

Ganga Ram and Lachi Rimal

0:43: My name is Ganga Ram Rimal, I was born in the Imire Dagana district of southern Bhutan.

1:07: My name is Lachi Maya Rimal, I was also born in Deorali Imire Block.

2:29: Thank you for this opportunity to talk about my childhood life. When I was little, I was born in a very low income family.

2:28: Thank you for this opportunity to talk about my childhood life. When I was little, I was born in a very low income family.

2:58: When I was around 5 or 6 years old, I started doing all of the house chores, from cooking to feeding my brothers and siblings. My father used to go for up to 70 days to serve the government of Bhutan to construct the road, while I looked after the family.

3:57: During those times, I did all the chores like looking after the cows and sheep, I had to do everything, and around that time there were no clocks so it was when the roosters crowed early morning around 3am to 3:30am. That was when I woke up to cook morning meals for the cows and all the animals, I cut the grass, took the animals out for grazing, farming work, everything.

5:24: Then after I become a little older, around 9 to 10 years old, I started doing more agricultural work, grazing the Oxen, milking the cows.

5:57: I first married when I was 11 years old.

6:11: I had to work in the farms, and do a lot of domestic work. As per the rules of Bhutan, we were asked to devote our time to volunteer work for the government. My brothers and sisters were little, I helped with grinding corn with stone, I used to cook and help the women.

7:12: I had to do everything, I was the oldest out of our siblings, there were 10 of us, and when I was 15, my first wife passed away. Then my grandfather died in the same year (and uncle).

7:54: I faced a lot of struggle and suffering, When I was 16 I took care of all the cows and animals, and in my free time I worked in carpentry and building. At first I built beds and similar furniture, and then when I was around 17 to 18 I started working on houses.

8:48: As I was born in remote Bhutan, there were no schools, and since I was the oldest, I had to keep the household together, I had no time to go to study.

9:27: When I was 19, I married again, to my current wife.

9:42: I didn't get the opportunity to study, and instead I encouraged my siblings to study, and helped them study.

10:07: My second brother is still in Bhutan, and my youngest sister is here in Australia.

10:47: When I was little I worked as a Shepard, I stayed at the farm, and when I was around 8 to 9 to 10 years old I grazed the cows, milking the cows and cutting the grass. Stayed there alone in the shade.

11:44: there were Oxen, sheep, and cows.

12:02: I didn't grow up with my siblings, I was only with them until I was 6 or 7 years old. That was when my older brother married, so were separated since young, and so I was alone.

12:56: My parents were very rich, we didn't struggle or suffer much.

13:22: My husbands uncle had married my sister, and that's how we knew each other.

13:52: we didn't see each other much, we had seen each other for 15 days.

14:08: At that time it was arranged marriages, and the parents decided the marriage, and that was that.

14:38: There has been nothing bad between us, we've never argued with each other.

15:17: Thank you.

15:29: After we got married, we needed to go far to go to the shops, if you left to go on Monday, you'd come back by Sunday, when it snowed a lot, in winter, in November/December, until January/February, was when we had to get salt, sugar, oil that lasts us the whole year. We didn't have oil back at home, we carry everything on horse back, while we walked. It was very tough.

16:10: November, December, January.

17:20: So I married again at 19, and when I turned 20, we had our first daughter, and then we had our first son, from which then we moved out from our family.

17:47: I had to look after our siblings, and also the kids, we moved out during 1984, carrying on our responsibility, and also the siblings and parents.

18:22: during then, It was a monarchy, with the king, but it was still good towards the people. Since I was separate from January, then from may the king offered us land, as I had requested, and then from July I received 4 acres of land and that's where I built my home.

19:19: When I went to request the land, I met the king two times to make the request in front of him.

19:43: Then before I moved out, I did volunteering work, until I was 20 years old. I did volunteering jobs, digging roads, a lot of things, since I was 20 years old, without pay.

20:44 Doing everything, I also had to do farming work, I had to coordinate a lot of people to do work in the offices when volunteering.

21:24: Here we have letters sent to us to pay government rates and charges, There we had to go around to 100 to 150 households to collect government rates and charges from in a year. Going once was not enough, we had to go two or three times.

22:21: It was very tough, especially since I didn't get the opportunity to study language, even for a person that had studied it was hard.

23:36: It was very tough! the kids were very small, and we also lived separately, and because we also had to look after the cows and since we lived in a jungle.

24:13: it was tough, with great difficulty we raised 5 children, it rained heavily a lot, in the jungle.

24:46: a lot of struggle, since we were separate, my second daughter was born, and my wife fell sick, she didn't even realise she was sick for 6 months. We had to feed our daughter biscuits and cow milk for 15 days.

25:39: Around that time, there weren't many hospitals, there wasn't much herbal medicine, we had to call an witch (jumping) doctor since there weren't many hospitals, Only recently during that time there were more, but when you went to the hospital, it was not certain that you would come back better.

27:18: They used to say that the Rimal woman would die first, my friends used to say that, my chest, I was like that and still survived.

27:43: When I came to, my son was already big, you kept playing, and I kept arguing with you.

28:57: Now around that time in the beginning, it wasn't like that, We were "independent"... you could say we were independent, you could wear the traditional clothes of your own culture, we Nepali people wore our traditional Nepali clothing, we also wore tikka, from then the Government said that the people in the single Nation should have a single language, and they took out \$1900 for that from 1986.(?)

29:47: From before that I left out a few things, from Bhutan from my knowledge, from before the 1960-1962 there were no roads, not even in the Thimphu capital, but we brought the parts for a Jeep, carrying the parts on top of horses and donkeys from there, and joined the Jeep, and we started building out the road from Phuentsholing for 70 days of compulsory voluntary work, my father and everyone else helped build the road, and before that there was nothing there to my knowledge, there was only a road from Paro to Thimphu, not around where we were.

31:09: the car engines, were brought by people and carried by their horses.

31:32: I have forgotten, but at first, before that, the government of Bhutan was in Kalimpong, and then it moved to Thimphu.

32:40: When leaving Bhutan, there was lots of agitation, the Government became a dictatorship, imposing to become one (one nation policy), and Nepali books were burnt, more agitation, how it was done I do not know.

33:18: I have only heard of the agitation, and what had happened, but after I went back, they told me that people like us who wouldn't accept the new policies had to go away, since we lived in a remote area so we were not aware of this. Later on, we went away because they forced us to.

34:01: Even after them saying all of that, we were stubborn and didn't leave, but my father in law's house went to Nepal first, so my wife's census was in Nepal, and mine was in Bhutan, and so that didn't work.

34:45: When I was in Bhutan I was the only Bhutanese citizen in our family, everyone else, my wife and all the children would have not been citizens.

35:14: And then when they said to leave, we left on the 17th or 18th of April. Taking the children, we left around April/May. When the Dzungda (District head) came around, we had to give 2 or 3 girls.

36:56: Even children born in the refugee camps..

37:19: We left Bhutan and the children were small, I grabbed her by the hand and carried my youngest daughter, and we brought boxes with clothes to wear, we walked for 2 days, up steep routes, we spent nights in caves since it rained a lot in the night, we had to stay in caves. There were about 10 or 12 families with us.

38:25: we walked for 2 days to the border and stayed there for 6 to 7 days. Then from India a truck took the 11 families including us to Nepal. From the afternoon to all night we then made it to (the Gateway of Nepal in eastern Nepal) Kakarbhitta.

39:08: From the border we left at 3pm and then we arrived 11am (2am?) at Kakarbhitta.

39:38: From there we had to get checked at the gate, since we came from Hilly areas, it was quite hot there, the children were hungry and worn out like dried saag (grass), and we got checked for 2 hours, and they gave us Malaria shots, and then they let us go.

40:22: We had brought beaten rice and ate that there, and then from Kakarbhitta we arrived at Shanishchare Patri at the Morung District at late night. When we made it there, a lot of people were already there, and we were all in the middle of the jungle. We stayed there, and recognised a few people there, my wife's Father and Mother were there, and the brothers, we stayed with them, In the morning we realised the place was quite dirty.

41:30: Then the day after, we did some management, they gave us a block of land to build a hut, we cut down the trees and bushes, and built a small hut. We bought tirpals to cover the roof.

42:03: The people before us were the people from Maidhar, and they lived with great difficulty compared to us, we had it a little better since the UNHCR looked after us.

43:02: I can still hear the noise of the cows from the journey from Bhutan to the camp to this day, when we left.

43:33: I had never walked such a long road, and all night the rain would beat against us, And in the morning after I had eaten we arrived at Kali Khola and stayed there, there were small basic huts there.

44:19: Then from Kali Khola, I become very ill, my youngest daughter also became ill, we didn't get to drink water, and then we arrived at Kakarbhitta (the entry gateway of eastern Nepal).

45:10: Then we arrived in the camp at late night, it was very dark when they dropped us off, I didn't know where they had dropped us off, my brother had gone to get me, and my dad was there looking after our belongings.

46:23: There was a lot of struggle when we lived in the camp, when it started raining, everything would get wet and flood, lots and lots of struggle.

46:42: And there was only one type of food, there was nothing else, we didn't get to eat anything else.

46:52: And when we went outside they used to say that "The Bhutanese are here" to us.

47:04: Above everything else, we were people that came from somewhere else into the Nepalese camp, for one family, there was a block of land about 12 to 18 feet. Using bamboo we would tie tirpals for shelter, we came from a very lakey place, and it was very hot where we were in the camp.

48:27: We came from there, to a very hot place, and the tirpals would heat up and it was uncomfortable to stay under them, we had lived around lakes before, a cold place, like comparing here to Tasmania, we lived in a place where it would snow, and then we came to a hot place in the camp, we didn't recognise anything there, we didn't recognise what the food

was like, in Bhutan the children would somehow eat yoghurt and drink milk, when we left, they did give us rice because of our situation, but not food that people needed, it was very difficult.

49:57: Around June/July, it was super hot, and a lot of strong wind would come and lift all of the plastic and tarpaulins in the air, we had to try and hold them to keep the hut together, and there was lots of rain.

50:28: And then from Bhutan for the first 3 months I had stayed there, and in August to September, when we were building more of the camp, I started working with LWS to construct toilets.

51:22: Around October we started to move the camp to another place, for 1 week I had carried pebbles, and for a week I worked as a builder, and then there were 4 builders in a group that constructed 2 toilets in a single day.

52:22: It was difficult, when we first arrived there, for the first 2-3 months there were temporary schools inside of the camp, where they were taught on open ground outside, it was very difficult, there was also a struggle for food, because there were a lot of people living there, it was very dirty and there was a lot of rubbish, there were no toilets, and the kids were taught outside on the dirt floor.

54:09: Food was a big issue, the food they provided was not sufficient for the adults in the camp, they provided 400 grams of rice for each individual person. At first they only gave rice, but then they started to provide potatoes and other vegetables later on.

55:00: Around that time, they then started giving ginger and turmeric powder and other spices in limited amounts. For the little kids it was enough, but not for the adults.

55:33: My children were all born in Bhutan, so after about 1-2 years of being in the refugee camp they started to grow, so we had to buy 10-12kg of rice every month.

56:02: In the camp, when I was working for the LWS making toilets, in the beginning there used to be lines of toilets under a single roof, we started making toilets for schools, at first they started paying a bit more money, but then they started to deduct the pay rates.

57:05: At first they used group the houses in blocks, but then they started to group these into sectors for better management.

57:37: In the beginning, when there were blocks, we were from the Imire block, and there they shared sacks of rice and that's where I started working for 12 years even after it became a sector, even in my leisurely hours. For 14 days they gave us rice, and I worked to distribute it. They sector we were in was called Sector L there were 48 units inside.

59:49: At first one family went, and then the next family, and another family after that, and then so we were tempted to go as well.

1:00:09: I was very happy when I arrived in Australia.

1:00:17: At that time, when we left there we didn't know anything, we had a big family, the family from Bhutan.

1:00:40: We had everything in the refugee camp. My brothers, siblings, and Maternal families, and Family in law, and friends, they all decided to go to America, but I was thinking that we should go to Australia, even though the UNHCR didn't want us to settle in Australia.

1:01:29: At that time I approached the UNHCR, but I found out that my boys had already applied for the third country settlement with the UNHCR, and when the UNHCR called us, my boys were outside of the camp for teaching.

1:02:08: And when I went there they told me that our whole family had to go to the USA, since most of our family, relatives and friends had already gone to the USA. But I had told them that I didn't want to go to the USA, since they told us that we could go wherever we wanted.

1:03:09: When I was first in Bhutan, I had worked with cows and horses and sheep that were brought from Australia, and for that I had training for 15 days in Samchi, and from then I had always wondered how it was like to live in Australia.

1:04:11: At that time the UNHCR had not allowed me to come to Australia. For about 1 hour I had discussed with them, and they told me that even though they had written our name down to come to Australia, that they would not accept us there. They told me that the government of Australia might accept us at the end of 2012.

1:04:50: In the end, they said they had written our name down, but that we were fitted to America, and then after 6 months they called us again saying that our family was still fitted to go to America.

1:05:53: At that time they also said that none of your family members or relatives were settled in Australia, and that looking at your family, you should be fit to America, and that

you two haven't studied and everyone else has studied, and so I said that I would either go to Australia, or stay in the refugee camp. After that they called me because the immigration team to go to Australia had arrived.

1:07:15: When I arrived, I wondered what there was to do, and what there was to see.

1:07:34: When I looked over here, there was a road, and if I looked over there, there was the same road, and I was wondering where I was going.

1:08:06: When I looked at the people here, especially the aunties, I had thought that they were my people.

1:08:29: and then I started getting used to living here and started forgetting about my life in the camp.

1:08:43: About 2 months before I arrived in Australia, the children had already arrived in Australia, my 2 sons and a big daughter. We first flew to Kathmandu, and I was very hopeless.

1:09:20: When I arrived in Australia, I had known nobody, when I arrived at the airport, I knew only the children, and there were 2 old men that had come from the camp which I will never forget the names of.

1:09:54: And then the volunteers had come, and the 2 elderly people; Som Nath Subedi and Laxmi Guragai, and when I came to my house from the Airport, they also came the next day.

1:11:00: I went to TAFE, and also the gardens, the TAFE teacher Ruth took us to the gardens and we stayed there, and the people from TAFE introduced us to people.

1:11:49: The garden in Thurgoona was very good.

1:12:42: first we grew long beans, pumpkin, zucchini, coriander, cauli flower, asparagus, green vegetables.

1:13:57: There were the 2 people, and I started walking and going to TAFE, around that time, my foot had issues, and so I took the public bus to TAFE and made friends. And then I made friends there.

1:14:39: At TAFE I studied for 550 hours and for 1 year I did a course for Agriculture in Thurgoona at CSU. Along with that, with friends we had registered a cultural committee, and started working as a volunteer for 12 years.

1:15:43: I studied there, and coming here I had only learnt how to write ABCs and my name, at school they asked me to start working, and for 10 years I had worked, and then since August I have retired.

1:17:50: We aren't able to forget our mother land for life, but at the moment we are not allowed to go back to Bhutan.

1:18:14: They wouldn't let us go back, and we wouldn't be able to do anything even if we went back.

1:18:29: Now we are Australian citizens, so why should we think about going back to Bhutan?

1:19:18: I don't feel like going back.

1:19:22: When I think back to Bhutan, we had everything, and would like to, but it has been over 32 years since we had left, so we have nothing left there now. I do still think about it because it was where I was born, where I played when I was little, a lot of memories back there, but there is no point in going back now.

1:20:17: I already said that I don't want to go. I have already came to Australia.

1:20:36: I cannot do my work there, when I pull out grass, I have to kneel down here and I feel pain.

1:21:03: It is not like how it was when we were there, because a lot of development has happened since.

1:21:06: You have to dig, it can't be done. We have to clear the fields, and look after cows and domestic animals and after cutting the grass, carry it on our back, collect fire wood from the forest and carry that on our back, you have to build a kitchen can cook rice there using the fire wood you have collected.

1:21:58: Most of the households have a car, and roads have been built.

1:22:00: I had left Bhutan when I was 32-33 years old, and now if I go back, of course I wouldn't be able to work.

1:22:42: We have to teach them, because it is our own culture, we don't understand, we have never been to school, we don't understand English, and how are we meant to teach the children.

1:23:00: We also have to teach them our traditions, we have to teach that we had done this, and that they should do that, we have to teach them that.

1:23:08: each family has their own tradition.

1:23:28: We should not let our culture die out, we have to teach them, for the children's futures, since they don't understand.

1:23:50: It is very important to teach our language, later on our children may regret and blame us, saying that the older generation did not properly teach them.

1:24:23: For me, I am happy to be Australia, I have nothing to complain about except for the fact that I never learnt how to speak English, that is something I struggle with, I can't understand.

1:24:54: Nor when I learnt Nepali had I understood, nor did I understand any of the English I was supposed to learn. I can only speak Nepali.

1:25:26: Just one more thing, everyone else here became emotional, but I do not feel emotional. When I came here I had 2 (3) grand-children, but now there are 13 of us, why should I be unhappy? I have plenty of family.

1:26:22: at first when my husband's grandfather migrated from Nepal to Bhutan, there was 1 person. But now how many Rimal's are there in Bhutan, tell me?

1:27:31: Thank you for coming here and giving me this opportunity, thank you very much for this, even talking for 2 days about my struggles would not be enough, but even then, thank you for this opportunity.

1:28:11: I was getting ready to meet my mother in America, but I hadn't received my citizenship then, so I had to stay here quietly.