

Darkness of Life

By Lakpa Tamang

My parents lived in Bhutan for 18 years. Because of some political problems, the government of Bhutan didn't allow my parents to stay. My dad told me, "We were compelled to leave our birthplace and with much sorrow we moved to eastern part of Nepal."

As time passed, a lot of people died in the refugee camp because of health issues and water pollution. A lot of people suffered from sickness and diseases. Thankfully, UNHCR did provide our people with food, clothes, and some blankets. They built schools, hospitals, and water taps so our life was a lot less of a struggle.

In 1995, I was born in the Khudunabari Refugee Camp and grew up mostly there. When I was 6 years old my little brother was born, and 5 years later, my little sister was born. Also, when I was 6 years old, I started going to school. We had to buy our school uniform, some books, and pencils. Because I was growing up in a poor family, my parents were unable to afford to buy to me some school supplies, so my friend shared pencils with me. Life was horrible for me. When we were late to school, our teacher punished us badly, so I had to wake up early in the morning to be there on time. After school I had to study there. The school that I went to was almost 30 minutes away from my hometown, so I had to do everything on time after school because we didn't have electricity in the refugee camp. I lived in the Khudunabari Refugee Camp for 17 years.

In 2000, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) started a process for third country resettlement. They resettled people into different countries like United States, Australia, Denmark and Canada. As time passed my uncle and some relatives started the process for third country resettlement. As the oldest son in my family, I had to decide about third country resettlement because my parents were uneducated, poor, and unhealthy.

I was curious learning about United States because my uncle was apart from us. My friends were curious too whenever we talked to our teacher about it. My teacher told us that the United States is a developmental country and about its freedom of religion. I learned a lot about the United States. When I talked about resettlement in the United States with my parents, they were upset and got mad at me. "In the U.S you have many different freedoms," I explained to my parents. "We would make a better life for ourselves."

"We have our own ethnic culture, our own language," my dad said. I explained to my parents about our future and freedom of religion. So my parents agreed about resettling to a third country, and we went to the IOM office to process for resettlement.

After 3 months, they called us into the DHS. It's not a really fast process. There was a ton of screening. Our process took a long time. In 2011 we moved into the Pathri Camp because of a landslide. I went to high school in the Pathri Camp. In 2013 we left the Pathri Refugee Camp. I was wondering about the plane and the language. We arrived in Kathmandu, the capital city of Nepal. I was sorrowful about leaving my friends and relatives. I was so nervous because we had never traveled in a plane before, so I was excited to see one. They kept us in Kathmandu for 5 days.

Our first flight was Kathmandu to New Delhi, then to Italy, to France, to New York, to Chicago, and then to Fargo, North Dakota. Our plane left New Delhi late, so by the time we got to Italy, I was carrying a lot clothes and books, which were very heavy. We had to pass through two different security checkpoints, so we had to run even faster to make it to our flight. By the time we got to our flight for Italy, I was completely out of breath and sweating a lot.

Thankfully, the trip to Fargo was comfortable because Chicago Airlines is very good. After the 3 days, we finally reached Fargo. We were very excited to see our uncle and some of

my old friends. They came to the airport with a caseworker to pick us up. In the airport the caseworker gave us a little amount of money to buy some clothes as well as some personal stuff. By that time I was sick because of the climate change. I was suffering from a fever, toothache, and headache, so my uncle took us to their home. They had already been cooking food for us and that time we really enjoyed eating that food. I had to take some medicine for my sickness.

Looking back, there were really big challenges for us, like how to get to another location, how to go to the hospital, shopping at a store, and following the laws. Our family is thankful to Lutheran Social Services who helped us to learn the basics of living in America. Our caseworker provided us shelter for our family as well as some food. Our family is proud to be in the United States. We came to have a better future and to not struggling or suffer in a refugee camp.

Nepali Language Glossary

“kaka”

“uncle”

“cunauti”

“challenges”

“dukkha”

“sorrow”

“jatiya”

“ethnic”

About the Author

Lakpa Tamang was born in Khudunabari Refugee Camp. In 2013, he came to the U.S from Nepal with his whole family. He has five members in his family. He is a senior at Davies High School and he is 21 years old. His favorite class is math. He likes to play games in his free time.

