

Tibet Oral History Project

Interview #36D – Thupten Wooser
May 21, 2012

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INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

1. Interview Number: #36D
2. Interviewee: Thupten Woesser
3. Age: 80
4. Date of Birth: 1932
5. Sex: Male
6. Birthplace: Minyak
7. Province: Dhotoe (Kham)
8. Year of leaving Tibet: 1959
9. Date of Interview: May 21, 2012
10. Place of Interview: Hotel Tibet, Mcleod Ganj, Dharamsala, Himachal Pradesh, India
11. Length of Interview: 1 hr 50 min
12. Interviewer: Marcella Adamski
13. Interpreter: Tenzin Yangchen
14. Videographer: Pema Tashi
15. Translator: Tenzin Yangchen

Biographical Information:

Thupten Woesser's family consisted of 17-18 members divided into two groups, one that worked as farmers and the other as nomads. He explains about this typical composition of family and its advantages. He became a monk at the age of 12 in a small monastery called Sikhu Gonpa. He talks about dividing his time between the monastery and his home. He also explains the religious studies and how he received the teaching called Lamday 'Path and its Fruit' from His Holiness Jigdal Dagchen Sakya Rinpoche.

Thupten Woesser recounts the first appearance of the Chinese army in his region, the fleeing Nationalist soldiers and the Chinese policies in the early 1950's when Lhasa had not yet been invaded. People in his region were divided into five groups and subjected to praise or accusations depending on their status in society. Thupten Woesser's parents faced hardships during the liberation because the Chinese confiscated all of their possessions and farmland.

Thupten Woesser decided to not return home from the monastery, but instead accompanied His Holiness Jigdal Dagchen Sakya Rinpoche to Derge and eventually travelled to Lhasa. He recalls the various pilgrimage sites he attempted to visit while in Lhasa, which included Shigatse, Yarlung, Tsethang, Tandu and Samye. He then stayed at Sakya to continue his Buddhist studies until the unrest in Lhasa caused him to flee to Sikkim.

Topics Discussed:

Kham, childhood memories, customs/traditions, monastic life, Buddhist beliefs, first appearance of Chinese, invasion by Chinese army, resistance, oppression under Chinese, pilgrimage.

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Interview #36D

Interviewee: Thupten Wooser

Age: 80, Sex: Male

Interviewer: Marcella Adamski

Interview Date: May 21, 2012

Question: Please tell us your name.

00:00:12

Interviewee #36D: Name? Thupten Wooser.

Q: His Holiness the Dalai Lama asked us to record your experiences, so that we can share your memories with many generations of Tibetans, the Chinese and the rest of the world. Your memories will help us to document the true history, culture and beliefs of the Tibetan people. Do you give your permission for the Tibet Oral History Project to use this interview?

#36D: [Nods] Yes.

Q: Thank you for offering to share your story with us.

#36D: [Nods]

Q: During this interview if you wish to take a break or stop at any time, please let me know. If you do not wish to answer a question or talk about something, let me know.

#36D: Okay.

Q: If this interview was shown in Tibet or China, would this be a problem for you?

#36D: It is fine.

Q: We are honored to record your story and appreciate your participation in this project.

00:02:05

#36D: Okay.

Q: *Aku-la* ‘respectful term for paternal uncle,’ can you please tell me where were you born and what did your family do for a living?

#36D: The birthplace was Minyak in Kham.

Q: How many members were there in the family when you were a small child in Minyak?

#36D: There were two groups, one that worked as nomads and another in the fields. Altogether there were 17-18 members.

Q: And in which part were you engaged in doing and what did you do?

00:03:18

#36D: I was the child of a nomad. The parents lived in two pairs. One pair lived in the nomadic area and one pair at the farm. When they had children, they brought home daughters-in-laws that were sisters, so that the nomadic and farming families remained as one unit. This had been followed from generation to generation. A pair of siblings married a pair of siblings and when they had children, everyone was related.

Q: Did you live at the nomadic site or farm?

#36D: Though I was the child of nomads, I became a monk at the monastery when [I] was small. I had three siblings from the same set of parents. I was the youngest.

Q: Youngest?

#36D: The youngest.

Q: What age were you when you went to the monastery and which monastery was it?

#36D: [I] was 12 years old.

Q: Which monastery was it?

#36D: It was the Sikhu Gonpa and it was a small monastery with around 70 monks.

Q: Sikhu?

#36D: Sikhu Gonpa.

Q: Sikhu Gonpa.

00:04:35

#36D: The region was called Minyak Siwu and the monastery was Sikhu Gonpa.

To relate an old story, long ago there was a king called Siwu in Minyak. An old palace and such existed in our region from the time of the Siwu king. [The region] was called Siwu Rong and there was the Siwu king and the monastery called Sikhu Gonpa. Actually we used to speak another language. The language was different, which was neither Tibetan nor Chinese.

Q: In Minyak?

#36D: [Nods] The language of Minyak.

Q: Was there a name for that dialect?

#36D: The language of Minyak.

Q: It's called the Minyak language?

#36D: Yes.

Q: Before you went to the monastery, can you tell us some memories before you were 12 years old? What your family life was like and how growing up was for you?

#36D: I was the youngest among three siblings and [my] parents did not give me much work. There were two families, one of my father and the other of my mother who had come as daughter-in-law [to father's home]. At the age of 12, I was sent to my maternal uncle to study the alphabet. I learnt the alphabet from the teacher.

Q: Not at the monastery, right?

00:06:33

#36D: [I] joined the monastery only after 12. It was quite late when [I was] left at the monastery.

Q: [You] learnt a little from maternal uncle before joining the monastery?

#36D: Yes.

Q: And was your uncle a monk or a learned man?

#36D: Maternal uncle? He was not a monk but a layman.

Q: The one that taught you the alphabet?

#36D: Yes.

Q: *Aku-la*, you mentioned a king, a Sikhu king in the old palace. Can you tell me about this king? Who was he and when did he live?

#36D: It was long ago. Which time was it in Tibetan history? There is [a chapter] in history when China invaded Tibet. It is in there. I did not learn about it in history as a youngster. There was a high structure called Sawang, which belonged to the Siwu king. It lasted for around 300 years old. There was such a legend.

Q: Prior to 300 years?

#36D: [I] heard that he lived for 300 years.

Q: Oh, you mean this king's reign lasted for 300 years?

#36D: Yes.

Q: In Sikhu?

00:08:26

#36D: Ruled by the Siwu king in Siwurong.

Q: It isn't mentioned in Tibetan history [books]?

#36D: It is not found in history [books]. Amdo [Dhoday Province] claim, "Minyak is ours and the Siwu king is ours."

Q: Who said it?

#36D: Amdo.

Q: Amdo.

#36D: Amdo [people] said that of Minyak. It is useless to talk much but some accomplished ones have written books that I saw. Is it of any use? Shall [we] drop this since [I] do not have correct information.

Q: When you were sent to the monastery, how did you feel about going to the monastery at age 12?

#36D: There was no grammar, poetry or basics that were taught in the monastery except for memorizing the prayer recitations. [I] studied for three years, from [age] 12 to 15.

Q: [You] lived in the monastery for three years?

#36D: There was no learning the scriptures like it is done here. The teachers taught prayer recitations, beating the drum and cymbals, and performing the *cham* 'religious dance performance by monks.'

Q: I see, beating the drum and performing *cham*?

00:10:24

#36D: [We] learnt to beat the drum and cymbals, perform *cham* and chant prayers. That was my situation. There were not many that did not know the scriptures in the monastery. One could go to Rikhu Gonpa and other monasteries and become learned. Some became teachers.

Q: The Rikhu Gonpa...

#36D: Rikhu Gonpa is the head of 13 monasteries in Minyak. There were a little over 300 monks. There were a *sheta* 'study center' and *dupa* 'meditation center' and teachings given.

Q: After completing a few years of studies at Sikhu Gonpa, Rikhu Gonpa...

#36D: After completing a few years of studies, one went to Rikhu Gonpa as [they] belonged to the same sect. One lived at the *sheta* and became abbots after studies. Some became teachers that taught the scriptures.

Q: You spent three years at the Sikhu Monastery and then did you go to the Rikhu Monastery?

00:12:19

#36D: [I] did not get to go to Rikhu Monastery. I was 15 years old then. And then 16, 17, 18...[I] continued to live at the [Sikhu] Monastery but could not study the scriptures in depth. [I] was the youngest [in the family] and [my] parents kept me close by. The parents could not live in one place. [They] moved every 3-4 days in search of grass in warmer regions. During summer they moved higher up and the distance from my parents widened. So during those years, [I] lived intermittently at the monastery and with parents until [I] was in the mid 20's.

Q: So [you] lived in the monastery until the age of 15 and then went back to the parents?

#36D: Yes, [I] went back to the parents but attended prayer assemblies at the monastery. It was a small monastery and when there were no prayer assemblies, [I] went to help the parents. They did not live in one place. The parents faced difficulties. When grass for the animals depleted, they moved to a distance of 3-4 days. During summer they came back. [They] changed places.

Q: You moved higher up during summer...

#36D: Yes, during summer there was milking to do. The grass was good and so were the animals. There was not much grass in winter and [they] journeyed 3-4 days into the valleys in search of good grass, crossing over 2-3 mountain passes. [They] lived there for 4-5 months.

Q: Did you stay at Sikhu Monastery to do that?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Sikhu Monastery, and then also to the nomadic camps.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: And then back to Sikhu...

[Interpreter to interviewer]: ...when there were prayer assemblies to attend.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: So he never went to Rikhu.

[Interpreter to interviewer]: No.

Q: Okay. So that was age...

[Interpreter to interviewer]: 15-26.

Q: Did you want to be a monk and stay in the monastery all the time or was it okay that you would join your family from time to time?

00:15:19

#36D: [Speaks before interpretation is complete] It was a small monastery and one could not live there for the entire duration of 12 months. When there were no prayer assemblies, one went back home. So I went to my parents.

Q: Did the other monks too return to their respective homes?

#36D: [They] returned home while some lived in caverns and meditated. Some returned home and helped in the work. There were certain times during winter and summer when there were prayer assemblies. [We] went to the monastery during such times.

Q: Didn't you want to remain a monk always?

#36D: [I] did not get time for meditation and such things. I lived there until the age of 23.

Q: Was it 23?

00:15:58

#36D: Yes. When [I] was 23, the Sakya Gongma Rinpoche Phuntsok Phodang [His Holiness Jigdal Dagchen Sakya Rinpoche], who presently lives in the United States, was invited to our region. There were many Sakya Monasteries in Minyak. There were 13 branch monasteries of our monastery and numerous other monasteries, but I am not able to give you the exact number. When monks of all these [monasteries] gathered, there were 1,700. His Holiness the Sakya Gongma Rinpoche was invited to teach the Lamday 'Path and its Fruit' at the Minyak Pal Lhagang. I was 23 years old then.

Q: In Minyak?

#36D: Yes, in Minyak. There was a large monastery in Minyak called Pal Lhagang.

Q: Minyak Pa...?

#36D: Pal Lhagang.

Q: Pal?

#36D: In Hindi it is...[not discernible] and we Tibetans say Pal. Lhagang means...When the Jowo 'statue of Buddha Sakyamuni' of Lhasa was being escorted, it was kept there and a ceremony held, hence the name Lhagang.

Q: Can you tell us was that unusual and special for His Holiness to come to that area?

00:17:47

#36D: The Sakya lineage is passed from father to son and not otherwise.

Q: Had His Holiness the Sakya [Gongma Rinpoche] visited in the past?

#36D: We left later. During that time I was 23 years old and received teachings. Later I came to Sakya [in western Tibet] and lived there for a year.

Q: Yes?

#36D: [I] lived a year in Sakya. That was later. When I was 23 years old, [I] received teachings from His Holiness the Sakya Phuntsok Phodang for three months. When I left home, it was not to flee from the Chinese or to fight, but I left to receive teachings.

Q: And this is from Holiness...?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Sakya...

[Interviewer to interpreter]: Sakya...?

Interpreter to interviewer]: ...Phuntsok Phodang.

Q: Can you remember what teachings His Holiness Sakya was giving?

00:19:20

#36D: It was the Sakya Lamday. The Lamday was taught for three months.

Q: Lamrim 'Graded Path to Enlightenment'?

#36D: Lamday. It is not Lamrim but Lamday. The Geluk [sect] teach Lamrim but the Sakya teach Lamday.

Q: Is it called Lamrim?

#36D: It is Lamday, the *lam* 'path' and *day* 'fruit.'

Q: Can you help me understand what are the teachings about?

#36D: The teaching is about the practice of meditation. It is about practicing the dharma and meditating. If you practiced meditation and excelled in it, you could perform rituals in the monastery, bring merit upon the dead and the living. Once you mastered the lessons, you were considered as one with powers.

Q: Did many monks do meditation or was it mostly reciting the scriptures?

00:21:04

#36D: The majority of the monks recited the scriptures and prayers and lived in the monastery. Some of the learned monks engaged deeply in meditation.

Q: *Aku-la*, did you learn meditation practices?

#36D: [I] did not practice meditation. [I] was able to receive all the teachings after coming to Sakya and hoped to become a good monk later but could not achieve it.

Q: Would it be possible for you to just say in words what the Lamday meditation involves? What is that—because many people are familiar with that title, but I would like to understand what actually you are praying in that Lamday meditation?

#36D: You reflected upon the sins and all that was negative in your past life and meditated, visualizing your lama being in the center [touches head] with lights and nectar flowing down gradually [moves right hand down from head to face to chest], washing away your sins. That is how you meditated and there are many types of meditations. One meditated upon the Dorjee Sempa ‘Vajrasattva (a tantric deity).’

Q: Is there any way that the meditation involved praying, taking on the sufferings of other people and freeing other people from their sufferings because you take them on yourself?

00:24:06

#36D: Yes, there are such and that is the best form of meditation. You take the sufferings of all sentient beings and exchange by giving them your happiness. You shed tears from your eyes and if you can meditate upon the 16...[not discernible], you become enlightened.

Q: Yes?

#36D: You become enlightened. It is most important to possess a pure mind. Whether you meditate or practice the dharma, I am not very knowledgeable, but you must believe that you want to achieve enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings and to help them, and not that you want happiness for yourself.

Q: Were there any situations that were difficult to take for you...Were there situations in which you had to take on other people’s suffering and pray for them or were there situations that were difficult for you to do that?

#36D: There will be difficulties during the initial stage. Once you get *kondi* ‘accustomed,’ you felt happiness in your heart. You thought, “I must do it for the benefit of all sentient beings.” Then there was happiness in your heart and no difficulties. There were problems only in the beginning and then you got *kondi*.

Q: *Kondi*?

00:26:30

#36D: *Kondi* is like teaching the alphabet to a child. From the next day [he] will repeat it and that's *kondi*; initially [he] does not know. Likewise, once you get accustomed, happiness in the heart comes naturally.

Q: *Aku-la*, if this is respectful I would like to ask if you could put into words what the prayer is, the Lamrim [Lamday] prayer. If you could tell us, if there is a version that you can share with us because many people really love to know about...would love to know about this meditation because it's the heart of the Buddha teachings.

#36D: [I] began learning at the age of 23 at Sakya, but did not get to spend time on meditation. [I] wanted to do it but all the time was spent on procrastination. Hence, [I] cannot provide a good explanation.

Q: Was this meditation practiced by all the monks and even the lay people or only by the educated monks and lamas?

#36D: It was the custom in early Tibet for monks and not lay people [to practice meditation]. The figure was very small though it was possible that there were a few. Even among monks, except for performing rites and rituals in the monasteries, meditation practitioners were very few. [They] must join the *sheta*. After coming to India, His Holiness the Dalai Lama has begun *sheta* and *dupa* facilities, even for lay people. There never was this practice in Tibet.

[Interviewee removes his hat]

Q: Do you continue to...Look how beautiful he looks without his hat!

#36D: [Laughs and touches head]

Q: You have very nice hair. Very beautiful.

#36D: [Laughs]

Q: *Aku-la*, do you still practice the Lamrim [Lamday] meditation in your heart?

00:30:21

#36D: It is not right to utter lies. [I] cannot do it perfectly. Not because of...[not discernible] but its due to my failing. I am 80 years old now. I try my best and attend His Holiness' teachings and read books as well but [I] lack in intelligence. One has become habituated since a young age. Had one done it from a young age, it would have been good.

Q: But I think you understand in your heart what the message of Lamrim [Lamday] is. I think I can see in your face that you understand the teachings.

#36D: It is not correct to utter lies but [I] do not know it well. The Sakya Dolma Phodang [His Holiness Sakya Trizin Rinpoche] taught the Lamday many times. [He] taught for

three months in Bir [Himachal Pradesh, India] and in Rajpur [Uttaranchal, India]. It was taught on many different occasions, and also in Varanasi [Uttar Pradesh, India]. [It is] taught once in 3-4 years. I did not get the time, as I had two small children [then] and with a wife and [laughs] time passed like that.

Q: Who taught in Bir and...

#36D: His Holiness the Dolma Phodang.

Q: By His Holiness the Dolma Phodang?

#36D: His Holiness the Dolma Phodang. His Holiness the Phuntsok Phodang lives in the United States. [His Holiness the Dolma Phodang] taught on many different occasions, each for duration of three months.

Q: What made you...had to stop since age 23? What happened that you had to stop meditation?

00:32:59

#36D: After attending the teaching at age 23, I came to Tibet [Utsang Province]. [I] left my village and went away. My family has faced great hardships during the liberation. I journeyed six days to attend the 3-month teaching and that happened to be the exact time of the liberation by the Chinese. I did not feel like returning to the village and went away. [I] was around six months in Derge and then stayed in Lhasa. While at Lhasa [I] went on a pilgrimage to Eru Bakor and lived over a year in Sakya, but except for chanting prayers, [I] did not get time for meditation.

Q: Did [you] say that [your] mother faced hardships during the liberation?

#36D: What?

Q: Did [you] say that [your] family faced hardships during the liberation?

#36D: Yes. Because of the hardship, [I] did not want to stay home.

Q: Can you tell me what liberation was going on in your area?

#36D: During the liberation all people were classified into five groups: *sadhak delrim* 'land owners class,' rich farmers...[not discernible] and finally the poor people. The properties of the [wealthy] groups were to be confiscated and distributed to the poor. It took around 10 years for the Chinese to make preparations. Initially the Chinese left the people alone.

Q: You mentioned five groups...

00:34:57

#36D: The people were classified into five groups.

Q: What were the five classifications?

#36D: The first was *sakhak delrim*; that was in our region, but in Lhasa there were the *ngadak* ‘leadership class,’ and *ngatsab* ‘deputy to *ngadak*.’ It was different in our region.

Q: *Sadhak delrim*...?

#36D: *Sadhak delrim*, rich farmers...

Q: Yes?

#36D: The first was *sadhak delrim*...

Q: Rich farmers...

#36D: Rich farmers, then the *riring*, those that were the skilled workers...

Q: Yes.

#36D: And then the poor. Is that five?

Q: It’s four.

#36D: Four? The poor were the last. There were five, [smiles] something is mixed up.

Q: Before you went to the teachings, were you able to see changes in your community and can you tell me what happened?

00:36:24

#36D: Changes were taking place then. There was great fear that the Chinese were coming. The *Shi Pang Chue* were marching from China towards Lhasa to fight and the route ran through our region.

Q: [It] was said that the Chinese were coming...

#36D: ...that the Chinese were coming and everybody could see [them] come. *Shi Pang Chue*: this is Chinese language.

Q: Yes?

#36D: *Shi Pang Chue*. There were 10,000.

Q: What does *Shi Pang Chue* mean?

#36D: 180,000.

Q: 180,000?

#36D: One hundred and eighty thousand Chinese soldiers were advancing to Lhasa to fight. *Shi pang chue* is the name of the unit.

Q: Was the name of the unit...?

00:37:03

#36D: It was said that the *Shi Pang Chue* unit would be proceeding to Lhasa to fight. [They] were coming through our region and everybody was apprehensive as to what would happen.

Q: What year would that be or how old were you when you saw that with your own eyes? And did you see the troops with your own eyes?

#36D: The main army's route was a little further away from my village. However, I saw the fleeing Chinese of the Kuomintang that were being pursued and caught and led away by groups of 25 or 30 Chinese [Communist troops]. The main army passed through Dhartsedo and though I did not see, I heard everything.

Q: Where did [they] go through?

#36D: [They] were going to Lhasa through Derge.

Q: Which was the main route?

#36D: [It was] through Dhartsedo, Kanze, Dhargay Gonpa, Derge and Chamdo and onwards to Lhasa through Kongpo.

Q: Were they marching or in cars when they were going through your region? And what were they wearing?

[Interpreter to interviewee]: You saw 25-30 Kuomintang soldiers...

00:39:10

#36D: There were the Kuomintang but the army was the Communists. The Kuomintang was on the run.

Q: Were the Kuomintang escaping when the Communist Chinese appeared?

#36D: [They] were fleeing. There were many wars in China, but [I] do not know the number. The Kuomintang was defeated. Those soldiers that were there in our region were fleeing towards Yunan when the Communists arrived. They could not withstand the [Chinese] army due to the disparity in number.

Q: Were the Kuomintang soldiers in army uniform?

#36D: Yes?

Q: The Kuomintang soldiers on the run, were they in uniform, riding horses or in vehicles?

#36D: [They] were not in vehicles since there were no drivable roads. I did not see but heard that some of the leaders were carried in palanquins and the ordinary soldiers walked carrying guns. [They] crossed the river at Miling and then to Gyalthang where there was a route to Yunan. [They] planned to go to Taiwan from Yunan.

Q: Did you see the Kuomintang troops?

00:40:21

#36D: [I] did not see the soldiers; it is useless lying. [They] passed close by us at a distance of a day's journey or half a day. [I] heard all the news.

Q: And the soldiers that were running away from the Chinese were they soldiers from your region?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Kuomintang.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: Kuomintang from their region. Kuomintang is from...?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Kuomintang is the previous Chinese, before the Communist Chinese came.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: Okay.

Q: Were the Nationalists in the Kham area for a long time before the People's Liberation Army came and what were they doing there?

00:41:48

#36D: The Kuomintang did not live around our region. Dhartsedo was Kuomintang region and the whole of China was governed by the Kuomintang. There were regional troops and officials stationed at Dhartsedo and they had lost the territory to the Communist Chinese. There was great danger to their being caught and killed. Hence, all their soldiers gathered together and fled. That was how it happened; [they] were not our people; they were Chinese.

Q: Since they were Chinese, were they in Minyak because it happened to be on the route or where did [they] come from?

#36D: They could not go to China from Dhartsedo because the Communists were there in large numbers. So [they] went towards Yunan. [I] am not sure if [they] went through Burma [Myanmar] since Burma is close by. Then from Yunan they planned to go abroad, to Taiwan.

Q: ...to go to Taiwan?

#36D: Yes to go to Taiwan.

Q: Had there been any Chinese Nationalists in the Kham area before the Communist Chinese came?

00:43:45

#36D: [They] did not exactly live in the region, but it was Dhartsedo where we paid our taxes, took our disputes and traded.

Q: Yes?

#36D: Dhartsedo. Dhartsedo was under Kuomintang rule, so we became their subjects.

Q: The people of Dhartsedo?

#36D: Yes, Dhartsedo.

Q: From your region to Dhartsedo...

#36D: Dhartsedo was close by. [We] had to go to Dhartsedo to pay taxes, to trade or for any other contacts.

Q: To trade?

#36D: Yes, to trade, to buy things to eat, drink and wear. [We] went to Dhartsedo for everything. Produce from our region like grains, animals, mushrooms, *yartsa gunbu* ‘winter worm, summer grass’ [caterpillar fungus/*cordyceps sinensis*] and many kinds of spices were taken to Dhartsedo and sold to the Chinese. And different kinds of fabrics, salt, tea and all requirements were purchased from the Chinese. Dhartsedo was the center for all such types of trade. All the *satay* ‘land tax’ were paid to the Chinese.

Q: What?

#36D: *Satay*. Taxes needed to be paid for the lands. Tax. One must go there to pay to the Chinese.

Q: Who [paid]?

#36D: People of our region must go to Dhartsedo.

Q: I see.

00:45:00

#36D: There were Kuomintang offices located in Dhartsedo. There were 13 offices called *yamin*.

Q: So it was a very reciprocal relationship. Is that correct? And these years would have been before 1955?

#36D: [It] was prior [to 1955].

Q: What happened when the armies came in? You didn't see them you said except for a few but what happened? What did you do next?

#36D: There was no attack in Dhartsedo then. Soldiers came and were cordial saying that we were all friends. [They] were all young between the ages of 18 and 25. There was a huge number and [they] were compliant. They wore numerous *dhayen* 'Chinese silver coins' [moves right hand from left shoulder to right waist]. *Dhayen* were carried like this and this [moves right hand from right shoulder to left waist and repeats on opposite side]. Whether they needed to buy *tsampa* 'flour made from roasted barley' or anything from our people, they paid well. They paid a lot of money to those that constructed roads for them. It came to be said, "The Communists are good."

Q: You said that at 25, you were there for the teachings and then you had to leave. What made you leave at 25 if this was a friendly behavior on the part of the soldiers?

00:48:18

#36D: When I left, they [the Chinese] had been there for 10 years. They arrived in '49 and I left in '54. [They] had lived for many years. Then they held meetings and gave speeches. [They] gave the sweetest of speeches. Wealthy people and past leaders were given money saying, "You are a leader or you are this and you are that."

Meetings were held separately for poor people and lectured, "[You] work very hard. [You] are good and bring progress to the country." However, they were questioned repeatedly, "What is the reason for your becoming poor?" Then some of them would reply, "The wealthy charged a high rate of interest for the loan." Or others would say, "[The wealthy] made a lot of profit [from us] through trade." Or some said, "As leaders they collected tax from us." There were some people who said such things and the Chinese commented that such a person was an excellent, observant and knowledgeable man. He was given gifts and such. Hence, the plan was to do it [liberation] in a gradual manner and it was not like [they] arrived today and carried it out the next day.

Q: And what happened next?

#36D: Then it was 6-7 years [since the Chinese arrived] and there were meetings everyday [wherein it was said], "Mao Zedong is precious. The Communists are good." There were singing and such things every day. One must present a paper once every week.

Q: Yes?

#36D: One must present a report once every week. In it must be mentioned, "This number of yaks died and this number of calves were born. This number of people have increased or reduced and the types of harvests from the fields." One must present the paper once in seven days mentioning all the happenings in the village.

Q: Once in seven days?

00:51:42

#36D: Once in seven days. [The report must mention,] “This is the work [I] did in the field, the amount of fertilizers used, the grounds dug and the effort put in.” All these must be written on paper. A time was allotted and many officials were appointed to do this work.

Much later, all those wealthy people...The poor who said that [a wealthy person] was bad was lauded and told that he was very knowledgeable, and those that did not say anything were told, “You do not have any experience and do not understand despite being told. You are useless.” And in this way, all the people turned hostile. The wealthy and the poor became detached.

Q: Where were you? What did you see with your own eyes and what happened to your family; to you and your family during this time?

#36D: I was classified among the *sadhak delrim*, the wealthy. I was away attending teachings for three months at upper Minyak. So, I was not there when they [the Chinese] began tormenting during the liberation. I escaped [the torments]. My older brother who lived on the farm was taken to Dhartsedo. He was not ill-treated but left in peace...

Q: The older brother?

#36D: Yes, the older one was told, “[You] cannot go home.” The younger brother was at home. During a meeting he was accused of this and that. The people of the village remarked, “You did this and you did that in the past” and slapped [him] on the cheeks. One was not allowed to answer back to whatever the charges. Earlier when we had discussed a solution should such a situation arise, one person in the know had remarked, “Even if you are charged with murder, keep silent. If called a thief, keep silent. The time for conversation is over.” One must remain silent.

Q: How far away were the teachings from where your family lived, your parents?

00:55:56

#36D: It was a distance of six days on foot. We drove yaks laden with *tsampa* then and it took six days.

Q: But the Chinese had been separating up divisions for a long time between the landowners and the poor. So before you went on the teachings, what did you see? What happened to your family and to your parents? Were there any problems before you left?

#36D: [The Chinese] did not ill-treat then. My older brother was taken to Dhartsedo but was not mistreated. It was not just us, but the region’s prominent people that were taken away to Dhartsedo. The second son was at home. He was questioned. The Chinese did not need to ask but the people said, “[You] caused us suffering in the past. You did this and you did that. It is good now under the leadership of Mao Zedong.” [Smiles] A time came when such things were mentioned.

Q: Were you at home then or at the teachings?

#36D: I was at the monastery for the teachings. I received a good opportunity but did not get to utilize it.

Q: The question being asked is, did anything happen to [your] parents and relatives before you left for the teachings?

00:57:29

#36D: There was awareness but no sufferings caused then. Things remained as usual [though we] understood everything. It was heard, “There is liberation in China and things have become terribly difficult. It is starting in Dhartsedo and it is just a matter of time before it happens to us. In the end there will be nowhere to flee.” There was a lot of panic but things had not been confiscated then when I was at home.

Q: So when you went to the teachings and it took six days to walk there, and the teachings were three months. Was it during that three months—did anything happen to your parents while you were at the teachings?

#36D: Yes, it was starting to happen. It was happening sequentially. Liberation is like this: [the Chinese] did not come in a day and confiscate everything. They gave an example that was based on a big tree. [They] said one of the roots of the tree would be dug out. A month or two later, another would be dug out and so on and finally, the tree would fall over. The wood would be burned and the land used for cultivation. [They] said that such a thing would be done to the families of the *sadhak delrim* and annihilate [them]. Otherwise, when I was there, nothing like this happened but the problem was starting.

Q: So in the end did any harm come to your parents?

#36D: My parents faced hardships for a year or two. We used to take care of animals and all the animals had been seized under the pretext that [they] belonged to the people. There was no income once the animals were confiscated. All the lands were divided and we had been allotted a small piece. All the grain stock at home was distributed claiming that [they] belonged to the people. That was temporary. Distributing to the people was temporary. It was good for a year or two for them. And finally on account of the lack of knowledge in the country’s policies, there was such a problem that everyone lacked food. Naturally the rich families faced hardships, but the poor that worked hard too did not have anything to eat. Everybody suffered, though I was not there.

Q: Did you experience these kinds of changes before you went to the retreat, the distribution of animals and lands? Did you see that with your own eyes?

01:01:56

#36D: I did not see it because I did not go back after the teachings. [I] came to Lhasa.

Q: The reason you went on to Lhasa was because you heard there was problem in your homeland. So what did you do? Confirm that and then what did you do when you went to Lhasa?

#36D: Yes, it was that [problem] but [I] did not mention it. [I] said something else and left, as mentioning it would have brought me trouble.

Q: [You] didn't say that that was the reason for going to Lhasa, but...

#36D: There were around 200 horses and mules belonging to His Holiness the Phuntsok Phodang. They had to be driven from Minyak to Derge. Though he had many people, eight [monks] from the various monasteries in Minyak were required to join the escort [team]. Our monastery and another were required to send a monk and I volunteered. I was able to find a way through this, otherwise, I would not have received papers to travel.

Q: So you went from Minyak to Derge and what happened...was there any problem on the journey?

01:04:08

#36D: There were many Chinese soldiers waiting along the way to check papers. Even a nephew of mine was there since he hailed from a poor family background. [He] asked me, "Older brother, where are you going?" [He] spoke in a different dialect. "[I] am going to Lhasa," [I] replied and advised him to work hard. Then we left and arrived in Derge. [I] was six months in Derge.

Q: In Derge?

#36D: Yes, Derge which was ruled by Chagotsang. Chago Tobden was the *tushi* 'leader/commander[?]' of the Chinese.

Q: Yes?

#36D: [He] was a big leader of the Chinese in Derge. [He] was called Chago Tobden; [he] was a *tushi* of the Chinese. However, in the end the Chinese did not treat him well.

Q: *Aku-la*, the Chinese soldiers were waiting at the road and there was a nephew of yours. Was the nephew working for the Chinese?

#36D: [He] was working for the Chinese. When I left home he was a shepherd. We were distantly related. He was standing on the road wearing a Chinese cap. [He] asked if [I] was going to Lhasa.

That was not all. We were eight men that had the responsibility of driving the horses and mules. There were many monasteries in Minyak [whose officials] communicated to the Chinese that the horse and mule drivers needed travel papers. The Chinese did not subject His Holiness the Gongma Rinpoche to any problems, as liberation had not been launched in Lhasa. Hence, they obeyed and immediately issued documents for us and we could go to Derge.

Q: Who issued the papers?

01:05:43

#36D: The Chinese issued the papers in Dhartsedo.

Q: At Dhartsedo?

#36D: At Dhartsedo.

Q: *Akul-la*, how far is it from Minyak to Derge? How many days did that take you?

#36D: It's far. It might take 3- 4 days in a vehicle. [I] cannot say. In the olden days when we walked, it took us 14-15 days from Kanze to Minyak. And from Kanze to where we stayed in Derge, the distance was around three days, driving the horses and mules.

Q: Kanze to Minyak was 15 days and from Minyak to Derge?

#36D: Not from Minyak but from Kanze to Derge is around three days. You came from Minyak to Kanze and from Kanze to Derge.

Q: It's from Minyak to Kanze and from Kanze to Derge?

#36D: Yes.

Q: From Minyak to Kanze is three days?

01:07:22

#36D: Fifteen days.

Q: And is it around 12 days from Kanze to Minyak?

#36D: Three days. Not by vehicle but walking and driving horses and mules.

Q: When you saw your nephew, was it a PLA uniform...was this a surprise? Did it trouble you or was this common among the nomads that some of them joined the Chinese PLA?

#36D: Earlier [he] was a shepherd and then became a Chinese soldier. These changes were expected and nothing surprising. When I left Minyak, there were some people I knew who gathered together and told me "You are very fortunate. You are leaving and will get to see Lhasa and other places. It is the karma from the past life. Your family members will be destroyed and there is nothing that can be done."

Q: Who said it?

#36D: The one who said it was a lama from our village. The lama was led away by the Chinese in the end. [He] was called Tsultim.

Q: Were there many Tibetans that joined the Chinese army at that time?

01:09:12

#36D: There were. [They] did not join because [they] liked the Chinese. Such a time as this dawned. [The Chinese] arrived to ask if [people] wanted to join the Chinese army. [They] brought Chinese boots made of superior leather and such things and remarked during the meetings, “Whoever wants to join [the PLA] can come. They will receive salaries. As for food, whether one wants to eat rice or meat or white flour or whatever, these are readily available.” [They] came saying such things. Initially nobody joined, but gradually people started to enlist. Much later, [I] think they joined.

Q: And the people that joined, were they from all levels of the society or were they like the farm owners and aristocrats and the poor? Did all levels join or just some?

#36D: It was not the wealthy. Those from the poorer families joined, and also the young.

Q: *Aku-la*, when the lama told you that your family was going to be destroyed, how did that affect you?

#36D: It was not only that talk. One heard from various sources. Considering the situation, it was certain that there was going to be no joy. There was a burden in [my] mind. When the lama said it, it did not affect my mind immediately. “What will happen to my parents in the end? [They] will not have food. [They] will not have clothes. How will my siblings suffer?” It was always there in [my] mind.

Q: Did the lama’s prediction come true? Were your parents destroyed by the Chinese?

01:12:53

#36D: [They] faced great hardships. It was not just us, but it was happening to numerous families. There were great hardships. The Chinese said, “The land owners’ class is the minority. Five to 10 [people] in a 100 must be subjected to hardships. We have to live in a society and only those with clean bodies will fit in. So all the dirt must be cleansed. Then there will be no problems.” That is what they said. When the time for implementing it arrived, the figure grew more and more and 50 percent were put inside.

Q: In prison?

#36D: Yes. For instance, [the Chinese] accused some, “You are an ex-soldier. You are an ex-leader. You are a senior lama.” Initially [they] said that there was only 5-10 in a 100 but then the number of the imprisoned grew more and more.

Q: I wonder why did the shepherd who you knew... Why did he ask if you were going to Lhasa?

#36D: One was not allowed to speak more than that. I just said, “Do [your] work well” and nothing more.

Q: [You] didn't answer?

#36D: [I] did not answer because there was not time. There were Chinese around. More so if it became known that I was the child of landowners, I would be caught. [Laughs]

Q: *Aku-la*, did you ever hear of any of the poor people who became Chinese soldiers who later changed their mind and threw away their uniforms and fought the Chinese or did they stay and fight against the other Tibetans?

01:16:13

#36D: It is not possible, not possible [that poor people who became Chinese soldiers changed their mind later]. Some of them fled [from the Chinese army]. Six, seven, 10 men came fleeing. However, the Chinese did not mistreat them. [They] could live at home as usual or go back. It is not possible that they would fight against the Chinese. An encounter did take place in our region. It took place a few months after I had left. Many Chinese had been killed during the combat. They could not...[not discernible].

Q: In your region?

#36D: Yes, in our region. I was not there; I had left already. Fighting in Lithang continued for around three years. The war could not come to an end easily. There was fierce fighting. All the bodies of the dead Chinese were buried in a field and metal plates with names to identify the bodies were erected next to each [of the graves]. The field was full of Chinese bodies and from a distance one could see [the metal plates] sparkle. Such a huge number was killed, but [they] could not be subjugated due to the excessive number. The more you killed, the more they increased. [Laughs] That was in Lithang, not in our region.

Q: What was the metal that was fixed?

#36D: When a person died, when a soldier died, a pit was dug in which [the body] was buried. After a few years one would not know where the body lay interred. [I] heard that a flat metal piece with the name [of the dead soldier] was affixed. A piece of metal was erected for every dead person. So, when there were 15-20 or 100-200, they shimmered in the sunlight as one looked on from a distant. Numerous Chinese were killed in Lithang.

Q: The Chinese themselves buried their dead in the fields and then they put up the name of the Chinese person who died?

01:18:57

#36D: The Tibetans did not do that; the Chinese soldiers did it. When their people died, [they] buried the bodies in the ground and marked the spot because they must show it [for the records]. Numerous people of Lithang too were killed. There were deaths on both the sides during the many years of fighting.

Q: *Aku-la*, how long did you stay in Derge and when did you go to Lhasa?

#36D: Yes?

Q: How long did [you] stay in Derge?

#36D: [I] stayed six months. I owned a horse and a mule that I had brought from home. Both of them were lean and not good-looking. There was plenty of grass in Derge and in the six months the horse and the mule turned nice and fat. They were with the 200 mules of His Holiness the Sakya Gongma Rinpoche.

Q: *Aku-la*, can you please tell me why was the Sakya lama so cherished? What was special about him? Why did people love him so much?

01:20:41

#36D: [His Holiness] was held in high esteem. For one, it was the Sakya lineage. There's a great account about the high lineage; it is an exceptional lineage. Secondly, [he was recognized] both as a reincarnation [of Ngor Ewam Luding Khenchen Jamyang Chokyi Nyima] and through lineage.

Q: Two sons?

#36D: His Holiness the Dalai Lama [is recognized] as a reincarnation. The 14th [Dalai Lama] is the reincarnation of the 13th. Likewise, there is an account that describes the reincarnation theory of the Sakya Rinpoche. And there is also the high lineage. There are two types.

Q: What do we mean by lineage? What does that mean?

#36D: There are books called Sakya Kaboom and Sakya Dhokkracho which must be referred to, as I cannot explain well. Actually [they] are said to be descendants of deities. [They] are said to be descendants of deities. Long ago, the Sakya Gongma Rinpoches' descendants never moved the eyelids. [They] were like deities. There are many explanations about the lineage but I cannot express it well. There is a book called Sakya Kaboom, which has everything.

Q: After six months in Derge, what did you do?

01:22:52

#36D: Then I hired a Chinese automobile and came to Lhasa.

Q: Can you tell us how that...How did that come about that you were able to ride in a Chinese vehicle?

#36D: The Chinese were smart. While implementing liberation in one area, [they] did not do so in another. [They] fought in some areas and executed [liberation] in others. There was no attack in Derge [then]. And of course, Lhasa was left untouched for many years. Hence, there were no problems in Derge and [we] could stay there. Our host in Derge was a *tushi* of the Chinese called Chago Tobden. He was a capable person among the Tibetans in

Derge and the Chinese had given him the rank of a *tushi*. There was not anyone that said anything and we stayed there in peace.

Q: But after six months you left Derge and why did you leave? If it was so peaceful, why did you leave?

#36D: As per the Tibetan custom, one must go to one of the monasteries in Lhasa. I would have to go to Sakya. [I] went on a pilgrimage since the Jowo of Lhasa was considered very precious. “We have arrived here and spent six months with Gongma Rinpoche. We miss [our] parents. We will go on a pilgrimage to Lhasa and then return home.” We were five people.

Q: How large was the group and were they also travelling in vehicles?

01:25:36

#36D: We were five people.

Q: Were everyone in Chinese vehicles?

#36D: We were together until Chamdo. Then some did not possess much *dhayen* as money was in short supply. So [they] left for Lhasa on foot. Two of us continued in a vehicle.

Q: Did you say that you travelled in a vehicle from Derge to Chamdo?

#36D: I travelled [in a vehicle] until Lhasa. Three men from our [group] proceeded on foot from Chamdo. [We] met later in Lhasa.

Q: Because they did not have money?

#36D: Yes, as money was scarce.

Q: This would have been 1956-57 and you were about 24-25?

#36D: It could not have been ‘56-’57. It was in ‘54 or ’55 during the time His Holiness the Dalai Lama went on pilgrimage. We were just short of reaching Lhasa around that time.

Q: Where did His Holiness go?

01:26:49

#36D: [His Holiness] went on pilgrimage to India.

Q: I see. It was when [His Holiness] went to India.

#36D: Yes. [I] wonder what year it was?

Q: Was it around ‘54 or ‘55?

#36D: [I] think it was around '55.

Q: So when you got to Lhasa was His Holiness in Bodh Gaya or was he in Lhasa?

#36D: [His Holiness] was not in Bodh Gaya then. He was invited to India later. I had only seen pictures of His Holiness and never in person until then. [I] caught a glimpse of [His Holiness] in a yellow car in Lhasa.

Q: In a car?

#36D: That was the only time in Lhasa.

Q: Travelling in a car?

01:27:42

#36D: [I] caught just a glimpse in the car.

Q: When you saw Lhasa, what were your impressions when you saw it for the first time?

#36D: [Laughs] There was a feeling of happiness in the heart as I took refuge in the Jowo of Lhasa. However, nothing was planned because I had to find a place [to stay] and food to eat. Everything fell upon your shoulders and it was difficult, but believing that the Jowo of Lhasa was precious, there was joy in [my] heart.

Q: How did you do that [find a place to stay]? Under what conditions did you live in? How long were you in Lhasa?

#36D: [I] stayed for only eight days.

Q: Eight days in Lhasa?

#36D: Eight days.

Q: And then where did you go next?

#36D: During the eight days [I] went to see Drepung and Sera [monasteries]. [I] did not get to see Gaden [monastery]. And then [I] went to see Samye. Do [you] know Samye?

Q: Samye?

#36D: Yes, Samye and Tandu. I had heard that these places and Yarlung were very holy pilgrim spots. We were two men and decided that we must visit these sites. [We] went on foot.

Q: [You] did not get to see Sera and Gaden [monasteries]?

01:29:48

#36D: [We] did not see Gaden but visited Sera and Drepung [monasteries]. [We] could also see the Norbulingka [Summer Palace of His Holiness the Dalai Lama].

Q: *Aku-la*, what were the conditions like in Lhasa? Was it peaceful? Was there any anxiety about the war, about the Chinese? Did you see any Chinese? Can you describe what it was like?

#36D: After arriving in Lhasa, when we had gone to see the Jowo and were atop a monastery, there were monks [we] did not know but could be grandly dressed caretaker monks. [They] knew we were Khampa [people of Kham Province] from our attire, waved and took us aside secretly. “What are the Chinese doing? What did the Chinese do?” They had heard about the sufferings caused in Kham and asked us.

And then there was a monastery [in Lhasa] similar to the one in our region called Minyak Khangtsen. [We] went there and they spoke to us in our regional dialect, “There is not a soul here. Tell [us] whatever the Chinese have done. You have no courage.” One dare not say too much. “Our Minyak people are cowards. There is no one here. Tell [us]. What happened?” Everybody feared the Chinese after learning about the sufferings caused in their villages. There were people that questioned [us] in Lhasa. We could not express everything due to the fear of being caught.

Q: What were you afraid of?

01:32:24

#36D: There was the fear of being captured by the Chinese. If a new person spoke too much and got caught, you were done for. There would be nothing left to do. You cannot say that you were speaking the truth.

Q: Were there Chinese in Lhasa? Did you see many Chinese?

#36D: There were many. [Their] army surrounded [Lhasa]. [Chinese troops] walked in the market, stopped vehicles, worked as police; there was a huge number.

Q: So tell us what happens in your life next? How you are doing the pilgrimage to the monasteries? What happens to you next?

#36D: [I] had heard that the statue of Guru Rinpoche in Samye was very precious. [We] went to see it and arrived in Samye. On the way to Tsethang people told us it was close by but [the way] was filled with sand. It was very difficult to cover distance in the sand and [we] were exhausted. Both of us faced great strain. People told us that it was close but though we walked a great deal, we could not arrive there. [Laughs]

Q: On the journey from Samye to Tsethang?

#36D: Yes, during the journey to Tsethang.

Q: There was sand on the way?

01:34:00

#36D: The way was covered in sand. One foot sank in the sand while you raised the other foot. It was a great strain on the body.

Q: And what was the purpose...or how far is that town from Lhasa and why did you go there?

#36D: There was a high mountain called Gonpori in Tsethang that was a pilgrim site. Sameye, Tsethang—I cannot explain much about Tsethang—the speaking Dolma [statue] in Tandu, there were nine such [holy spots]. On the top of a mountain in Yarlung, there was the cave where the Guru Rinpoche [Padmasambhava] had stayed. Then there was the Yumbu Lhakhang, the first building in Tibet constructed during the reign of Nyatri Tsenpo [first king of Tibet].

All these could be visited. However, [we] could not climb atop the Yarlung Mountain. It was very exhausting to climb up. So we continued the journey visiting the nearby places and avoiding the distant ones. Actually there were nine [pilgrimage] spots to see and visiting all of these would take around a month. It was difficult [for us].

Q: It sounds as though your attention was focused more on pilgrim spots and praying than paying attention to the fact that the capital was surrounded by Chinese soldiers. Were you not worried about that or wondering what would happen?

#36D: If one did not speak adversely, one was left alone. We too would not face trouble. Liberation had not been launched in Lhasa then. Lhasa was left untouched. For instance, when we left our region, only the Chinese paper notes were accepted while earlier it used to be the *dhayen*. *Dhayen*, the round silver became useless. Only paper [money] was valid for carrying out trades.

However, when we arrived at Kanze, the merchants were exchanging paper money for *dhayen*. In Kongpo it was the *dhayen* that was valid and not the paper notes. It was a very strange practice of the Chinese. In Lhasa we were asked to pay in *dhayen*. When we said, “This [paper notes] is your money,” they refused to accept. Lhasa was especially left alone and the *dhayen* and not the Chinese notes were in circulation. There was a certain amount of peace in Lhasa then.

Q: Was it [*dhayen*] used in Lhasa then?

01:37:36

#36D: The *dhayen* was used in Lhasa. The *dhayen* and not the Chinese notes were in circulation in Lhasa. Whereas in areas like Kanze, the Chinese notes and not *dhayen* were valid. It was useless if one possessed a huge quantity of *dhayen* because goods must be purchased from the Chinese.

Q: So what happened in your story next?

#36D: Then we reached Shigatse. There was someone we knew in Shigatse who was an aristocrat from Lhasa. The aristocrat's father hailed from Minyak like us. We contacted him and sent our things through him. My companion and I went around the pilgrim sites. The aristocrats could subject the people to tax by assigning them work. Two such people were sent to receive us. He had told them in Shigatse, "Two men will be arriving. Go and receive them." Then we reached Shigatse.

Q: Who did you meet in Shigatse? An aristocrat?

#36D: He was an aristocrat of Sakya. [He] had come to Lhasa to attend a Chinese meeting. His father hailed from the same region as us. [His] mother was an aristocrat. He was the child of such [origins]. He helped us and things were easier [for us].

Q: At Shigatse?

01:39:22

#36D: He helped us to find lodgings in Shigatse. He lived in Sakya and his name was Mingyur-la.

Q: Please continue what happened?

#36D: Then I arrived in Sakya. [I] left speedily because it was said that Zongsar Kyentse Rinpoche was giving teachings in Sakya. He was leaving for Gangtok [Sikkim] in two days. [I] left soon and was able to see Kyentse Rinpoche Choekyi Lodoe.

Q: Where did [you] say [you] went from Shigatse?

#36D: To Sakya.

Q: Sakya?

#36D: Yes, to Sakya. I belonged to the Sakya sect and it was a must to go there.

Q: Was it two days from Shigatse to Sakya?

#36D: One reached in two days.

Q: Which lama was giving the teachings?

#36D: Zongsar Kyentse Rinpoche Choekyi Lodoe.

Q: Zongsar Choekyi Lodoe?

#36D: Choekyi Lodoe. His Holiness the Dalai Lama thought highly of him. He had predicted that Tibet's religion would face difficult times.

Q: *Aku-la*, can you tell us please when did you leave Tibet for India and under what circumstances?

01:41:16

#36D: I lived in Sakya for a year or two learning the recitation mantras. The *Chushi Gangdrug* [Defend Tibet Volunteer Force] was waging a war then. I am a Khampa. Hence, [I] thought it was going to be difficult [for me]. My companion and I, we were of the same age and hailed from the same village. Both of us came to India through Gangtok [Sikkim]. At that time [we] thought that if things turned calmer in Lhasa, we would return.

When I was in Sakya—[I] told you about the aristocrat who hailed from my region—I was a monk and used to go to his father’s house to read prayers. [I] wanted to tell him about the sufferings in [our] region, about servants and maid-servants beating their masters who were not given food and subjected to difficulties. [I] apprised [him] hoping it would help. His wife stopped me saying, “Do not mention it. Do not mention it.” Later the Chinese captured him, took him to Lhasa and [he] was never heard of.

Q: Did he ask [you] not to talk about it?

#36D: The wife told [me] not to tell [her husband]. They are a wealthy family and I used to read prayers [for them].

Q: These days, what do you feel about the Chinese these days? What do you think about them?

#36D: [I] feel it is certain that the Chinese are not good.

Q: Yes?

01:43:57

#36D: They are no good, not stable. It is difficult. The people face hardships.

Q: If we could give a message from the Tibetan people to the Chinese people, what would you want to tell the Chinese people? Not the government but the Chinese people.

#36D: I do not have the capability for such. If [I] were to really meet a Chinese, “We are the same. We belong to the Buddhist religion. People need freedom. How nice are the foreign countries that have democracy. There is progress and people have freedom,” I would love to say such things, but I have no ability and it is difficult to meet them.

Q: If you were doing Lamrim [Lamday] prayers, would you actually be able to include the Chinese in Lamrim prayers that you learned how to do a long time ago?

#36D: I would not be able to talk to the Chinese because the Chinese language is different. However...

Q: That’s not it. When you practice meditation, you do it for all sentient beings. Would you be able to include the Chinese?

#36D: That is right. One cannot keep aside the Chinese as [taught] by some lamas. Whether it is a Chinese or someone else, as long as one has taken human form, [we] must pray that he finds happiness and benefits [from our prayers].

Q: Is there anything that you would advise the next generation of Tibetan children to do or preserve about Tibet?

01:47:09

#36D: There are various books of advice by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. All children must practice those. I do not have anything more than that to say. However, I have two children. One son is a doctor and lives abroad. One is in Yol and studies the scriptures well. If they are self-sufficient and well read, [I] hope they can be of help to the people. I am 80 years old and can no longer be of any help. It is like that.

Q: Is [he] a monk at Yol?

#36D: What?

Q: Yol...

#36D: One is a monk and the other a doctor. [He] lives abroad and has a wife and child.

Q: Well *aku-la*, I want to thank you for a very, very fine interview and for giving us so much information and so much understanding of what happened in Tibet.

#36D: I could not say much to be of help to you. However, I have an opinion. When I read the *namthar* [biographies of those who attained liberation both for themselves and others] of Jetsun Mila ‘Milarepa’ and numerous lamas, I feel an incredible joy in my heart. Alas, I am a son of my parents but was not fortunate [cries]...I am still alive but did not get to practice the dharma. I do not have any other problems.

Q: You mean you could not repay your parents?

01:49:17

#36D: I do not mean my parents. My parents made me a monk. There are many books of the Kagyu sect, Jetsun Mila’s *namthar* and *namthar* of Sakya lamas. When I read those I feel, “Alas, I took the form of a male and received the chance but have not used it appropriately.” I feel regret again and again.

Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW