, they were usually about the food. For instance, we fought for the foods to eat because we were hungry. What did we have anyway? We just had a ladle of porridge each. But, for me, sometimes I would have this... I ate very little. I would take a portion of my ration and give it to him. It was not enough for him, so I gave some of my food. When we finished our labor, we would go to the eating hall; they let us go there together, you know. There were about 30, 40 or 50 people in a group who ate at the work sites. I could not finish eating my portion, so I gave the rest to him so that he could eat more, because he ate more than I did; for me I just ate a little bit and I was full.
- Q Did you ever think that you would have to die because of the fact that you had to give a portion of your food to your husband?
- A No, I ate less than he did, so I always gave some of my foods to him, because I thought; well, both of us might be able to survive together.
- Q When you gave a portion of your food to him this way, did you have enough to eat?
- A Yes I did. You see, I ate very little. I just slurped the soupy part of the porridge,

you know.

Q Did you have any personal effects for deeming yourself? Did you have a good hygiene?

A Laughs... What did I have? I could only take a bath. At the beginning, there were some soaps to clean our bodies up. Later on, they got scarce to the point that there was none. There was no soap, so we just took a bath. Oh, those people who had no hygiene were infested with lice. There were many people who had lice at that time. At the time, in order to keep ourselves clean, we had to take a bath after we went home from doing the labor, before we went to eat. What did we have to clean ourselves with? We had no soap at all. If there was some around, it was left over from the old times. When these were gone, then we had no more left. We bought these soaps and stocked them up for quite some time, and some people would just hide them for their own usage. When these were used up, well, that was it, there was no more. Talking about hygiene, there was none. There was nothing more for us to do except for taking a bath and scrubbing ourselves; where did we find any soap? Those who were infested with lice were too tired to take a bath after doing the labor; besides this, they did not wash their clothes too often. If we just washed them often well, they would be clean too. For me, the whole time I lived under that regime, I never received a *sampot*, skirt. They never gave me one.

Q So then, you had your own skirt?

A At first, I had some *sampots*, of course, but after a long while, they were torn to shreds. They said that they had the *sampots*, but they did not give them to us because we already had them. When I was still a cook, they gave me a scarf. Later on, I gave it to my coworker because hers was torn to shreds. I was still a little better than she was, so I just passed it on to her. During the time I lived under the *Pol Pot* regime, all those years, I never received any *sampot* from his people. They never gave one to me. They only gave me a scarf once, and I passed it on to another person.

Q How did the people eat?

A They made us eat collectively. They had some eating halls. They had us eat collectively. They confiscated all the dishes, pot and pans and stocked them in a place called a warehouse. They confiscated all the pot, pans, and dishes and did not allow us to have any of them. First, they only let us have a dish and a spoon each. They confiscated all the dishes and the pots and pans. They stocked them in one place. They had some people cook rice separately from those who made soups. They would set up some tables in rows, and when the people came over

they would give them some porridge. They gave each of them a ladle of porridge.

At first, the soup was quite all right. This was when I was a cook. There was some fish, some preserved fish and salt to make the soups, you know, it was quite all right. But, after a long time, there was no salt. We only had enough salt to season the soup. When someone came over and asked for a spoonful of salt they could not give it to this person. They would not give it to anyone. Some people had a fever and said that they could not give it to them. As for the porridge, we ate it with the soup. As for the soup, there was a sour soup with the *trakuon*, morning glory. At first we had the *prahok*, salted preserved fish and some fish that we put in the soups. But, later on, when we made the soups we only had some salt to season them. We had neither the *prahok* nor anything else to season our soups. We just slurp the soup made with the *trakuons* and plain water you know. Sometimes, they just seasoned the soups with a little bit of salt, that was the reason why many people got sick. It was quite a hardship. As for the *kakoe* soups, it was mainly vegetables. It was the same way, they just picked the leaves, and those from the forests. Sometimes, it so happened that they did have the preserved fish, but they did not use it in the soup for seasoning; instead, they made a soupy *prahok*. The way this soup was made was by boiling the *prahok* and add a little bit of salt. They gave us a bowl of this soup. All of us knew about the soupy *prahok* because the cook told us about it. The cook said, "today we are making the soupy *prahok*." So we led one another to pick the leaves and those that grew in the forest to boil and dip in it. Those who had sour seasonings would pound them with a mortar and pestle and season the *prahok* with it. We then ate it with the porridge.

Q What were the kinds of leaves that the people ate?

A The people picked some of the leaves that I have never eaten before. They were *Chan kiri*, *truoy damlong*, *woa ta aeuk*, they just picked them and brought them. Sometimes, they brought the banana trunk, and *phity* boiled it so we could dip it in the soupy *prahok*, while other people did not have the sour seasonings, so they just...sigh, it was such a hardship. We were near death; this was the reason why so many people died, it was such a hardship.

Q Were the people able to eat until they were full?

A No. They gave us a ration. For example, let us say that there are five, six, or ten people at a table. They would put a bowl of the soupy *prahok*, here, and another bowl there, when we had the soupy *prahok*. It was the same thing with the soup. They would put a bowl of soup for us; they did not care if whether or not we had enough to eat. As for the porridge, they only gave us a ladle. We always had things to put the porridge in. Some people took a bucket, or a big wash bowl to get the porridge if there were many people in the family, if there were many

children in the family; but we never had enough to eat.

Q Were the people allowed to bring the rationed porridge home?

A At first, they allowed us to bring the rationed porridge home. But later on, they did not allow us to bring it home. They made us eat it at the eating hall. They put some tables there in rows and they made us eat there. There were rows of tables. They made long tables; they put sheets of woods as table tops. People sat in a row on one side, and in another row on the opposite side. At first, it was not too bad. We were able to bring our ration home. But later on, they did not allow us to do it. They made us eat it at their eating hall. If we did not finish the water, we were able to bring it home.

Q Did they ever hold religious ceremonies or any banquets?

A At first, they did. They would tell us that, on such a day, or month, they would give us some rice. The people who were eating the porridge were very happy when they heard that they would get to eat rice one time. That night, we were so happy that we were unable to sleep. We were happy because we heard that they were going to give us some rice. They rationed the rice for us too. They gave each of us a ladle of rice. They gave it to each one of us. We were so happy. Later on, on some holidays, they held a banquet. They gave us rice. They made a decent soup for a change. At one time, we noticed that they killed a cow, and they made beef soup for us to eat once. As for me, I did not like to eat beef. When I was too skinny, they always said "Grandma, go ahead and eat it." When I ate it, I vomited all of it right back. I vomited all of their beef soup. After that one incident, I learned a lesson. But now, I always try to eat a little bit of beef right now. I try to eat one mouthful of beef now. In the old days, I did not eat it at all. I learned how to eat it under *Pol Pot* regime. They said that I was too skinny, so they wanted me to try to eat it; well, they made me try to slurp the beef soup; after I slurped it, I vomited all of it right back.

Q Why did you not eat beef?

A My mother did not eat it. My father ate it. So, I took after my mother. When she did not eat it, I just followed her example, and I did not eat it. But right now, I am able to eat a little amount of beef now. I don't really like beef that much. I like fish. Pork is not too bad, but I don't eat beef that much. They would give us rice again. They made a *numkoe*, a pancake made from rice flour once, but this cake was bland not sweet. They put just a little bit of sugar. They only put salt in it. They gave each one of us a piece, about the size of that cassette, but it was bland. They gave it to us one time, and we were so happy. Once in a great while, I guess in one or two months, they gave us a dessert. After this, they gave us porridge

again.

Q At that time, did you have any fruits to eat?

A Well, if we grew them ourselves, then we got to eat some of them, you know, for instance, watermelons. If we are talking about oranges, not even the green ones could escape us. Both the children and the laborers would pick all of them. At first, there were plenty of coconuts, for instance, those coconuts around my hut, those coconut trees bore a lot of fruits; the coconuts look like the carts' axles. It was difficult for us to climb the trees. Later on, we picked all of them, to the point when the fruits didn't have any pulp yet, and we still picked all of them. We picked them to the point they were extinct. As for the bananas, they were not even ripe yet and they would already cut them off. The oranges were just green and they would pick all of them and leave none. The oranges became scarce. The fruit trees did not give enough fruits at all. Talking about the fish, in the river, there weren't very many of them anymore. They were extinct. I don't know where they had gone. They might have fled the way the human beings had to, I guess. We had not heard any noise in the river at all; all was still and quiet in there. Even the river mussels were not spared, you know, the mussels that were at the bottom of the river. Well, we groped for them and ate them too. We even ate the rats, and this was the reason why the people had many diseases. The people even ate the rats. I did not eat them. The people were starved, so they ate anything. As for me, even when I was starved, I would bear my hunger. I could not eat the rats. I did not dare eat them. As for the other people, they just put anything in their mouths. They ate the rats, they ate anything, they ate everything... Some of them had diseases, you know, from eating the rats. They ate them, and it was appalling.

Q Where did the people catch the rats?

A They caught the rats in the rice fields, you know? They caught them in the village; they just caught them and ate them, you see, because there was nothing else for them to eat. They ate everything and nothing was left untouched. They even ate the chameleons, the *cieh*, kinds of creatures, the frogs, the toads, they ate all of them. Well, all the creatures were extinct. The fish in the river were gone too. There were no living things around to make any noise. Everything was quiet. In the old days, there were noises... I am saying that we had plenty of things around. The creatures might have fled to another river, I guess, and that was the reason why they were gone. The trees did not yield many fruits at all. How could they yield any fruits, when the people picked the green ones as soon as they appeared. They did not have time to get ripe, and they were picked until they were all gone. I am saying that, when the country was poor, everything was scarce, everything was bare.

Q How was the wedding ceremony conducted?

A The way they conducted a wedding ceremony was to marry off twenty couples at one time, or thirty couples. When they married those couples off, the parents were not consulted. It was the comrades, the friends themselves who proposed among themselves. They would propose the requests, and the chiefs would marry them off; you know, all those young men and young women comrades. There was one time, they had the wedding ceremony at the *Preak Krouch* pagoda; I saw the ceremony because I went there to see it performed. At the ceremony, there were no foods, no desserts. It looked as if they did not do anything. They just prepared the minimum things. It didn't seem like they did anything much at all; the parents didn't do anything. Some parents did not even attend the ceremony. The comrades just proposed among themselves; they just proposed to the chiefs and the ceremonies were conducted. All they did was to hold each other's hands, and they swore (laughs). I went to attend the wedding ceremony and I saw it. They swore: "We are now husband and wife; now we are pronounced husband and wife, and we must not betray each other." You know, this was what was said. After one couple went up to swear, they went down the stage, and another couple followed. They got married by twenty-five couples each time. Sometimes, there were twenty, fifteen couples; they just went ahead and match them off.

Q Did the bride and groom love each other at all?

A No, they did not. They did not really love each other at all. Some of them were married for one or two months, and they got a divorce, they broke off just like that. Some others stayed together. Though it did not seem that they stayed together either; after two or three months, they were divorced; others stayed together for a whole year, while others stayed together for six months, and they were divorced. Other couples got a divorce right after they got married.

Q Were they allowed to get a divorce?

A What else would they do if they didn't get a divorce? They quarreled with one another. They did not stay together. Those who did were the minorities. I did not see any couple that stayed together. Well, as I was saying, there was a girl who was married to *Siv Hor*. They were married off. The authority did not listen to her when she protested, and they went ahead with the wedding. They got a divorce after a couple of months. They did not stay together at all, well, some of them did stay together. A few of them stayed together and a lot of them got a divorce. At the time, the parents were not consulted about the wedding of their children. Someone did propose to marry my daughter. I was really concerned. You know, those comrades came over and made the proposal. I really didn't know what was going to happen. Later on, I went to the rice field at noon time while the

sun was the hottest. She was in the rice field, leading a group of small children to gather the sections of stems just below the spike of rice plants. "Now someone proposes to marry you," I went and told her: "I don't dare refuse. I am afraid they will kill us. You will have to solve this problem yourself." Later on, she solved the problem herself. They went to the rice field, called her up, and informed her about the proposal. She said: "I don't want to get married yet. I would like to educate myself to be a revolutionary; I mean to say, I want to prepare myself to be a good revolutionary. I don't want a spouse yet." She said that she did not want a husband yet; she was still preparing herself to be a good revolutionary. She refused, and she got off the hook. I did not dare refuse at all, for fear that they would mistreat me. I was afraid of them. Those who came to make the proposal were the comrades. My daughter said: "I am still serving the *Angkar*, the Organization.

Q Did the women have menstruation at that time?

A No, they did not. They did not have enough to eat, so they did not have it. They were all bony. Some of them had babies. These babies had no milk to nurse them so they died. It was difficult to raise them. Some people gave porridge to them, while others got some bananas to feed them, so some of them did survive. The majority of them died; not many of them lived, those poor children.

Q How did they take care of pregnant women?

A Where did we get any doctor to take care of them; if the so-called medics only studied for seven or eight days, and then they were ordered to go into the practice. The medics did not study too long. Some of them only studied for two weeks and graduated. Those medics were very young; there were no older medics, when the youngster were about 15, 17 or 18 years old, they were recruited to be medics, therefore, they did not have any experience. Talking about their medicines, they took rice flour, you know, and mixed it with some kind of medicines, I really don't know what kind of medicines they were. They molded them into a shape like that of a rabbit's ding; they were pills, and there was no paper to wrap them. They wrapped them with dry banana leaves (laughs). Whoever went over and asked for those medicines, they would wrap those pills with dead banana leaves.

Q Where those medicines our Cambodian folk medicines?

A They had Cambodian folk doctors make them. They made those doctors prepare the medicines according to their own formulas. They would take the rice flour and mix it with something, I really don't know what it was. They molded them into pills. They molded them into small pills that were kind of black. Whoever went to ask for some medicines, they would give them to them.

Q Did they allow the people to use our traditional medicines?

A They did have those traditional medicines. I saw the people go and dig the herbal roots from the mountain somewhere. They went to the upper land's mountain, and brought those roots to make the medicines. I don't really know what kind of medicines; I did not care enough about them to do it. No matter how many pills people took at one time, I didn't notice that they did any good. But, what other people did was their own business. Yes, there were Cambodian folk doctors, but they had to follow the *Khmer Rouges'* ways of making medicines.

Q Did they have any medicines to treat various diseases?

A How in the world could they have any medicines? When someone was sick and went to ask for some medicines, they would give them some, but, honestly, we didn't know what kind of medicines there were. It was just like what I was saying before, they were pills. They would give them to the people, and they did not even have any paper to wrap them. They just used dead banana leaves to wrap them. They gave a package of medicines to each of the patients.

Q Did they give any injections?

A No, it didn't seem like there were any injections at all. I never went over there and had any injections like other people. Those people who got sick would sneak and exchange gold, if they had any left, for some Western medicines to take. They always went to ask for some rabbit's drug medicines, those people who were sick, you know, they always went to ask for them. But when they took them, those medicines were not good. What kind of medicines were they anyway? The people only went over there to ask for the medicines because they wanted the *Khmer Rouges* to see that they were sick so they were able to take some rest.

Q Did the *Khmer Rouges* allow the people to practice Buddhism? Were the people able to pray or go the pagoda?

A No. How could they go to the pagoda when the religion was abolished? They made all the Buddhist monks disrobe. First, right after the *Khmer Rouges* took over, there were some monks. But, later on, they made all the monks leave the monkhood. There were no monks. How could their people hold any religious ceremonies at all when the *Khmer Rouges* destroyed all the Buddha statues by hitting them? They destroyed all the Buddha statues. They dismantled all of them. They did not leave any statue intact. They moved all the Buddha statues and threw them away. They disrobed the monks too. At first, they would make the monks do hard labors. They made the monks dig canals. When the monks did

not eat the evening meals, Buddhist regulations, they could not stand the labor, so they left the monkshood. The *Khmer Rouges* made them leave the monkshood; they did not do this on their own accord. They ordered them to leave the monkshood. All of them left the monkshood. They used the pagodas as a detention center, such as the *EK Phnom* pagoda for example. Those people who were going to be killed or tortured, would be taken to that pagoda. They were put in the temple and were detained there. Then, they took them out and killed them. There were no pagodas, they were all gone. They took the Buddha statues and threw them away; they were all strewn around, and were all dismantled.

Q Were you able to pray for yourself?

A What did I have to pray on? When I went to sleep at night, I just prayed. I had no *joss* sticks at all. I only had ten fingers to pray. I prayed to Buddha, the *Dharmas*, and the *Sangha*, monks. I prayed for Buddha's power to help me. I just prayed, but I had no *joss* sticks to use in the worship. How could the people hold any religious ceremonies? They just prayed in silence. No one dared to pray in the open. It looked like we did not dare to pray in the open, because we were afraid of them. We always thought about Buddha's grace, because we were used to pray to him, and we were used to prosperity; so we just prayed to Buddha everyday, and recited Buddha's scriptures. The *Khmer Rouges* did not know what we did when we were in our own homes, but we were kind of afraid of them too, you know. We were afraid of the militia who might come around and hide underneath our huts to spy on us. We were always afraid of them you know. At the time, I thought; it looks like the situation is not ever going to change; I will probably die under the *Khmer Rouges'* regime. It doesn't look like they are going to change. But later on, the situation did change. At first I thought, I am going to die this time, the situation will not change.

Q According to Buddhism belief, what kind of penalty would people who eradicate Buddhism or who force the monks to disrobe receive?

A Sigh, they committed a serious offense; the offense is called "*Ak-nim-nea-riy-ya-kam*". They would go to hell. The offense is very serious. I heard about what the offenses according to Buddhism, they are: beating your own mother, destroying Buddha statues, and beating the monks. These offenses are very serious. This is called "*Ak-nim-nea-riy-ya-kam*", and it's very serious. The offenders go to hell, not an ordinary hell, but a very deep level hell, and the offense is very serious. But when the *Khmer Rouges* committed such an offense, I don't really know what happened either, I don't know how serious their offenses were.

Q So you believe that those who eradicate Buddhism like what the *Khmer Rouges* did will go to hell, right?

A Yes, I do. I believe that they will go there. All of those people will go to hell, and I don't really know when they are coming up here at all. I would think that they will go to a deep level hell, I guess.

Q In your opinion, why do you think that these people hate Buddhism?

A I don't really know why. I was really wondering about these people. They even beat, kill, torture their own parents, you know, those who believe in the *Khmer Rouges*. In *Kok Dong*, where a *Khmer Rouge* lived, he burned his parents' home. When he burned it, some people criticized him for the action saying: "Why do you burn your own parents' home?" He replied that he did not burn his parents' home, he only burned his enemies house. This was what he said, you know?

Q What did they teach the new people? When was the time that they usually taught them?

A They usually held meetings at night. They held a meeting every two or three days. They would call us to go to a meeting at night. They had us get up and take turns talking.

Q What did they have the people talk about?

A Sigh, I didn't seem to understand what was being said. I don't know what they were talking about. They wanted us to strengthen our goals, our organization, whatever, I don't really know; it was like... I was not able to understand them at all. I was listening on and on, and sometimes I got sleepy and I would nod. You know, it was late at night. Some people were asleep and did not get to go to the meeting, and the *Khmer Rouges* went after them right to their home and would beat them while they slept on their mats. They called them up to go to the meeting, you know. Well, you know, the people were sleepy! They waited until it was late at night before they called them up to go to the meeting. They wanted us to strengthen our goals, or whatever they meant; they said whatever they wanted to say. They wanted us to be faithful to the organization, or whatever. They said whatever they wanted to say, and they used their own terms. Ha well, whatever teaching or advice they gave us, it was fit for us. But, sometimes what they said were right, and some other time, what they said were wrong. For example, when they wanted to say: follow a path, a policy, which is "*miekie*," they said "*niekie*" instead. I don't know what they said, but they said it wrong every time. On time, *Niv*, a girl, went to a meeting somewhere when those *Khmer Rouges* said a work wrong, she would correct them, my lord, you know, later on, they were monitoring her movements, and they planned to kill her. When we pronounced a word the right way, they accused us of being an educated person.

They would monitor us, and they wanted to kill us, you know? Those *Khmer Rouges* always pronounced the words the wrong way; you know, all of them were ignorant. They always picked the ignorant people to work for them; they did not pick the educated people (laughs), they killed all of these people later.

Q What kind of people were the *Khmer Rouges* in your village?

A From what I know, all the *Khmer Rouges* are bad people. From what I know about their history, no *Khmer Rouge* was good. All of them were either thieves, stealing cows, and water buffaloes, or robbers; others owed money to people and fled to join the *Khmer Rouge*. Many of them were bad people. There were just a few educated people. As for the educated people, they worked in higher ranking positions. Those who gave us order directly were all ignorant, you know, those who controlled us. This is what I am saying; they were all ignorant people. As soon as they heard about some people being educated, they would have them killed, all of them. They even killed the teachers. For those people who had a higher education, they labeled them intellectuals. They took all of them away and killed them. They did not spare anybody. Just look at the villagers, some of them were only chiefs of a village with fifty house, or assistants to chiefs of a sub-district or a chief of a sub-district, or whatever, and they took all of them away and killed them. They only kept those who were not educated.

Q How did they educate the people?

A They made us go to the meeting, you know? We would go up to the platform and talk. They always gave us some advice. But, whatever they advise us to do had no real essence. They always wanted us to work hard, and to strengthen our goals. I don't really know what they meant by goals; they said what they wanted to say. They called us up, and they would give us a lecture to criticize us like that; I didn't seem to see how they taught anything at all.

Q Were there any educated *Khmer Rouges* in your village?

A There were none.

Q Who was the one who gave orders to the people to carry out some works? Did any informant *Khmer Rouge* official ever go to your village and give orders to the villagers?

A All the leaders in my village were ignorant. Once in awhile, they called up a meeting. The big meeting was held at the *Ek Reang sei* pagoda. The people came from all over the area and went to the meeting. The leader who went to this particular meeting was supposed to be an educated person. His name was

comrade *Sou*. Comrade *Sou* was supposed to be Mr. *Khaek Penn*. Once in awhile, he went to this meeting. As for those leaders who were stationed in the area, they were all gamblers, the musicians, or the thieves. There was a man whose name was.. He was a former thief who used to steal cows. His name was *Hai*. He was in charge of killing, of executing the people. Whenever someone did something wrong, he would take him or her away and kill him or her. After killing those people, he would take their pancreas out and hang it up, they were all dangling around, in order to threaten us so that we would be afraid of him. Besides, this man also ate people's livers. He would kill women. He would carry her liver, dangling, jell like texture, and he took it to fry and eat it. Later on, this man died, and he went around, and raped someone's wife. When he was afraid that someone would find out about his offense, he killed that woman. He took her away and killed her in the corner of my rice field. Later on, people found out about it. The *Khmer Rouges* took him away and killed him. He had a history of stealing the cows. He lived in *Stung Chas*. He was a *Cam*, Javanese.

Q How many months passed before a high ranking official went to your village?

A He went once in awhile. He went there every two or three months. It was very seldom that he went there.

Q In the old days, have you heard of people eating people's livers?

A I have not heard about it at all. I only heard about it under that regime in that era.

Q What did the husband do after he found out that his wife was killed?

A After finding out that his wife was killed, he did not dare say anything about it. He just took care of his children. They had two children. You know, he was afraid of them. He did not dare say anything about it at all. Every time there was a meeting, I would go and attend it, but I could not understand what they were talking about. I did not know what they were talking about. I did not understand them at all. It didn't seem that they taught us anything at all. It looked like they called us up just to give us a lecture. They called us up to scold us, to give us a lecture. They did not teach us anything so to educate us, no. All of them were ignorant people, you see. For example, *Hai*, was a thief who stole cows; *Pei*, was a former gambler, a musician, and he was chosen to be a comrade too; there was another one, comrade *Ang*; all of them were ignorant, those who went to live there. Comrade *Chorn*, well, you know all of those people who were low-ranking officials, were all ignorant; I did not find any educated people there. I did not see any *Khmer Rouge* go to my village and educate us to be prosperous; I only saw that they called us up to scold us, and to give a lecture, and that was all. When they called up a meeting, they just called us up to scold us, you know?

Q How did they control, rule you?

A They ordered us to do some labors. Very often they would take someone out of a work team and put him or her in another team. When they found out that we did something wrong, they will take us away and kill us.

Q Were the people able to refuse to do something and to complain?

A No, it was not permissible. When they said that they would kill someone, they would do it. There were many people who were killed. When people said something that they didn't like, they would take them away and kill them, if they did not follow their ideals. Some people did not really do anything wrong, but they still killed them anyway. This was the reason why so many people died to the point of extinction. On one hand, they died of illness, on the other hand, they died of being murdered, and some other people died of starvation. Some people got sick and there was no medicine in sight, so they died. Some people still begged for rice at the brink of death. Sometimes, the wife would go around and get a small amount of rice to cook for the husband, and while she was cooking it, it was not cooked yet when he expired. Two of the people who lived in my house died. These people came from *Phnom Penh* capitol, and they asked me for the permission to stay there. The father died, and the son who was single died too, due to a very hard labor. The *Khmer Rouges* made them go did the canals. First they would say that they had to dig two meters wide, and the two men really tried hard to do it. After digging two meters of the canal, they came up. The next day, they ordered them to dig three meters. How could they dig the canals when there were many meters of canal to be dug? The *Khmer Rouges* put so much pressure on them that they died. I felt so sorry for them... Yes, they came and stayed in my house. The poor fellows died. They were the Chinese Cambodian coming from *Phnom Penh*.

Q Was their rule intended to weaken the people?

A Yes, that's right. It was intended to weaken the people by starving them. They also made the people fear them and they frightened them too. As soon as they heard that they were going to be taken away to be killed, we could hear him or her cry out. Some other times, they would take him or her away by boat, and pushed the body into the water after beating him or her to death. For some other people, the *Khmer Rouges* would come over and tell them that they would taken away to work as carpenters to build some carts. Actually, they would just take them away to be killed. They would always lie to us, saying that we were taken away to perform some kind of labor. They told us that they wanted to send us to this place, or to that place, but they just took us away to be killed, that was all. The

Khmer Rouges never tell the truth. They always tell lies, dupe us, and swindle us.

Q The *Khmer Rouges* said that they educated the people so they would be good people. In your opinion, did this prove to be true?

A No. They did not educate us to be good people. They were not educated themselves to be able to educate us. The only thing they did was to force us to do some labor, hard labor, that is to say, that they made us do the labor until we died, you know. For example, they made the people build a dam in *Doun Teo*, beyond *Keo* pagoda. They tried hard to build it to hold the water.. So many people died there, it was not a few of them, you know. Later on, the dam broke and so many people died. You see, they made those people hold the water from a river. They devised a scheme just to weaken the people make them die, and make them miserable. We did not see that they educated the people to make them be good people at all.

Q How did they punish the people? What kind of offenses did the people commit?

A Sigh, they did not really commit any real offense at all. They would take them away, and would steam them. They put them in a plastic bag. They put the plastic bag over their heads and tied it at their necks. Therefore, those people gasped for air, and they would have convulsion, rolling everywhere, so the *Khmer Rouges* just killed them to finish them off. At the *Ek Phnom* pagoda, so many people died. Talking about the graves, oh my Lord, they were crammed together. We would not know how many people they buried together en mass in the same grave. The graves were everywhere. That was their execution place, at this *Ek Phnom* pagoda; that was one of the places anyway. Well, why would they not order people to do such labor? Around the rice fields to the sides of my house, the people were made to dig the canals. I really didn't know why they ordered the people to dig them. The people were able to do the farming on ten of thousands and hundred of thousands rice fields before, and they came and made the people dig the canals. When the people dug the canals, the water flowed away and the rice stalks were dried up, it seemed as though they too followed the water. The *Khmer Rouges* would take the early rice and transplanted them in the rice fields. When there was water from the rain or flood, the rice was flooded and ruined. They did just the opposite. They were scheming to do anything just to be contradictory. The farmers used to farm ten of thousands and hundred of thousands of acres of rice fields, why could the *Khmer Rouges* not follow their examples? Whoever dared to oppose them, they would take him or her away and kill him or her. They did anything just to go against us and consequently we would not get anything to eat, you know. They took some people away and killed them by beating them to death. They took away young men of 14-15 years of age and beat them to death. They steamed some other people by putting a plastic bag

over their heads. They steamed those people whose offenses were not too serious. Then they would release these people who were kind of mentally ill, and they were ruined. Due of the circumstances, they would just kill them off. They used only young people to beat the people to death.

Q How long did they put the plastic bags on people's heads? Did you know some of these people?

A I don't really know how long they left them on. I heard people say that they took some people away and killed them by using the plastic bags on their heads. They tortured some people by this method. For other people, they just clubbed them bang, bang. I did not know these people. I only learned about this from the people who came from that area where it happened and they told me about this. They said: "Oh, my Lord, the *Khmer Rouges* killed many people at the *Ek Phnom* pagoda. There was a tremendous amount of blood everywhere in the temple. They would beat the people up, and after these people died, they took them away to be buried. For those who were not dead, they would take them away and put chains on them and tortured them, you know. They tortured the people a lot. They made the people dig the canals. One of them was called *Trass*. It was a huge canal, as big as a street, big enough for the cars to pass one another, and it was also high and deep. The people had to dig this canal; besides, where did the people get all the energy? They ordered them to dig a canal as big as a couple of square kilometers around. They made the people transplant the rice seedlings there. When the flood comes, the rice stalks were all flooded and ruined. They also had to dig some canals way out there at the *Chhkae Koun* field. This was plainly a mistreatment. Nothing good ever came out of this. They did this just to torture us so that we would die. Come to think of it, those people did not commit any offense at all. The *Khmer Rouges* mobilized these people to do the labor. When they did the labor, and if the *Khmer Rouges* found that someone said something wrong, they would take them away and kill them. They were torturing them.

Q Auntie, have you ever witnessed anybody rape a woman?

A I have not witnessed any rape; I only heard people tell me about it. The woman who was raped was killed by the rapist and had been already buried. It was all done and finished, then I heard the people say that girl was raped. After he raped her, he took her away and killed her. He was afraid that he was not able to hide it, and that the matter would leak to the authority. This story about rape was really out of hand. People said that there was a man named *Ek* who was in charge of an area called *Weal Trie*, along the road to *Mongkul Borei* town. There, there were a lot of girls who were stationed there. Oh, my Lord, he would rape almost all the girls there. I heard about this from the villager who lived with my group. She

said that there was no girl who was not raped; you know, she would go on and call out their names. He would rape them first, then he would match them with so and so afterwards. This meant that, he raped a girl first, and he would make her marry so and so. He mistreated the girls so much... His name was *Ek*. He was quite notorious about this; he was stationed in *Weal Trie*. He mistreated the girls so much.. At that time, there was only this *Ek* who was the most notorious of them all. I didn't know just how many girls were under his control. After he raped a girl, he would match her up with another man, whoever it happened to be. You know, the *Khmer Rouges'* militia? Some militias would agree to take those girls, and others would not agree to take them. The people said that many girls and women were compromised under this regime.

Q Between the men and the women, which one did the *Khmer Rouges* mistreat the most?

A The women were a little bit better off. It seemed like they mistreated the men very much. For the men, as soon as they committed just a small offense, they would be taken away to be beaten to death. They took away so many young men away and beat them to death. They would make them go and dig the canals. At the digging site, as soon as they said something wrong, they would take them away and beat them to death. A large number of these young men died from being beaten to death. Many of them also died from diseases. This was the reason why so many people died.

Q Did the *Khmer Rouges* respect these people?

A No, they did not. How could they respect these people? They did not respect any kind of people. These old folks were starved. They walked to the work sites to get the porridge. The *Khmer Rouges* had their people cook rice and porridge at these work sites. Some of these old folks would die when they got to the place. They were already too weak at the time. They came over to get the porridge. When they got there, they would stand in line. While standing, suddenly, they would fall with a thud and die there. This did happen.

Q Did the *Khmer Rouge* not allow the meals to be taken to this old folk?

A No, no! The folks had to go to the place where they rationed the foods for us. We would go there. For those who were critically ill, they would just die. Many people died. They died from illnesses, starvation, no rice, no porridge. They would not allow the ration to be taken to these sick people. There was nobody to take the ration to the sick people right to their homes. They would have to get it themselves. The *Khmer Rouge* had no respect for anybody at all.

- Q In your own opinion, why did the Khmer Rouges do this?
- A Their character is not that of good people. Their character is that of the bandits, and of the traitors. The reason they were so treacherous was because they had no morals like we do. All of them are bad. There was none of them who were good. They were all mean.
- Q Was the reason behind their being mean because they were angry, and held grudges, or because they were poor?
- A I don't know. I don't know what their superiors' orders were. Oh, sure, at the beginning, they were poor. When they came into the cities they confiscated the people's wealth, but they were still mean. When they came in, they confiscated all the people's wealth, and left them with nothing. They took it to their heart's content. For us, if it had not been for the Vietnamese who invaded Cambodia, due to Mr. *Heng Samrin's* defection to the Vietnamese, we would have been all dead, and none of us would have been spared. They made some handcuffs, they made the ovens to burn the people. You know, they finished the construction too. I heard people say that the *Khmer Rouge* made a huge amount of handcuffs. You know, they made the handcuffs to handcuff the people. They intended to kill all the people. They did not want to leave any of us alive. Thanks to the Vietnamese invasion, they were dispersed.
- Q Were there any communist women?
- A Oh my gosh, yes, there were many of them. There were both men and women. Of course, they had women communists. They were as violent as men. They were very mean. The *Khmer Rouge* were about to kill all of us; this was the rumor, anyway. They were waiting to call a meeting, you see. It was like, there was about two more weeks and they would call for a meeting, right after the harvest. You know, I have heard that they would call for a meeting where they would treat us to the Cambodian style noodles. When all of us would be at this meeting, they said that they would throw some grenades and kill all of us. But they fell short of time to finalize this project. They were toppled by the Vietnamese invasion. If it had not been for that, all of us would have died; none of us would have been spared. They said that the meeting would be called in a few days. They would throw grenades at the time the meeting would have been held; all of us would have been killed. But, they did not have enough time to carry out the plan since the Vietnamese invaded Cambodia. Their "nests" were shattered.
- Q Did these women kill the people, or use the plastics to smother them?

A There were some communists women where I lived. I have heard that these women were executors. They executed people. As soon as I saw them, I was frightened to death.

Q What kind of disposition did these women executioners have?

A They were quite big. All of them were quite dark and big. None of them went to my village in *Svay Chrum* pagoda vicinity, a little bit beyond my hut. When she went there, people told me that she was an executioner; she executed people, you know. The *Khmer Rouges* did have women executioners, you see. There were women executioners just like men.

Q What did Buddha teach us to do when people intend to harm us?

A According to Buddha, we are not supposed to hit people. How can we hit people back when they hit us? If they would to kill us, then we don't know what to do. But, we do not forget Buddha, his *Dharma*, and the monks' merits. If we were to die, we would not know what to do except to pray to Buddha. How can we retaliate? Under *Pol Pot* regime, that was all that I could think of. I was always thinking of my mother's and father's merits, and Buddha's, his *Dharma*, and the monks' merits. We must live and adhere by to righteousness, and not be deviant; we should not do bad deeds; we must always do good deeds, and if the *Khmer Rouges* kill us, then we can't do anything about it.

Q Before the Communists took over, if someone would to mistreat your children, what would you teach them to do?

A I would teach them not to go around and visit associate with them anymore in the future. When they are mistreated, then my children should not go to visit or play with them anymore. If not, they would end up having a fight with those people and this in turn will bring problems to the parents. I would teach them to be good, not to play with whoever who is wrong. They should just stay away from him and not to hang around with him anymore. They should be straight. Whatever they say, it should be the truth, and not lies. Whatever they say should be the whole truth. They should not take other people's belongings. Even when they should see anything lying around carelessly in people's houses, they should not take it. They should be straight, and that is all that I ask from them.

Q Before 1975, how did the people hold funeral ceremonies for their beloved and respected ones?

A When my father passed away, I cried and I longed for him. When he passed away, I held religious ceremonies for him. I wrote the merits for food offerings for many days. I held religious ceremonies for him, you know. Afterwards, I arranged for his

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- Q What did you do when you knew that the *Khmer Rouges* will kill you?
- A What could I do? When I was extremely frightened, all I could do was to pray to my mother's merits, and Buddha's, his *Dharmas*, and the monks' merits. I always prayed to them. I always thought about them; what else could I think about? If we were to die, we would just pray to Buddha's merits to help us, and that was all we could do.
- Q What did Buddha teach us to do when people intend to harm us?
- A According to Buddha, we are not supposed to hit people. How can we hit people back when they hit us? If they would to kill us, then we don't know what to do. But, we do not forget Buddha, his *Dharmas*, and the monks' merits. If we were to die, we would not know what to do except to pray to Buddha. How can we retaliate? Under *Pol Pot* regime, this was all that I could think of; I was always thinking of my mother's and father's merits, and Buddha's, his *Dharmas*, and the monks' merits. We must live and adhere by to righteousness, and not be devious; we should not do bad deeds; we must always do good deeds, and if the *Khmer Rouges* kill us, then we can't do anything about it.
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- Q Before 1975, how did the people hold funeral ceremonies for their beloved and respected ones?
- A When my father passed away, I cried and I longed for him. When he passed away, I held religious ceremonies for him. I invited the monks for food offerings for many days. I held religious ceremonies for him, you know. Afterwards, I arranged for his

remains to be put to rest in crypt. Later on, I had his remains moved from the crypt so I could hold some more religious ceremonies for him again. At first, I held a religious ceremony by inviting the monks for food offerings for several mornings. I think I did this for quite some time; it was quite awhile. Seven days later, I held another religious ceremony. At night, (my relatives) invited the monks for the *Dharmas* recitation. After the monks finished the *Dharmas* recitation, the laymen would recite the *Dharmas* too. These recitations were done at night time, you see, when I put his body to rest for the viewing. In the mornings, the monks would recite the *Dharmas*, and the recitations went on and on. After the recitations, the monks were invited for some food offerings every morning. The guests would come over and fill up my house.

Q When the people stand vigil over the body, what kind of *Dharmas* did they recite? What did these *Dharmas* mean?

A They recited the *Dharmas* called the *Pathoam*. I don't really know what it means. I don't really know what it means, but they recited it by chanting. The recitation was very melodious. It was very melancholic. When we had the funeral procession, we had the kind of music called the *Taem Meen*, which is the *Mong Krum* music, you know, a kind of funeral music. This music is different from the kind of music played at the religious ceremonies, people would have the *Piphaat* music, or the *Mahoree*, traditional music. For the funeral, people play the *Taem Meen*, sounded *Mong Krum* music, you see.

Q How long did you mourn your father?

A I mourned his death very much. Before I could come to term with myself, it took me many years. I always thought about him, about the time when he was still alive, about what he did for me, this and that. I mourned him very much, and it lasted for quite some time.

Q What happens during a funeral procession?

A The way people have a funeral procession is by having the coffin put on a funeral cart that is then pushed. There is a monk who could lead the procession. There is also a person who would throw the popped rice. The family members would wear white clothes, and cover their heads with white cloths, and someone would throw the popped rice. Following the coffin was an *Acha*, a wise man, and there was also a monk who recites the *Aphik Thoam Dharma*, and there was a monk who lead the funeral. Four monks stand at every corner of the coffin. There is also a monk who leads the procession. The cart was pulled by the ropes. I had my father's remains lay at the pagoda. The procession headed for the pagoda. When we returned, I invited the monks for food offerings. I did not have my father's remains cremated. I

had someone build a kind of miniature house, and had his remains put there, a few years later, I had his remains moved so I could hold religious ceremonies for him again.

Q When did the families hold religious ceremonies for their loved ones after they had died?

A After there beloved ones had died, one week later, the families held religious ceremonies for them. After a period of 100 days, they held another religious ceremony. As for me, after this second ceremony, I had his remains dug up so I could hold another religious ceremony for him one more time after three years. For my father, I did not have his remains buried under the ground at all; I had a building like a small house built for him. When we opened up the coffin, we brought up the shroud. There was the "lort", corpse preservative inside the coffin, you know. When we brought it out, the corpse was all dried up. The flesh and the skin were gone, and only the skeleton remained. I had his remains washed. I then had these remains cremated; so then I gathered his ashes and put them in an urn. Then I took the urn and installed it inside the *stupa* at the *Praek Kruoch* pagoda. When the *Khmer Rouges* took over the country, they smashed up everything; they smashed up the *stupas*. We did not know where they took the ashes to at all. I was not able to find his ashes. I guessed that they threw away his ashes. There were many urns, you know, with the ashes inside of course, inside the *stupa*. There were just about ten urns inside the *stupa*, you see. But, you see, these were the ashes of all the relatives; my older aunt and uncle, my relatives, and even my neighbors who passed away. When my neighbors died, their relatives had no place to keep their ashes, so they asked for my permission to have the urns stored inside the *stupa* which I have built, with the rest of my relatives' ashes. When the *Khmer Rouges* took over, I didn't really know where they threw away all of these urns. They smashed up the *stupa*. When I went to look for the ashes, I could not find them at all. They smashed up the *stupa*. I didn't know where they took the ashes. I guessed they threw them away.

Q Before the *Khmer Rouge* regime, how long did the memorial service last?

A Oh, it all depended on our means. Those people who were rich would have it for awhile. They would invite the monks for the morning food offerings for one, two, or three mornings. Those who were rich would have the morning food offerings for six, or seven mornings, until they reached the traditional time, meaning for seven days; well, this practice is for the rich people. As for the poor people, they only held morning food offerings for one or two mornings, and the service was all over. Some other people were able to do it for three mornings. They were not able to do it too long. After this service, the remains were taken to the burial ground, or whatever, This is the poor people's practice. As for the rich people, they had a small building

and had the remains laid there.

Q What kind of beliefs made the people hold another religious ceremony seven days after a person dies?

A I really don't know what kind of beliefs make people do this. Seven days after a person dies, we hold another religious ceremony for him or her. Then, 100 days after the person's death, we hold another ceremony for him or her. This is our tradition, that's the way it is. For the poor people, they don't have to do it since they can not afford it; those who are rich, would do it. But, I heard people say that; after a person had died for seven days, his or her soul or mind comes back to look for his or her family; but for me, I believe in some of these traditions, and doubt some others. I don't really know for sure whether or not the soul comes back. The people said that it does come back seven days after a person dies, that it would come home and look for its family. I don't really know whether or not this is true.

Q In *Pol Pot* regime, were the people allowed to hold memorial services?

A There were no memorial services allowed. After the people died, some of them were put in the coffins, while others were rolled inside the *Kriebs*, cloths or things for wrapping dead bodies. Mr. *Barm Ho's* wife, *Kim Dy*, died in *Pol Pot* regime. After dressing up the remains, people took a sheet of tin, put the corpse inside, rolled it up, and tied it. Then they buried it. Many of my relatives died at that time. We did not hold any religious ceremony for them at all. Right after they died they were buried. Some other people's remains were cremated. *Chan Thorn's* mother and her stepfather died at the time too. The people asked for some old plywood's to make a coffin to put the corpses in, and they looked for some firewood to cremate them.

Q So then, the *Khmer Rouges* allowed the people to make coffins and cremate the bodies in your village, right?

A For those who had the plywood's handy, they would make the coffins, while those who did not just use long bamboo to roll the bodies inside and bury them. This practice was done with the people who died in the villages, and the counties. As for those people who came from other areas, their remains were buried in a mass grave, two or three corpses to a single grave, or four or five corpses to a single grave, you know. At that time, many people have died. Somebody died at this place, then, not too long afterwards, someone else died at another place. At that time, it was an era of death and famine. The *Khmer Rouge* did not just bury one corpse. They always buried from two or three corpses up, or so many corpses until.... They just put all the corpses in one single grave, and they would just pile them up. These people died at the clinic, you know, when they were sick! Some people died at home, and were

cremated, not buried. More often than not, they were not cremated. For some corpses, the *Khmer Rouges* just dug the ground and buried them, two or three in one grave, because too many people died.

Q In the *Khmer Rouge* regime, when someone died, did they inform his or her relatives about his or her death?

A No, they seldom informed the relatives. After the person died, they would just take the body away and bury it, if this person died at the clinic. They did not inform the relatives either. The neighbors were the only people who would sneak away to inform them of the death. If one waited for the *Khmer Rouges* to inform relatives, they would not do it. They were afraid to lose their working time. They did not inform relatives. They did not care about anyone who died.

Q If a brother or sister, or a parent passed away, were the people allowed to express their grief or to cry over that person's death?

A No. If we were to cry, we had to do it somewhat secretly. If our son or daughter was sent to a labor to a place quite far from the village, nobody was sent to inform his/her family. The family might hear about the death much later on, from those people who moved along back and forth. You know, in my time, many people have died. Nobody was sent to inform the family. No religious ceremony was performed. In my case, I only had a little bit of rice, which I had asked for from the authority for the occasion. I then cooked it and offered it to the person who took the corpse to be buried, and that was all. When my relatives came over and saw me grieving, they would just cry, you see. Some of them came over; we did not have people travel freely like in the old government at all. For instance, the father and son who asked me for the permission to live in my house, when they died, they were taken away to be buried, without any ceremony whatsoever.

At the time, it was difficult to find a caretaker. Sometimes, we had to go and ask for a caretaker. The caretaker was given a can of rice as a token, and so he would just take the corpse and bury it. The *Khmer Rouges* would assign two or three people to be caretakers. We did not have a chance to perform any religious ceremonies. When a son or a daughter inform his or her family in case of death. The family was being informed through the neighbors. By the time these neighbors got a chance to go and inform the family, the deceased had already been buried and done with. There was no religious ceremony performed.

Q When no religious ceremony was performed for the deceased in this fashion so the family could convey the merits to the deceased's soul, whatever happens to this soul?

A I don't know where the soul had gone to. I don't know. I don't know where the soul has gone to after a person dies; I don't know whether it had gone to hell or heaven.

We are not able to understand this process at all. We don't know which way it has gone to.

Q According to the Cambodian beliefs, how is a soul roaming the earth?

A I don't know how a soul was doing this, since there were too many people who died. I don't know where they have gone. Some people died, and after their death, their spirits have possessed some other people, you know. They would possess their relatives who were still alive. Some people who were possessed by the spirits said that the deceased went somewhere and returned; I think, they just said that and made it up; I don't really believe in spirits possessing another body. For example, a person died around the *Stung Chas* area, way over there, and his/her soul came over and possessed the person who lived over here. The possessed person answered "Oh, I came here by permission which was difficult to get granted," when someone asked how this spirit was able to travel such a great distance. The possessed person continued: "I was granted a permission to come here for only a couple of days. I have to go back." Oh sure, there were spirits which possessed some people. But, after a person dies, I don't know where the soul would go for the reincarnation. I really wonder about this, you know.

Q According to Buddhism, can a person be reincarnated after death?

A Yes, he/she can be reincarnated. After a person died, he/she could reincarnate, you know. This all depends on whether the person had done bad or good deeds in his/her life. Those who did good deeds would be reincarnated into a being living in a good condition, in heaven; those who committed sins and did bad deeds would go to hell.

Q What did a person do to be reincarnated?

A Some people did remember their previous lives. But, according to Buddha's *Dharmas*, after a person dies, he/she would be reincarnated. Those who did good deeds would go to a blissful place. I am only afraid for some of those people who did bad deeds, for they may even be reincarnated into some animals, who knows. As for those ordinary people who did some charity acts and performed some religious ceremonies, they would be reincarnated after death.

Q When the bodies were buried in such abnormal fashions mass grave, without being blessed by the monks, wouldn't the souls be tormented?

A Who knows? They did bury the bodies all piled up in a mass grave, since too many people died. I have heard that the *Khmer Rouges* used tractors to push the bodies into the grave and shovel the dirt over them. Some people said that the *Khmer*

Rouges put the bodies in the ponds and filled them up. They kept throwing the bodies in these ponds and buried them with some dirt. The *Khmer Rouge* dug such huge holes.

Q Auntie, who was your closest relative who died in the *Khmer Rouge* regime?

A My older brother-in-law, my older sister-in-law-, my aunt, my uncle, my nephew, my niece...they died in this regime.

Q Did you get to bury them properly?

A I was able to cremate my older brother-in-law and older sister-in-law. I asked them for the permission to cremate them. They let me look for some fire wood for the cremation. I was able to bury my aunt, and that was the only case. I was able to bury her properly. I had her buried in a burial ground. The land was being purchased solely for a burial ground; you know, it was a rice field. People buried their deceased; you know, it was just a rice field. You see, I was able to bury her properly. The only thing missing was a religious ceremony. But, you see, where would we find a monk to perform it when all the monks were being disrobed?

Q Have you ever dreamed of those relatives who have died?

A No. I don't seem to dream about them at all. Many of my relatives died. My grandchild died. She was the child of *Chea*, my distant niece. Her husband also died. Her two grown daughters also died; one of her sons also died. She studied medicine for two or three years then died in *Pol Pot* regime. I have never dreamed of those deceased people at all.

Q In the United States, if someone dies, did the Cambodian people hold religious ceremonies according to their tradition?

A Yes they do. In this country, of course they were some monks who perform the religious ceremonies. The people hold those ceremonies according to the tradition.

Q Auntie, nowadays, are you thinking very much about your parents, and your relatives who passed away?

A Yes, I do. In the evenings, I pray to Buddha; I recite the "*Yang Kenh*" *Dharma*. Then I pray for my parents; I recall their names, you know. I recall parents-in-law names too, and all of my relatives' names too. I always conveyed the merits to them.

INTERVIEW 8 - PART 6

Q What kind of emotional and physical consequences did all kinds of tortures have on your life in the *Khmer Rouge* regime?

A Right now, I am quite happy, I don't worry about anything. In the *Khmer Rouge* regime, I worried about everything. For one thing, my children were separated from me. We were separated and I suffered. All my relatives have died; I grieved a lot. I then thought, this will not change. I guessed that if the situation remained the same, I would not have survived, I would have died. All of us would have died. This was what I was thinking about. Later on, the situation changed, and then I was glad. At that time, some people were glad; for example, my nephew was glad because he heard people talk about the Vietnamese invading Cambodia. We all thought that we would have peace. He was extremely glad, to the point that he said something wrong about his mother, and the *Khmer Rouges* took him away. At that time, the Vietnamese did not invade Cambodia yet; or they may have invaded certain places, but they had not invaded the city of *Battambang* yet. He was *Iv Heng's* husband, and *Ho's* brother *Iv Heng* is a widow, with two or three children, and she is still alive right not too. He was very glad about the Vietnamese invading Cambodia, and he thought that our country would have had peace like before. He was glad and thought that he would have peace and prosperity soon. He was bragging this way, and the *Khmer Rouges* took him away and killed him. They killed him at the very end, so close to the Vietnamese invasion. The Vietnamese invaded Cambodia, close to our country, so when the villagers heard about the invasion, they were glad. At that time, many people got killed because they were glad the Vietnamese invaded Cambodia. When they were glad, they said something which offended the *Khmer Rouge*. They said that they would have peace and prosperity. These rumors got to the *Khmer Rouges* and they took those people away and killed all of them. The number of people who died at that time was not a small one.

Q At the present time, is your body stronger then during the *Khmer Rouge's* time?

A Yes. My body is stronger than when I lived under the *Khmer Rouge*.

Q Do you think that your body got old faster and disintegrated faster at that time, right?

A That's right; this was due to the fact that I was sad and worried, and also physically exhausted. It was like I was not able to reason about something. When I did hard labor, my body was weak, you know. My strength was weakening at that time, and I was skinny. Because I lived under the *Khmer Rouge's* regime, I

got old very fast. If there were no *Khmer Rouges*, I don't think I would get this weak like the way I am right now. If I had not done such hard labor then, I would have not been this old; I would have been better than the way I am right now. You see, I suffered such a hardship before I came. I went to Thailand because I was evacuated to a small hut. I was then told to go and live in a cow's stable. I slept on the ground; it was such a hardship. Then, the *Khmer Rouges* ordered me to do some labors, to the utmost, you know. Later on, the Vietnamese invaded Cambodia, so I fled. I went to stay in *Thmor Korl* for a few months. I persuaded my old man, my husband to go back to my home in *Prek Kruoch*. He said: "No, let's go on our journey." I went to *Svay Sisophon*. At that time, I hired a guide to take us to where it was safe and paid him four *chis*, measures of gold. He led me and left me at the Thai border; I did not get to cross the border to Thailand at all.

Q What did you do to escape that vicious and violent danger?

A Well, for example, for the labor, I would do whatever they told me to do. I was afraid of them. Then, at home, I would give them whatever they wanted to take, I gave everything to them. Whatever I had at home, I would empty the house and give all that I got to them. Then, I was chased out of the house too. I was told to go live in a small hut. Afterwards, I was evacuated from there, from a village to another place. If I were to live there it meant that there were vegetables growing right there in the village. They did not let us pick the vegetables and eat them. They did not let us pick either the coconuts or any other fruits at all. When I was evacuated there, I was able to survive. At that time, I prayed to Buddha and to his merits, but the situation was not getting any better at all. I always prayed to him with my palms joined every morning, and every night. Very early in the mornings, I would get up and I would pray. In the evenings, I would pray and think of Buddha's merits. I had no *joss* sticks to light up since the *Khmer Rouges* did not allow us to light up the *joss* sticks.

Q Did they allow the people to pray to Buddha? Did they see the people do it? Did they know about it?

A No; how could they see us, we did it in our own hut. They would build small huts for us to live in. When I said that I went to live in the cow's stable, well, they would build something like a long plank, and they would divide the stable up into little rooms for us to live. In order to survive in the *Khmer Rouge's* regime, I would just do anything that they ordered me to do. They would order me to do just about anything, indiscriminately. Whatever they wanted me to do, I just complied. When they wanted me to go and cut off the jute I went to cut off the jute; when they wanted me to peel them, I peeled them. I did all kinds of works. When they wanted me to grow the vegetables, I would grow them. They told me to make the strings for the mats and to weave the mats, I did it. They always

ordered you to do all kinds of work. I always complied.

Q Were you allowed to speak up?

A No; I didn't dare talk about anything. In order to survive, I would have to act as though I knew nothing, and heard nothing. I didn't dare talk about anything because I was afraid of them. If they found out that we talked and complained, we were be doomed. They would take us away to be killed. In order to survive, we had to act as if we were ignorant, naive, or a moron. I didn't dare do anything. I was always afraid of them. Whatever I had, I would give it to them. I took with me some of my *sampots* and blouses. The villagers, you know, well like the people who did the labor with me, when they didn't have something, I would give it to them when I saw that they needed it. I gave some of my *sampots* and blouses to them. I was always ready to please them. And you know what, they took everything, and I had nothing left. In order to survive, whatever they ordered you to do, just do it, and don't you oppose them.

Q You prayed to Buddha and to your parents to help you. Did you pray to them everyday?

A Yes I did. I always thought about their merits, because I was frightened. I was always thinking about their merits. I thought about nothing else.

Q What did you say in your prayers? What were the words that you used?

A Well, I just prayed to my mother's and my father's merits, saying: "Please, mother, father, help me cross this field; this field is huge; help me cross this field so I can survive. "I did not say anything else, this was all that I thought about.

Q Did you ever think that you might die one of these days?

A Yes, I sure did. I thought: I don't think I can survive any longer. If I was not to die by execution, I was to die by starvation from lack of rice or porridge for sure.

Q At that time, have you ever thought about the fate of Cambodia in the future?

A I did not have any hope. At that time, I had no hope at all. The *Khmer Rouge* regime took control, and there didn't seem to be any hope for peace. It spelled doom and hardship for us. This was the reason why I fled to the border. When I thought it over, I saw that, when the Vietnamese invaded Cambodia, the situation was not any different from under the *Khmer Rouges regime*, it would be a hardship for me one more time, and this was the reason why we led one another to flee, when I was on my way to the border, I did "stumble" on the *Dangrek*

mountain, dear old me. I was the first one to flee, and I stayed in *Svay Sisophon*. I was staying under someone's house on stilts. I stayed under some trees' shade. There was a big fruit tree, and I would spread out my mat and lived underneath that tree. I would tie my mosquito net underneath it. Whenever it rained, I would run to take refuge under the person's house, but I didn't dare go inside the house. It was such a hardship for me at the time.

Q You had a feeling that you would be taken away and be killed, or that you would die by starvation. Were you frightened by this idea? Were you afraid to die?

A I was frightened and afraid. At night, I never dared talk about anything at all. I have never discussed with my husband about any matter at all. I was extremely afraid. I was afraid that the militia might come and hide under my hut, you know. When he heard us talk about something that was against the *Khmer Rouges*, we would be taken away to be killed.

Q At that time, did you feel that you were prepared to die, or did you feel that you were much too young to die?

A I did think about it. I didn't know what to think about actually. It was too late. I did not leave the country prior to this event. I made a mistake. My son persuaded me to leave the country, you know. He wanted me to flee the country and go live in *Au Chreuv*, near the Thai border, but I refused. I said: "How can I leave when I am not able to collect the money from my creditors yet. How about my rice fields, my fruit and vegetable orchards, and my house?" I did not want to leave them, you know. I just could not leave. In 1974, I did leave, you know, I went to *Au Chreuv*. I also went there in 1975 when the *Khmer Rouges* did not take over Cambodia yet, My son said: "Please don't stay; you can't stay here, Mother, you just wait and see, the *Khmer Rouges* would have your own coolies come and do you harm to get even with you, you just wait and see. You can't stay here. Please leave and go to live in *Au Chreuv*." He said that he would send me some money to spend if I needed some money. I said: "No, I have my own money you know." I refused to listen to him and to leave the country. So then he added: "If you stayed in this house, I can't help you. If you go to live in *Au Chreuv*, in *Aranyaprathet* I am able to help you." He came over, and I did not believe him. I did not want to leave my house.

Q Where was your son at the time?

A My son was in Hong Kong. I only had one son, my natural son.

Q How did you feel about the actions done by the *Khmer Rouges* to the people?

A I thought to myself: "I will certainly die." I didn't know why they did what they did. I was wondering about that. I have never seen Cambodians killing their own people this way at all; this action led me to wonder about this, you know. I really didn't know their real reason behind this. I suspect that they had their leaders, you know, who ordered them to kill the people so that the Cambodian race would be endangered.

Q Who was their most powerful leader? Was he a Cambodian or another nationality?

A We have never seen their senior leaders at all, you see; he always stayed some place, on one knows where. All we saw were his followers. People said that the leader is *Pol Pot*. I don't know what nationality is *Pol Pot*, you know. I don't know whether or not he is Vietnamese or Chinese. He doesn't seem to be a Cambodian. When he made a law, he made sure that we respected it. His law seemed to be a good law. When they applied it, they killed us for no apparent reason.

Q When you lived under the *Khmer Rouge* regime, was your living condition different, and very poor? You did not think that it would happen they way it did, and that it would be to that degree, did you?

A Oh yes; I thought that they would not destroy money; I didn't think they would do this. When the Thai invaded our provinces, for 100 *Riels*, currency, they gave us 61.00 *Riels*, you know. But, the *Khmer Rouge* destroyed money needlessly. This did not make sense at all, you know. Nobody believed that they would destroy money! We tried to make money by working until our sweat flows like running water and they destroy the money! I always wondered about that.

Q At one time or another, have you ever thought that either your soul or your senses left your body? Was it like your senses were all gone?

A Yes, Sometimes, I felt like any soul was gone somewhere. I felt as if I was thinking about something but I could not. I felt numb. People seemed to be all dazed and ignorant. We could not think at all. We seemed to be all numb. For example: we used to wear gold and we would use gold as jewelry, when they told us to bring it to them, we just took it and gave it to them. Whatever possession we had at home, we would take it to them when they told us to do so. We were afraid to die, you see. We seemed to lose a sense of longing for our possession. Valuable goods seemed to lose worth, you know. I don't really know what happened to our brain. We did what they told us to do: we would throw things away when they told us to, and would obey their commands.

- Q At that time, did you feel like you were meditating, did you not?
- A No, I did not.
- Q In order that you did not suffer so much, did you ever do any meditation?
- A No, at the time, it seemed that I could not...I did not get to do any meditation at all. I used to be informed somewhat and learned something at school, but at that time, I seemed to be kind of dumb.
- Q At that time, have you ever thought about something that would make you happy?
- A No, I could not think about anything. I did not think about looking for any fun. All I thought about was, in the morning, I would get up, then hurried up to do the labor for them.
- Q At the time, have you ever thought that you were a machine, or a slave?
- A Yes; I was a machine for them to use me. Early in the morning I would have to go to the labor on time. When I arrived at the work site late, they would scold me, I was like a machine; I did whatever they commanded me to do. I always thought: if I went to do the labor late, or at the wrong time, they would scold me. They would starve some of us too. They would not give the late-comers any porridge. They would starve these people, you know. This was when these people went to work site at the wrong time, or arrived there after everyone else got there.
- Q At the time, were you angry that they did what they did to you?
- A Yes, I was angry, but I didn't know what to do. Even when I was angry, I didn't dare talk. They sure made me very angry, but I didn't dare talk. When I talked, I would die.
- Q At the present time, are you still angry?
- A No; I seem to let my anger go, you know. I am not angry with them now. I accept the fact that it was my *Karma*. Ah, well, I try not to be angry with them.
- Q You said it might be your *karma*. What are you trying to say?
- A Well, it is like this; it might be that I may have committed some sins in my previous life, I wouldn't know for sure. This is the reason why I suffered so much. When I reason this way, it seems like our country has a *karma*, because this happened to everyone, you know. At that time, wealthy people became poor,

while the poor people became better off; you see, gee, that was what really happened.

Q Was it a good *karma* or a bad *karma*?

A It was a kind of *karma* that all of us had. You know, it was true, the people had the *karma* too. The whole country suffered. But, as for me, many people seemed to have a compassion for me, because in the old days, I was a generous person. For example, my servants used to live with me and worked for me. Later on, these servants were good to me. Some of them had to tend the cows for the *Khmer Rouges*. These *Khmer Rouges* gave them some preserved fish and some salt. When they could not finish them, they would give them to me, because they saw that I had nothing and that I suffered. They gave me some food. Sometimes, I would get some fish, which I would then salt. I also got some dried fish, and some broiled fish. This food helped me to survive. All the villagers did not hate me; indeed, they loved me and had compassion for me. They always donated foods to me, which helped me survive.

Q So then that *karma* was not a good *karma*?

A (laughter).... oh sure, the *Dharmas* say about the *karma*: when you do a good deed, you'll get a good merit, when you do a bad deed, you'll get a bad deed, is it not so? We all had *karma* in the whole country; what can we say? We are not the only ones who suffered, but the whole population suffered.

Q The people in the refugee camps are concerned about losing Cambodia due to the fighting and the killings. Are you concerned about this too?

A Yes, I do have some concerns about this. But I said: it seems that Cambodia won't have any security or peace; she will not be peaceful. I am concerned about losing Cambodia. I am afraid that in the event that the leaders won't be competent, then Cambodia will be lost again. If the leaders were educated, then she will be all right. She will be all right if the international community can help her. If we leave it up to the Cambodians, I don't think that they will give up the fights among themselves.

Q For example, you read in the newspapers that, right now, Cambodia is lost because Vietnam takes one half of Cambodia and Thailand takes another half. How would you feel about this event?

A Oh... if they took her, then she is lost. Vietnam takes one half, and Thailand takes another half, then she is lost, gone, (laughs.. feeling overwhelmed); the whole Cambodian race will be wiped out. In my opinion, I guess there won't be security

in Cambodia. She will not have peace. I don't know when she will have peace. Luckily I am here. I guess I am lucky, because I evaded suffering. When I lived in *Pol Pot* regime, I did not know what would happen to me. When I came over here, once in awhile I would think back, and I always wondered how lucky I was to be able to come over here in this country. I thought: how could I even think about having any money to pay for the plane ticket. Now, destiny brings me over here. My coming over here is comparable to going to paradise, you know. Some people said that it is no fun coming to the USA. They said that Cambodia is a much more fun, and they want to go back. As for me, if someone pays me to go back, I will go back. But then, why should I go when my farm land and my vegetables and fruit farms are confiscated? All my wealth is gone, why should I go back? When I stay here, the state supports me. Nobody supports me in Cambodia. At least, I can have an easy and peaceful life here. I am able to have enough money to spend and to hold religious ceremonies, and this is all that I ask.

Q Do you have any idea why the leaders do what they are doing?

A I can't think logically about it, I don't know why. I don't know why they are like that. In the old days, they were not like this. Now they are not unified.

Q The Doctor knows that you have a lot of peace in your mind, and that you feel secure. What have you done in order to come to terms with yourself and to get a hold of yourself in this fashion after having lived through such hardship under the Khmer Rouges?

A (Laughs) I don't want anything anymore. I only want to have something that is enough for me, and that is all. When I have enough, what else can I wish for? Some people said that they want to go back to Cambodia. I don't want to go back, because I am fed up with *Pol Pot*. I don't want to go back any more. If someone pays me to go back, I still won't go back; I will not go back. I will undoubtedly have my remains buried in this country. This is the reason why I always hold religious ceremonies. I only believe in the merits. I train my heart not to want anything, not to think about it. Never mind if some people want to have something. I only want to leave enough to live on. I don't want too many things.

Q Did they allow the people to celebrate the Chinese New Year, paying tribute to the deceased ancestors and relatives, or the "Yin-Yang"?

A I never saw any Chinese New Year celebration here. They had their kind of celebrations. Every time there was a celebration, they would make some food for us to eat, but that was some rice and some meat for us to eat. This happened once in awhile, once in a great while, but that was their way of celebrating. This was

INTERVIEW 8 - PART 7

Q Who are the *Khmer Communists*?

A I don't know, my niece; I just heard people say: "The *Khmer Rouges* are the *Khmer Communists*."

Q What do "*Khmer Communists*" mean to you personally?

A Who knows? What do they mean? I don't really know. I only heard the people call them *Khmer Rouges*.

Q Do the *Khmer Rouge* keep the Cambodian customs, traditions, and Buddhism?

A They did not allow us to follow our customs, such as Buddhism. How could they when they demolished all the pagodas, and made all the monks leave the monk hood? We no longer had any customs. Those of us who adhered to Buddhist principles could no longer do it. Those who held religious ceremonies, could not do them anymore. The *Khmer Rouge* did not allow us to hold any ceremony. They demolished all the Buddha statues. Sometimes they took these statues and dumped them in some wells, some ponds, they would just dump them there. They broke off the statues' hands and legs, you know. They did not spare them. They dismantled all of them, including the pagodas and temples. The *Khmer Rouge* used the *EK* pagoda's temple to guard the offenders. They chained them and kept them there.

Q What temples were used as detention centers?

A They only used the *EK Phnom* and the *Samraong* pagodas for detention. They did not use other pagodas. But they would demolish them. They don't keep the pagodas at all. They didn't allow us to hold anymore religious ceremonies. When the people died, they just took them away and buried them without any religious ceremonies or funerals.

Q Did they allow the people to celebrate the *Phcum Ben*, paying tribute to the deceased ancestors and relatives, or the New Year?

A I never saw any *Phcum Ben* or New Year celebrations. They had their kind of celebrations. Every time there was a celebration, they would make some food for us to eat, butcher some cows and make some soup for us to eat. This happened once in awhile, once in a great while, like twice or three times a year. This was

the time when they let us eat, and would give us rice, butcher some cows, and make some soups to have a party. Once in awhile they would give us some desserts. They would make the *banh canoeuk* to treat us, glutinous rice cakes with sweetened *mung* beans in the middle and ginger syrup. Sometimes, they would give us a *numkoer*, rice flour cakes with coconut milk, you know, I told you before about these cakes bring bland because they did not have enough sugar. They made them once in a great while. I have not seen them celebrate the *Phcum Ben* at all. I only saw them have some celebration at a place called "*Kara than*" the eating hall at work sites, you know. They would have a party once in awhile. It took a great while before they had a party.

Q How did you feel each time that you got to eat the foods?

A Oh... I was very thrilled every time they gave us foods like this. They abandoned all our ancient customs. They didn't allow us to have any. You probably know that in the old days we had the *Phcum Ben*, and the New Year celebrations. You know, we have many celebrations, but they would not allow us to have any celebrations. When there was a celebration, there weren't any monks at all. All they did was to have a party, and they would give us some rice. One time they gave us *num ansorms*, rice cake, with bananas or *mung* beans and pork in the middle, wrapped with banana leaves). They gave one to each one of us. They gave two pieces of *num banh canoeuk* to each one of us; as for the *num koes*, they gave us a piece each. Once in awhile, they gave us some green mangoes to dip in the preserved fish sauce. They also gave us some green *tik doh koes*, kind of fruits, and green *sokolah*, kind of fruits, which they distributed two or three to each one of us to dip in a bowl of preserved fish sauce each. It was just enough to fill our stomachs. They gave us these treats once in awhile. I have never gotten anything good at all.

Q Have they ever let those fruits have time to ripe at all?

A No; they seldom let these fruits ripe. They always picked them while they were still green. You mean they picked the *tik doh koe* fruits? Yes, they picked them while they were green. They didn't know any better, I guess they were not used to picking these fruits before. They always picked them while they were green you know. Oh, it was such a hardship at that time. Listen, they forbade us to pick the fruits off the trees, you know, those fruit trees which grew in our village, like, in front of our huts? In front of my hut, there were some mango and *tik doh koe* trees, but they forbade us to pick them. They would pick them by the sacks and carry them away to be distributed to their own people somewhere. They did not give them to us. They did not allow us to pick coconuts either. They did not

allow us to pick bananas. To sum it up, they starved us and denied us all kinds of foods.

Q What did they do with the household goods?

A They led one another to come to our houses and took everything away. They took them and stored them in a warehouse. They built a big building to store the common goods, a commune. They took all the household good from our houses, it did not matter what they were. They took all the household goods. They took many things from our house. Later on, they used horse carts to transport them. When they finished using the horse carts, they had the people come over and carry them. There were four or five people who came by and carry them in baskets suspended from a pole and carried across the shoulders, while some would carry them on the heads. They left nothing for us, they took everything. They didn't even leave a pot for us. They only left a dish for the rice and a soup bowl. Every time we went to eat, we would carry a plate and a spoon with us. Later on, they confiscated everything, and left us with nothing at all. They took all of those household goods and stored them in a place called *Karathan*, a kind of warehouse, where we ate in the commune. I met with all kind of behaviors, and none escaped me.

Q Why did the *Khmer Rouges* make the *ansorm* rice cakes once a year like this? What did this act mean?

A I don't really know why they made those cakes and gave them to us once in awhile this way. They gave one to each of us.

Q When was the time that they usually made these rice cakes?

A They made them during the *Phcum Ben* celebration, you know. This is the time of the year that we Cambodians make them too.

Q Do you still remember some of the teaching, or guiding words from your parents or your senior relatives? Do you remember any songs?

A No, I don't remember them. Sigh, ever since I got married, I did not get to go to any parties or celebrations which are kind of part of our Cambodian tradition. I didn't get to go to those events like other people did. My mother and father were very strict with me. When there was any kind of celebration, they would say to me: "Why should you go? It doesn't provide anything good for me; it is a waste of time. It is better for you to stay home and do house chores." This was what they

said. They did not let me go out and have fun. When I wanted to go and visit a far away place, they would not allow me to go there either. They said that I didn't gain anything by going there. It was better for me to stay home and do house chores. These were their teaching words. They taught me to preserve in holding religious ceremonies. They taught me to adhere to Buddha's principles, and not to kill any animal. They always taught me these principles. My neighbors also taught me something, such as not to do bad deeds, to be a fine person, to hold religious ceremonies. In the Buddhist principles, Buddha also preached us some guidelines. Religion (Buddhism) teaches us not to commit sins, and to persevere in holding religious ceremonies and to try to maintain a serene heart. These are Buddha's teachings.

Q Do you still remember any folk tales or any legends?

A There were some in which appear in the ancient *Satras*, documents written on palm leaves. These were the *Kram* Code, the *Kekall* Code, and the *Kaum Cow* Code, children, I don't remember these codes too well. The teachings in these codes are excellent, but I remember any of them. The proverb in the code says: Too much wealth, and it is difficult to guard it; too little wealth, and it is difficult to manage. There are some other teachings in the Code that say: To have wealth, be it valuable or of little value, do not pass it on to your children, or to all of your relatives... It means that if you have some wealth do not give all of it to your children; you should keep some of it for yourself in your aging time. Those words are wise words. All these words in the Codes are teaching words, but we do not get to bring them with us.

Q Why did our ancestors teach us not to give the whole wealth to our children?

A I don't really know why they did this. Their words might mean: that if we would to give our whole wealth to our children, and later on in life, we would be deprived people, and it won't be any easy matter for us to go and ask for some wealth from our children. We should keep some for ourselves. It is easy for us to give them wealth, but it is difficult to ask it back. We should keep some for ourselves, and give some to them. This is a better way. You know there were some stories concerning this matter. Some people's children would not make their parents beg for a living you know. This happens in life. Some children are ungrateful to their parents. I don't really remember all of those teachings. I would read those codes, and after I finished reading them, I would forget about all of them.

Q Please try to elaborate more about the Cambodian customs.

A In the old days, we would let our sons live at the pagoda, you see. We had them stay at the pagoda and learn *Dharma*. But then, in this country, the children would just go to school, and so, it is an easy matter. In the old days, Cambodia was a poor country, and we had nothing; we had no TV's, no tape recorder- player, none of these. My grandchildren asked me: "Grandma, when you were young, did you have any TV at all?" I said: "No, grandma did not have any TV." "Did you have a tape recorder- player?" "No, I did not have any." If I had anything to listen to at all, I just had a chance to listen to some songs played on some old record player once in awhile. Oh, you know, the children would come from a great distance just to listen to them, you know. They would run to listen to the songs. Someone would have an old record player, you know, in the old days, a record player to play some records. I would go to see some plays, and I would run to see them. Well, some people would be like that, and when they are this way, I would just stay home. I would not know where to go at all. It would be plenty of entertainment for me to watch TV, but I did not have it. I had neither a tape recorder-player, nor a TV.

Q In your generation, the boys usually went to study at the pagoda? Where did the girls go to study?

A That's right, the boys went to the pagoda. Later on, the girls did have a chance to go to the pagoda and stay there, you know. My younger sister studied at the pagoda. She went to study in *Battambang* City, where my older sister lived, sister *Lorn*, who passed away. In my generation, some girls went to school, but I did not get to go to school like everyone else.

Q Do you still remember any teaching words or stories that are important enough to teach the younger generation in the future?

A I don't really remember them too well. My parents taught me: if I would to make friends, I should try to find someone who is a good person, a fine person. I should not make friends with a bad person who does not know right from wrong, and who does not possess any quality to lead me; I should look for an educated person instead. I should conduct myself in a proper manner; I should speak in a proper way. I should not tell lies; I should only tell the truth. I should not roam around everywhere. I should not go to participate in anything fruitless. I should persevere in making a living. I should make a good living and a lot of money. When I have a lot of money, on one looks down on me; when I have none, then people will look down on me. They said that, in order to go somewhere, I should have some money; I should try hard to make a living. When I make a living, I

should be honest; I should not be like... meaning that when I buy something, whatever it may be, I should not ask for the original price bargain. I should be honest when I make a living; I should not cheat the people, or be greedy. Some people would cheat on us when they weigh the merchandise. My parents did not allow me to do this should I have a business. They said that this kind of behavior would not be passed on to my children would not survive. Like the Chinese people in Cambodia, when they have a business, and when they weigh something, they would cheat the customers. You know, I realized that they cheated me a couple of times. Luckily, I caught them red handed just in time. You know, they did this when they weighed beans, etc... My husband was not around too much, and he would just trust me to weigh things to sell to the people. He had to go some places. The Chinese merchants would use his foot to hold the bean sack down. While weighing the socks, they suspended them for a pole. When one weighs these kinds of merchandises, one would lift them up. But when we used our feet to hold them this way, the merchandises look like they weighed less. For example, in a sack, the beans should really weigh 80 kilograms, but it looked like it only weighed 70 kilograms. I saw the merchant do it in time. I saw him use his feet to hold the sacks. I was fast enough to catch him. I said: "What are you doing? Try and weigh them again and be honest. We have made an agreement on the price; you can't cheat me like this." When I said that he stopped the trick. He used his foot to do this, to hold the sacks this way. We would not check on the merchants; we would be busy checking the scale above. When the merchants used their feet to hold on to the sacks, the scale weighed down, and the merchants then pushed the scale, weight back to the front part of the scale. He would be able to cheat about 10 kilograms of merchandises, of beans on us. Well, I must say that, in a business, the Chinese are very daring, whereas we, the Cambodians, we are not very daring. This is in violation of the Buddhist principles. The Chinese make a living this way. Well, they just do that, so some people, due to their naively would say: you go ahead and cheat on me, you will be blind in your next life. Well, if we are already blind in this present life, and let them cheat on us right before our very own eyes and we don't even see it, because we are blind, how can we wait until next life? They always taught me to be honest in making a living. They taught me not to cheat people. They taught me about making a living: when I sold something, I should not try to make a deal, for example, when someone bought rice or beans for me, when this lawyer gave me a price, I should not raise the price up and make a deal with him or her. They said that it is not good to make a living this way. They wanted me to adhere to Buddha's principles, and go hold religious ceremonies, and give to charities. They wanted me to participate in these activities so that I can gather merits for next life. This is what they said. For some people who are husbands and wives, and when the husbands cheat the people, for instance they would cheat the buyers when they do business,

and drive their rivals to bankruptcy and they would then use this money to feed their wives and children. They use the money to raise their wives and children, and they commit sins. When the husbands commit sins, they would go to hell. Only the husbands are sinful. Their wives and children are passive recipients of the money, and they get fed, so they are not... They don't know what happens. This was what my parents said. They said that when I am honest in my trade, then my wealth will be passed on to my children. If I am not honest in my trade, then the sins will catch up with me. My wealth will not be passed on to my children. Sometimes the sins will even manifest themselves in this present life. Sometimes the sins will even follow me in my next life.

My niece, you go ahead and just observe this: The business men, the husbands anyway, who cheat and swindle the people to get the money to raise their wives and children, would be sinful, because they cheat the people. Their wives and children, on the other hand, are sinful, because they don't know about their husband's and fathers' deeds. The wives know nothing about this, nor do the children. All they know is that their husbands and fathers give them some money, and they are very happy about this. This is the same principle. In the Buddha's principle, the same rules apply: those who tell someone to go and pickpocket for them are sinful; they are also sinful when they do the deed themselves. When they told someone to go and pickpocket for them, they are sinful, the same as when they did it themselves.

Q In the *Khmer Rouge* regime, what did the *Khmer Rouges* educate the people? How did they guide them? Did they tell the people stories? If so, what kind of stories were they?

A Their teachings centered around such principles like, trying to strengthen our stand, trying to follow the revolution like they did. I don't seem to hear any good teaching at all.

Q Were there any slogans?

A If we are sick, they said that we feigned the sickness, that we were not really sick at all. We did not feign the sickness. They just said that we pretended to be sick, because they were not responsible people. I did not see that they educated us at all. All I saw was that they wanted us to try hard to do the labor and that was all. Some of them said: "Well, we still...." This means that, before the *Khmer Rouge* regime, some people said that they were duped by Buddha for so many years and they saw nothing that they could gain for believing in Buddha. Well, you see, these people who said such things, it was like blasphemy to Buddha. Later on,

these people joined the *Khmer Rouges*. Of course they did not think of Buddha, and his *Dharma*. They abandoned Buddha and his principles.

Q What did they say about Buddha?

A No, they did not say anything about Buddha. They just plain did not have any use for Buddha, period. The *Khmer Rouges* did not need Buddha and his principles. They did not believe in him.

INTERVIEW 8 - PART 8

- Q. What is your life like in the United States?
- A. I am happy over here. It is more secure than it is in Cambodia. We don't have to be afraid of anything. In Cambodia, we were in danger during the previous government. During the previous government there were a couple of wars, ever since the time of the *Issarak*, Khmer liberation front fighting the French, and it was such a hard time. We had to run and crawl. We could not stay safely at home. When they fought one another, we could not sleep. We went down to the ground and slept there. We just ran, to the bunker, you see. We dug a bunker under the house, and we went down there to stay. It was very difficult then. When I came to live in America, I was very happy. It is as if I am in paradise. This is the paradise on earth. I am very happy. There is no reason for hardship. For the young people, they are strong and they can work, so they can make money. We are the elderly, we receive social security, and we don't have to worry.
- Q. When you first came here, what difficulties did you encounter?
- A. When I first came here to stay, it was difficult at the beginning it was like we still didn't learn much about anything such as electricity; it is difficult to turn on the lights. I didn't know anything about hot water or cold water. But now, I have learned about everything. It was difficult at first. Later on, people would instruct me about those things. Now I know, and it isn't difficult at all. Right now, if someone wants me to go to Cambodia, I would not go there. I am happy to live here. I will undoubtedly leave my remains here until I die in this country. I pursue in building merits through giving alms to the monks and giving to charity. I want to be a good person, be generous, and not be wicked. I don't have much left in my heart now. I don't have a profession. The only I do is go to the pagoda in the morning, make some foods for the monks, then came back home. After I go home, I pray to Buddha and recite the Buddhist scriptures. I have no hardship; my life is quite easy. I only think about collecting the merits; I don't think about the sins. Right now, I try to adhere to the good principles, and not to be mean. When my mind is being mean, I just forget about it.
- Q. What did you do not to be tempted by being mean?
- A. Ugh, people would say that the only thing is to be patient, to endure, to be patient, to be *Hiri Uttapak*, we are afraid of sin. We should not go near anything sinful. We should abandon greed, anger, and bad mood; we should abandon these three vices, greed is sinful. Sorrow, changes, ephemeral state, greed, anger are vices. Talking about the others, we are at sorrow, changing state, ephemeral state *Aknitu*

means nothing belongs to us. *Agnicang* means nothing remains the same. *Tugkhang* means sorrow. We have to use this *Dharma* to reflect to abandon our desires. Greed is never ending. We always have greed. When we see somebody with wealth, we want it too. What if we Life for me, I don't want to have anything any more, I abandon everything, you know. Look at my hair, I shave my head. I stop wearing jewelry. Right now, the only thing I still have is money that is given to me. I can't do anything if I don't take money. How can I not have it? It is given to me so I have something to spend. I stopped wearing jewelry; I stopped making a living. Before, I played the 50 cents lottery. That was a long time ago, ever since 1986 I stopped. When I have some money, I lend it to people, with interest. In Cambodia I didn't have much of a profession either. Someone said that it is unlawful to take interest. I don't do it though. If someone really needs money, I just lend money, I would lend it to him or her like 500 or 1,000 dollars. I just loan it. I just take back the principle. Well, we can't say that we can't see what's wrong here. When we do unfair business, it will too. We don't have to look very far for an example, Auntie *Sien Yuk* owns a stone house, a hotel. She is the one who has a child who is deaf, and another one who is mute. You will remember her. Don't say, it doesn't happen, yes, we can really see it. There is Karma. That why people talk about it. My sister has a profession just like that one, the one who died, my late sister Lon; she had a pawn shop. People say that it is all right to have a business selling materials. Being in the pawn shop business is too much. I have heard that, after three months, the merchandises belong to the shop owner when the client cannot afford to pay for them. This is hot business. That's why I said that went I can control my desire, I am all right. Only this *Dharma* that teaches us about our wealth, this *Dharma* can lead us to *Nirvana*, and then there are these *Nirvavanag Dharmas*, which stop us from being greedy.

Q. What does *Ag Thang Khig Ka Meak* mean?

A. These 8 *Ag Thang Khig Ka Meak Dharmas* are the *Dharmas* that will lead us to *Nirvana*. We should let go of everything. First we must adhere to *Sek Tek Pak tham* Dharma. These 8 *Ag Thang Khig Ka Meak Dharmas* are the ways to Preah Aruksath. Good deeds will always lead us toward the way to *Nirvana*. *Sang Ma Pa Thek* Dharma, will lead us to righteousness.

Definitely see clearly the way to *Nirvana*, and we will see a well being, almost void of any sorrow. As for the *Anka Sama Sangkhang Poa* is the knowledge that makes us laborious, not wanting to possess anything, it makes us want to avoid lust. As for *Sama Viecha*, it means saying true things, being honest, not telling lies, not saying insinuations, or words that hurt people's feelings. Saying only words that are good. Insinuations are also influx, if we insinuate to make people angry, *Sama Viecha* means to say true things, being honest, and not telling lies, not insinuate and say words to hurt people's feelings; say only the words that are

good. *Sama Ka-Montoa*, means to do things, and to avoid lust, not wanting, not stealing anybody's wealth. *Pana* means avoiding killing the animals. *Sama Achivo* means maintain our heart to be honest, to make a living and being careful, not to sell or trade people and animals, to commit fraud against the five kinds of trades. *Sama Vierjiemo*, means try hard to do the right thing, so that we will not go beyond our desire to try to be away from sins, bad deeds, so that the *Khla* won't happen. Try hard to get of the sins that we have committed. Try not to ignore these sins because this act will bring us trouble. Try to get rid of them. By doing this, sorrow will not be present. Try hard to get the merit that really exists, so that they will grow to be plentiful. Try to have the *Sama Satek* some kind of mind, and charitable heart; try to meditate and have meditation in your mind and body. Have the intelligence to reason, to think very often in our mind. Think about this, and try to shy away from things that bring sorrow to us ; things don't remain the same; we have no essence or fragrance to untie the ephemeral state of being. Do meditations, and make our mind to do good things, and try to adhere to meditation; endeavor for meditation so that we will get to the *Aekkata* as our goal; these are the eight Dharmas. Just look at the way (we) talk; *Sama Kan Montoa*, we make our living in the right way; *Sama Achivi*, making our living the right way; *Sama Vie-yie- Sama Satek*, a kind of mind; *Sama Sannathig*, meditation, that's all. There are eight altogether. Try to get rid of 5 Nirvannag: lust, revenge, laziness, anger, doubling.

- Q. In plain English, what do they mean?
- A. Kam Chanteag means pursuing the 5 lusts: destruction, wanting to see people perish. *Theinikmik* means to be lazy. *Vikchek Kechha* means having doubts. There are only five of them. We were taught to shed these. We should not covet our people's wealth, wanting to do something so that other people's wealth flow our way. This is also sinful. We should shed this kind of idea. If anyone can remember these *Nirvannag*, five of them, and the *Athea Khig Kameak*, coveting other people's wealth, and reflect upon these principles, this person will be rid of everything, of doubting, wanting, other people's wealth, for example when we see other people have wealth, we want to make the wealth come our way. The five Jewels and the eight Jewels warn us about them. We should try to. adhere to these jewels and we won't be greedy.
- Q. Do you have any problem with language?
- A. When one is old, one has a problem. When someone speaks to me , I can't understand the person.. When someone speaks to me, I can't understand the person. Right now, I am even worse off than the children. *Hong Chhum's* child, my grandchild, isn't even in school yet, but she can speak English. She said things; she told me things. I told her that "grandma doesn't speak English", " So

then wait, Lisa will teach Grandma to speak". She said that her name is Lisa. She isn't in school yet but she can understand people, and she can talk. I have a hard time with the language, but I really don't know I can find a way to learn.

Q. Do you, Auntie, receive enough money to support your family?

A. Yes, they provide me, you know? Previously, they gave me \$75 every two weeks. Yes, it is enough. I have some left over to build the merits and do good deeds for charities. When I stay at a home apartment, there was a store near my house, and there was a sign on the side that said "checks" cashing for. I don't know who took the check, but it disappeared. This was in 1985. It was a long time ago. In 1989, then there was a letter for me saying that I have cashed a check. At the time I told them about it. It was quite awhile before they gave me another check. That other check was lost. I have reported the lost check to them. Later on, they cut my benefits. They just cut them in 1989, they cut almost \$40 a month. I got \$377, and I only get \$339. How much did they cut? They cut them. They cut them ever since April. I guess up to now, it is almost gone. You go ahead and count. It has been eight months now, it is almost over. They gave me \$377, and I just spent them. When they gave me \$339, I just spent them. I don't want to cause them any trouble. I thought that I didn't leave any money with them. They didn't deduct from my wages. They gave it to me because of my merits, my luck. I spent it accordingly. I am waiting to see that, when they deducted the whole amount, they may give me the same amount as before. They told me to have a hearing, but I said: "No, why should I protest, someone has already spent the money". I have not cashed the check for one or two months, see I only cashed one. But if I told them this, they would not believe me, because the check was already lost. I just comply with their rules. I will take whatever amount they gave me. I don't really mind. Whatever they gave me. I will spend whatever amount they gave me.

Q. Do you have any problems in the caring for your children?

A. Before, I used to care for my grandchildren. Now, I stop caring for them. I did it when I lived with *Hong Chhum*.

Q. Did your children do anything to worry you?

A. No, my children never did anything to worry me. My children go to work, and my grandchildren go to school. When they come home, I would cook for them. Sometimes when they come home, they helped me cook. Sometimes, they were busy with their home works, and I would make rice and foods for them. My children are straight, they are fine. Whatever I try to teach them, they are readily susceptible. They mind me. They never did anything to worry me. The only thing is, that sometimes, when they came back from school, they went to the library. They would call me and tell me that they can't come home yet. She said she is at

the library, and isn't able to come home yet. She said: " When Auntie came from work, can Auntie please come to pick me up?" When my daughter came home, she went to pick her. Another one works until 6 o'clock before he she gets off. At 6 o'clock, someone went to pick her up at the insurance company.

Q. Do you allow your children to go out?

A. I don't usually allow them to go out. I don't like the fact that they go out. I don't want them to go out. Even when we now live in the United States, I still don't want them to go out.

Q. Do your children follow your advice?

A. They do when they want to go out, their uncle *Hor* would take them out. *Hor* feels sorry for his niece and nephew. " I will take them to the store, or somewhere else". I said "OK if you go then take them along." If *Hor* didn't take them, I would not let them go out with anyone else. I am still old fashioned.

Q. Do allow your children to go with their friends?

A. No, I don't. My grandchild has no friends. She only has friends who are at the school. But she don't bring friends home, never. She never bring them home. Well, they might call, yes. They would telephone her, such as asking her about the homework, see? I always teach them about that. I don't like people who go out like that.

Q. Right after you came to America, how was your life? Do you have any problems with your way of life?

A. There were no problems. I am happy here. It was difficult in Cambodia.

Q. No, when you first came to America, did you have any problems?

A. When I first came, I had some problems, yes. I didn't speak the language. I went to study English for a couple of months. I remembered some expressions, when I came home I forgot all of them. I didn't study it any more. I just study for a couple of months., but I didn't learn any- I didn't pursue the learning. If I tried very hard, I might be able to learn something. If we learn to do something else, we would know how to do it, we would remember. This is because ...I rely on the fact that there are some Cambodians who can talk to me, then I just speak Cambodian. If there aren't any Cambodians, and there are only American people, then I would speak English with them. Whether or not my English is correct, I can still speak some English.

- Q. When you first got off the airplane, how did you feel?
- A. When I first came here, it is normal that I had some feelings about this country. In Cambodia people told me that there is no rice here, laughs. It was too cold as laughs; they fed me only bread. I said: " Oh, no! How can I live by bread?" my two Laughs, I was used to eat rice, you know? When I came home, well, everything is just fine; we have plenty of everything and it is just wonderful, just like in is then Cambodia, for me anyway. Just look, the elderly are given assistance. We have enough to spend. I have some money to contribute to religious ceremonies.
- Q. You said that it is more wonderful here than in Cambodia. Is it more wonderful before 1975 or after 1975?
- A. Ugh, when I was there, I had to make my own living; it was wonderful, yes. When the Khmer Rouge mistreated us, well, I was frightened and afraid. I was very for, worried. You see, I heard gun fires quite often. I always had to run, and hide and it was very difficult. When I came here and have a wonderful life, I forget all the hard times.
- Q. When you first came here to live were there any of your neighbors who are Cambodians? Did they welcome the Cambodian families?
- A. When I first arrived, there were just a few people. There were only about 500 people, that was all. Well, it was in 1980s, you see?
- Q. What year did you come to America?
- A. I arrived here on July 17th, 1981.
- Dr. So then, she had to be the first Cambodian who arrived in the United States.
- Q. Who lives with you in the United States? What relationship is this person to you?
- A. When we came here, there were four of us: *Hok Nov*, *Viravuth*, grandpa, my husband, and me. *Hok Nov* is Grandpa's niece. *Viravuth* is Grandpa's nephew's son that is *Hok Nov's* older sister's son. Grandpa is my husband. Right now we have many nephews and nieces. On my side, there are *Hong Chhun*, who is my younger brother's son. *Kim Ean* died in 1986. He arrived here in 1981. My brother's children with his second wife are altogether three. There are two children with his first wife: *Chhon Hiep*, and *Hong Chhum*. *Hor* is my second cousin, and *Chan Than* is my niece. I arrange their marriage. They are relatives.
- Q. Who is the head of the family who oversees it?

- A. *Chhiv Bui*. I live with *Chhiv Bui*. This house belongs to *Chhiv Bui*. She is my niece and I raised her. The nephews and nieces whom I counted are: *Hong Chhun*, *Chhiv Hiep*, *Chan Thorn* and *Hor*, that's all, my brothers and sisters are deceased. *Hor*, who is my second cousin, helps us with outside matters, such as buying the home, he would help us with that. He helps us with the matter my two daughters are also being taken care of *Hor*. He helps to remind them to study hard. When they finish high school, he doesn't want them to quit. He wants them to go to college.
- Q. If you came here with just grandpa, my husband, are you able to take care of these businesses yourself?
- A. No, laughs. Previously I always ask people to ask me. I asked the people whom I know, you know? When we came, then helped us, for example, going to apply for welfare. I just asked for their help. But right now, I have my nephews; I have *Hor*, *Hong Chhun*, and my own niece also helps me. When have any problems, I would show them the letters to read. Now I have my grandson. He knows enough to read and understand the letters from the doctors. He knows that the letters are bills. He knows about my appointment with the doctor. If there were just the two of you, what would be the situation that would give you the most difficulty?
- A. No, there is no difficulty. First, it was a little bit difficult. After I have been here for awhile, like right now, everything is better. I know some people.
- Q. You said you had some difficulty. What was the difficulty?
- A. I had difficulty because I don't know the language. As for grandpa, he learned some English. Previously, the people from the church came and drove him to the English classes. That happened two days a week. But I don't really know if he can speak it or not.; he might have forgotten all of it. I want to learn it, but then I was sick. They took me to the hospital where I was admitted. I like to know how to tell them where it hurts. I really want to learn, but I just can't remember. Well, I just give up. If I just try to memorize, just try to learn, I am sure I will learn. I just said to myself oh well, I still have some people to help me. I don't try to learn it on my own.
- Q. Since you came to America, what problems did you and your family have? Were there any illness? Was there any death?
- A. Oh, two people died, one younger brother died. His name is *Kim Ean*. The other one is *Chhiv Bui*'s husband named *Baan Ho*, who died in 1986. One died in August, the other one died in September, in the same year, 1986. .

- Q. What did *Baan Ho* die of?
- A. His illness was very serious. The doctors could not cure him. We spent a lot of money treating him. The white blood cells destroyed the red blood cells, I don't really understand that. I think his blood pressure was too low. Previously he lived in Illinois. He didn't get well when he was treated in Illinois. When he heard that I came here, he moved here, too. He was treated there, but was not cured. He went to a doctor in Boston to be treated at Mount Auburn hospital, but he was not cured. He came to live here for one year, and he died. He had been sick in Illinois for one year.
- Q. What was your brother *Ean* die of? How did he die?
- A. He had hypertension. People said that hypertension makes the veins break. He was not sick at all. He came to my house twice. He went to visit at his brother's and sister's-in-law's house, on his wife's side, twice. When he went back home, he took a shower. After the shower, he went to sleep. When he went to sleep, he felt like he was ill. He called his wife to rub him with the tiger balm and a coin. When his wife took the coin to rub him, he was just gone. He didn't speak. They took him to the hospital. They gave him oxygen. They did everything for him but he was still unconscious. Well, he was still breathing, but his soul was gone. He was in a coma.
- Q. How old was your younger brother?
- A. He was 58 years old.
- Q. Was any of your nephew or niece ill?
- A. I don't really know. His three children live here. His other child lives in Thailand. He gave one child to someone in Bangkok. In my family, there are only two members who died here in the U.S.
- Q. Do you have any worry or problem because of something that happens in your family?
- A. No. Right now, I don't think that I have anything to worry about. It seems like everything is going well. I don't have any more profession. I am not working. Previously, I had some difficulties. Right now, I live by the money, the charity which was given to me, and I have no problem.
- Q. Do you still have any relative in Cambodia?

- A. Yes, I do. I worry about the people in Cambodia. When I got the assistance, I took part of it and sent it to Cambodia. I sent it to my younger brother's son named Ean. His second wife in Cambodia has 4 more children. He has three wives. The first wife has two children. They were divorced. She had another husband. His second wife has 4 children. He divorced this one too. He has another wife. He didn't even finish with the divorce, when he took another wife, you know, his present day wife.
- Q. Who is the one who lives in Cambodia ?
- A. I have an older sister who lives there. Her name is *Haang*. She is almost 80 years old.
- Q. When you think about your older sister, what kind of worries do you have about her ?
- A. I think about her, but I don't know how I can go over there. I don't have enough money for the trip. How can I go over there ? Her legs and her arms are paralyzed. She is bed ridden. She can't move, she is bed ridden. She has *Siv Hor* to look after her. He is her son. Right now, she is taken to Phnom Penh. She is bed ridden. I sent her some money. I never sent her too much money. Previously, I would send her either \$110 or \$50 each time. But now I only send her \$40. The money is not I always scrap a little bit of money here and a little bit of money there.
- Q. Do you think that you will be able to see your younger sister ?
- A. I don't have any hope at all. Where would I get the money to go see her. It looks as if she The other day, I recorded (my messages) on a video tape and sent it to her I don't whether her niece took it and gave it to her or not. I sent it to my younger sister-in-law. She is my younger brother's wife, you know, *lea*. I sent it to the nephew, niece and my sister-in-law. They are his son, daughter and his wife. I sent \$250. *Ngnaa* Chips in. *Chhiv Hon* chips in. I only chip in \$100. We chip in together \$250 and sent it to them.
- Q. Do you think about your relatives in Cambodia very often ?
- A. Yes, I often think about them. I thought, if I have money, I would send some to them. I have no way of going over there. It cost too much money. It costs more than \$1,000. It costs close to \$2,000. Where do I get money for this trip there?
- Q. What are the things that you worry about in Cambodia?

- A. Well, I don't really know what I worry about. There are only two relatives left. I really want to go there and see her face. But never mind, it doesn't look like I am able to go at all I have already told her so. I will certainly die in this country, if I can't go back to Cambodia.
- Q. Are you able to talk to her on the telephone ?
- A. No, I have never done that. I am afraid that I have to pay too much. I only sent her whatever amount of money that I have saved.
- Q. You are an elderly woman, are you thinking a lot about the past ? Do you think a lot about your way of life in the past, and, on occasion, do you think that you are living in Cambodia ?
- A. No, why should I think about it ? Right now, I am happy. The other day I went to Mzus and I had a good time in the forest. In the forest, the people meditate. There are people you sit and meditate. After sitting, they would walk around and meditate. I would go to see the Japanese temple. I went to the temple and sat inside and meditated. The people built the temple in a circle this way, and we would stay around the passages which are left for us to walk. I would go and sit there because they are quiet. They built the passages like an arena the same way that Grandma Yang built in the Kandaal pagoda.
- Q. You mean to say that you don't think about your childhood in Cambodia, you don't think about your life during *Pol Pot's* regime, you don't think about life in Cambodia, you stop thinking about everything then ?
- A. I give some thoughts to those times. Once in awhile, I think about my life during *Pol Pot* time, when it was so much hardship; I especially think about *Pol Pot* time. I also think about the pre 1975 era. I think about this once in awhile. When I was there in Cambodia, even when I was so exhausted, I wasn't afraid to be too tired, because I wanted to have some money. When one wants to have money, one tries very hard. When I think about it, it seems like my energy was spent for nothing. When I think about it, I regret that I spent so much energy then. Oh, but I really tried very hard to earn money. My energy was spent for nothing; I get nothing in return. During *Pol Pot* regime I thought that it looked as if nothing ever changed. I thought that my life would remain the same way as it was then. It looked as if I would die because of *Pol Pot* regime. It looked as if nothing would ever change I thought that my life would remain the same. Well, things turned out fine. I just exchange whatever I had for food, and tried to do some labor for them Khmer Rouge. What could I do ? That was the way of life then. I do think about my plight during *Pol Pot* regime.

- Q. Do you think that Buddhism helps lead you toward your plight, helps you understand about the way of life, and helps you lead an easy life, and it help you not to think about your plight, isn't that right?
- A. Yes, it makes me think that, the sorrow was gone, it was in the past, it has already happened, therefore I just think about the future. Old age and death are getting closer. I am already 71 years old. I only have four more years, and people say that my day will come, my Khai age will come.
- Q. Auntie, I don't understand what Khai age means?
- A. Well, people's age is getting closer and closer to death and it remains at a certain figure. People say that, for the present generation, 75 years old is the ultimate age. It is very rare for people to be over 70 or 80 years old. If the person is 70 years old, he/she won't live to be more than 70 or 80 years old or so. I know that I am in that category.
- Q. What did you do to help other people try to forget about their hardships and suffering which they have encountered?
- A. I lead them to give arms for merits, and be charitable to do meditation, to meditate, so they can be rid of unhappiness, and we are able to rid ourselves of material things. . . We should reflect on grief, on the ephemeral state of being, the uncertainty, death. We are told to rid of lust rid of lust, that means that we should rid of lust, revenge, toward our friends, rid of laziness, greed coveting other people's wealth. We should rid of these 5 vices cited in the Dharmas. If we are able to rid of these vices, then we are all right. This kind of control helps us to cope with grief. The serenity comes from within. We should be charitable. When someone says offending words to us, we shouldn't get angry. Try to maintain our mind calm. When someone says something which is enough to make us angry, just try to suppress anger. We have anger just like everybody else. Some people can not control anger, say a few angry words back. Other people who can control their anger, are secretly able to keep quiet, you know, when we suppress it for awhile, the anger subsides.
- Q. How many hours do you meditate a day? Do you meditate every day?
- A. If I go to the pagoda, I meditate 3 times a day. In the morning, I would pray to Buddha. After the prayer, I sit and meditate for one hour, and I would go out of the temple. Afterwards, I would meditate while walking. For one hour or half an hour, depending on my strengths. Then I would rest. When I am at home, I meditate in the morning. and at night I get up early in the morning, then at night

before going to bed. Sometimes it varies. When I could not sleep the night before, when I woke up the next morning, if I wanted to do it, I would. I would do it any time, my strength permitted. Sometimes, laziness sets in., and it perseverance. Is gone. But we are told to be patient. We must be patient, and do meditations and shouldn't be lazy. I would do meditations for half - an hour or one hour, whether it is more or less, I still did them.

Q. Do the meditations help you to stay calm and rid of worries ?

A. The meditations can help me rid of worries. After doing them for a long time, I am able to rid myself of worries gradually. I am able to do this gradually. I just forget about the ties to material things. Everybody possesses the same physical needs. We can not count them in our daily life. But we have to rid of them, you see.

Q. During the *Pol Pot* regime, you had such a strife. After you learn the Buddha Dharma, do you understand and forgive the Khmer Rouge ?

A. Laughs I don't condemn them I reflect like this: This is the prophecy for our country. I am not the only person who had a hardship. People in the whole country had a hardship. I don't want to have Karma with them Let them be whatever they want to be. I pray every day and the prayer is intended for them, you know. After the meditation, I would recite the Dharma about elementary for them. I recite it for all the animals, you see, so that they too can be well. I do not try to have trouble with them, or be angry with them. Once in awhile I would remember life under their regime., and I would talk about it, but I am not angry.

Q. You said, "Once in awhile you would think about it and would talk about it." What kind of stories did you talk about ?

A. I talked about it. I thought about that time when they would mistreat me in this manner or that manner. I was starved and I had nothing. They gave us rice bran to eat. They gave us watery rice porridge to eat. There was no food to eat. They would boil the *trakuon*, a kind of vegetable. At first they gave us the preserved ; they still had some fish that they put into the soup. But later on, they didn't have any themselves, and they were not able to find any food. They just boiled the *trakuons* and put some salt on. Those who could not eat this kind of soup got emaciated and died.

Q. You said that: "It's the country's fate." What do you mean by that ? He doesn't understand it .

A. It means, everybody suffers the same fate, everybody suffers. The time has arrived

for the country to be in this kind of state. The time has come for us, to be in this kind of state, to have a hardship. How can I get angry with them? It is our Karma which makes us meet with such fate. If we don't have Karma, he came abroad, and we would be spared. But we get attached to our wealth. We think: Oh, my rice fields; we always think about ourselves too much; we think about our rice fields, our villages, our orchards, our houses. How can we leave? Then, there would be some people who owe us some money, and such and such matters which entangle us. Therefore we can't leave. If we left before this happened we were able to do so, just like some other people, we were able to leave. Look at Sister *Chhaay*, uncle *Hong*, they left. They didn't suffer like us. Some people told me about the plight but I didn't believe them I said: "No way". They said that, later on, we would not have any money to spend, and we should try to exchange our money for the Thai currency, and that I should go to live in Thailand. I didn't believe them. I said: "Sure, how can anybody not money to spend. It's money! We work very hard until sweat breaks out and flows like water.!" Then the Khmer Rouge destroyed money. Oh, how much can I be wrong!

Q. According to Buddhism, what makes people have bad Karma? Do we suffer bad Karma?

A. In my opinion, it is because we are ignorant. At that time we were very ignorant. When some people informed us about so thing, we would not believe them. They told us that we better not keep our money. The Khmer Rouge did not keep money. We didn't believe them. Come on, we try very hard to make a living, we sweat, we spend our energy, why don't they use money? I didn't believe those people. I didn't know our country could be in such a state. Just think about it, ever since I came to this world, our country has never been ' this state. When we lived during the Thai's transition of rule, we were at least able to exchange 100 *Riels* for 61 *Bahts*. But not during that regime. As for Karma, when we do good deeds, we will receive good deeds in return. I don't understand what happened in Cambodia. I don't know what happened. Karma is the deeds we did in the previous life. I don't know at kind of Karma we sowed in the previous life to suffer such fate. When I think about it, I ask why we had such Karma? People say that every body received the same Karma. Every body had a strife. Some people had a hardship and died under the Khmer Rouge regime. Some people were en away to be killed. We had hardship, but I cannot understand why we survived and came here to America to live. We also had Karma, but we were able to come here where it is secure. We have grief and we have happiness.

Q. Are you able to know if you had done any deeds in the previous life?

A. I don't know.

- Q. How do you feel about our country that got such fate?
- A. I would say that it is due to the leader, no doubt about this. This means that the leader has the wrong policy. The leader is not mature enough. He would join such and such a party and it is the wrong move. This brings upon us his followers the plight that we are in.
- Q. Do you have any plans in the next five years?
- A. I don't think that I will live that long.
- Q. How do you know? Do you know how many more years you are going to live for?
- A. I don't know. Whatever the material thing is, it is unpredictable.
- Q. Don't you have any plans for the next five years? How about two more years?
- A. If I were to die, then I can't do anything. Even when I live for one more year, or two more years. I don't have any goal. The only goal is for me to adhere to the Dharmas. So that I will be pure, and also to do the meditations. I put all my energy on these principles. I don't have any more profession. Right now, I don't have any worries. I am rid of everything. I don't want to wear any clothes that are too beautiful. They should be like everybody else's clothes. I always like the colors white and black, white and black. I even shave my head. I don't have a *hun*, measure of gold, of gold on me. I only have money. People told me that I should adhere to the 10 Buddhist precepts. I adhere to the 8 Buddhist precepts, and that should be enough. This way, I fast in the evening. If I adhere to the 10 Buddhist precepts; it is against the principle of using money. When we adhere to the 10 Buddhist precepts, we stop using money. How can we use money to exchange for goods?
- Q. Why do you spend the two years so you can learn about Buddhism?
- A. It is like I was destined to do it from my previous life. It may be that my ancestors used to do it in the previous life, and this continues until now, I don't really know. I am endowed with spiritualism, I guess.
- Q. Do you feel that you prepare yourself to accept death and for the after life?
- A. Yes, that's right. I did the religious merits so that my mind is pure, so that it follows Buddhism's Dharmas. I am a true devout. I am not just a half believer, like example I might convert myself to another faith, that's not the case. I sacrifice my body and my life for Buddha, for the monks. Even when people told

me that if you have a Buddhist faith, I will be punished, I would dare the challenge; I would sacrifice my life for it. I am a devout Buddhist. I don't my faith in any other religion. I have faith in Buddha.

- Q. Are you afraid of death? Or do you expect death?
- A. No, I am not afraid of it. I am this old now. I am very old. How much longer can I live beyond this? After 70 years old, one is very old. This is the reason why I try to make my mind pure. I don't want to be angry, be greedy and covet other people's wealth. I want to weigh my words. I don't want to lie. I want to speak the truth. I don't want to talk about things that are untrue. The Buddhist forbid us to do many things, such as not to kill animals, not to steal other people's wealth, not to lie, not to drink, not to gamble. Ever since the chief monk taught me Buddhist precepts, I followed every principle. The Buddhist precepts taught us not to wear gold, not to use our money to lend to other people with interest, not to play lottery, not to gamble. I stop these things forever. The chief monk told us not to play *Tong Teen*, lending money and charge high interest. This will only tie us to material things. We would think: "Oh, on this day, the event will happen this way, and some one will pay enough interest to get the loan". I said: "We shouldn't want the money. Whoever will be so wealthy as to have the wealth come down through the open roof, just don't even worry about it."
- Q. Because you have encountered such strife, are you happy to prepare yourself for your new life?
- A. Yes! This is the one situation that makes me happy. I don't get excited when someone is wealthy, and I don't care. I don't seem to want anything. I just prepare my way to the after life. We are not taking anything with us when we travel the path there. We brought nothing when we came, and we take nothing when we go. We don't possess anything at all. We have nothing. We just make our mind pure.
- Q. What kind of life do you think you lead? What level of life are you leading?
- A. Ever since I was young, I seldom do any bad deeds such as committing frauds, embezzlement, and slaughtering animals. I make an honest way of living. This is the reason why I always make an honest living ever since, even when I came here. I can't really say what level of life I am leading, but I just prepare myself well, you know, Buddhist Dharma taught us to rid ourselves of greed, and not to be to be charitable and not to commit sins, to make our mind pure, to be charitable. These principles aren't all that many, you know. We were told not to commit sins, to make our mind pure. I haven't done anything bad.
- Q. Dr. Mollica wants to ask you about something. He says that it is unusual for the

American couples who are husbands and wives, and yet don't live together like you and your husband. Please explain either about your way of thinking or about the Cambodian customs.

A. Laughs Well, right now we are going our separate ways, as you can see. We don't have a relationship. Well, it's like this : the monk, her husband, became monk and he gets the merits, and I am adhering to the Buddhist Dharma, and I get my own merits. We both try very hard to make the merits respectively. Adhering to the Dharma cannot be shared between people. We are able to share the material things. As for adhering to the Dharma, those who do it will get the merits; those who don't do it, will not get the merits. Please observe those who adhere to the Dharma, who understand the Dharma, their mind is not upset, jealous, or wishing bad things about other people. For example, those who don't adhere to the Dharma, when they get angry, they fly into a rage, and cannot refrain from doing that. As for those who adhere to the Dharma, they can put a brake to that anger. They know that they are angry, yes, they are angry, but they can control the anger. Some people just fly into a rage, and are not able to control themselves. The Dharma help us to control ourselves, and to understand that by being angry, we go against the teaching of the Dharma, and by doing this, we go against the Buddhist precepts. Therefore, our mind is being reformed from being angry.

Q. At the first, why did *Lok Ta*, your husband decide to go and enter the monk hood?

A. I don't really know why. First, I wanted him to join the monk hood. I said: *Lok Ta* join the monk hood. You know, why are you staying home? You have nothing to do at home anyway. All you do is the copy the Dharma, and read books, copy the Dharma, and read the Dharma. You do this all day long. You don't do any work. The food is ready for you. When the food is ready, I put it on a tray and take it to him. In the morning, I make the porridge, or rice for him, and I serve you:- Well, go join the monk hood"! He answered, "Well, even if you pay me \$5,000, I won't join the monk hood. Joining the monk hood is difficult, you know, when you join the monk hood, if you adhere to the Buddhist principles the correct way, you are fine. But if you do it the wrong way, you go to hell" This is what he said. Later on, he would study the Buddhist principles and understood them; I guess he know the way to adhere to the Buddhist principles by now.

Q. Later on, why did the monk decide to join the monk hood?

A. Later on, I don't really know what made him do it, or what he felt. He said "I join the monk hood". You know, he asked me for the permission to join the monk hood. I said "Oh, I am very happy". I joined my hands and lift them above my head, a sign of praying to Buddha in moments of joy. I said: "When you join the monk hood, oh Lord Buddha, I am very happy. I receive a lot of merits. According

to the *Ennesankh* he should receive 64 *Kab*, equal to eternity, but I don't really know how much is a *Kab*, I don't know the real meaning of it. I was told that when the husband enters the monk hood, we should receive 64 *Kap*. There are a lot of merits in this action. Then I prepared to sew the monk's robes, the monk's robes for bathing, the monk's robes for the lower parts, and the bags.

Q. Auntie, How many years passed before he decided to enter the monk hood?

A. First, he said that he didn't want to enter the monk hood. It was about 2 to 3 years before he made that decision, ever since Ban Ho passed away, and *Ean* passed away, it was since that time. After that time, I really don't know what he was thinking about, or how he arrived at the conclusion. He said that he wanted to lead the way to religion; he wanted to lead those who are ignorant to understand the religion. He wanted religion to prosper, and that's the reason why he entered the monk hood. The monk hood will lead Grandma and Grandpa, the monk, toward the way to Nirvana. He said that meditation will lead to Nirvana. This way is the way to Nirvana. That's the reason why he wanted to lead the way.

Q. How many years has it been since the monk entered the monk hood?

A. He has been in the monk hood for three years now.

Q. Auntie, Dr. Mollica asks whether or not every man can enter the monk hood. Is there any need for the men to learn anything special?

A. Yes, they have to learn something. The monks who enter the monk hood have to learn something. He (her husband) accompanied the monk to the temple in Washington, DC. The monk went to the pagoda in Washington DC. The head monk at the temple in Washington, DC has him learn the Buddhist discipline, the regulations for the monks. As for Grandpa, he already knows the Buddhist Dharma when he was young, when he entered the monk hood. All he had to do was to take the Dharma book or the book of regulations for the monks, and read it and recited, and he would remember the regulations. He studied the principles and the regulations so that he can abide by the Buddhist principles. He studied them with the head monk for awhile. He adhered to the Ten Buddhist Precepts and he would fast in the evening. He would wear white clothing. Before he entered the monk hood, he stayed at the pagoda in Washington DC.

Q. Ever since the monk entered the monk hood, do you see him very often?

A. After he entered the monk hood, he stayed in the pagoda in Washington DC. I guess he stayed there for 3 or 4 months. This is when the head monk in Washington DC went to Buddha's place of birth, to India, and the monk would

look after the pagoda for him. When the head monk returned, the people in Lowell, the pagoda people, the elderly men went to accompany the monk back here and he came back.

- Q. Are you making foods for the monk everyday?
- A. Previously, Grandma *Ran* cooked for him. When she was sick, I cook for him. Right now, I stop making them. *Hor* makes them, you know it's a man that cooks. He makes porridge, rice. When I went to the pagoda on Buddhist Holy Day, I went the night before. In the morning I prayed and received the Buddhist precepts. And I would then cook for the monk. In the evening, I would do the meditations. In the evenings, I would do the meditations. If there were many elderly ladies at the pagoda, I would stay there with them. If not, I would come back home with the rest of them. Right now, Grandpa *Hor* is the cook for the monks. He takes the responsibility to do it. I don't have to take the responsibility. This is the reason why I am able to go anywhere that I want to.
- Q. Are you going to the pagoda everyday?
- A. No, right now, I don't get to go there too often. I would go there sometimes. I would stay home for one day, two days. I would go to the pagoda on Sunday. I would go there on religious celebrations, you know, in order to help the people cook, and then I would come back home afterwards. I usually just stay home. I would go to the pagoda on Buddhist Holy Day. I go there on Sundays, too, on Sunday evenings, to do meditations.
- Q. Dr. Mollica wants to know that, when the monk entered the monk hood and thus becomes a monk, are you and the monk still husband and wife or are you divorced?
- A. Divorced. When the monk went to enter the monk hood, the head monk, Honorable *Oung Mean* wanted me to sign a paper for him. He prepared a statement for me to sign and to have my fingerprints on it. I took it to him, before he agreed to have the monk enter the monk hood. We are not husband and wife.
- Q. Were you divorced under this country's laws?
- A. No we weren't divorced under the law. But the head monk wanted us to prepare a statement and for me to sign it., saying that I agree for the monk to enter the monk hood, that the monk had my permission to enter the monk hood. I had my fingerprint taken and my name signed on it. We gave the statement to the head monk, we made a statement for him before he agreed to have the monk enter the monk hood. If not for the statement, he would not have agreed to do it.

- Q. Now that the monk has entered the monk hood, he cannot touch women, or hold their hands, isn't that right?
- A. Ugh! ugh, he can't. He can't even touch girls. He can't touch children, as long as they are girls. He can only touch boys.
- Q. Do you miss your husband? Are you happy that the monk entered the monk hood?
- A. I am delighted, very delighted. I don't miss him. I think that I receive a lot of religious merits. I consider the religious merits as important. The merits measure 64 *Kabs*, you see. I thought that I will receive a lot of merits. I let him enter the monk hood. I am happy. When he entered the monk hood, things are getting easier for me whispering. When we want to go somewhere, we are free to go there laughs. It is easier for me to go anywhere.
- Q. Is the monk a good monk who adheres to the Buddhist principles?
- A. This monk adheres strictly to the Buddhist principles. He does not handle money. He adheres strictly to the Buddhist principles. When I went to the pagoda, he didn't dare talk to me, not one word. He never spoke to me. He never spoke to me. Even when he had some matters that he wanted to discuss with me, he would not talk to me. If he had some matters to discuss with me, he would do it with the *Achaa*, a layman who arranges Buddhist ceremonies at a temple. Well with me, he would discuss them with the *Achaa* or the Buddhist committee. He never discussed them with me. He never discussed anything with me at all. He never did. He adheres strictly to the Buddhist, principles, you know. Well, we are separated; we go our separate ways.
- Q. This means that you are very fond of him, isn't that so?
- A. I am very happy. I am very happy that, I don't have to care for him like before, for example, like preparing foods for him. Right now, I have it easy. He would eat the foods that the people offered to him. He never complains whether the foods are bland or too salty. He never complains whether the foods are delicious or they don't taste good. If he can eat the foods, it's fine. If he can't eat the foods, that's fine too.
- Q. Before the monk entered the monk hood, was he choosy about the foods?
- A. He was choosy, very choosy, oh! Very choosy. But now, he is not choosy. When the people don't put enough salt in their foods, that fine for him. When they put too much salt, that's fine for him. If he can eat them, it is fine. But when he can't

eat them, it's fine too. It's all right the way it is.

Q. Dr. Mollica said that, the monk is probably very pleased with you being a very good nun, right?

A. He is pleased. He taught the grandmas and the grandpas the Dhammas. He gave me some Buddhist scriptures to learn too. He tries to lead us to walk the right way. Take for example my trip to Amherst. The monk said that my trip to Amherst is a very good idea.

Q. Dr. Mollica said, he believes that, you will have a longer life, at least 10 more years.

A. Laughs... If I can live 10 years longer, I will be very happy. This means that when I live that long, I will be able to receive Buddhist precepts, to meditate. When we do good deeds, when we are generous, we will be blessed. If we live longer and do bad deeds, it would be a waste. That's right, we would live for no purpose. We may have a long life, but we serve no purpose. If we live longer and can do meditations, we do something important, and we contribute to the leadership. For example, for the Buddhist nuns, we are able to provide them with the Dhammas, to help them with the Dhammas, to give them the Dhammas books so they can read them, or we can read them to them, and explain the Dhammas to them.

Q. Can you read the Sanskrit?

A. Yes, I can read the *Pali*.

Q. Do you still remember some stories which your parents told you in order to educate or give you guidance?

A. Uh! Remembering stories! We studied before like "*Cbap Kram*", poetic book concerning rules of conduct, "*Cbap Ke Kall*", "*Cbap Koun Caw*", poetic book containing rules of conduct for children, "*Cbap Srey*", poetic book containing rules for women. All of these *Cbap* taught us a lot of good things. For example, "*Cbap Kram*" teaches children "not to pass the whole wealth on to their children because there are siblings, or the others who will take care of you when you get old or sick. It's true it is not a good idea to give the whole wealth to the children. Have to keep some for yourself. If you give them all, they will not take care of you now a days in this country you get money from American government, but in our country, Cambodia, you get nothing from the government. In Cambodia, if your children won't take care of you, you will suffer for the rest of your life. The old Buddhist Monk told a riddle to the elderly men "to cut 3 woods; to take care of 10 woods; to drink 5 packages of medication; to abstain from doing 2 things".

Some could solve this riddle, some couldn't:

- To cut three woods means to get rid of envy, hatred, ignorance.
- To take care of 10 woods is 10 deeds like 10 Buddhist principles, is it right, Auntie? Yes, it is right.
- To drink 5 packages of medicine is to have 5 Buddhist principles with you.
- To abstain from doing 2 things right are "Hiri" and "Utabaak".

"Hiri" is a shame or shyness. If we shame of the sin, we are afraid of doing evil and shameful things. If people shame only in front of the other people, but they abstain behind their back that is called having "Hiri and Utabaak". Some old men could solve this riddle.

The proverb said, to make soup with low salt, to put yourself at the lower level, to have a great behavior, it is right. "To start making soup with low salt is good." "To place yourself at the power level instead of to show yourself up is good". "To have a great behavior, some people have cheap behavior then they pretend that they have great behavior, that is not good at all." Buddhist monks teach us to practice the 5 Buddhist precepts and to remember the 8 Buddhist precepts. People who practice the 5 Buddhist precepts: do not kill, not steal, not lie, not drink alcohol, not have an affair with peoples' wives.

Throwing the shuttle of weaving from one side, they remember the Dharma, and think about death. Nowadays no one thinks about the Dharma or death. Most of us forget about these. People who meditate look for the way to death.

"*Kammeatthan*", an analytical medication, is to know what you are doing, e.g. left or right sitting down, sleeping, working, standing up and eating. If you don't work carefully, you will stumble then you don't have your mind with you. People do things carefully when they have their mind with them. To associate with the wise man has the power and not to be stumped. To associate with an ignorant person is stupid, naive and wondered.