Where Are You from?

Key Grammar Points in Lesson Five:

1. Verbs of Identification: བོད་ vs. རེ་
2. Absolutive Case
3. Names of Countries and Nationalities
4. Personal Pronouns
5. Interrogative words: ཤུག་ of Where and ཤུ་ of Who

5.1 Dialogue

CD-R DISC-1

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Bai Li: How are you?
Tom: Good. How are you?
Bai Li: I am good too. Where are you from?
Tom: I’m from America. Where are you from?
Bai Li: I am from China. Who is she?
Tom: She is my friend.
Bai Li: Where is she from? Is she from America too?
Tom: No, she is from Japan.
Bai Li: What does she do? (What is her job?)
Tom: She is a student.
Bai Li: Who are they? Are they also students?
Tom: Yes, they are my classmates.
Bai Li: Where are they from?
Tom: He is from India. She is from France.

5.2 Vocabulary
### 5.2.1 Vocabulary from the Dialogue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Tibetan</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>བཤེ།</td>
<td>pro.</td>
<td>which</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>བཤེ་སྐད།</td>
<td>pro.</td>
<td>of/from where</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>བཤེ་མོ།</td>
<td>n.</td>
<td>America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>བཤེ་སྐད།</td>
<td>n.</td>
<td>China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>བཤེ།</td>
<td>pro.</td>
<td>she, her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>བཤེ།</td>
<td>pro.</td>
<td>who</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>བཤེ།</td>
<td>v.</td>
<td>to be</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>བཤེ་སྐད།</td>
<td>n.</td>
<td>friend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>བཤེ།</td>
<td>adv. (neg.)</td>
<td>not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>བཤེ་སྐད།</td>
<td>n.</td>
<td>Japan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>བཤེ་སྐད།</td>
<td>pro.</td>
<td>her (Gen.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>རྣམ།</td>
<td>n.</td>
<td>job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>བཤེ་སྐད།</td>
<td>pro.</td>
<td>they, them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>བཤེ།</td>
<td>aff.</td>
<td>plural marker (see 5.3.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>བཤེ།</td>
<td>n.</td>
<td>classmate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>བཤེ།</td>
<td>pro.</td>
<td>he, him</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>བཤེ།</td>
<td>n.</td>
<td>India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>བཤེ་སྐད།</td>
<td>n.</td>
<td>France</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 5.2.2 Additional Vocabulary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Tibetan</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>བཤེ་སྐད།</td>
<td>person</td>
<td>Lobzang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>བཤེ།</td>
<td>n.</td>
<td>America (abbreviated)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>བཤེ།</td>
<td>n.</td>
<td>Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>བཤེ།</td>
<td>n.</td>
<td>Korea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>བཤེ།</td>
<td>n.</td>
<td>England</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>བཤེ་སྐད།</td>
<td>n.</td>
<td>Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>བཤེ།</td>
<td>n.</td>
<td>(Han) China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>བཤེ།</td>
<td>n.</td>
<td>America (Ch.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.3 Grammar Notes

5.3.1 Also ☞

The ☞ in this lesson differs from the sentential particle ☞ introduced in Lesson 4. Here ☞ means also. The English adverb also appears in a fixed position (e.g. after to be), having the flexibility to refer to phrases that is not adjacent to it. Consider:

1) Mary is a teacher. John is also a teacher.
2) John is a teacher. He is also a poet. (He = John)

In (1), the adverb also refers to the subject John (Mary is, John also is.) In (2), when the subject remains the same, also refers to the noun phrase a poet (John is a teacher and also a poet.)

The context of the discourse helps the English speaker figure out which phrase also refers to. Tibetan ☞ is different. It must be attached to the right of the phrase to which it refers. For example:
Some of the names of Western countries are apparent transliterations from English such as अमेरिका (sometimes truncated into a short form अमेरिका), कनाडा (Canada), फ्रांस (France), कोरिया (Korea), etc. Some other names, which sound less akin to the English language, are earlier transliteration into Tibetan such as इंग्लिश (England) and जर्मन (Germany). Yet a third group of names of countries (mostly neighboring countries of Tibet) are indigenous Tibetan terms such as इंदिया (India), नेपाल (Nepal), etc.

The term चीन refers to the part of China that is mainly Han Chinese. The political entity known as the country China is referred to by the term चीन, a Chinese loan word. In Amdo region, where most Tibetan people's first non-native language is Chinese, the Chinese word 她 for America (meaning the United States) is more understandable. It is the author's personal experience that the sentence अमेरिकालिङ्गिनिलिङ्गिन लिङ्गिन "I am from the US." is not as clear to the Amdo Tibetans as चीनलिङ्गिन

To indicate a person's nationality, one uses the Genitive Case marker after the country's name. They refer to the origin of something but do not refer to the language. For names of languages, see Lesson 6.

### 5.3.3 Personal Pronouns

The colloquial forms of the third person pronouns are उन्हें or उन्हें she and उन्हें or उन्हें he. The Genitive form for उन्हें is उन्हें her, as the standard written form. To reflect the colloquial pronunciation, we change it to उन्हें. Similarly, उन्हें her is changed to उन्हें/उन्हें/उन्हें takes Genitive case marker उन्हें then changes to उन्हें. उन्हें becomes उन्हें. Examples:

1. उन्हें उन्हें her friend
2. उन्हें उन्हें her teacher
Below is a summary of the Absolutive and Genitive forms of the pronouns.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Abs</td>
<td>Gen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abs</td>
<td>I, me</td>
<td>my</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen</td>
<td>my</td>
<td>my</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Abs</td>
<td>Gen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abs</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>your</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen</td>
<td>your</td>
<td>your</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 m.</td>
<td>Abs</td>
<td>Gen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abs</td>
<td>he, him</td>
<td>his</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen</td>
<td>his</td>
<td>his</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 f.</td>
<td>Abs</td>
<td>Gen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abs</td>
<td>she, her</td>
<td>her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen</td>
<td>her</td>
<td>her</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Plural personal pronouns ་ར་ we, ་ར་ you, and ་ར་ they are formed by adding the plural morpheme སག་ to the singular personal pronouns 认清, you, and he. Note that ་ར་ they does not have a gender distinction. It can refer to either a group of females or males. The Genitive forms of plural pronouns are formed by adding the Genitive Case marker རི་

► 5.3.4 Absolutive Case

Recall that in Lesson 4, we mentioned that Tibetan employs a case system that is different from that of English. The above chart gives the Absolutive and Genitive forms of each pronoun. The Absolutive Case is the "unmarked" or base form of the noun and is used, roughly speaking, when the noun phrase is the subject of an intransitive verb including the linking verb རེན་ and རྟེན་, which we have covered in Lesson 4, or the direct object of a transitive verb, which we will cover starting from Lesson 9. The subject of the following examples is marked Absolutive:

1. །།(Abs) ་དེར་བདེ་ ་།། How are you?
2. །།(Abs) ་དེ་ཞེས་ །། She is from France.
Note that in (3) and (4) the noun phrase *student* and *Tserang* function as a nominal predicate, linked by *be to be* to describe the subject. They have the same case as the subject, therefore, Absolutive. It is tempting for the English-speaking student to associate the Absolutive to the Nominative case in English at this point. Please don't. For example (5) below proves that such association is faulty and simply prevents the learner from internalizing the Ergative-Absolutive Case system.

(5) *I am a student.*
(4) *I am not Tserang.*

The noun *John* in (5) is marked Absolutive in the complement position, while the subject of the verb *my name* is, as we covered in Lesson 4, marked Oblique Case with the *-*. The noun *students* and *classmates* in (1) and (2) are called nominal predicate. When noun phrases are used as nominal predicate, linked by *be to be*, it is always the unmarked form (Absolutive) that is used. In fact, even though *students* can be attached to nouns to indicate plurality, it is often not used outside the pronominal (personal and demonstrative) category. A rule of thumb is that when a plural noun phrase is used vocatively (i.e. in calling), thus similar to a pronoun, then plural marking is used. For example, in *Comrades! Let's fight on! or Teachers and students, how are you all today?* the noun phrases *comrades, teachers,* and *students* can be marked with *-*. When plurality is expressed by means of numerals or demonstratives, the noun itself cannot take the plural marker *-. We shall return to this issue in Lesson 7.
In Lesson 4, we learned that the linking verb भएको to be expresses subjectivity of the speaker. In this lesson we introduce its non-subjective counterpart भए to be. Again, the criterion for choosing भएको or भए is not directly related to "person" as a rigid grammatical entity. It would appear that second and third person subject, when not in any way considered as an extension of the speaker (the first person), employs the verb भए. The negative and interrogative forms of भए follow those of भएको: the negative adverb ै is placed before भए to form negation भए ै, only that भए ै has no contracted form. The interrogative adverb र is placed before भए to from the yes-no question. It is interesting to note that the two adverbs र and ै seem to be somehow competing for the same position before भए, for it is impossible to put both of them in front of भए to form a negative yes-no question. In other words, the combination *भए रै is ungrammatical. One way to solve this problem is to use a sentential particle (ै or ैै) when the verb is negated (see Example (4)). The various forms are summarized below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>to be</th>
<th>Subjective</th>
<th>Non-Subjective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affirmative</td>
<td>भएको</td>
<td>भए</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>भए ै</td>
<td>भए ै</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interrogative</td>
<td>र भएको</td>
<td>र भए</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Interrogative</td>
<td>रै भएको</td>
<td>रै भए</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Examples:

(1) नेपालीको भएको। रशियाको भए। I am from the US. She is from Russia.
(2) नेपालीको रै भएको। रशियाको रै भए। Sophie is not a teacher. I am not a teacher either.
(3) नेपालीको भएको। रशियाको भए। Are you a student? Is he a student?
(4) नेपालीको रै भएको। रशियाको रै भए। Isn't he your student?

The interrogative particle र, called Jeddul (रिज्जुल) in traditional Tibetan grammar, is the same as ैै, which we learned in the greeting नेपालीको भएको। Like भए, रिज्जुल also has several variants depending on the syllable preceding it. When the word that precedes it has a syllable-final consonant ज or र, the form रै is used. Other variants of रिज्जुल will be introduced in Lesson 11.
 Normally, interrogative pronouns in English appear in a sentence-initial position to form questions. Under special circumstances, the interrogative pronouns can stay "inside" the sentence. This is called an echo question, used by speaker's raising the intonation to show surprise, disbelief, or asking for clarification. Compare the following examples:

(1) Where is he from? Who did you see? (normal questions)
(2) He is from where? You saw who? (echo questions)

Tibetan, like most other Asian languages, does not move forward the interrogative pronouns such as who, what, and from/of where to the sentential initial position. They stay put, or "in situ", as it is technically called, inside the sentence just like the English echo questions. Their presence in the sentence alone is sufficient to give the sentence a natural interpretation of a question. In other words, such Tibetan questions are interpreted as normal questions as the English questions in (1), and not the echo questions in (2).

If the reader is not sure where the original position of an interrogative pronoun is, he can always test it by trying to answer the question first, then replace the key words by an interrogative pronoun. For example: དེ་གཉིས་ [བོད་སྐད་ལས་ང་] རེད། He is your teacher is the answer to the question Who is he? Therefore, the Tibetan word order for the question is: དེ་གཉིས་[མ་] རེད། and not དེ་བཞིན་པ་རེད།

Similarly, the following English questions are translated into Tibetan by placing the interrogative pronouns "in situ."

(3) What is her job? སྤེན་གཉིས་མཁན་རེད། (Lit. Her job what is?)
(4) Where is she from? ན་སྐབས་པ་རེད། (Lit. She where of is?)
(5) What is your name? སྤེན་གཉིས་མཁན་སྐར་རེད། (Lit. Your name what is called?)
(6) Who is our teacher? བོད་སྐད་གཞི་ནས་ནག་པ་རེད། (Lit. Our teacher who is?)

The above word order should make perfect sense if one compares it with the answer to each question. Lastly, the phrase དོན་ནི་ from where actually consists of an interrogative word དོན་, meaning which, and the Genitive Case དོན་. The word དོན་ can be used independently, meaning which, or with other particles or prepositions, e.g. དོན་ཅོ་ at which place (Lesson 7) and དོན་དོ་ to where (Lesson 10).
5.4 Cultural Notes

5.4.1 Tibetan Calligraphy

Earlier in the lesson, we introduced two writing styles, namely Wuchan and Wumed. Literally, นุ่วด means the headed, referring to the initial horizontal stroke that resembles the "head" of each letter, and นุ่วด means the headless, referring to the removal of that head-stroke. In the Amdo region, the two styles are known as इंशन (the white font) for the headed and इंशन (the black font) for the headless. Together, they are called इंशन.

In terms of traditional Tibetan calligraphy, the headed is called Zabyig (adopted). This is the style used in almost all printed material, and the style we learn in this textbook. The other headless calligraphic styles should all be called Xarma (adopted). Among them, varying in how cursive the strokes are and how connected they are to the other strokes, are the Drutsa (adopted), Chuwig (adopted), and Chumatsug (adopted). Drawing a metaphor from music, if the printed style इंशन is adagio, then the इंशन, इंशन, and इंशन are, respectively, andante, allegro, and allegro ma non troppo. Below is a selection of different styles (courtesy of, 1999).

Calligraphy-Example 1 Zabyig इंशन
Traditional Tibetan calligraphy is written with a flat-topped bamboo pen in a similar fashion to a quill. The bamboo must be first treated with a layer of yak bone marrow or butter. After the bamboo has absorbed the substance, it is then heated and dried before the actual making of the pen. The width of the flap top decides the size of the words produced. Depending on the style of the writing, the flap top needs to be cut either slanting towards right for $\textit{the headed}$ or left for $\textit{the headless}$. When
writing, the user holds the pen with his or her thumb and index finger and turns the pen clockwise or counterclockwise to produce the desired width and shape of each stroke. Generally speaking, horizontal strokes are thick and level; vertical strokes often thin and long. During the writing, a knife is sometimes needed to sharpen the pen.

Good penmanship, as well as proper spelling, is usually regarded as a reflection of one’s education. Therefore, even though the thick-thin contrast of stroke shape in traditional calligraphy cannot not be easily done with a ball-point pen, it is still a good idea for a student to write neatly and smoothly and to cultivate a sense of what makes proper Tibetan calligraphy.

5.4.3 Yes or No

The Tibetan language does not have the equivalent of the English yes or no. The short answer to a yes-no question is simply by replying with the verb. For example, to answer do you like tea, Tibetan speakers, lacking the words yes or no, may say “Like.” Do you eat lamb and yak meat? "Eat." In a negative response, the negative adverb རོ་ can not be used alone. The shortest possible answer is རོ་ + verb.

Foreigners find it fascinating that in many areas not limited to Amdo, Tibetan speakers respond to a yes-no question or a statement by making a very brief inhaling sound. This is to signify agreement with your statement or yes to your question. As far as the Tibetan is concerned, by inhaling, he has already answered the question.

5.5 Key Sentence Patterns

5.5.1 Asking About Origin

1. ཉེས་རབ་ཀྱིས། Where are you from?
2. ཉེས་བྲག་གི་དྲབ། Where are they from?
3. ཉེས་བཀྲ་ཤིས། Where is she from?
4. ཉེས་བཀྲ་ཤིས། Where is John from?
5. ཉེས་བཀྲ་ཤིས། Where is Akimi from?

5.5.2 Country / Place + རོ།

1. རོ་ཞེས་བྲེ། I am from Qinghai.
2. རོ་ཞེས་བྲེ། རོ་ཞེས་བྲེ། She/He is from China.
3. རོ་ཞེས་བྲེ། རོ་ཞེས་བྲེ། We are from Japan.
4. རོ་ཞེས་བྲེ། རོ་ཞེས་བྲེ། They are from England.
(5) Sophie is from Europe.

- 5.5.3 रें to Be, रें (Negative), and रें (Interrogative)
(1) Is Dawa Dondrup a teacher?
(2) No, he isn't. He is a student.
(3) Is Sophie from America?
(4) Sophie is not American. She's from France.

- 5.5.4 यू Who
(1) Who is she/he?
(2) Who are you?
(3) Who are they?
(4) Who is Tserang Drolma?
(5) Who is Sangji Lhamo?

- 5.5.5 Asking and Answering Questions About जॉब Job
(1) What’s his job?
(2) He is a farmer.
(3) What’s your job?
(4) I am a doctor.
(5) What's their job?
(6) They are workers.

- 5.5.6 Personal Pronouns, Absolutive and Genitive Case
(1) Who is our teacher?
(2) Is your (pl.) teacher from Lhasa?
(3) Are your students from America?
(4) Their doctor is Lobzang Dondrup.
(5) John and Mary are our friends.

- 5.6 Exercises

5.6.1 Listening Comprehension: True or False
(1) Tom is a student.
(2) Sophie is from France.
(3) Tom is from Japan.
(4) I am a student too.
(5) Tom, Sophie and I are friends.

5.6.2 Complete the Dialogues

(1) ཤིང་བོད་བེན། ________________ ?
   ཤིང་བོད་བེན།
(2) ཤིང་བོད་བེན། ________________ ?
   ཤིང་བོད་བེན།
(3) ཤིང་བོད་བེན།
(4) ཤིང་བོད་བེན།

5.6.3 Fill in the Blanks (I): Personal pronouns for (1), (2), ཤིང་ or ཤེས་ for (3) and (4)

(1) ཤིང་བོད་བེན། ཤིང་བོད་བེན། ཤིང་བོད་བེན།
(2) ཤིང་བོད་བེན། ཤིང་བོད་བེན། ཤིང་བོད་བེན།
(3) ཤིང་བོད་བེན། ཤིང་བོད་བེན། ཤིང་བོད་བེན།
(4) ཤིང་བོད་བེན།
   ཤིང་བོད་བེན། ཤིང་བོད་བེན།
   ཤིང་བོད་བེན། ཤིང་བོད་བེན།
   ཤིང་བོད་བེན། ཤིང་བོད་བེན།
   ཤིང་བོད་བེན། ཤིང་བོད་བེན།

5.6.4 Fill in the Blanks (II): Insert the correct form of the Genitive Case

(1) ཤིང་བོད་བེན།
5.6.5 Image Description: Introduce the following people according to the information provided. Start with "His/Her name is… S/he is from…etc."

(Top left) Tom, Canadian, doctor; (top right) Sophie (left), French, student, and Mary
(right), American, student; (bottom left) Akimi, Japanese, student (bottom middle) Lao Bai, Han Chinese, farmer; (bottom right) Dorje Tserang, Tibetan, worker.

5.6.5 Translation

(1) A: Who are they? Are they your students?
   B: No, they are not my students. They are my classmates.
   A: Where are they from?
   B: Tserang is from India. Sophie is from Europe. Akimi is from Japan.

(2) I am a teacher. I am not a student.

(3) A: What do you do?
   B: I am a worker. What do you do?
   A: I am a farmer.

(4) A: Is she Sophie? Where is she from?
   B: No, she is not Sophie. She is Mary. She is from England.

5.6.7 Oral Spelling

(1) གླིང་གིས། classmate (2) ནིད་གུ་ཁ། China (3) ལྷོན་པ། Japan
(4) ལྷོན་གུ་ཁ། England (5) དབྱེ་གྱུར། friend (6) རིག་པ། job
(7) རིག་པ། worker (8) རིག་པ། farmer