Spring 2018

Dolpopa

Yvette Segan

SIT Study Abroad

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/isp_collection

Part of the Asian Studies Commons, Family, Life Course, and Society Commons, Place and Environment Commons, and the Work, Economy and Organizations Commons

Recommended Citation
https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/isp_collection/2859

This Unpublished Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the SIT Study Abroad at SIT Digital Collections. It has been accepted for inclusion in Independent Study Project (ISP) Collection by an authorized administrator of SIT Digital Collections. For more information, please contact digitalcollections@sit.edu.
Dolpopa
དོལ་པོ་པ་
by Yvette Segan

Academic Director: Onians, Isabelle
Senior Faculty Advisor: Decler, Hubert
Project Advisor: Moore, Zachary
Vassar College
Drama
Asia, Zomia, Nepal, Dolpo, Dho Tarap
Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Nepal: Tibetan and Himalayan Peoples,
SIT Study Abroad, Spring 2018
Abstract

The village of Dho is located in the Tarap Valley in the Himalayas of western Nepal. In the limited literature about the region, it is generally regarded as one of the most remote villages in the world with a culture that has been largely preserved due to the lack of accessibility. The villagers today maintain a trade that has been occurring for hundreds, if not thousands, of years with Tibet to ascertain the goods that they need. Lower Nepal is less available for trade due to the lack of a drivable road between Kathmandu and Dho Tarap. This has resulted in a tight knit community with a rich culture. The realities of life in Dho are complex and dynamic, filled with dilemmas, customs, and the struggle between tradition and change.
Acknowledgments

Thank you to the SIT staff for encouraging me in this project.

I would also like to thank Zachary Moore for all of his generosity of time and energy. Your support and attention has been helpful and vital to me in this process.

A big thank you to Phurwa Dhondup for inviting us into his life and home. I wouldn’t have been able to write even half of this without your advice and insight.

Thank you to my lovely homestay family in Dho, and all of the wonderful co-researchers who helped me with interviews and connections. Thank you to my interviewees who took time out of their busy days to speak with me, and thank you to all of the 10th graders who delayed their journeys in order to take us on the beautiful and arduous trek to Dho Tarap.

And last, but not least, I would like to thank Pepto Bismol. I truly do not know where I would be without you.
Table of Contents

Title ...........................................................................................................................................1
Abstract .................................................................................................................................2
Acknowledgements ...............................................................................................................3
Introduction ............................................................................................................................5
Scene 1 ....................................................................................................................................6
Scene 2 ...................................................................................................................................10
Scene 3 ..................................................................................................................................16
Scene 4 ..................................................................................................................................21
Scene 5 ..................................................................................................................................31
Scene 6 ..................................................................................................................................34
Glossary .................................................................................................................................35
Bibliography ..........................................................................................................................36
Suggestions for future research ...............................................................................................37
Introduction

Characters:

Palsang: Female; 62 years old; mother and center of household. Lived in Dho or surrounding villages her whole life.

Sonam: Male; 40 years old; uneducated son of Palsang.

Nyima: Female; 33 years old; uneducated married to Sonam.

Tsering: Female; 26 years old; uneducated.

Pema: Female; 6 years old; daughter of Nyima and Sonam.

Dawa: Female; 22 years old; just finished studies in Kathmandu. Back home to visit and help her family with farming.

Dhargey: Male; 35 years old; friend of Sonam.

Setting: Springtime in Dho, a small village located in the Tarap valley in the Himalayas of Nepal. The play takes place in a mid-sized home in the dark kitchen with no windows save for a small ceiling opening covered on the outside by a translucent tarp. The walls of the home largely made of stone, mud, and wood scaffolding. The wall of the kitchen stage left is lined with large, floor to ceiling, wooden shelves with pots, pans, plates, and different types of porcelain or glass cups and bowls. The wall stage right has 2 deep-set Tibetan-Style couches with thin, wooden coffee tables in front of them. The center wall has a low wooden shelf and a doorway blocked by a tall wooden shelf with pots stacked on it and a blender and a power strip on the floor in front. There is a doorway downstage left that leads to the storage room. The center of the room has a black wood-burning stove with a chimney pipe that goes up into the ceiling. Next to it is a cut-open green plastic container holding dried yak dung-cakes and juniper root pieces. Downstage and to the right of the stove are a cushion and a rug. The rest is wooden floor.
Scene 1

It is early in the morning. 6am. Sounds of horses neighing in the background and the light noise of a stream close by. The sunrise slowly lights up the stage.

Palsang enters from the doorway, quickly tying her chuba\(^1\) and fastening her striped belt and triangle apron. She gets to the stove and sits at it’s opening with one knee raised. She begins to light it by taking sticks and dried manure from the bucket next to her and placing them in the stove. She then blows on the fire until it grows. She puts water from another container into a kettle on the stovetop.

Tsering enters in a similar fashion.

Tsering: Morning Ama.\(^2\)

Palsang: Good morning Tsering.

Tsering immediately begins to tie up her chuba into her belt exposing her fleece-lined grey sweatpants that she wears underneath.

Tsering: We need more water. Picking up empty plastic jugs with straps to be worn on one’s forehead and goes to the doorway. Pema! Exits into the storage room.

Enter Nyima.

Palsang: Nyima, could you feed the horses? Gesturing to the dried barley in a metal pot on the floor next to her.

Nyima: Yes yes of course. Fastens her chuba up to her belt and begins to fill burlap sacks that attach to the horses ears and exits again.

Tsering: Entering back with a large bowl of fingerling potatoes. Pema! Sits down and begins to peel and slice the potatoes.

Palsang lifts the kettle on the stove, moving it to the back burner, and puts in a few more pieces of manure. She then goes to the shelf behind her and gets a small circular pan, a rolling pin and a wooden board, and another plastic container with dough in it and another small plastic container with flour. She assumes the same seated position by the stove and begins to roll out dough on the small board in front of her.

Palsang: Pema!

Pema enters and runs to Palsang.

\(^1\) བ་

\(^2\) འམ་
Pema: Evee!3

Palsang: Ningje!4 Can you be a good girl and get some more water for us?

Pema nods and pulls two of the small empty water jugs over her head by their straps and sets off. Nyima reenters and begins to help rolling out the dough, readying potatoes, etc.

Enter Sonam.

Palsang: Sonam!

Sonam: About to sit down on the cushion next to the fire. Ho!

Palsang: Go and help your daughter with the water jugs. She’s been gone too long.

Sonam: Okay okay. Heads to the door as Pema reenters struggling with the heavy water. Sonam lifts the jugs from her. Good girl, now go and get dressed for school. Pema runs out the door again.

Nyima: I’ll go and help her. Wiping her hands on her skirt, exits.

Sonam comes back to sit again in the same seat.

Tsering: Do you want to drink tea?

Sonam: No.

Tsering: Butter tea, pö cha, or coffee?5

Sonam: No, no.

Tsering: Arak?6

Sonam: Ho yah yah7.

Tsering goes and gets a dirty green plastic container and pours him a shot glass worth of arak in a decorated porcelain glass.

Dhargey enters and stands by the door for a moment.

Palsang: Ah! Dhargey sit sit!
Dhargey: Thank you. Sits next to Sonam.

Palsang: Pö cha, coffee?

Dhargey: Oh, no, no.

Palsang: Come, drink tea!

Dhargey: No, no thank you.

Palsang: Cha thung, cha thung.\(^8\)

Dhargey: Men.\(^9\)

Sonam: Arak?

Dhargey: *Taking out a cigarette and lighting it.* Oh no, no, men, men.

Sonam: Come on, drink arak with me! *Getting a glass and pouring.*

Dhargey: Fine, fine fine. *Lifting his glass, to cheers and taking a sip.* Sonam immediately refills the glass to the brim and his own cup as well.

Palsang: Dhargey are you hungry? Do you want to eat?

Dhargey: Oh no.

Palsang: Yes, yes eat eat!

Dhargey: No no.

Palsang: Eat!

Dhargey: Men.

Palsang: Eat eat!

Dhargey: Yah yah.

Palsang begins to fill two bowls with cooked potatoes and puts a tall stack of roti (circular bread) on a plate between the two men. The men begin to eat. The women then serve themselves food, except for Palsang who waits until the men are finished to start eating. Nyima and Pema reenter and join the meal as well.

Dhargey: I hear that Dawa comes home today.

Sonam: Yes, yes. She called us from Dunai three days ago! She should be back later today.

\(^8\) རོག་

\(^9\) རོག་
Dhargey: Three days! She should be able to do the walk in two days!

Sonam: She’s been in Kathmandu for five years studying. Of course she’s slow now.

Dhargey: It always happens like that. They come back from Kathmandu and they forget how to do everything. I almost forgot how to plow the fields when I first came back.

Sonam: Really?

Dhargey: It comes back quickly.

Sonam: Good. We need her help more now.

Dhargey: Yes yes.

Sonam: It’s been very hard in the fields without Akay.¹⁰

Dhargey: It’s okay, you’ll have a few more kids and you’ll be fine.

Sonam: Oh really. Like you?

Dhargey: I have four children!

Sonam: Talk to me when you’re at 6. Then you’ll have a full basketball team!

Dhargey: Why stop at 6! I’ll keep going until I’m at 11! Then I’ll have a football team.

The men laugh. Palsang leans over to their bowls with a spoon of potatoes.

Palsang: More pate?¹¹

Dhargey: Men.

Palsang: Yes, yes more!

Dhargey: Ho.

Palsang refills both men’s bowls. Sonam refills their Arak.

Dhargey: Today is going to be a lot of hard work.

Palsang: Yes, yes, eat eat!

Dhargey: Ho yah yah. The men quickly wolf down the rest of their meals. Phurwa and Namgyal have the yaks ready for us. We should get going.

Sonam: One last arak?

¹⁰ ཉི་ཞེས་

¹¹ བ་ཏེ
Dhargey: Shyaptak![12]

The men down their drinks. Dhargey puts out his cigarette on the stove and leaves the butt. They exit.

The women finish eating their food and begin to clear the kitchen.

Nyima: Pema, it's time for school. Helps her into her backpack and sends her out the door.

Nyima and Tsering take a bowl of dirty dishes outside to clean them. Palsang continues to tend the stove.

Scene 2

Enter Dawa, escorted in with linked arms by Tsering. Palsang looks up, sees Dawa, and runs over to her gripping her arms in hers and touching their foreheads together.

Palsang: Ningje.

Dawa: Ama.

Palsang: Sit, sit, sit.

Dawa takes her position opposite the mouth of the stove where Palsang sits. Tsering sits in the middle of them. Tsering runs around getting tea and cups for the women while they all sit in tears taking each other in.

Palsang: Drink, drink.

Tsering: Thung. Are you hungry?

Dawa: Men, men, I'm fine.

Tsering: You must be hungry after all of that walking!

Dawa: Okay, okay.

Tsering goes and begins to heat up rice and prepare dal bhat.

Palsang: We didn't expect you until after lunch! How did you get here so fast?

Dawa: Well, I walked all day yesterday and the day before to try and get here as fast as possible. I would have made it in two days, but it got too dark last night at the tent in Langka, so I slept there. Then I woke up at 5 am to finish the final bit of the walk today.

Palsang: Ningje. Are you tired? Do you want to rest?

Dawa: No, no. I'm okay. Palsang refills her tea to the brim immediately after Dawa takes her first sip.

---

12 ཤབས་ཏག་
Palsang: So, did you enjoy Kathmandu?

Dawa: Yes, yes. I had a good time. I missed it here though. It's so busy and dirty in the city.

Tsering: Oh I’m sure. I don’t ever want to go to Kathmandu.

Dawa: No way. Of course you do.

Tsering: What would I do there?! I would be scared of all the motorbikes flying around.

Dawa: It’s not that bad. You get used to it. You should have come to visit me with Ama last year.

Tsering: I had to stay and look after the house. Anyway, what I’ve heard about Kathmandu sounds awful.

Palsang: At the rate things are going here, there are going to be motorbikes flying around in a few years anyway.

Dawa: Oh, yeah. I was going to ask… Is that Sonam’s bike outside?!

Tsering: Yeah, he got it from China last year. Now he rides it all the time even if he’s just going a few houses away. It's so dumb.

Palsang: Why the horse wasn't good enough for him, I'll never understand.

Tsering: The horse doesn't play music and make a lot of noise when you ride it!

Dawa: Horses could make a lot of noise if you ride it wrong enough!

They laugh.

Palsang: So, how were your exams Dawa?

Dawa: They went well! I finished with high marks.

Palsang: Ningje. We’re so happy to have you home.

Dawa: I’m so happy to be home. I’m sorry I couldn’t come back when Akay passed. I’ll never forgive myself for that.

Palsang: Don’t be silly. You were busy with school. What could you have done here anyway? Sonam and Tsering were a great help. Everyone in Dho and Tokyu all came and brought us food and money and tea.

Tsering: It was crazy! Everyday, so many people in the house. We were running around trying to feed everyone. They would just hand Sonam or Ama 50 rupees or 100 rupees.

Palsang: It was very nice of them.

Tsering: You wouldn’t believe it! We got so many eggs, too!
Dawa: Really?!

Tsering: Yes, really! 6 eggs, just for us! We almost couldn’t eat them all.

Dawa: Wow. That’s great. I still should have been there.

Palsang: You’re here now. It’s been hard without your father to work the fields and help around the house, but Sonam has been doing well.

Tsering: He has. He works hard. He, Phurwa, Dhargey, and Namgyal have a group to plow each of their fields together so we can all get done on time.

Palsang: It’s very good.

Dawa: Oh, good, good... Is Sonam still drinking?

Tsering: Yes.

Dawa: Oh.

Tsering: Not like Akay, though.

Palsang: Akay worked very hard.

Tsering: We work very hard.

Palsang: You know how men are. They like to drink.

Tsering: But—

Dawa: Here Ama, I brought you more matches from Dunai!

Palsang: Oh! Horche horche!13

Dawa: And candy for Pema!

Palsang: Oh, she’s so big now. You won’t believe it.

Dawa: I’m sure! She was just a baby the last time I was home. Where are Nyima and Sonam?

Tsering: Nyima is busy weaving, but she should be back for lunch, and Sonam is plowing the fields today.

Palsang: We only have seven days to prepare the fields this year. It’s going to be very difficult.

Tsering: It’s so good that you came today because the men are in the fields and we can rest. Tomorrow Nyima and I have to start carrying the manure.

Dawa: Oh! Good, I’ll help.

Tsering: Are you sure you still know how!?
Palsang: Don’t be silly. Of course she does.

Tsering: I’m not so sure Ama, she’s been in the big city for five years after all.

Dawa: Very funny. I can help. I think I still remember how to carry manure. It’s not that hard.

Tsering: Oh, that’s easy to say now!

Palsang: Thank you for offering Dawa. We really need your help here. It’s going to be difficult until Pema is old enough to work in the fields. Hopefully Sonam and Nyima will have more children soon.

Enter Nyima.

Nyima: Did I just hear my name?

Tsering: Ama wants more grandchildren.

Nyima: Oh, not this again. Dawa! Runs over to Dawa and they greet each other by touching foreheads.

Dawa: Nyima. How are you?

Nyima: I’m good. Same as usual. Working hard.

Palsang: Everyone has been working very hard. But still no grandchildren.

Nyima: Ama, you already have one!

Palsang: Maybe Tsering will get married soon and she can give me a grandson. You’re getting old.

Tsering: Ama!

Nyima: Maybe soon, maybe soon. And hopefully the next child will be a boy.

Palsang: Yes, yes. I hope so too. We need more men! Too many girls in this house! I was always so sad I had so few boys.

Dawa: Why, Ama?

Palsang: You have to ask? Boys have more freedom. Boys can go where ever they choose and do what ever they choose. My girls, you don’t have that.

Dawa: But I do, I think.

Palsang: Yes well, I sent you to school. You got an education. I wanted at least one of my children to have a better life than I did.

Tsering: Ama, I think things are a little different now. When you were young, men didn’t help in the fields like they do now. Things are much more equal.
Palsang: Maybe so, but don’t be naive. Men are men. Men have the power and men have the freedom.

Dawa: But women go to school just like the men.

Palsang: Change is slow.

Dawa: Change is faster than you think. Kathmandu is changing all the time.

Palsang: This is Dho. Change is slow.

Tsering: I heard that Phurwa is trying to eliminate the fee for when people marry across castes.

Dawa: Really? Do you think he’ll do it?

Tsering: I’m not sure, but he didn’t drink the golden water when his cousin eloped with that low caste boy and ran away to Kathmandu with him.

Nyima: But he let his parents have the golden water.

Tsering: But he didn’t drink it.

Nyima: He also says he wants to make arak illegal.

Dawa: No way. Doesn’t his home have a separate house just for making arak?

Nyima: That’s what he says.

Dawa: I’ll believe that when I see it.

Tsering: I think he’ll do it. I hope he does it. And I hope he makes smoking illegal too.

Dawa: I don’t think it will work even if he does.

Tsering goes and starts serving lunch, Dal bhat of potatoes, rice, and dal.

Tsering: Why not?

Dawa: Because making something like that illegal just makes people want it more I think. And you’ll never stop the old men from drinking.

Palsang: Nothing would have stopped your father from drinking.

Tsering: He drank too much.

Palsang: They always say that they need it to keep warm or that they work so hard all day and they have to drink—

Tsering: Or they say that they just want to have fun—

Nyima: Or that they need it to relax—

Tsering: Or they deserve a break...
Nyima: Men are different when they drink.
Palsang: Men are different when they drink.
Tsering: Tsewang’s husband hits her when he drinks.
Dawa: Ah mah! How do you know?
Tsering: I saw it.
Dawa: He hit her in front of you?
Tsering: Yes.
Dawa: Why? What happened?
Tsering: I was at her house just for a visit and her husband came in drunk and yelling so she tried to tell him he couldn’t have any more alcohol and he hit her.
Nyima: I can’t believe he would do that in front of you.
Tsering: In front of his kids, too.
Dawa: Ah mah.
Palsang: He used to hit her but he doesn’t anymore.
Tsering: Really?
Palsang: Yes, because once he got angry and started breaking plates and glasses, so she got fed up and picked up one of their thermoses and threw it so hard that it cracked in half. After that he stopped.
Dawa: Ah mah.
Tsering: I guess also Dhondup is a small man. She can just hit him back!

They laugh.
Palsang: Your father used to hit me.
Dawa: Ama what?
Palsang: When we were young. I don’t think he remembered after. He was quite drunk.
Tsering: Ah mah!
Palsang: It was only a few times.
Dawa: Akay hit you.
Palsang: A long time ago. He hadn’t in many many years before he died. He was drunk. He became angry with me for something. What is there to do?

Nyima: I’ve tried to tell Sonam not to drink. Every time I try he says that he drinks so much so that he can keep working…

Tsering: Blah blah blah they all say that. Women work hard too.

Dawa: And women don’t drink.

Tsering: Some women drink.

Dawa: I would never! I’ve seen what it does. I have no interest in alcohol.

_Tsering goes to the wall and pours a glass of arak._

Tsering: Shyaptak! _Downs the glass in one go._

_All of the women stare in disbelief. Tsering pours another and gives it to Nyima._

Nyima: No, no.

Tsering: Drink. Don’t pretend you’ve never tried it.

_Nyima giggling, looks around and quickly downs the glass._

Tsering: Ama? Times are changing.

Palsang: I’ve had enough of this. I have to go tend the animals. Dawa, go put on your chuba before any guests come. _Exits._

Dawa: Ho yah ho yah. _Goes to get chuba from a chest in the same room and puts it on._

Tsering: Was that too much?

Nyima: It was definitely a lot.

Dawa: Yeah really, what’s gotten into you?

Tsering: I don’t know, I—

_Dhargey and Sonam enter laughing and joking about something, visibly drunk._

**Scene 3**

Sonam sees Dawa and goes over to her tearfully touching their heads together.

Sonam: Dawa. Egee._14_ Sister. _He clutches her arm and drags her to a seat by the fire._

---

_14 རྨི་ཇི་_
Tsering and Nyima run to get food and plates ready for the men.

Nyima: Sit, Dhargey sit.

Tsering: Pö cha, coffee?

Dhargey: Men.

Tsering: Yes, cha thung.

Dhargey: Men.

Tsering: Cha thung.

Dhargey: Yah yah.

Tsering gets cups for the men and pours them butter tea.

Sonam: Arak?

Dhargey: Men.

Sonam: Arak thung!

Dhargey: Okay.

Sonam gets the arak container and two arak cups and fills them. He then returns to his spot next to Dawa and continues to touch his head to hers and hold her arm.

Sonam: I missed you so much Dawa. You look very beautiful. You’ve grown so much. I’m so happy you’re back now. How was it?

Dawa: It was fine.

Sonam: Tell me all about it. How were your exams?

Dawa: My exams went well. I passed with high marks.

Sonam: I always knew you were the smart one. Not like me, I’m dumb. I never went to school, I can’t even read. Do you think that matters?

Dawa: I guess, you have a different—

Sonam: What do I have to read for! I work in the fields all day. No books necessary.

Dawa: Well—

Sonam: How about Kathmandu? How do you like the city?

Dawa: It’s okay. I like it here more.

Sonam: No way. No chance! What is there to do here?
Dawa: You are all here.

Sonam: Hah. If I could move to the city right now I would. I'm surprised you came back!

Dawa: Of course I came back. This is my home.

Sonam: And I'm so happy you're back. I don't ever want you to leave again. You look great. So beautiful.

Dawa: Thank you.

Sonam: I used to be mad that I never got to study in Kathmandu like you and like Dhargey. I had to stay home and help the family. But you! You got to go and study.

Dawa: Yes…

Sonam: Now, I bet you're going to go back there forever and make lots of money and become rich and successful and have nice clothes and electricity and all sorts of things. And then you'll send home some money if we're lucky enough and we can buy more damn rice.

Dawa: It's not like that. I'm not going to abandon you.

Sonam: Oh, no. Of course you won't. You're home now! Let's celebrate! Dhargey! Thung!

Dhargey: Ho yah!

Sonam: Oh Dawa. You look so different. The city has changed you. I'm glad you're wearing your chuba. I can't believe it still fits you. You've grown a lot. You really do look like a woman now.

Dawa: Thank you.

Tsering: Do you want lunch?

Sonam: No! Just arak for lunch! Right Dhargey?

Dhargey: Ho.

Nyima: Don't be silly. Here's food.

Sonam: No!

Nyima: Yes, here.

Sonam: No!!

*Nyima and Tsering look at each other uncomfortably, not sure what to do.*

Nyima: To Dawa He isn't usually like this.

Sonam: I'm not usually like what? Happy?! I'm happy to see my sister after five years. Let me be happy. Fine I'll take the damn food. Here, give it to me.
Nyima gives him a large bowl of Dal bhat.

Sonam: Here Dawa, eat.

Dawa: I already ate.

Sonam: Eat more! You must be hungry after the walk. Eat more!

Dawa: I’m full.

Sonam: Okay, fine. I’ll eat it then.

He begins to messily eat and pours himself and Dhargey more arak. Tsering serves Dhargey food.

Dhargey: So, Dawa, did you enjoy Kathmandu?

Dawa: Yes, yes. It was great. But, lots of hard work and studying.

Dhargey: Nursing is a tough profession, but good for you for doing it. What do you think you’ll do now?

Dawa: Well, I’m hoping to stay here for a few months, and then I’ll go to Kathmandu and find a job.

Dhargey: That’s great. I was never good enough of a student to do that kind of work. Good for you.

Dawa: No, I’m sure that’s not true. I’m nothing special.

Dhargey: It is true. You should be very proud of your accomplishments.

Sonam pours himself more arak and holds up the pitcher to Dhargey.

Sonam: Demga! ¹⁵

Dhargey: No.

Sonam: Demga!

Dhargey takes a sip of his arak so that Sonam can refill it.

Dawa: I heard you were a good student Dhargey.

Dhargey: I was when I was very young, but then my father died so I had to come back.

Sonam: Yeah! In his last year at school his mom showed up to Kathmandu with his wife and said “Here she is! Time to come home!”

Dhargey: In so many words.

¹⁵ འཆེས་པ་
Dawa: Ah mah! Your marriage was arranged! I forgot!

Dhargey: Yes, but we’ve grown to love each other.

Sonam: My marriage is for love. We met so young. But we’re in love. We’re having another baby.

Nyima: Sonam!

Sonam: What? We’re all family here. This one is going to live. This time I know it. It’s a boy and he’s going to be strong and healthy.

Dhargey: Ah mah!

Dawa: Nyima!

Tsering: Ah mah!

Sonam: Right, Nyima? This time we’ll have a son.

Nyima: Yes.

Sonam: It’s so good to have you back Dawa. It’s so good. I’m happy to see you. It’s been hard since Akay died.

Dawa: I’m sorry. I was at school. I couldn’t come back.

Sonam: You should have come back. He would have wanted you to come back.

Tsering: Sonam!

Sonam: What? It’s true!

Tsering: You know it isn’t. Akay wanted Dawa to get an education more than anything else. He wanted her to have a better life.

Sonam: Well what about us?

Tsering: We had to help run the house.

Dawa: I’m sorry. I wish I could have come back.

Tsering: It’s okay! You did the right thing. He’s just drunk.

Sonam: I’m not drunk. And who are you to judge me? I work hard all day. I run this house. I carry all the responsibility. Can’t I have a little fun? My baby sister is home! I’m celebrating! We should all be celebrating! Raising his glass. To Dawa! To my egee! Downs the glass, refills Dhargey’s glass. Drink Dhargey, drink.

Dhargey: Men.

Sonam: Thung.
Dhargey: Men.

Sonam: Thung.

Dhargey: Yah yah. *Takes a very small sip, pretending to drink.* Well… The other’s are probably waiting, we should get back to the fields.

Sonam: Nyima, give us some arak for the fields.

Dhargey: Don’t you think we’ve had enough for today?

Sonam: No! We need to keep warm. Come, Nyima.

*Nyima obliges, silently takes out a plastic bottle and fills a quarter with hot water, and the rest with arak. He quickly takes it from her.*

Sonam: Come on Dhargey.

*Dhargey and Sonam exit.*

**Scene 4**

*Nyima starts silently crying. The other women rush over to her.*

Dawa: Shh shh it’s okay. It’s going to be okay.

Tsering: Here, drink some hot water. Chu khol.\(^{16}\)

Dawa: Drink, thung. You’ll feel better.

Nyima: I didn’t want to tell anyone! I just thought that we should wait as long as possible to share the news this time—

Tsering: I know, I know.

Nyima: I just… he’s a different man when he drinks.

Dawa: He’s changed a lot.

Tsering: He has. It’s been the hardest for him. He has a lot of responsibility now.

Nyima: I know.

Dawa: That’s no excuse. He shouldn’t behave like that.

Tsering: It’s okay Nyima, Ama will be so happy when she hears! This one will live. We’re all going to pray for you.

\(^{16}\) ལུང་ལའོག
Nyima: He says how much he loves me, and how important our family is to him... But sometimes, it just doesn't seem... If he were really devoted to us why would he drink so much?

Dawa: I don't think it's like that. He does love us. We're going to get through this. He's going to stop drinking. I can try and talk to him.

Nyima: That won't do anything. He won't listen.

Tsering: He never listens. To me, to Ama, to Nyima...

Dawa: I can still try.

Tsering: I don't think you should. Just enjoy your time at home, don't worry yourself with this.

Nyima: Oh no! It's your first day back and I'm sitting here crying. Are you hungry again? Do you want tea?

Dawa: No! No, stay. Sit. Relax. I'm not a guest here, this is my home.

Nyima: I know, but still. I'm going to get you some tea. Oh no! we're already out of water. How is that possible? I'll get some more.

Dawa: No, I'll get it.

Nyima: No. Sit, stay. I could use a walk anyway.

She gathers up the empty bottles and exits. The remaining women sit in silence for a moment, and then gather up the empty cups and plate to wash them.

Tsering: That only happens sometimes. He's just like all of the men. They all behave this way.

Dawa: It isn't right.

Tsering: It doesn't have to be.

Dawa: What does Ama think?

Tsering: Ama... she just lets him do it. He's her only son, what is she supposed to do? I mean, Akay drank too... she's used to it.

Dawa: Akay drank a lot at the end, but—

Tsering: No, Akay drank a lot always. You just were too young to realize, and you were away at school most of the time.

Dawa: Oh.

Tsering: Yeah.

Dawa: I don't want to talk about this anymore.

Tsering: Me neither.
Dawa: How are you? Tell me something good!


Dawa: Of course you don’t just work. Tell me! There must be something. Tell me some gossip!

Tsering: Nothing happens in this town. There’s nothing to tell.

Dawa: You and I both know that isn’t true.

Tsering: No. Well… no.

Dawa: What?

Tsering: No, no it’s nothing.

Dawa: It doesn’t sound like nothing? What is it?

Tsering: I shouldn’t.

Dawa: Come on, I’m your sister. Just tell me.

Tsering: Okay fine, but you have to promise not to tell anyone.

Dawa: Okay…

Tsering: I’m in love.

Dawa: What?!

Tsering: And it’s been going on for about a year now.

Dawa: Really?! Have you told Ama?

Tsering: No, not yet. But, soon. It’s a bit complicated right now, but soon.

Dawa: What? How so?

Tsering: I can’t say.

Dawa: Egee, what?

Tsering: It’s fine. We’re in love. He said he wants to marry me.

Dawa: Really?! When?

Tsering: I’m not sure. But I think soon.

Dawa: Huh?

Tsering: He said soon. We can’t right now… but—

Dawa: What do you mean you can’t right now?
Tsering: It's complicated. I really can't explain...

Dawa: Egee... Be careful.

Tsering: Oh come on, trust me. Everything is great. I'm very happy.

Dawa: Okay...

Tsering: It's going to be fine. We're in love. Begins clearing dishes.

Dawa: No, no let me. Takes dishes from her heading outside.

Tsering: No, don't!

Dawa: Too, late! I'm already outside! Sit!

She exits.

Tsering sits by the stove, and sighs, begins to fill the fire to boil more water.

Enter Dhargey.

Dhargey: Sorry, did I leave my hat here?

Tsering startled, quickly scrambles to where he was sitting and finds the hat, goes to hand it to him he takes it from her.

Dhargey: Horche.

Tsering: Anytime.

Dhargey suddenly grabs her and kisses her. She pushes him back giggling and smiling.

Tsering: Dhargey! What if Ama walked in!

Dhargey: I don't care. Kisses her again, suddenly they hear a creek on the steps and he pushes her away and she runs back to her spot at the stove. Well okay, thanks, see you soon!

He exits as Palsang enters.

Tsering: He forgot his hat.

Palsang: Who did?

Tsering: Dhargey. He was just leaving because he forgot his hat here but I just gave it back to him.

Palsang: Okay... She sits, warming her hands at the fire. The two sit in silence for a while.

Tsering: So, how are the animals.
Palsang: Good. I think we should slaughter a sheep soon so we can have meat now that Dawa is home.

Tsering: That's a good idea. I'm sure Sonam will agree.

*More silence. Enter Dawa with the cleaned dishes, the women begin to put them away.*

Palsang: Ningje, horche horche.

Dawa: It’s nothing. How are the animals?

Palsang: Good. I was just telling your sister, I think we should slaughter a sheep soon so we can have some meat.

Dawa: Oh! That's a good idea.

Palsang: We can have Sonam do it tomorrow.

Dawa: Great. Egee, did you tell Ama about Nyima?

Palsang: What about Nyima?

Tsering: She’s pregnant!

Palsang: Ah mah! I hope it’s a boy!

Tsering: She said she was waiting to tell us considering…

Palsang: Ningje, I understand. We will pray for her and her baby. We need more babies in this house. I’m sure this one will be healthy.

Tsering: I think so too. Speaking of babies, Ama, remember what happened the other day?

Palsang: What other day?

Tsering: Pema and the horse?

Palsang: Ah! Oh, you must hear. So the other night, we had all just gone to sleep, it was quite dark. And the horse had just come back from the fields late that night. So poor Pema, must have gotten up to use the toilet, and all of a sudden we hear her shouting outside for help!

Dawa: Oh no!

Tsering: Just wait.

Palsang: So we all run to help her, thinking that there must be a snow leopard, or something that came into the village, or that she had fallen, or who knows what. But we get there, and she had just let the horse into the house!

Dawa: Oh no!
Tsering: Yes, it was so funny. She was outside screaming as loud as she could, thinking she had done something horribly wrong because she left the door open, but the horse was just a little hungry and tried to get some more food!

Palsang: That girl, she's so afraid of horses. I have no idea where that came from. You’d think growing up around all sorts of animals she would be fine, but no. She hates them.

Tsering: She'll grow out of it. I think it’s because she’s so small and they’re so big.

Palsang: She has to grow out of it! Or maybe not, she’s been doing well in school, so she might end up being a city girl like you!

Dawa: I'm not a city girl! I'm Dolpopa. And more importantly, I'm not afraid of horses!

Tsering: Are you sure you even remember how to ride?

Dawa: Of course I do! I don't think that’s something you can forget.

Tsering: Okay, okay. But I'll laugh so hard if you fall off, tomorrow.

Dawa: Oh, stop.

Nyima enters and goes to get a bowl of dry tsampa for herself and pours butter tea.

Palsang: Nyima, I am very excited for you. We're all going to pray for you to have a healthy baby.

Nyima: Oh, thank you Ama. I feel good about this one, but I'm trying to be cautious this time. Sorry I didn’t tell you before.

Palsang: Ningje, don't be sorry. Don't be sorry.

Nyima: Does anyone want tea?

Dawa: Men, men.

Nyima: Cha thung, cha thung.

Fills all of the women’s cups.

Palsang: Are you hungry Dawa?

Dawa: No, no.

Palsang: Are you sure? Do you want some pey?17

Dawa: No, no, men, men. I'm still full.

Palsang: Drink your tea.

Dawa obliges with a sip and Palsang refills her cup.

17
Palsang: Where did you go Nyima?

Nyima: I went to get water, but then I ran into my auntie and had to stop for tea.

Palsang: Ah, how is she?

Nyima: Good. She’s excited to see Dawa. She said you have to come over for dinner this week.

Dawa: Ho yah. She’s always makes the best dinners.

Nyima: I know. I used to make my parents so mad because I would always stay over at her house for the food.

Dawa: I don’t blame you.

Nyima: Everyone is very happy that you’re back Dawa. They all want to see you.

Dawa: Tomorrow, I’ll start visiting everyone.

Tsering: Don’t worry, they’ll visit you.

Dawa: Yah yah. But also tomorrow we’ll see everyone in the fields.

Tsering: Yes, we will.

Nyima: I’m also going in a few days to help build the road in Tokyu, if you want to come you should.

Tsering: You only need one person per household, though, you don’t have to.

Nyima: But two if you can spare two.

Dawa: I’d love to go. That sounds fun. I always liked working on those big projects with everyone.

Nyima: I think they’re fun too. And you get to see some new faces from other villages which is a nice change.

Tsering: If you say so.

Palsang: Actually, Nyima, maybe we should be more careful this time. You should stay home and rest. Tsering will go in your place.

Nyima: That’s not necessary—

Palsang: Yes. I think it is. Tsering will go.

Tsering: Ama—

Palsang: Yes, you’ll go.

Tsering: Ama I can’t.
Palsang: Yes you can, what do you mean? Of course you can.
Dawa: I can go myself, I really don’t mind—
Palsang: No you won’t. Tsering will go with you.
Tsering: But Ama! I can’t!
Nyima: It’s really okay I can go!
Palsang: What in the world? What is going on with you today!?
Dawa: I can go on my own. Okay? I’ll go on my own.
Palsang: Fine.
Tsering: Thank you.
Palsang: You should be ashamed Tsering. You’re behaving like a child.

_Palsang exits._

Nyima: I should get back, too. _Puts her dishes away and leaves._
Dawa: Egee what is going on? You couldn’t possibly hate building a road that much...
Tsering: So what if I do.
Dawa: Tsering. You must be joking.
Tsering: I can’t tell you.
Dawa: Egee.
Tsering: Dawa.
Dawa: Egee. Tell me. What is it?
Tsering: I’m pregnant.
Dawa: Ah ma!
Tsering: I knew you wouldn’t understand!
Dawa: No, no I understand. I just… You need to get married right away! Did you tell the father?
Tsering: No, I was going to while everyone was away working...
Dawa: Egee… why did you need to wait until then.
Tsering: I can’t say.
Dawa: Egee.

Tsering: Because his wife will be away working! Okay!? I know! I'm so stupid, I'm irresponsible! I know!!

Dawa: No, no you’re none of those things. Can you tell me who it is? Maybe I can help.

Tsering: No. I can’t.

Dawa: Egee…

Tsering: No! I can’t!!

Dawa: Okay fine.

Tsering: Thank you.

Dawa: What are you going to do?

Tsering: I’m going to tell him. He said he wants to get married.

Dawa: Well, hopefully he leaves his wife.

Tsering: He will. We’re in love. And now there’s going to be a baby… He has to.

Dawa: He has to. He will.

Tsering: He promised me.

Dawa: We should tell Ama.

Tsering: No!

Dawa: We should.

Tsering: No we shouldn’t! She'll be furious!

Dawa: She might be able to help!

Tsering: I want to handle this on my own.

Dawa: You don’t have to… but either way you should tell him as soon as possible.

Tsering: I know. I might be able to tell him today.

Dawa: Please tell me who it is! I promise I won’t judge you, but feel like I can’t help you unless I know the full story.

Tsering: You’re going to be mad.

Dawa: No I won’t.

Tsering: Yes you will.
Dawa: Ah mah! I promise! I won’t be mad!
Tsering: It’s Dhargey.
Dawa: Which Dhargey?
Tsering: Our Dhargey. Dhargey Dhargey.
Dawa: Ah mah.
Tsering: See?! This is why I didn’t want to tell you!
Dawa: No, no I’m not mad I just… you know that…
Tsering: I know! I know! But times are changing! Things are different now.

*Palsang enters in the dark doorway, no one notices yet.*

Dawa: We have to tell Ama.
Tsering: No! Please, no! Not yet!
Palsang: What do we have to tell Ama?
Tsering: Nothing!
Dawa: Tsering is pregnant.
Tsering: DAWA!
Palsang: What?!
Tsering: Dawa! How could you?!
Dawa: You need Ama right now! You have no idea what you’re dealing with!
Palsang: Who did this to you?!
Tsering: It’s not like that. We’re in love.
Palsang: Then why aren’t you married?
Tsering: It’s complicated.
Palsang: It’s not complicated. Who is it?
Dawa: Dhargey.
Palsang: Our Dhargey? Dhargey Dhargey?!
Dawa: Yes.
Tsering: Dawa!
Palsang: Tsering. How could you do this!? What were you thinking?! This is not how I raised you. Thank god your father isn’t here to see you disgrace our family this much.

Tsering: Ama!

Palsang: No. Not “Ama.” How dare you be so careless. So stupid! To think I thought you were an adult. I thought I raised you better than this. Does he know? Did you tell him?

Tsering: Not yet but… I was going to today. We’re going to get married.

Palsang: Did he tell you that?

Tsering: Yes! Because we’re in love! I knew you wouldn’t understand.


Nyima: What?

Palsang: Go and get Dhargey.

Nyima: But, he’s busy plowing—

Palsang: I don’t care what he’s doing. Go and tell him to come here immediately.

Nyima runs out.

Tsering: Ama! No! What are you going to say?!

Palsang: I’m going to take care of this.

Tsering: Ama! Please no! Please just let me do this myself.

Palsang: I have. And look where that got you.

Dawa: Ama—

Palsang: You girls. My girls. You’re so young, and so stupid.

Tsering: Ama! How could you say that!? 

Palsang: No. Not another word. Go visit your cousin.

Tsering: Ama, I’m staying right here.

Palsang: Don’t make me ask you again. Dawa, go and take her.

Dawa and Tsering exit.

Scene 5

Palsang sits in silence and stillness for a moment. Dhargey enters and stands by the doorway.

Palsang: Ah. Dhargey. Sit. He obliges. Would you like some tea?
Dhargey: No thank you.

Palsang: How about some hot water?

Dhargey: Okay.

Palsang: Great. Goes and gets a thermos and a glass and pours him some hot water. She then sits back down. Dhargey takes a sip. It has come to my attention that my daughter is under the impression that you intend to marry her.

Dhargey: I see.

Palsang: Now, Dhargey, I wonder how she came to believe such an outlandish thing?

Dhargey: I... I... I do love her, but—

Palsang: But it isn’t up to you, is it? It’s up to your wife, who you have four daughters with. And, more importantly, it’s up to your parents.

Dhargey: I... I really did mean it at first. I thought things were changing, but after what happened with my sister... they had to run away together! They couldn’t stay here and be married across castes. My family was so ashamed, my mom cried for weeks...

Palsang: And still you promised my daughter you would marry her.

Dhargey: I was going to tell her, I just. I was waiting for the right moment.

Palsang: How thoughtful of you.

Dhargey: I’m sorry. I— Your family has been so important to me ever since I was little— I always thought the caste thing was so stupid anyway, but this isn’t just me anymore. I’m sorry, I’ll tell her it’s over right away, she should be fine. No one knew besides us anyway—

Palsang: Dhargey. She’s pregnant.

Dhargey: Beat. Clicks his tongue, bows his head and runs his hand through his hair. I— I didn’t know.

Palsang: Well now you do know.

Dhargey: What the hell am I supposed to do about that?

Palsang: Marry her.

Dhargey: I can’t. I would disgrace my family. I’d have to leave my children.

Palsang: So you’ll simply abandon her?

Dhargey: I don’t have a choice.

Palsang: You did have a choice. You chose to lie to my daughter, be unfaithful to your wife, and now there’s going to be a child.
Tsering appears in the shadows of the doorway the others don’t see her.


Palsang: Yes. Yes you did. And my daughter was naive enough to believe you.

Dhargey: Palsang, I’m sorry. You have been like another mom to me. Caste never mattered, if I could share a cup with you right now I would. I don’t believe in any of this stuff. But, my parents... my Ama...this would kill her. I just... I can’t... I don’t know what to do. What do I do?

Palsang: Marry her. You’re actions have consequences. If you’re a good man you’ll marry her.

Dhargey: If I’m a good man, I can’t marry her.

Palsang: Dhargey, you’ve destroyed my daughter’s life.

Dhargey: Okay, I don’t think that’s fair—

Palsang: You’ve destroyed my daughter’s life. But I won’t let you destroy my grandchild’s life, too. Do you love Tsering?

Dhargey: I really do. I just wish... I wish things were different.

Palsang: If you love her then you’ll do right by the child. You’re going to treat this child like it’s any of your others. You will leave it your property when you grow old.

Dhargey: You know I can’t do that.

Palsang: You only have daughters. This could be your first son. This could be your only son. If it’s a boy, you’ll leave him all of your property. If it’s a girl, you will divide it equally between all of your daughters.

Dhargey: I... What will my parents say?

Palsang: It’s too late to worry about that now. There’s going to be a child. I think it’s going to be boy.

Dhargey: There must be another way.

Palsang: You asked for my help. This is what I’m telling you to do.

Dhargey: Ho. I want to be there for the child, too. I want to help raise it.

Palsang: I hope you mean that.

Dhargey: Me too.

Palsang: Would you like some arak?

Dhargey: No, thank you.

Palsang: Drink some arak.
Dhargey: Ho.

*Palsang goes and gets him a glass and fills it with arak. She gets herself some butter tea. They drink.*

Dhargey: Palsang, I’m sorry.

Palsang: I know you are.

Dhargey: Can you… can you tell Tsering what happened?

Palsang: Yes.

Dhargey: Thank you. *He gets up.* I’m not going to drink the golden water. When my family finds out, I’m not going to drink it no matter what they say.

Palsang: Ho yah. Ho yah.

*Dhargey sees Tsering in the doorway, exits.*

**Scene 6**

*Palsang sits again in silence, then she begins to relight the stove and gathers materials to cook dinner. Tsering enters the room, and makes herself pey and sits by the stove.*

Palsang: Tsering.

Tsering: I heard. I know.

Palsang: You heard?

Tsering: I listened. It’s over. I know.

Silence. Tsering eats. *Palsang keeps tending the stove. Nyima enters and sits by the stove. Palsang pours her more butter tea.*

Nyima: Horche.

*She drinks. They sit. Dawa enters and starts collecting materials for dinner, checking pots, getting rice, potatoes Dal etc.*

Palsang: I’ll never forgive myself for having so many daughters. I will pray that your next child is a son.

Nyima: If I have a boy, I’m going to raise him and Pema the same.

Palsang: Change is slow. Change is slow.

*End.*
Glossary

1. རུ་པ།: Chuba, traditional dress
2. ལམ།: Ama, Mom
3. ལཱུ།: Evee, Grandma
4. སིང་རྒྱེ།: Ningje, rejoicing word of compassion, signifies caring
5. གི་བྲ།: Pö cha, butter tea (Tibetan tea)
6. ལན་ག་: Arak, homemade, distilled barley alcohol
7. ཨེ་ལྷ།: Ho yah, okay (yes)
8. དུ་མ།: Thung, drink
9. བོད་པ།: Men, no.
10. རུ་ཐུས།: Akay, Dad
11. སིང་རྒྱེ།: Pate, spicy potato stir fry
12. སིང་རྒྱེ།: Shyaptak, bottom’s up
13. ཨེ་ལྷ།: Horche, thank you
14. སིང་རྒྱེ།: Egee, Sister
15. སིང་རྒྱེ།: Demga, auspicious ritual of filling someone’s glass to the brim
16. སིང་རྒྱེ།: Chu khol, hot (boiled) water
17. སིང་རྒྱེ།: Pey, tsampa (ཙམ་པ་) usually served mixed with butter, dried cheese powder, sugar, and butter tea

A note about caste:

In Dho, there are three castes: high, middle, and low. The majority of the people in the community today are part of the high caste, and therefore have the largest sway in policy even as democracy is taking hold in Dho’s local government. The tradition of caste is such that a high caste member who interacts with a low caste member (sharing food, drinks, carrying on intimate relationships, etc) will have to drink “golden water” which is blessed by a Lama. Their entire family must drink this water as well in order to cleanse themselves and remain high caste. However, it is within the power and responsibility of the community leaders to acquire this water for the high caste members who ask for it. It is also within the power of community leaders to prohibit the people from drinking golden water.18

---

18 Cho cho; 4/23/18
Bibliography

Evee; 4/21/18
Egee; 4/21/18
Ama; 4/22/18
Cho cho; 4/23/18
Evee; 4/24/18
Cho cho (group interview); 4/24/18
Cho cho; 4/25/18
Egee; 4/25/18
Akay; 4/27/18
Egee; 4/27/18
Cho cho; 4/21/18, 4/22/18, 4/23/18, 4/24/18, 4/25/18, 4/27/18, 4/27/18, 4/30/18
Suggestions for Future Research

General Notes:
• Stay open to any and all information! Don’t approach interviews as “interviews” but rather start with a conversation. People will share information that is relevant to them and topics that they care about.
• Live in a homestay, not a guesthouse. There’s no other way to actually see life in a community.

Future Topics:
• There is a complexity in Dho about economics and loans, which is influenced by Arak (I may touch on if/when I turn this play into a full length)
• The influx of capitalism influences in the largely substance economy
• The growing presence of roads encroaching Dho from China, but slowly from Nepal
• Dho’s ancient trade routes with Tibet and changing borders and Chinese influence
• The effects of the city on the children who study in Kathmandu and then return to Dho
• Yarse Gumba (caterpillar fungus) in trade, scarcity, and politics