

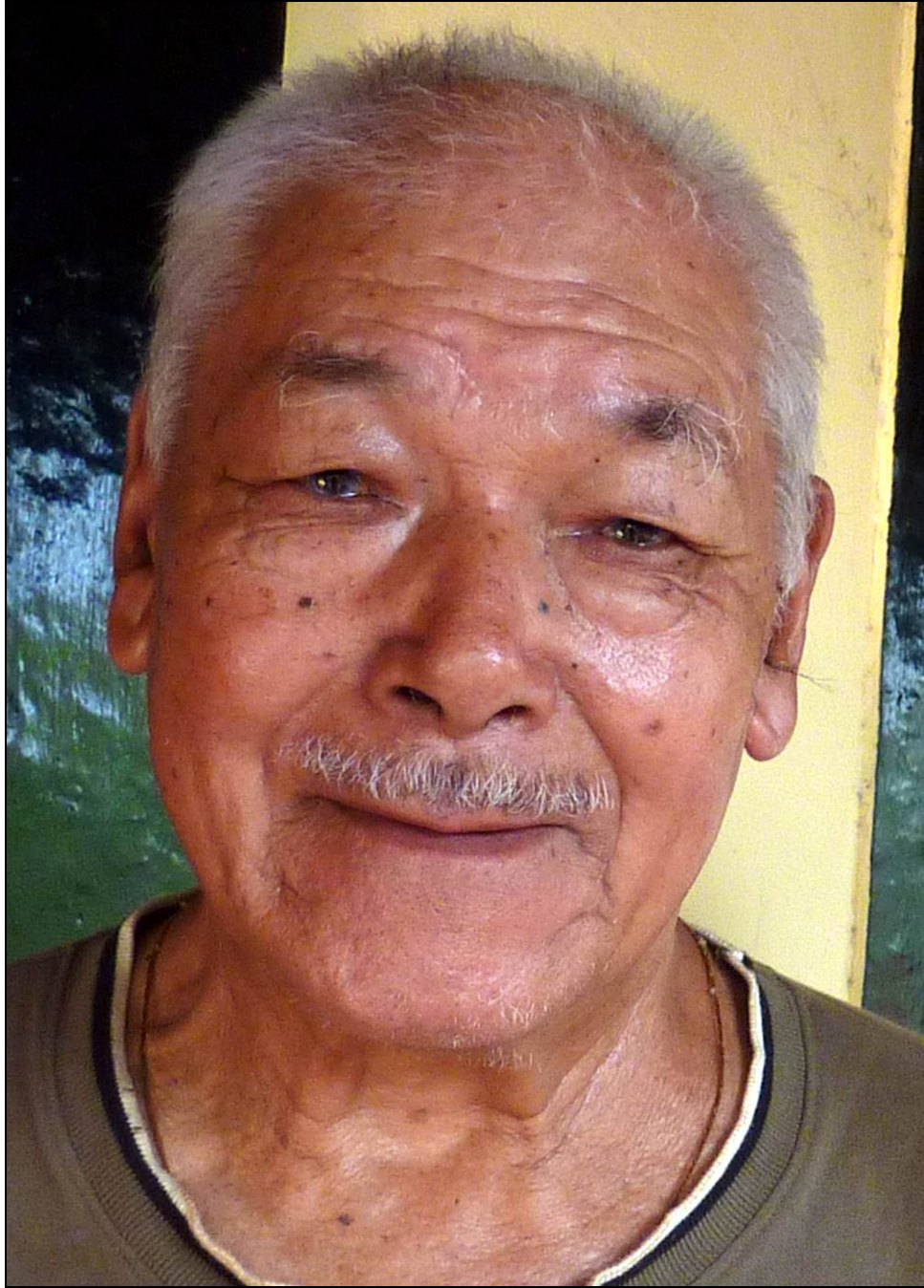
# **Tibet Oral History Project**

Interview #41M – Phakya  
April 12, 2010

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# TIBET ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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## INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

1. Interview Number: #41M
2. Interviewee: Phakya
3. Age: 79
4. Date of Birth: 1937
5. Sex: Male
6. Birthplace: Zinang
7. Province: Utsang
8. Year of leaving Tibet: 1959
9. Date of Interview: April 12, 2010
10. Place of Interview: Kalachakra Palace, Camp No. 3, Doeguling Settlement, Mundgod, Karwar District, Karnataka, India
11. Length of Interview: 1 hr 58 min
12. Interviewer: Marcella Adamski
13. Interpreter: Tenzin Yangchen
14. Videographer: Ronny Novick
15. Translator: Tenzin Yangchen

### **Biographical Information:**

As a child, Phakya grazed animals with the other children of his village. He recollects the huge pasturelands and the games the children played while herding the animals. He describes an encounter with a Tibetan brown bear as it attacked his sheep. He talks about environmental protection through the Tibetan government law which forbade killing of wild animals, fishing and setting fire to the hills. Once he was older he helped with the farm work.

Phakya fondly recollects His Holiness the Dalai Lama and entourage passing through his village on a visit to China in 1954. He speaks about his involvement in the preparation for the Dalai Lama's travel such as pitching tents and building roads. He provides a detailed account of both the onward and return journeys of the Dalai Lama.

The villagers had heard of battles in Kham and Amdo Provinces with the Chinese and realized that Mao Zedong's pledge to peacefully implement the "Liberation" would instead be a violent takeover of Tibet. Phakya describes the *thamzing* 'struggle session' of the daughter of a wealthy family of Bhakashoe. He joined the *Chushi Gangdrug* [Defend Tibet Volunteer Force] and fought a battle against the Chinese. When the news that Lhasa had fallen and the Dalai Lama had left for India reached the guerrilla force, they began to flee towards India.

### **Topics Discussed:**

Childhood memories, environment/wildlife, herding, first appearance of Chinese, invasion by Chinese army, life under Chinese rule, forced labor, *thamzing*, *Chushi Gangdrug* guerrillas.

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**Interview #41M**

**Interviewee: Phakya**

**Age: 79, Sex: Male**

**Interviewer: Marcella Adamski**

**Interview Date: April 12, 2010**

Question: Please tell us your name.

00:00:18

**Interviewee #41: Phakya. It's Phakya.**

Q: His Holiness the Dalai Lama asked us to record your experience, 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?

**#41M: Yes, you can use it.**

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

00:01:23

**#41M: Thank you. [I] have to thank you for your endeavor.**

Q: During this interview if you wish to take a break or stop at anytime, please let me know.

**#41M: Okay. I do not think there's need for a break. I do not have much to say. It is similar to what I told you earlier [during the pre-interview].**

Q: If you do not wish to answer a question or talk about something, let me know.

00:02:03

**#41M: Okay.**

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

**#41M: There will be no problems.**

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

00:02:30

**#41M: [Laughs]**

Q: *Pa-la* ‘respectful term for father,’ can you please tell me how old you are and where you were born?

**#41M: [I am] 79 years old.**

Q: Where were you born?

00:02:48

**#41M: It was in Kongpo.**

Q: How many people were in your immediate family?

**#41M: There were six members in the family: parents and four children.**

Q: *Pa-la*, how did you get your name, Phakya?

00:03:27

**#41M: When I was small I almost died from a sickness, so a bad name was given to me.**

Q: What is the tradition to give a child a bad name instead of a good name?

**#41M: It was the tradition to give a bad name, which was said to revive the child.**

Q: And why would he recover?

00:04:12

**#41M: I do not know, but that is an old story. This was a story that existed since many generations.**

Q: What does your name Phakya mean?

**#41M: It means the excrement of pigs. [Laughs]**

Q: Did you have a trouble as a child or were you teased about your name?

00:04:58

**#41M: They did not [tease me]. There was no such custom.**

Q: Was it unusual for children to have names that were like that?

**#41M: There were [children with such names.] It was prevalent everywhere in Kongpo. There were Phakyas and Khyikhas ‘Excrement of Dogs.’ [Laughs]**

Q: Was these names given to ward off evil spirits or to fool them? What was the reason?

00:06:00

**#41M: The child was ailing and in order for him to recover, a bad name was given. It was believed that if he was given a bad name, he would recover.**

Q: *Pa-la*, please tell us a little bit when you were a child, say under 12 years old, what kind of activities were you doing as a child in your family?

**#41M: One had to graze the animals. One must go to graze cows, goats and sheep.**

Q: What was the livelihood of your family?

00:07:09

**#41M: They worked in the fields.**

Q: Was more of the work in farming and less in grazing and only in cattle and sheep?

**#41M: [You want] the story about my family?**

Q: Yes, *pa-la*, when you were small.

00:07:36

**#41M: When I was small, there was not a huge area of land. There were three or four cows and a larger number of goats and sheep. I do not know each and every detail because I was a child then.**

Q: At what age was a child expected to take responsibility for caring for the animals and what were their other responsibilities?

**#41M: One had to go [to take care of the animals] at the age of 5-6. [Children] went to graze goats and sheep at 7 or 8 years of age. Children went together in groups of two or three.**

Q: And how did you take care of the animals when you were 6, 7 and 8? When you were grazing them, what were your duties?

00:09:02

**#41M: There were large open spaces and one did not have to go up the mountains. It was enough to drive the goats and sheep to the open ground. There was no difficulty in taking care of the goats and sheep.**

Q: Did you not have to go into the forests?

**#41M: One did not have to go into the forests. The pastures were large. They were driven there.**

Q: While the sheep were eating grass, what did the children do together?

00:09:41

**#41M: The children would play. They would play in the water or do various other things. [Laughs]**

Q: Tell us about playing in the river. Were they deep or was the water warm or cold? What did you do?

**#41M: There were large rivers where the children did not venture. They went to play in the smaller tributaries.**

Q: What kind of games did you play in the rivers?

00:10:25

**#41M: We went this way and that way in the water. There were many games one could play in the water. We threw water on each other and did other things.**

Q: It sounds like that kind of games would be best to play in the summertime when the weather is warm. Is that so?

**#41M: It was never too hot. It was not hot at all.**

Q: Even when it was cold, you would still take off your clothes and play in the river?

00:11:13

**#41M: Yes, [we] did play. If it was the height of winter the water froze and we could not play except sliding stones on the ice.**

Q: Stones?

**#41M: Yes, ice would have formed and children slid stones on it.**

Q: When you were grazing in the summertime and springtime, what kind of games did the children play together in the fields?

00:11:55

**#41M: The children played while grazing the animals in summertime, but during springtime it was not necessary to look after the animals until the fields had been sown and the crops had grown a little. One did not have to go with the animals, but let the animals loose [to graze]. Once the crops had grown, the animals must be watched.**

Q: If the crop had grown, why did you have to look after the animals?

**#41M: Otherwise they would eat the crops that were in the fields.**

Q: Yeah, you had to protect the crops. I thought so. Were there any dangers that happened or any unusual memories you have as a child when you were out taking care of the animals as a young boy?

00:13:11

**#41M: There were dangers. There were Tibetan brown bears and wild dogs that killed the animals.**

Q: Tibetan brown bears and...?

**#41M: There were those that were called Tibetan brown bears and wild dogs. If an animal was left in the hills at night, the Tibetan brown bear killed it. The wild dogs attacked during the day.**

Q: Did you ever see this brown bear with your own eyes?

00:13:52

**#41M: Yes, I have seen a Tibetan brown bear. It was brown colored and hairy.**

Q: Tell us what happened when you saw it, please?

**#41M: The goats and sheep were shut in the shed at night. The shed where the goats and sheep were housed was very smelly. The smell attracted the Tibetan brown bear. It smashed the door of the shed. At such times we screamed and the dogs barked to chase the Tibetan brown bear away.**

Q: Can you describe how big were the brown bears, if they were standing up, how big?

00:15:13

**#41M: They were bigger than humans and definitely not smaller. They were very big. They were broad and brownish. If they stood up, they were taller than humans.**

Q: As tall as you are?

**#41M: Of course. If one stood up if not taller than me, it was definitely not shorter. It was big.**

Q: Were there many of these bears in the area?

00:15:54

**#41M: There were only one or two Tibetan brown bears. They did not exist in large numbers. It brought two cubs with it. Once, one came to my house along with its two cubs. I might have been 17 or 18 years old at that time. When the brown bear came to the house, the dogs started to bark. I took a stick to drive the brown bear away.**

Q: And were you successful?

**#41M: [Speaks before question is interpreted] All the elders chided me a lot because it was said that if one went to chase a brown bear, it turned back and would take the person away. I had no such knowledge and took a stick to drive it away.**



Q: How old were you when you scared the bear away with two baby cubs?

00:17:20

**#41M: I might have been 17 or 18 at that time.**

Q: What else could you do? What would the adults advise you to do?

**#41M: The elders scolded me for pursuing it saying that the brown bear would have taken me away.**

Q: But what else could you do if not drive it away?

00:17:44

**#41M: If not driven away, it would enter the shed and take away the goats and sheep.**

Q: So he was coming into the animal enclosure. Did the farmers ever kill the bears and take their skin or did they just try to chase them away?

**#41M: Yes, there were people who killed Tibetan brown bears. However, one could not just kill a brown bear in the region. One must request for permission to kill a brown bear. The district authority must be informed that a Tibetan brown bear was causing harm to animals and humans in the region and forward a request for permission to kill it. If the district authority thought that it was really bad [dangerous], it said, "Kill the Tibetan brown bear. Bring the skin and gall bladder."**

Q: *Pa-la*, what do you think was the reason behind this requirement in not randomly kill bears and to require each person getting permission?

00:20:12

**#41M: That was the law of the Tibetan Government. That was the law because one could not take lives randomly in Tibet. There were many types of wild animals but one could not kill them. These days people talk about environment protection. It was similar to that. One could not kill wild animals and could not set fire to the hills.**

Q: What were some of the other environmental protections that were going on? So no fires built. No burning allowed. Why would people do burning?

**#41M: [If one set fire to the hill] many trees would get burned and many insects would be burned. If forests were set on fire, even the birds in the sky fall dead. So it was the government law that one could not set fire.**

Q: I was trying to understand why would somebody set the woods on fire?

00:21:59

**#41M: It could happen. There might be some accidental fires.**

Q: Were there other environmental laws that the Tibetan Government had in your area when you were growing up?

**#41M: So whether it was [killing] wild animals or setting fire to the hills, one was not even allowed to fish. Some people did so illegally and ate. That was not allowed.**

Q: Why was fishing not allowed?

00:23:03

**#41M: Because it is a living being. It has life. This is from the point of view of sinning.**

Q: Tell us the name of your village and how many people were in it, please?

**#41M: My village was called Zinang. There were not many families in Zinang, perhaps about 50-60 families. It was not very large.**

Q: I want to go back to the last statement. The fish were living beings and it would be a sin to kill them, so when was it okay to kill animals like sheep or yaks or something like that? Was there ever a permission to do so and under what circumstances?

00:24:37

**#41M: Those [sheep and yaks] were reared by us to make use of them. It was not necessary to obtain permission from the government to kill them. One could kill them.**

Q: But there was no sin in killing these living beings?

**#41M: There is sin, but [laughs] one does the killing along with reciting the *mani* ‘mantra of Avalokiteshvara’ and offering butter lamps. They were raised in order to be utilized.**

Q: What kind of prayers did you say for them before you killed them?

00:25:44

**#41M: Butter lamps were offered and *mani* was recited.**

Q: And would that be every time you killed an animal that you would say a *mani* prayer and light butter lamps or..?

**#41M: Yes, that was done.**

Q: *Pa-la*, how far was your village from the nearest city?

00:26:38

**#41M: There was no city. If we walked a little distance from where I lived, there was the district area called Shoka Zong, where the district administrator lived. That was called Shoka Zong.**

Q: Where would you reach if you went further from that area?

00:26:52

**#41M: Further to that was the lower Kongpo region. I lived in the upper Kongpo area.**

Q: Do you have any memories in your childhood of other events or things that happened in your village?

**#41M: Yes, I do remember what we did in my village when I was small.**

Q: Could you relate an incident?

00:27:40

**#41M: What I remember is what I told you earlier. When one reached the age of 7 or 8, one grazed the goats and sheep. And when one grew to be 17 or 18, one worked alongside the adults. One must work at whatever one was capable of.**

Q: So when you were 17 or 18, you were not working on the farm? You were working in the village?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Farm is in the village.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: Just working on the farm?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Farms, yes, along with the adults.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: With the other people. I see.

Q: Did your village life stay peaceful or were there any changes that happened in your village?

**#41M: One experienced various things, like at times you faced difficulties and at times you were happy.**

Q: Do you have any special memories of anybody coming through your village?

00:29:28

**#41M: Not many famous people from afar visited. When the government noblemen arrived, they stayed at the district [headquarters]. I lived in an isolated area. It was not located on the main road.**

Q: Did any noblemen come through your village?

**#41M: Yes, the government noblemen arrived there [at the Shoka district]. They were those that were on their way to Kham, like the *atung* ‘postman.’**

Q: Did the Chinese ever come through your village?

00:30:41

**#41M: The Chinese were there at the Shoka district.**

Q: What was your first experience of seeing the Chinese?

**#41M: I do not know which year it was. They arrived in Kham and then gradually came in. When they first appeared, there were no motor roads. They arrived carrying their loads.**

Q: Walking?

**#41M: Yes.**

Q: What did they do when they came through your village, *pa-la*?

00:31:43

**#41M: [Speaks before question is interpreted] When the Chinese initially arrived in the direction of Kham, His Holiness the Dalai Lama went to China. The Chinese said that they were going to implement peaceful liberation in Tibet and not through violent means.**

Q: His Holiness went to China?

**#41M: Yes, His Holiness went to China in the year '54. Mao Zedong, Chou Enlai and all of them held a meeting wherein Mao Zedong accepted to implement liberation through peaceful and not violent means in Tibet.**

Q: How did you know about His Holiness going to China? How did you know about that fact?

00:32:57

**#41M: [His Holiness] left through my region. He came from Lhasa and went through Kongpo.**

Q: Did you know he was coming before he came?

**#41M: [We] knew that. Not only that, learning of His Holiness' arrival, since there was no drivable roads and one had to use horses and mules, we cleared the path of bushes and rocks. We made the roads for His Holiness and bridges on the rivers. We did those things.**

Q: How many days of preparation did you have, to prepare?

00:34:19

**#41M: Perhaps it was 10-15 days earlier that the roads were built.**

Q: Can you remember how long of a distance you and the villagers tried to prepare, was it how many kilometers?

**#41M: We made roads for about a distance of two days' journey. Every region was required to make roads in its area. There were many villages that made the roads.**

Q: Did it involve a great deal of work or just putting a few rocks away? How much work was involved?

00:35:40

**#41M: It was not very difficult. If there were rocks on the way, they were cleared away. There were plenty of trees in Kongpo and we removed them to make the road wider. That was it.**

Q: Was the land for two days before your village, was it mountainous or was it plain? What was the land like?

**#41M: It was a sort of valley. There was a slight slope but not a steep one. The road was straight. The road passed along the [base of a] hill.**

Q: If you were born in 1931 and that was 1954, then you were about 23 at that time. So what was your feeling about seeing His Holiness?

00:37:15

**#41M: I might have been about 25-26 at that time.**

Q: You were 23 then.

**#41M: Yes, I might have been about 23 then. During His Holiness' onward journey, I was given a [form of labor] tax. There had to be a person to guide the way.**

Q: Yes?

00:37:34

**#41M: I was sent to guide the [entourage on] good routes to be taken, along with a nobleman. There were innumerable horses and mules. However, I was one of those obliged to lead the way along with a nobleman, but the nobleman did not take me for a long distance.**

Q: Do you know why he did not take you?

**#41M: The nobleman was of a high position and he asked me a question. He was not someone of a lower rank but a high one. He traveled wherever His Holiness did and attended the meetings in the night. He asked me, "Are you working on behalf of someone or did you receive the tax yourself?" I replied, "I received the tax myself." He said, "Okay. You do not have to continue tomorrow. You can go back."**

Q: Were you hired to go with him or was it a form of tax?

00:39:26

**#41M: It was a tax. Some were obliged to give horses and some, just men. I was obliged to serve as a person.**

Q: Some were obliged to provide horses?

**#41M: Yes, some were obliged to bring back the horses that were provided. They had to continue on the journey for 5-6 days.**

Q: Do you think that the nobleman did not want to impose that on you? Was that the reason he sent you back?

00:40:20

**#41M: Yes, it seemed that way. At that time I was not tall but small in stature. The nobleman might have felt pity for me.**

Q: You were short in stature?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Short in stature.

Q: At 23 you were shorter than now?

**#41M: At that time I was not tall. I joined the army when I was nearly 30 and became tall in stature upon joining the army. [Laughs]**

Q: Had you ever seen His Holiness before and how did you feel about seeing him this time?

00:41:23

**#41M: I saw His Holiness when he left for China through Kongpo.**

Q: Had you seen him earlier?

**#41M: No, I had not.**

Q: Can you tell us what was the feeling you had when you saw His Holiness come through your village?

00:41:54

**#41M: My heart was such that I felt very happy on seeing His Holiness. I was happy, but at the same time it was a strange feeling. I felt sad that His Holiness was going to China.**

Q: Can you tell us about that feeling about what made you sad about his traveling to China?

**#41M: It used to be said, "The Chinese are not good. The Chinese are bad. If His Holiness is taken to China, the Chinese will mistreat him. He is being deceived to go there."**

Q: First of all, how did you know that the Chinese were not good?

00:43:13

**#41M: We heard stories of suffering being meted out in the Kham regions.**

Q: What kind of suffering?

**#41M: The Chinese talked about something called liberation, but at the time His Holiness left for China, the Chinese had not implemented liberation. We heard that it would be implemented and such bad things were being talked about.**

Q: If the village people thought that they were deceiving His Holiness, how do you think His Holiness was being deceived because His Holiness is a wise person? So how could such a wise person be deceived by the Chinese?

00:44:32

**#41M: They [the Chinese] did deceive. For example, when the liberation was enforced in Tibet, Mao Zedong had accepted to do so through peaceful and not violent means. He had accepted that. Later His Holiness the Dalai Lama returned to Tibet from China in the year '55. After his return to Tibet, the Chinese became worse and worse. His Holiness wrote three times to China. What Mao Zedong had said was...**

**All the Chinese leaders including Mao Zedong sat on one side and His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Ngabo and many other aristocrats who had arrived from Tibet were accommodated on another side, while two Chinese army commanders were placed in the center. What Mao Zedong said at that time was, "The two army leaders will be send to assist Tibet. If they do anything bad in Tibet, you should send a letter."**

**His Holiness had returned in '55. Many battles were being fought in Kham and Amdo. Gradually the attacks inched inwards. Many battles had already taken place. The Chinese gradually became worse and worse in Lhasa. His Holiness said that he had written two or three times to Mao Zedong that they [the two Chinese army commanders] were not doing things peacefully. However, there was never any reply. And then His Holiness said that he became suspicious. That was how it was.**

Q: What did he write to Mao Zedong that he received no reply?

**#41M: Mao Zedong had said that the two army commanders were being sent to Tibet to help and not implement violence. His Holiness said that Mao Zedong had agreed to that. However, after arriving in Tibet, they were doing nothing good. Mao Zedong had told [His Holiness] that in case they did wrong, he was to write a letter and that they would be withdrawn.**

Q: Do you think His Holiness initially thought that the peaceful liberation of Mao was going to be good for the Tibetan people?

00:49:10

**#41M: He [Mao Zedong] had claimed that the liberation in Tibet would be through peaceful and not violent method. Later they conducted it only through violence and not peaceful means. So when they started being brutal, that was when the people of Tibet rose up and the 10<sup>th</sup> March[Uprising] began. That came about because they were totally brutal.**

Q: What exactly do you think the liberation was supposed to be in an ideal way that His Holiness would agree to consider it for Tibet?

**#41M: [Speaks before interpretation is complete] Actually, the Chinese have no authority over Tibet. However, they said that there were many bad things in Tibet: the rich stay rich and the poor stay poor, which was not good. What they meant was that they were going to make them equal. And the method adopted in making them equal would not be through violent means, but that they would be made equal through peaceful means. But they did not use any peace; it was conducted through violence. Liberation was implemented only through violent means.**

Q: As a citizen of Tibet, what do you think about that statement that the rich had much and the poor did not and did you think that there was a need for change about these circumstances?

00:51:36

**#41M: It was so in Tibet long ago that the rich were rich and the poor were poor. The Chinese claimed that they were going to make them equal. [Laughs]**

Q: Do you as a man think, as a 23 year old...

**#41M: [Interrupts] Before bringing about equality, they turned violent; they attacked Tibet. They did not bring about that [equality]. They attacked Tibet. They implemented the so-called liberation after attacking Tibet. So the liberation was conducted through violent means. One was left with no choice, whether to consent or reject.**

Q: Yes, but I am asking, do you think that there needed to be changes inside Tibet aside from what the Chinese thought or what they wanted to do? Do you think the Tibetan people as a farmer or as a sheep herder; do you think the people were unhappy with the way things were inside Tibet before the Chinese even showed up?

00:53:37

**#41M: It was said that a change was attempted during the reign of the Fifth Dalai Lama. Though an attempt was made, some people did not adhere to it and it failed. His Holiness speaks about it these days that an attempt at change was carried out long ago, but at that time some people did not adhere to it and so change could not be brought about. His Holiness the Dalai Lama says that.**

Q: When the Chinese initially came to your village, how did they treat you when they first came?

**#41M: When the Chinese first arrived, the adults did not let us on to the roads. It was strange that the adults did not let us on the roads. They were unhappy that the Chinese were coming.**

Q: Even before you saw them for the first time, they were already considered very bad.



00:55:17

**#41M: Everybody thought that.**

Q: So what happen...

**#41M: [Interrupts] Even though one had never set eyes on them, it was said that they were bad. Their having implemented liberation and conducting terribly bad things in China was heard in the region.**

Q: What did you hear about the liberation in China?

00:55:54

**#41M: There were many traders who traveled up and down. Yes, Tibetan traders went to China [laughs] and Chinese traders came to Tibet.**

Q: Do you remember any of the stories that the traders told you about what they saw?

**#41M: No, I do not know. I do not know what the traders did.**

Q: Any stories that you heard?

00:56:34

**#41M: One heard that the Chinese were coming from the Kham area and that there had been wars, first in Amdo and then in Kham and that they were gradually coming inwards. When they reached Chamdo that was where we lost the war. The Tibetan Government army commander at that time was Ngabo. Ngabo was then at Chamdo. The war was lost and Ngabo joined the Chinese at that time.**

Q: Chamdo was conquered before the Chinese even came to your village?

**#41M: Yes, [Chamdo] was conquered earlier. After the fall of Chamdo, the army which was named *Chushi Gangdrug* [Defend Tibet Volunteer Force] came about in Tibet. Chamdo had already fallen and the Chinese had built roads in Tibet.**

Q: How long was it before His Holiness returned and did he come through your village again?

00:58:16

**#41M: Yes, he came through our region.**

Q: How long after?

**#41M: He returned in the year '55. He left in '54 and returned in '55.**

Q: When he was coming through the first time, I asked what you thought and you said you were worried about his going to China. But I didn't hear what did the people, what did they do? Did you actually see him with your own eyes? What did he look like? Can you describe the group of people who were with him?

00:59:05

**#41M: [Speaks before interpretation is complete] [His Holiness] says that he was 15 years old then. Is that right?**

Q: That might be.

**#41M: [Laughs] I think I heard the age as 15. He was very, very young in age. He was exceptionally handsome, so much so that it made one happy just to see him.**

Q: What was he wearing?

00:59:46

**#41M: He was wearing a brocade *chupa* ‘traditional coat’ which I heard was a Mongolian costume. The *namsa* ‘honorific term for clothes’ was a *chupa* made from yellow brocade. One should call it a *namsa* for His Holiness’ [clothes].**

Q: This was the first time that you and many people saw His Holiness, but you’d heard about him your whole life. So were you surprised by the fact that he looked like an ordinary person?

**#41M: [Speaks before interpretation is complete] Some older people who’d been to Lhasa might have seen His Holiness earlier. However, most of the younger ones in my group and the aged people might not have seen him until he arrived there.**

Q: When you saw him, was His Holiness what you imagined him to be or what was it?

01:00:59

**#41M: When he first arrived on the road, there were the *chikpa*; only *chikpa* as there were no motor roads then.**

Q: *Chikpa* is...

**#41M: Horses. He rode on a horse and was accompanied by the security force. There were also many aristocrats. On the return journey, there were many Chinese soldiers. There were a huge number of horses. As soon as you saw His Holiness the Dalai Lama, you recognized him. He was incredibly handsome and looked everywhere. He looked this way and that way and continued to look everywhere as he rode.**

Q: And what was the look on his face?

01:02:21

**#41M: He looked all around [moves head] as he rode while the others did not look about like that. Whenever His Holiness passed by, he looked this way and that way and smiled as he went by.**

**What I was assigned to do at that time was that the village had built a square mound to burn incense at the road. I went there to burn incense, which we do when His Holiness arrived. I was assigned [the duty] to burn incense. [Laughs]**

Q: Did the entourage stop and did he do anything or did he keep going?

**#41M: You mean when he left?**

Q: Yes, on his way to China.

01:03:33

**#41M: He stopped a day or two at different villages. He stayed an extra day in my region called the Shoka Zong. He spent an extra day. All the people were given the opportunity of an audience. We were allowed to see him in a single file and then he blessed us with his hand. He also gave the Chenrezig mani lung ‘discourse on the subject of the mantra of Avalokiteshvara.’**

Q: How did the people feel that His Holiness was going to stay and teach?

**#41M: The old men and women were crying when they learned [that His Holiness] was going to China. They felt sad and cried.**

Q: Where did His Holiness conduct the teaching?

01:04:58

**#41M: At Shoka Zong, the place where I lived.**

Q: How many people could attend?

**#41M: I do not know how many people, but there were people assembled everywhere. People were allowed in a line [to see His Holiness] and he gave blessings with his hand. He blessed as people walked by in a line.**

Q: Was there teaching or lecture or was it simply blessings?

01:05:55

**#41M: There was a large open place for people to sit. It was a very large ground.**

Q: At the district?

**#41M: Yes, it was a large open place, a large empty pastureland. [The teaching] was given there. His Holiness stayed in a *u-gur* ‘honorific term for tent.’ There were only *u-gur*.**

Q: What’s *u-gur*?

01:06:14

**#41M: Tents. There were no houses. Tents were set up from place to place on the journey.**

Q: Do you actually remember attending that teaching and seeing him with your own your eyes?

**#41M: Yes, I remember.**

Q: Can you tell us what the teaching was about?

01:06:57

**#41M: The discourse on *mani* was bestowed by the Chenrezig ‘Avalokitesvara, the patron saint of Tibet.’ His Holiness is himself the manifestation of the Chenrezig.**

Q: Would it be possible for you to just tell us a little bit about what that teaching is and what it means? What is the practice supposed to be?

**#41M: I do not have much to say about it. The discourse was given and after that all the people were given an opportunity to see His Holiness. His Holiness was sitting on a high throne and in his hand he held a piece of wand with prayer flags attached to it, which is normally used while giving blessings. He placed that on top of everyone’s head.**

**What we had offered His Holiness was this: there used to be a currency in Tibet made from copper known as *shokang* and such [other denominations]. There was a pile of it on a large piece of cloth. Some people made offerings of horses, excellent striped horses. One family offered an excellent striped horse, while another family offered an excellent *kyangpa* horse.**

Q: What is *kyangpa*?

01:09:01

**#41M: *Kyangpa* means red but slightly brownish.**

Q: Were they able to take the currency and the horses with them?

**#41M: The horses were taken along with them.**

Q: When His Holiness was coming on the road that you fixed, were there decorations on the ground or on the buildings or anything?

01:10:13

**#41M: There was nothing like that. It was summer and raining heavily on [His Holiness’] way [to China]. There was mud and the road was very bad. That was on the journey [to China].**

Q: When he arrived at your village, was the weather still very bad?

**#41M: It was raining heavily and there was mud and it was really bad.**

Q: And were the people standing outside in their beautiful clothes in the rain?

01:11:01

**#41M: [Speaks before interpretation is complete] The rain was not a problem.**

Q: All the people came dressed in their best.

**#41M: They might have on thick clothes. The rain did not make one too wet. It was the mud and the slush and the road was very difficult at the time His Holiness arrived.**

Q: Do you remember what the day was and the month?

01:11:39

**#41M: Perhaps it was around the 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> month.**

Q: Do you mean in the Tibetan lunar calendar?

**#41M: It might be the 5<sup>th</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> Tibetan lunar month. It was raining very heavily and there was mud and water. Oh, it cannot be the 4<sup>th</sup> month. It might be the 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> month. At that time the river flooded and washed away the bridge.**

Q: When you saw His Holiness for the first time, did he look like how you expected him to look or were there any surprises for you?

01:12:42

**#41M: Since I had not seen him earlier, I wondered what he looked like. When I saw him, he was extraordinary.**

Q: There was very much concern about His Holiness going to China. Was there any attempt on the part of the people in the village to share their concerns with him? Did they have an audience to say “We are very worried or we heard the Chinese are causing problems”?

**#41M: That was not possible. That was not possible.**

Q: So now we know he came through the village and was it a whole year later, same season he comes back from China?

01:14:07

**#41M: You mean back to Lhasa?**

Q: Yes, back to Lhasa.

**#41M: He says that he returned in ‘55.**

Q: Do you have any knowledge about his return journey?

01:14:18

**#41M: Yes, I traveled to Kongpo Gyamda where we made preparations.**

Q: Was that a year later?

**#41M: He left in '54 and returned in '55. The return journey was during winter as it was dry.**

Q: It was during wintertime? Was it cold, was it dry?

01:14:42

**#41M: It was cold and the ground was dry. There was no rain. I went to Gyamda at that time to put up tents for His Holiness' stay. There were older people to do the work and I engaged in *khema longyel*.**

Q: What's *khema longyel*?

**#41M: Many stuff had to be transported on horses. The people stayed there to make preparations while the horses had to be brought back. So I brought back the horses [which is *khema longyel*].**

Q: And is Kongpo Gyamda your village or another village?

01:15:45

**#41M: It was four days' journey [from my village].**

Q: So was he going to go through your village again?

**#41M: There was the motor road on that side. He did not travel through the village. There was the motor road when he returned.**

Q: How did these roads get constructed in one year?

01:16:24

**#41M: Perhaps the road was being constructed earlier. It was not a good road, but a rough one and just wide enough for a vehicle to pass. The vehicles were not big ones but small ones. There were only jeeps.**

Q: Who constructed these roads?

**#41M: It was the Tibetan people who constructed the roads.**

Q: So this was a Tibetan Government enterprise?

01:17:16

**#41M: Whether the Chinese informed the Tibetan Government or not—but they [the Chinese] might have requested it [Tibetan Government] to send its citizens. People from different regions were asked to come to construct roads. I too have been to build roads.**

Q: And were you paid to construct the roads?

**#41M: Yes, they paid a menial wage. They paid a wage.**

Q: Who was in charge of the actual daily work?

01:18:07

**#41M: There was one [person] from my village who was one of the influential people of my village. There might be influential people from each village there. There was a leader who belonged to my village. There was one main leader and the people were divided into groups.**

Q: Was there any sense that the Chinese were constructing these roads or did you feel the Tibetan Government was constructing them?

**#41M: I thought it was the Chinese that built them. I have never heard that the roads were built by the Tibetan Government. The work was allotted by the Chinese.**

Q: What do you think about this fact that these nice roads were put in? Do you think that was a good idea or not a good idea? What do you think?

01:19:38

**#41M: To be frank, I did not have any knowledge about the significance of building the roads.**

Q: When His Holiness came through, you were selected to arrange the tents in the next...

[Interpreter to interviewer]: ...at Kongpo Gyamda.

Q: How did you get that big job?

**#41M: We were informed that [certain] men must report there. For example, one of the elders in my family was one of them. He needed a person to bring back his horse and he took me along for that. There was a monastery in our village. The monastery had to receive His Holiness. They had to go there taking along ritual instruments. So these were transported on horses to Kongpo Gyamda in preparation for the arrival.**

**Actually, arrangements were always made wherever His Holiness traveled. At the time he left [for China], they had tents with them. On the return journey, each region made the arrangements. When he traveled in the vehicle, he traveled longer distances. It fell upon Kongpo Gyamda from our region [to make the arrangements]. It hardly took any time from Gyamda to Lhasa. It was close.**

Q: Can you tell us about the return of His Holiness?

01:22:10

**#41M: [By the time His Holiness reached] Kongpo Gyamda, I had returned. I had delivered the things and come back with the horses. We'd heard that His Holiness was**

arriving on a certain date. I lived in the village and it took almost a day to reach the motor road. So I went with the purpose of seeing His Holiness. There was a big bridge at Namsay.

Q: Bridge?

**#41M: The name of the village was Namsay. The Chinese had hung a huge bridge there. I stood beside the road near the bridge. His Holiness arrived. There were 6-7 jeeps that arrived in a line. Once again at that time, [I saw] His Holiness. It was just a fleeting glimpse through the vehicle.**

Q: Who did these jeeps belong to, *pa-la*?

01:23:42

**#41M: The jeeps belonged to the Chinese.**

Q: His Holiness had been gone almost a year in China, what were your thoughts and feelings when you saw him come back?

**#41M: Then everyone felt happy. When it was said that His Holiness was returning, everybody was happy. Incense offerings were burned.**

Q: Did you have any idea about what happened when he was in China?

01:24:36

**#41M: I had no knowledge about what he did in China.**

Q: Now this is 1955. Are there many Chinese in your village at this time?

**#41M: The Chinese had already arrived. The motor roads had already been constructed.**

Q: Right, but I meant was there any problem with the Chinese in your village at this time?

01:25:29

**#41M: There were no clashes at that time. There were no such things like fights.**

Q: Did anything difficult ever occur in a later year?

**#41M: The problem [began] later when the Chinese implemented liberation. They implemented what was called “the Liberation.” Then everybody faced problems. They implemented liberation and conducted *thamzing* ‘struggle session.’**

Q: Please tell me how did they try to enforce the liberation? Can you describe that, please?

01:26:23

**#41M: Prior to liberation, they conducted the *thamzing*. For example, a wealthy family has a father and a mother. They were ordered to come, were beaten, subjected to *thamzing* and accused of various things. After that whatever assets the wealthy family owned were**



**distributed among the poor. They [the Chinese] pretended to give them away, but all the good ones were taken by them.**

Q: In your village was there anyone who was considered wealthy and arrested?

**#41M: There were many wealthy families in my village. There were many wealthy families that were mostly wiped out. There was a huge monastery in my village called Dupla Gonpa. The lama of the monastery was subjected to *thamzing* and imprisoned for many years. Then the lama passed away in prison.**

Q: So in your village there were many wealthy people who were destroyed, so how were the wealthy people destroyed?

01:28:36

**#41M: Just as [I] told you, the adults of the families were incarcerated. They were captured and incarcerated and then beaten. Some of them had to die in prison. Most of them died in prison. They are no more.**

Q: Did you ever witness any *thamzing* session yourself?

**#41M: Yes, [I] saw.**

Q: Would it be possible for you to describe this even though I know it might be painful to tell us?

01:29:37

**#41M: There was a wealthy family in the place called Bhakashoe. It was located away from Kongpo. There was this wealthy family [person] in Bhakashoe known as Bhaka Chukdhak. It was said that his son and daughter-in-law had gone to the Chinese. They were not there but the daughter [of Bhaka Chukdhak] was.**

Q: By “gone to the Chinese” do you mean they surrendered to the Chinese?

**#41M: Yes, they had already gone to the Chinese. The son and the daughter-in-law had gone to the Chinese. The daughter was living there. There were many families living here and there in that village. All the people of the village were ordered to assemble. The family [of Bhaka Chukdhak] had quite a number of servants and maids. They were ordered to assemble. Then the daughter was taken atop the house. It was a large house. She was taken atop. I believe the maids of the house had earlier agreed to subject her to *thamzing*, perhaps not knowing what *thamzing* entailed. They might have said that they would do the *thamzing*.**

**Many Chinese troops arrived. The Chinese troops surrounded the top [of the house], each taking position at a different spot. There was an interpreter and one [person] to write. The interpreter was a Tibetan and so was the writer. One was a man and the other a woman. The daughter was told that she was to be subjected to *thamzing*. It was announced that she must be subjected to *thamzing*. All of us sat on the ground in rows. Then one of the maids**

**stood up and beat her [Bhaka Chukdhak's daughter] a little. She was beaten a little, caught by the hair, pushed down and pulled up. Then she [the maid] left her.**

01:31:39

**Then another maid got up and chided her and left her. This one did not hit her. Then again another maid got up and spoke a lot about the [alleged misdoings] and pressed her down by her head and then pulled her up. She left her without hitting her. Another maid stood up after that. She [Bhaka Chukdhak's daughter] sat with her head bowed. She was forced to bow her head because she was kneeling on the ground. [The maid said,] “You do not have to bow your head.” She caught her by the hair and pulled her up and then pushed her down. She hit her a little.**

**Among them was a maid who was lame. She was lame. She was the first one who had accepted to subject her to *thamzing*. After all of the others had conducted their *thamzing*, the villagers were asked, “Do you wish to conduct *thamzing*?” They asked us and we replied that we did not wish to conduct *thamzing* as we belonged to different villages. That was it. Then the lame maid was told, “You were the one who accepted last night. Get up and beat her.” Poor thing, never mind conducting *thamzing*, she was miserable and crying. She could not conduct the *thamzing*. She sat miserable and crying. Then the Chinese leader and the interpreter told her, “Last night you accepted to conduct *thamzing*. What is the reason for not doing the *thamzing* today? Now you will face *thamzing*.” She could hardly be subjected to *thamzing*. She was lame.**

Q: So it sounds like there was preparation the day before they brought out somebody to be *thamzinged* that they got people together who would do it and threatened them. Is that correct?

01:36:15

**#41M: Yes, it looked like that they had made preparations. They [the servants] might have been asked, “Tomorrow we are going to subject them to *thamzing*. Who will conduct the *thamzing*?” And they did not know what *thamzing* was and volunteered, “I will do it. I will do it. I will do it.”**

Q: Were there other people from the village watching these maids do this?

**#41M: They did not come to watch the show [voluntarily]. The Chinese ordered them to come. They were told to attend the meeting and that “No one is allowed to remain in the village. Everyone must attend.”**

Q: Can you remember what was the sentiment or the feeling of the villagers as they watched this woman being *thamzinged*?

01:37:49

**#41M: [Naturally] everybody would feel sad. Everybody thought that the Chinese were bad and were sad and everyone did not like them. However, nobody could respond to them at that point. Nobody could respond and they had a free hand.**

Q: Was this particular family in the village, how were they regarded by the villagers? Were they especially difficult to people or not?

**#41M: I do not know such things about them. I was from another village.**

Q: *Pa-la*, do you know what happened to that young girl?

01:39:15

**#41M: The lame maid was not able to subject her [Bhaka Chukdhak's daughter] to *thamzing*. She did not do it. Now, one had to come down from the roof, right? We were atop the house.**

Q: Everybody was on the roof?

**#41M: Yes, everyone was assembled on the roof.**

Q: You were not on the ground?

01:39:29

**#41M: No, not on the ground. We were on the roof. Now everyone had to come down. Since the lame one did not subject the girl to *thamzing*, the lame one was made to carry the girl on her back, "You have to take her down. You refused to subject the girl to *thamzing*. Now you will be subjected to *thamzing*." The girl was placed on the lame one and she was made to climb down the ladder. The lame one could not come down the ladder, but they placed her [the Bhaka Chukdhak girl] on her back and held her from the front, from the back and tried their best to make her go down the ladder.**

Q: This did not take place in his [your] village. So *pa-la*, why were you there?

**#41M: I went there from my village on pilgrimage. [To the interpreter] I told you about it the last time [during the pre-interview].**

Q: Please tell us today.

01:41:19

**#41M: I went on pilgrimage. During the course of the journey, I reached the place called Bhakashoe in Kongpo Mey [Lower Kongpo]. When I reached there, I could not proceed on the pilgrimage. The road to take on the pilgrimage was blocked. Then there was the *Chushi Gangdrug* [Defend Tibet Volunteer Force].**

Q: Was the place called Bhaka located in Kongpo Mey?

**#41M: Yes, it is in Kongpo Chapna.**

Q: You reached Bhaka...

01:42:01

**#41M: Yes, yes that is in the same area.**

Q: So from this point you were not able to go further on your pilgrimage?

**#41M: I could not proceed on my pilgrimage from this point.**

Q: *Pa-la*, what stopped you from going?

01:42:25

**#41M: The *Chushi Gangdrug* Force was formed at Diguthang. It had already waged two or three battles against the Chinese. Some of the soldiers came to Kongpo while others went to the north. About 300 soldiers of Dhotoe ‘Kham Province’ arrived in Kongpo. Around 300 soldiers of Amdo [Province] arrived in Kongpo. Kongpo region raised about 300 soldiers of its own. [People] were called to join the force. Then the soldiers from Amdo were sent to the north. Now there were 300 Khampa [people of Kham] soldiers and 300 Kongpo soldiers in Kongpo. And I was one of them.**

Q: Can you tell us what happened as a member of the *Chushi Gangdrug*?

**#41M: [We] stayed there for three or four months.**

Q: Where?

01:44:13

**#41M: In Kongpo, in the *Chushi Gangdrug*. There was a monastery in Chapna called Theckchenling Gonpa and the Chinese had arrived there. The *Chushi Gangdrug* was at Bhaka. So we left in the morning to fight them there. The clash against the Chinese began just after daybreak and continued until around dusk. What happened there was that almost a hundred Chinese were killed. No one from the *Chushi Gangdrug* suffered any harm. Then in the evening we had to flee. [Laughs]**

Q: Were you in the monastery or...

[Interpreter to interviewer]: The Chinese were in the monastery.

Q: The Chinese were in the monastery and did you go to fight them there?

01:45:53

**#41M: Yes, we went there.**

Q: What did you use to fight them?

**#41M: It was only with guns. Except for regular guns, we did not have artilleries or bigger weapons.**

Q: Where did the guns come from?

01:46:24

**#41M: There were different types of guns like Chipamali, Ripin. All the guns had been brought by each individual and there were none from the government.**

Q: No one was killed in your group. Did you kill all the Chinese in the monastery?

**#41M: All of them could not be killed because they were many in number. A little over a hundred were killed.**

Q: And then you fled. Where did you flee to?

01:47:23

**#41M: We must flee in the evening.**

Q: Where did you flee to?

**#41M: We fled from Kongtoe [Upper Kongpo] towards Lhoka. Time had come to an end. It was over. From then on we resisted if we encountered the Chinese and moved on as Lhasa was lost. It was '59 and Lhasa was defeated. We received a message saying that Lhasa was lost and that His Holiness the Dalai Lama had left for India. We went towards Lhoka and once we'd covered a distance, the soldiers of Kongpo went back to their homes. Instead of moving ahead, many went back. *Thamzing* had started and people were beginning to flee. Everyone was scared to stay back.**

Q: However, some did go back home?

01:48:19

**#41M: Many people went back home. There was our general who also returned. The general was called Jola, a good man and the son of Dickey Khangsar. He was the General of the Kongpo Unit. Everyone went back. Now there was nothing left. That's the end of the story. [Laughs]**

Q: *Pa-la*, what did you do?

**#41M: I was planning to escape.**

Q: Where to?

01:49:15

**#41M: I was planning to escape to India. Everybody was fleeing then. The Chinese subjected the people to *thamzing* and caused a lot of suffering. However, I could not be subjected to *thamzing* because I was not in my village. I had left my village which was a great distance away. I was in someone else's area, but irrespective of whether I succeeded or not, I made an effort to resist them. So there was suspicion in my mind and I planned and fled to India.**

Q: *Pa-la*, did you have any family back in your village?

**#41M: All my family members were left back in the village.**

Q: Where?

01:50:03

**#41M: In my village.**

Q: In your village.

**#41M: Yes, in Zinang.**

Q: Had you been married at that time?

01:50:18

**#41M: I was not married at that time.**

Q: How long did your escape to India take?

**#41M: It took a long time. The road was very bad in the region of Mon Tawang [Arunachal Pradesh, India]. The road was extremely bad and it took us many months. There were many people of Kongpo who were escaping together with us.**

Q: So you were in a group of people?

01:51:06

**#41M: Yes.**

Q: Why do you think the Chinese invaded Tibet?

**#41M: It would be difficult for me to say why they came from China, why they caused so much suffering in Tibet, what they were doing and what they were not doing. Is that not it? It would be difficult for me to explain why they came. They said in Tibet that religion was poison. Religion was poison and that it should be eliminated. All the influential people were wiped out, whether they were lamas or... Monasteries were demolished. They did the worst of things.**

Q: What do you think could have been done to help the Tibetan people?

01:52:55

**#41M: The Tibetan Government sought the help of the Americans then. They sought the help of the American Secret Service Office. Tibetans were sent for training to the country of the United States. They received training and armed with weapons were parachuted into Tibet. They dropped at the place called Shotalosum and in the Thoe regions. Such things were done. Though these things were done, it was futile because the Chinese had already constructed motor roads and they had become extremely grand [powerful]. So it was in vain. It [resistance] could not sustain and was in vain.**

Q: What do you hope will be preserved about Tibet for future generations?

**#41M: What we need to preserve are the religion and politics of Tibet. Yes, religion and politics. They are most important. In earlier times it used to be said that [Tibet was ruled by] both religion and politics and even now we have to preserve both religion and politics.**

Q: How has it been for you to tell us your story and your memories and eyewitness accounts of the history of Tibet? What was that like for you to do today?

01:55:14

**#41M: I feel it has been good. I related what I knew. However, there might be good things and bad things in it. Perhaps you will separate those. Will you separate them? [Laughs] It might contain good things and it might contain bad things. You will separate them?**

Q: Do you think that it's important that the elder people tell the story of their experiences of Tibet?

**#41M: Yes, I do. It is good. Earlier our camp leader told us that [I] must go and tell my story. I said, "Okay. I will relate the little that I know." However, basically I am not a good speaker or a capable person. I am a stupid person. [Laughs]**

Q: Why do you think it's important to do it?

01:56:42

**#41M: For one, if we get our independence...You are asking these questions and surely you will publicize them to the world, whether you show them or write about it in books. Surely you will show them to the world. Is that not it? That will make a big difference.**

Q: We talked about many things and I want to just ask again. If this interview were shown in Tibet or China, would this be a problem for you?

**#41M: There will be no problems. Whatever I told you now is the real truth. There will be no problems because I related what they [the Chinese] actually did.**

Q: Can we use your real name for this project?

01:58:05

**#41M: You can.**

Q: Thank you for sharing your story with us.

**#41M: Yes. Thank you.**

END OF INTERVIEW