

Tibet Oral History Project

Interview #9C – Tsondue Kunga
July 5, 2013

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TIBET ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

1. Interview Number: #9C
2. Interviewee: Tsondue Kunga
3. Age: 78
4. Date of Birth: 1935
5. Sex: Male
6. Birthplace: Digunang, near Lhasa
7. Province: Utsang
8. Year of leaving Tibet: 1959
9. Date of Interview: July 5, 2013
10. Place of Interview: Tibetan Community Center of Portland, Oregon, USA
11. Length of Interview: 2 hr 50 min
12. Interviewer: Marcella Adamski
13. Interpreter: Kalden Norbu
14. Videographer: Jeddadiah Emanuel
15. Translator: Tenzin Yangchen

Biographical Information:

Tsondue Kunga fondly remembers his birthplace Digunang, near Lhasa as a beautiful village with a river, flowers, fruits and forests all around. He recalls that his family cultivated grains, mustard and peas and raised animals as well. They leased their land by paying with yaks.

Tsondue Kunga was inducted as a monk at age 9 at the Ngagpa Datsang of Sera Monastery at the request of his mother. He shares his experience of 15 years in the monastery, such as memorizing the scriptures and the specialization in tantric practice at the monastery. He then recounts the sudden change in his life when he and other monks went to the Potala Palace to fetch guns to counter the Chinese army. He witnessed the shelling of the Norbulingka Palace and the attacks on Sera Monastery, where many lives were lost trying to resist the Chinese bombardment.

Tsondue Kunga gives a detailed account of how and why the monks decided to flee Sera Monastery and join the *Chushi Gangdrug* Defend Tibet Volunteer Force. They had numerous encounters with the Chinese army and then an arduous escape journey through difficult terrain and he suffered from hunger and the grief abandoning many animals. Tsondue Kunga gave up the monkhood in exile and moved to the United States in 1969 to become a logger in Maine. He had a joyous reunion with his mother when he visited his village again after 22 years in exile.

Topics Discussed:

Utsang, childhood memories, herding, taxes, monastic life, Buddhist beliefs, invasion by Chinese army, defense of Potala Palace, Chushi Gangdrug guerrillas, escape experiences, life as a refugee in India.

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Interview #9C

Interviewee: Tsondue Kunga

Age: 78, Sex: Male

Interviewer: Marcella Adamski

Interview Date: July 5, 2013

Question: Please tell us your name.

00:00:12

Interviewee #9C: My name is Tsondue Kunga.

Q: His Holiness the Dalai Lama asked us to record your experiences, so that we may 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?

#9C: I have received permission.

Q: Do [you] give permission?

#9C: Is it fine to say that [I] give permission?

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

#9C: Thank you.

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.

#9C: Okay.

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

00:02:39

#9C: I think recounting it will be beneficial for the people.

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

#9C: [To interpreter] Please convey my thanks.

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

#9C: I am from Lhasa. Earlier I mentioned Digunang, which is the name of a village. [I] was born in Digunang to a *samadok* ‘farmer and herder.’ I was born to parents that were farmers and reared animals as well.

Q: Can you first say how old you are and when [you] were born?

#9C: I was born in 1934.

[Interpreter interprets as: I was born in 1934. I was born and then I went to monastery when I was 9 years old.]

Q: What village were you born?

#9C: The name [of the village] is Digunang. Digunang. It is close to Lhasa.

Q: How many hours would it take to walk to Lhasa?

00:04:40

#9C: It is a journey of one *shama* on horseback. Driving along a laden yak would take around three *shama*.

[Interpreter interprets as: For me to walk to Lhasa, if you normally go by horse, it would take one day...]

#9C: No, no. It takes one *shama*, which is two days.

Q: What was your family... You lived in this village. How big was the village? How many families lived there?

#9C: It was quite a big village but not very big. However, it was big. In my family, my mother had six children. I am the oldest.

Q: Were there boys and girls?

#9C: There are five boys and the youngest is a girl.

Q: Does the oldest son have special kinds of responsibilities because they are firstborn?

00:06:46

#9C: I used to be sent to herd animals when I was small, to graze yaks. I have been many days to graze yaks but there were no other difficult duties.

Q: How many yaks did your family own?

#9C: My family owned six male yaks and 12 female.

[Interpreter interprets as: In my village we have 6 yaks, which are male and 6 female, a total of 12 yaks.]

Q: In your family or in the whole village?

#9C: That is what my family owned.

[Interpreter interprets as: Just in my family we have 12.]

#9C: No, there were six yaks and 12 *dri* ‘female yaks.’

Q: How do you take care of yaks? Can you describe how you did that as a young man, a little boy?

00:08:41

#9C: In the morning one would be given a pouch containing *pa* ‘dough made from *tsampa* and tea,’ prepared from *tsampa* ‘roasted barley flour.’ One took the *pa* and spent the whole day grazing yaks wherever there was good grass on the hills. You would be sent to graze yaks along with many other herders from the neighborhood.

You took along *pa* made from *tsampa*.

Q: How long would you be away from home?

[Interpreter interprets as: How far is it from home?]

#9C: One would have to go to a distance of at least half an hour. During summertime the *dri* were brought home at midday too because they needed to be milked at that time. That is when grass was plentiful. During wintertime milking was carried out only twice a day, once in the evening and in the morning. *Dri* were milked three times a day during summertime, which was why the animals were brought home once during the day.

During summertime [the *dri*] are milked three times a day.

Q: What was the livelihood of your family? You had many children, what did your father do for a living and your mother, what was her major work?

00:11:30

#9C: The primary livelihood was farming. We grew grains and the harvest in autumn must last us a whole year. In case it was not sufficient, [we] engaged in trade.

Q: What kinds of things did the family grow on the farm?

#9C: It was grains and *pekha* ‘mustard’ from which oil is extracted. These were the two and then peas were also cultivated at times.

Q: Did you own the land or did the land belong to someone else?

#9C: In the past my family did not own any land; the reason being that there was no tax [the family was liable to remit]. When there was no tax, there was no land. My family leased lands from farmers for three, four or five years by paying [them] in the form of yaks. [We] cultivated that to earn a living. The government did not impose any tax [on my family]. [We] did not have to pay taxes to the government.

Q: The land did not belong to [you]?

#9C: It did not in the past but later it did, the Chinese...

Q: Who did it belong to?

00:13:47

#9C: [The land] belonged to those that remitted taxes.

[Interpreter interprets as: There was no taxation system; the land does not belong to the family. It belongs to those who do the tax. Later on they decided to do the tax, so he owned, they owned, we as a family owned some of the farm and land.]

Q: How did you decide to take on the tax? I don't understand. How did the property go from belonging to someone else and then belonging to your family? What...I never heard of this mechanism. How did that happen?

#9C: It is like this. In the past there would be a leader in the village. Each particular village is assigned to a particular proprietor. Earlier we were tenants of Sera Ngagpa [Monastery] and as tenants of Sera Ngagpa, [we] were obliged to pay tax to Sera Ngagpa. Families that cultivated lands belonging to Sera Ngagpa had to pay tax and [they] hired additional people from other families to serve labor tax. [The tax-paying families] must serve additional labor. Without doing additional duties, you did not have right over the land. When you did not have right over a land, you leased lands [from other families] by giving animals and cultivating it. [To interpreter] Did [you] understand?

[Interpreter to interviewee]: [I] didn't but will clarify.

Q: Please talk about this again. Who is the tax paid to and how?

00:16:19

#9C: It is like a tax but in the form of additional labor depending upon the size of land you are cultivating. One must perform something called *wulak* 'labor tax.' Depending upon the [size of] land you are cultivating, it meant sending an extra person for *wulak* to serve [Sera Ngagpa]. You did not have right to any land if you could not perform this duty.

Q: Can you tell us a little bit about the feeling in your family? You have one sister and brothers. What was the feeling in your family life, in your home?

#9C: My mother was a very competent person. Even though the children did not do much, mother was very competent and so [we] had a very comfortable home. There was not much anxiety over sustenance. [We] had no problems with livelihood.

Q: What did your father do for a living?

#9C: My father passed away when I was 13 years old.

Q: So mother had many responsibilities then.

#9C: [Nods]

Q: Could you just tell us a little bit, in your village, please just tell me how many families like five or 25 and what would we see if we looked around your village? What would the scenery be like? So how many families and what would the scene look like when you woke up in the morning and went outside?

[Interpreter interprets first part of question]

00:19:45

#9C: Do [you] mean [how many members] in my family?

Q: Not in [your] home but in general in the village. The first [question] is how many families are there in the village? Secondly, what's the feeling like? There are many families and what was the feeling like when one woke up in the morning? What was it like in general?

#9C: It is a very beautiful village. A huge river flowed in the center, an incredibly clean river. This river flows towards Lhasa. Since everyone was *samadok*, rearing animals and doing farm work there were not very many poor people. Everybody was economically sound. The landscape of the region was very beautiful because there were good forests and during summertime, pretty colorful flowers bloomed. Mushrooms and other edibles were plentiful in summer. When we went up the mountain as children in summer, there were pomegranates and many things to eat and I felt very happy. There were many people in the village.

Q: How many families were there?

#9C: There were at least 500-600 people in the village. There were many clusters of villages.

Q: It sounds very beautiful.

#9C: Thank you. It was an incredibly happy place.

Q: When you think back on your village and your childhood, what do you miss about Tibet?

00:22:53

#9C: I feel very [sad] that my happy place is no more. Even otherwise, I always remember my village because it is such a beautiful place. However, I went back to Tibet in 1982. My mother was there then. I had not met [her] for around 20 years. When [I] went back to Tibet in 1982, [I] met my mother and my siblings and I spent a month in my home. I felt incredibly happy then.

Q: What do you miss?

#9C: That is [what I mentioned] about being incredibly happy.

Q: What had changed in your village? In 1982, let's see you went back, that was after you left in '59. So that was 22 years.

#9C: [Nods]

Q: What had changed in your village in 22 years?

#9C: There had been a great change because in the past my family did not own any land. There was no land but animals. However, what the Chinese had done then was to divide the lands and animals equally based on the number of individuals [in a family]. Though the division was equal but on account of one's fate and fortune, those families that were well off in the past became well off and though the division was equal, those that were poor once again became poor. [The people] remarked that it happened like that.

Q: So not a lot of improvement for the poor people.

00:26:15

#9C: Improvement was supposed to have been brought about but due to their karmic action of past lives, there was not much progress in their case.

Q: Did your mother tell you what had happened to her during those 22 years? Did she describe her experiences in anyway that you can share with us?

#9C: I had left and mother had not seen me for 22 years. She said that she had been greatly worried about me. Except for the deep anguish, they had not suffered much in terms of survival. However, [she] had not seen me and when I arrived there mother was overjoyed to see me. [She] said, "[I] have never been happier than today in [my] life." Everyone came to see me and cried. [Mother] hugged me and remained so for almost an hour.

Q: Beautiful. So *pa-la*, tell us how things changed in your life? What happens, you are a yak herder as a young boy? Do you go to school? Do you go anywhere? How does your life begin to change?

#9C: The change took place when the parents made me a monk when I was little. I lived in the monastery as a monk and studied the scriptures a great deal. [I] studied the scriptures

and then when Tibet was conquered, I went to the Potala Palace to fetch guns. Is it okay to recount [the story] about the guns?

Q: It's okay.

00:29:26

#9C: Is it fine? I went to the Potala Palace at that time to fetch guns, as there was a war. When we went to get guns from the Potala, being monks we knew nothing about guns. We went to get guns from the armory at the Potala. After getting the guns we saw many troops there. [We] requested the soldiers to impart training and then we started to learn how to fire guns while the attack had already ensued. Outside, the Chinese were firing innumerable cannons while we were just training in warfare.

Q: Let me go back and we'll pick up that story, but I want to understand, you went to the monastery at 9 years of age. How was that decision made and why were you selected to be a monk?

#9C: The decision to make me a monk was taken by my mother. I had no power. Mother said, "I want to make the first born a monk." Mother made me a monk. As a 9-year old [I] was placed between bundles on a yak's back and taken to Lhasa on the 2-3 *shama* of journey to become a monk. My teacher with whom I was to remain as a monk was my mother's sibling. My teacher was my mother's sibling, who was in Sera [Monastery]. Because the teacher was there, mother sent [me]. I did not have any wish [to be a monk] then.

Q: Why would a mother want her son to become a monk?

00:33:34

#9C: A mother's reason for making a son a monk is that [he] would study the scriptures and become a very fine dharma practitioner that would result in a good life to [benefit] both this and the next life. That is the reason for making [someone] a monk.

Q: At that time, can you remember what was your understanding of why the Buddhist teachings were so important? When you were only 9, did you have any grasp of why it was important?

#9C: I did not understand anything at the age of 9. [I] memorized what the teacher taught everyday. There was a lot to memorize and read from the scriptures, and besides following the teacher's word, [I] did not have the ability for any profound comprehension then. One must be honest.

Q: We would now like to understand more about the monastery. Do you remember how did you feel when you left home and where was the monastery that you went to study?

#9C: The monastery was at a distance of two days or one *shama* on horseback from home. It took three to four days on yak-back. When [I] reached the monastery from home, I found it different and felt a kind of joy.

Q: It felt exciting to go?

00:37:46

#9C: [I] felt very happy to be in the monastery because there were many friends. There were many children of my age studying the scriptures in the monastery and so being with them gave [me] great joy. It was a different feeling and I had a great feeling.

Q: Was this monastery towards Lhasa? What is the name of the monastery? Where was it located in relation to Lhasa and how many people lived there? How many monks were there in that monastery?

#9C: The name of the monastery is Sera and is very close to Lhasa. Among the three [monasteries of] Sera, Drepung and Gaden, Sera is located closest to Lhasa. Sera is closest to Lhasa and one could reach Lhasa in about an hour's walk. What's the other [question]?

Q: That's it.

#9C: Yes? The number of monks? The standard number of monks is 5,500. And there are three *datsang* 'sections in a large monastery.' There are three different *datsang* in Sera [Monastery], Ngagpa, Jey and Mey.

Q: What did they represent? Why were there three different sub monasteries in the big monastery?

00:41:06

#9C: [The monks of] Sera Jey and Mey study the debates while there are no debate lessons but studies in tantric tradition in Sera Ngagpa. The practices are different.

I am from Sera Ngagpa.

Q: The tantric?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Yes, yes.

[Interviewer to interpreter]: The first one is the philosophy. The first one is philosophy. The second one was...

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Together. The first one and second one together they study philosophy and the last one the Ngagpa, which study tantric, and all those other perspective.

Q: *Pa-la*, did you choose which school you wanted to study in? Did you choose to study the tantric tradition?

#9C: It was not my decision. My teacher was from Sera Ngagpa. Since my teacher was from Sera Ngagpa, I was automatically admitted into Sera Ngagpa.

Q: How many years did you study at Sera Monastery?

#9C: I studied from the age of 9 until 24 or 25. At times [I] went home for short visits.

Q: Could you help explain to people who don't understand the tradition that you were studying the tantric tradition? Could you explain just some of the basic teachings? What is that tradition?

#9C: What did one study at Sera Ngagpa?

Q: Please explain what one studied at Sera Ngagpa.

00:45:01

#9C: The three parts to study were Sangwa Dhuepa 'Exposition Tantra of Guhyasamaja,' Dhechok 'Chakrasamvara, tantra textual tradition showing the stages of the path and fruition'...One practiced and memorized three or four traditions called Jigchay 'Bhairava, the lord of death,' Dhechok and Sangwa Dhuepa. There was a lot to memorize and after memorizing these, there were prayer assemblies like the *dupchoe* 'establishing the mandala and making offerings' and *ngachoe*, another prayer assembly. That is how one practiced. It is different from the debates in that there are a lot of texts to memorize.

Q: It's *dumtso*, right?

00:46:00

It is like *bumtso* 'assembly of 100,000 offerings.' There are four different major assemblies.

Q: Did you understand the meaning behind the memorization?

#9C: [Understanding] the meaning and memorization are totally different. We just memorized and did not understand the meaning because one cannot understand the meaning without studying the debates.

Q: Now that you are a wise older man of the Tibetan community, why do you think the teachings of the Buddha are important compared to people who don't have the teachings? What is the advantage of understanding the Buddhist teachings?

#9C: I do not much understand the dharma since in the past I have only memorized and not focused much upon the meaning. However, after coming here, we have a *geshe-la* 'monk with Buddhist philosophy degree' here under whose teaching I have learned a little bit about the *kyabdo* 'taking refuge.' Seeking refuge in the three jewels, the lama and *yidham* 'tutelary deity' is very important. The most important part of the dharma is the *kyabdo*.

Q: What are they?

00:50:12

#9C: *Kyabdo* is seeking refuge in the three jewels; refuge in the lama, the Buddha and dharma.

*Sangay choe dhang tso kyi tso nam la,
Janchup bhar dhu dhag ni kyab su che,
Do la phen chir Sangay dub par sho.
That is the kyabdo.*

00:51:40

[You take refuge in the] Lama, Buddha, dharma and then the *sangha*.

Q: What is your understanding of the Buddhist teaching of impermanence?

#9C: A person's life...I do not know much, but it is there in the Buddha dharma that life is not permanent. [Life] is not always permanent. It is considered very important to have compassion for others. Helping other people, considering others before self is a good way of practicing the dharma.

If you are not able to do anything, by doing something to help others and keeping others before self is a great way of practicing the dharma, and there is no need to be profound in the knowledge of the dharma.

Q: Now let us go back to the monastery and you can tell me—how does your life...you actually were then a monk from 9 years to 24 years. So for 15 years you were a monk. Can you tell us any memories that are some of your favorite memories or difficult memories about being a monk before anything changed, you know, while you were a monk? What are some experiences you can share?

00:55:22

#9C: I did not have too many experiences because I was memorizing the scriptures to a great extent. I have memorized the four traditions of Sangwa Dhuepa, Dhechok, Konrig 'Sarvavid, class of yoga tantra' and Jigchay. After memorizing these, each tradition would hold an annual assembly wherein rites and rituals were conducted. The practice of rituals is considered very important and is specifically followed in Sera Ngagpa unlike in Sera Jey and Mey.

00:56:29

It is called *dumchoe*, the assembly of respective traditions. There are four different *dumchoe* for the respective traditions. Each tradition holds a separate assembly. The rituals must be observed for around a week each.

Q: What was the practice about?

#9C: It is about tantra. Though [we] did not practice meditation, it is believed that performing the rituals of tantra is immensely beneficial.

Q: Did any of it involve meditation?

#9C: We did not practice meditation and such. However, one can practice meditation by specifically retreating to a hermitage but that is not present in the monastery. There is also

the practice where one can go to the villages and stay in a cave for a month or two and engage in meditation.

00:58:47

There are instances of one going into retreat for three years.

Q: Were there any teachers that you had that you thought were very holy, very wise, very special that you can tell us about if they were in your monastery or maybe they came to visit? Can you describe, tell us the name and tell us of any one of them?

#9C: In the past there were many revered ones during our time but many of them are no more. [They] have passed away. I cannot remember any revered ones that are there these days. There were many in the past.

Q: Was there any teacher that influenced you in your spirit or in your heart who helped you understand the wisdom of these teachings?

#9C: There have been many revered lamas in [my] life in the past but all have passed away. I consider His Holiness the Dalai Lama as [my] root guru. There is none greater than His Holiness. If you listen to His Holiness' instructions, there is no one, no revered lama that can surpass it. [I] listen to His Holiness' advice over and over again and retain it in [my] mind.

Q: Well, you were in the monastery for all those years—for the 15 years—did you ever see His Holiness the Dalai Lama in person and can you tell us about that if you did?

01:02:53

#9C: There have been many opportunities because in the beginning His Holiness visited Sera [Monastery] for the *choeshuk* 'initiation into religious life' and [I] saw His Holiness then. Then [His Holiness] came to Sera to give the *geshe* examination where His Holiness engaged in debating. [I] had an opportunity then. Then there is the one called Norbulingka, the summer residence of His Holiness near the Potala. [I] have visited it many times to see His Holiness.

Q: Can you tell us a little bit more about when you were witnessing His Holiness in that debate for his Ph.D., his *geshe*? Were you very close? Were there many people there? Can you describe the scene?

01:05:31

#9C: I was not learning the debates then. Since [I] was not learning the debates, I could not comprehend it much but we saw His Holiness engaging in the debates from close quarters. Normally the figure is believed to be 5,500 [monks] in Sera then but it seemed more than that. His Holiness gave the *geshe* examinations by engaging in debates in a gathering of more than 5,500 monks. I witnessed this very clearly. I did not comprehend the meaning then since I had not studied the debates.

Q: What was the... You had gone from a small farming community to this enormous university and you were there for a long time. How did you feel about being a monk in this monastery? Did it suit you? Did you wish you weren't there? What were you feeling?

#9C: I was born in a small village and then became a monk in a great monastery. I felt incredibly happy that I was so fortunate in this life.

Q: How were your memorization skills and were you considered a good student, a medium student or a slow student?

01:09:06

#9C: I was good at memorization as a small [child]. However, I was not the best but could be placed somewhere in the middle.

Q: In addition to your serious studies you were with a group of young boys from 9 years to 24 years. What kind of funny things can you remember or mischievous things that you did besides all these studies, memorization, what did you do that got you in trouble?

#9C: While I was memorizing the texts, my teacher was my mother's sibling. However, I used to be very scared of my teacher while studying the scriptures. [He] would beat me at times. [I] must memorize 3-4 or 5-6 lines from the scriptures everyday and regurgitate to the teacher in the evening. If the recitation did not go well, the teacher would beat [me] a little bit.

Q: Are there any mischievous incidents?

#9C: [I] had been mischievous. [I] had been mischievous with other children and gone to play on many occasions.

Q: Could you tell us about a few?

01:12:17

#9C: On many occasions [I] had gone to play with other children. One game was called *apchu* where you throw coins called *boli* into a hole dug [in the ground]. Then there was climbing rocks and such. [I] had gone to play on many occasions. Sometimes [I] had arguments with the children and many other things.

Q: *Pa-la*, when did this...? I guess I have one last question. When you turned like in your 20s you still went home maybe in the summers to help with the farming, I think you said. Did you ever wish you were married and had a family like the other boys in the village?

#9C: [I] never thought about getting married while I was a monk. I desired to study the scriptures well and never had such thoughts.

Q: So when does your life change in the monastery, *pa-la*?

#9C: In the monastery?

Q: What happens, any external circumstances? What happens in your life as a monk?

01:15:41

#9C: I have a story to recount. Is it okay to for me relate it? I have a story regarding my giving up monkhood and informing His Holiness the Dalai Lama about it. Is it okay to recount that now?

Q: We would love to hear it.

#9C: Oh, really? I have to start at the beginning of the story. I arrived in Dalhousie [Himachal Pradesh, India] as a monk in 1959 after the invasion of Tibet. [I] stayed a year in Dalhousie. [I] was a monk during the year in Dalhousie. Then His Holiness said that a school must be established at Mussoorie [Uttarkhand] and since there was no building for the school, volunteers were sought from among the monks. Such an advice came from His Holiness. So 21 of us monks from Dalhousie went to Mussoorie to volunteer for the construction.

01:18:09

And worked there for two years constructing the school building.

At the time of the construction, His Holiness the Dalai Lama visited Mussoorie and I took the vow of *nyentsok*.

Q: What's *nyentsok* vow?

#9C: It is the *gelong* 'vows for a fully ordained monk.' There is such a vow that a monk takes.

Q: Were you a monk then?

#9C: [I] was already a monk but there are the *gelong* vows and the *getsul* 'novice monk' vows. I had already taken the *getsul* vows and I took the *gelong* vows then.

And then in the year '69 I came to the United States. I lost monkhood prior to the migration to America. Then I returned to India in 1975. I conveyed to His Holiness the Dalai Lama then. I lost monkhood just as I was going to go to America.

01:20:23

In 1975 I went to see His Holiness the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala [Himachal Pradesh]. What I informed was this. I sought forgiveness for having lost my monkhood. Earlier I had taken the *gelong* vows during the construction work in Mussoorie. [I] sought forgiveness and made an offering of some money. I sought forgiveness and made the confession. [I] asked what could be done and expressed that [I] was sorry.

I took the *gelong* vows in Mussoorie and in '75 sought forgiveness. His Holiness told me, "You have become a *barko*."

Q: What's *barko*?

#9C: *Barko* means one who had lost monkhood.

His Holiness advised me to chant the *thungshag* 'formula of confession and atonement section of the Triskandhaka sutra' without fail everyday. *Thungshag* is a prayer recitation. There is the *thungshag* and *chishag*. It is to cleanse one's sins.

[End of DVD Part 1]

[Start of DVD Part 2]

00:00:02

Then His Holiness said, "You who have gone for the logging work, do you have a cordial relationship? How are you? What is the country like?"

Q: Interesting.

#9C: [I] replied that we were very happy. We were 22 men in a group that had gone on logging work. [His Holiness] asked how all were doing and whether we shared a cordial relationship. [I] replied that we were cordial and happy. [His Holiness] said, "Take care and work hard." And patted [me] on the back. I felt very happy.

Q: Cutting wood?

00:01:06

#9C: [We] went to Maine to cut wood through the American government. We were hired by the Great Northern Company. Maine state.

Q: To be a logger, a logger? Logging?

#9C: Yeah, yeah.

Q: In logging?

#9C: Yeah.

Q: Cutting trees?

#9C: [Speaks in English] Cutting trees and make paper.

Q: In Main Street?

#9C: Yeah, Maine state.

Q: The state of Maine?

#9C: Yeah.

Q: East Coast?

#9C: You are right, near Connecticut.

Q: The other side of America?

#9C: Yeah.

Q: So 20 Tibetan men...

#9C: We [were there for] twp years.

Q: And was the purpose to be as a refugee or to help give them asylum? What was the reason?

00:02:28

#9C: Earlier the Great Northern Company had taken six people to work in logging. These six men did a good job for two years. Because of that 21 or 22 of us were taken next.

Q: Not as a refugee?

#9C: There was not any such talk.

Q: I want to ask you about Kundun, His Holiness. Can you please tell me why is His Holiness so important to you?

#9C: The reason for the importance is...it is not only for me but it is throughout the world. However, from my perspective there is no one greater than Kundun to whom I can seek refuge for both this and the next life. [His Holiness] is [important] throughout the world.

Q: How did it feel when His Holiness gave you a prayer to say because you had broken your promise to him? How did that feel to you?

00:05:43

#9C: The feeling was something [I] had never experienced in my life because it felt like taking down a huge load I had been carrying. [My] body felt light. When [I] came out of the door after seeing His Holiness, [I] felt so light, physically so light. [I] felt very comfortable and something like carefree. It was a unique feeling of happiness.

Q: Beautiful. I want to back up a little bit in history and go before you come to India. What was happening in the monastery in 1959? What happened?

#9C: How do [you] mean?

Q: Tibet was invaded and there were many difficulties before [your] coming to India. I wish to know about that, about Tibetan history and what happened before you came to India.

#9C: Before coming to India?

Q: Tibet was invaded and such...

00:07:42

#9C: Right. At the time Tibet was lost...I will recount a story about escaping from Tibet at that time. [I] carried a gun from Tibet...the story about going to fetch the gun has already been recounted, right?

Q: It's okay to relate it again.

#9C: Yes? I went to Tse 'Potala Palace' to get guns. Following the training from the soldiers, I left the Potala with a gun. I spent three days at home where mother was and then proceeded to Lhoka where the *Chushi Gangdrug* army [Defend Tibet Volunteer Force] was based. Lhoka is a place located close to India. [I] left to join the force because [I] felt the Chinese would not leave [me] alone since [I] possessed a gun. [To interpreter] You can translate that and then I will continue the story.

Q: Where did you spend the three days? With parents?

00:09:05

#9C: Yes?

Q: [You] mentioned spending three days somewhere.

#9C: Where?

Q: When [you] went to fight.

#9C: At home with my mother.

Q: Just so we have some background story, you are in the monastery before you get a gun and learn how to shoot and visit your mother. Before that happens, what's going on in the monastery? Why are you learning how to shoot a gun? Why? Tell the story of why?

#9C: The reason for learning [to use] a gun was to fight the Chinese and the hope to win the battle. That was in our mind. We did not have any training but there was the hope that we would fight and try to save Tibet.

Q: When you were in Sera Monastery, how did you know the Chinese had come into Lhasa? How did you find that out?

00:11:42

#9C: [I] knew about the Chinese invasion a few years earlier because the Chinese had arrived 5-6 years prior to '59. The Chinese invaded through Chamdo, and Chamdo and

many regions at the border had fallen. Then [they] appeared in Lhasa and [people] lived in dread in Lhasa wondering what would happen as the Chinese were very powerful while the Tibetans had no power or experience in warfare. Everybody lived in fear.

Q: So there's 5,500 monks in Sera Monastery. Did the monks begin to talk about becoming fighting forces? Did some of them say, "No, I will stay a monk"? Did some of them take off their monk's habits?

#9C: The monks did not have any freedom [to make choices]. They [the Chinese] attacked Sera [Monastery]. Norbulingka had fallen and then they bombarded Sera relentlessly. We were forced to flee. There were no options due to the disparity in might.

Q: Were you inside Sera Monastery when the Chinese...? Did they surround the monastery? Did they come inside? There are 5,000 monks there, so did they try to take over? Can you describe what you saw and what you heard from inside the monastery?

#9C: It is like this. Norbulingka had fallen. Cannons were being fired and one could not endure the continuous shelling. So we fled in the night. Sera was being bombarded relentlessly. The outer fencing received innumerable bombardment such that one could no longer remain under the gunfire.

Then we consulted the deity in the temple with a *zenril* 'divination through balls of dough' whether it was better to fight the Chinese or escape. The prediction was, "It is better for you to leave. It is better to go away. Staying back is futile." And so, all the monks fled in the night.

Q: When you said Norbulingka was gone, the Chinese had bombed Norbulingka. Did you know His Holiness had escaped at that time?

00:17:38

#9C: We did not know at the time of fleeing the monastery. [We] were sure His Holiness was there and were filled with great anxiety. [We] were greatly worried that His Holiness might have been killed in Norbulingka. Then a few soldiers that had escaped from Norbulingka gave us the message, "His Holiness has left for India. It has been a few days since the departure." We received this message and were overjoyed. A few soldiers knew about it.

Q: Tibetan army soldiers came...

#9C: Yeah.

Q: ...and told you.

#9C: Yeah.

Q: And then were the Chinese bombing Sera?

#9C: [The Chinese] fired cannons from afar but not bombs. It was cannons and that is similar to bombs. It was unendurable.

Q: From the sky or missiles shooting cannons?

#9C: The cannons were fired from afar and not from the sky. It was being fired from Lhasa where [the Chinese] have a military camp.

Q: So they were artillery, very strong, very strong guns.

#9C: Very strong.

Q: What was happening? Were they destroying the walls or were there people getting killed in Sera?

00:20:06

#9C: There were many people killed in Sera by the artilleries. Pits had been dug as hideout and around 10 people were killed. [I] saw it with my eyes.

Q: How many people?

#9C: There were other individuals as well as monks. Around 10 had been killed. We fled in the night.

Q: Were they monks from the monastery?

#9C: Some monks of the monastery had lay in wait holding guns in the bunkers and waiting to fight. [They] were hit by the artilleries.

Q: Were they monks?

#9C: Yes, monks.

Q: Were all monks?

00:21:14

#9C: Besides monks there were two lay people killed that were kitchen assistants at the monastery.

Q: *Pa-la*, you are 24 years old at this time. What are you thinking? Do you think, “I’m going to run away like the Gods recommended that we do” or “I’m going to stay and fight”? What was your thinking and your planning?

#9C: I thought that since everyone was taking flight it was better to flee. [I] thought that but I possessed a gun and falling into Chinese hands would mean certain death. So [I] thought [I] must go and fight even if [I] died in the process. [I] did not have any other thoughts then.

Q: Where did you go to?

#9C: I met mother and spend three days at home. Then I went to Lhoka where the *Chushi Gangdrug* had its base camp. I went to join the fight against the Chinese.

Q: What was your mother telling you?

00:23:44

#9C: Mother was crying, “Don’t go.”

Q: What did she want you to do?

#9C: Initially mother cried a lot. Then I told mother, “I am carrying a gun, so the Chinese will not leave me alone. I must go to fight.” Later [mother] agreed.

Q: Well, your mother was living there. Was her village at that time, was it occupied by the Chinese? Was it okay, and where were your brothers, your younger brothers and sister?

#9C: There were no Chinese then [in mother’s village]. The Chinese had not arrived.

One of the siblings was a monk and he was in Lhasa. The others were not monks and were living at home in the village.

Q: You mentioned getting guns. Did you get the guns in the monastery and the training there or did you get that later when you went to Lhoka?

00:26:00

#9C: Guns?

Q: Yes.

#9C: [I] mentioned earlier that I went to fetch guns at the Tse.

Q: What’s Tse?

#9C: The Potala Palace. Earlier [I] had been to the Potala Palace to get [guns]. I went to get guns at the Potala Palace and carried one.

Q: Was it when [you] were in the monastery?

#9C: Yes. Over a thousand monks from Sera [Monastery] went to get guns. The Chinese had already captured Norbulingka by then.

Q: Did you have any ammunition or just guns?

#9C: There were bullets for the guns. [I] received a gun and bullets as well. The soldiers gave lessons in discharging a gun, as we had no knowledge then. There were soldiers that gave training in how to discharge a gun. [We] trained. I had 200 round of bullets, 200 bullets worn around the waist. [I] was armed with a gun and the bullets. When [we] fled after receiving the guns, two or three monks got killed just as we were fleeing from the Potala Palace.

Q: Got killed by each other accident or...?

00:28:12

#9C: No, no, shot by the Chinese.

Q: Because you were in the Potala Palace and the guns were part of the Tibetan Government's soldiers?

#9C: Yeah, soldiers.

Q: And they had been given to them by the British or how did they get those guns?

#9C: The guns were like this. The Tibetan Government had purchased those guns by giving away a region on the border, the border between India and Tibet called Mon Tawang. In the past India was ruled by the British and [the guns] called *Enji khadhum* 'English-made short barrel [rifle]' were bought by the Tibetan Government from the English. I have heard of it.

There were many guns stored at the Potala Palace.

Q: And were those guns going to be used by the Tibetan government, you know, guards or soldiers to protect the Potala Palace from any kind of problem or invasion? Was that the purpose?

00:30:06

#9C: I do not know about that because it was many years since [the guns] were purchased. I do not know about the purpose of the government whether it was to give to the army or any other reason. Having knowledge about the existence of the guns, the monks went to get them.

Q: What was the attitude of—you are a monk, were you planning to continue to be a monk and defend Tibet or did you have to take off your monk's vows and robes?

#9C: Actually one must give up the vows it seems. We did not get time to give up the vows. However, [we] did not leave wearing monks' robes. [We] were in laymen's attire on the way to get the guns. [We] wore laymen's attire to get guns.

Q: What was the objective?

#9C: The objective was to try to prevent Tibet from being occupied. We hoped to be able to protect Tibet by resistance. Our objective was to try to prevent Tibet from being occupied but it was in vain.

Q: Can you paint a picture for us? You say a thousand monks go from Sera to Potala Palace to get the guns and then was it very scary and chaotic? What happens and how do you get out of the Potala Palace with the Chinese all around?

00:33:18

#9C: When we went to the Potala to get the guns, the soldiers there were very happy to see all the monks. The soldiers said, "It is very good of you to come." However, the Chinese were firing countless number of artilleries outside the Potala Palace, firing innumerable.

When we reached there the soldiers were happy and gave [us] training to operate the guns. [We] went to the armory to get the guns. One had to volunteer to go to get guns and everybody could not move together. Many men got killed on the way to get guns. Even if one got a gun, the ammunition was stored elsewhere. The guns were stored at one place and the ammunition in another armory. So Chinese artillery firing killed quite a number of our men in the process.

Q: And then what happens?

#9C: And then we carried the ammunition. Initially the bullets were divided with each person being allotted 50 numbers. Then there were soapbox like cases that contained 10 bullets each. Many such were piled in the center and many of the monks rushed to grab. I managed to get 50 bullets then.

[I] had already got the initial 50 bullets in a brown belt that could be worn around the waist. These [kinds of bullets] were divided among everyone.

Q: And then?

00:36:31

#9C: Then [we] fled from there. Initially [we] had planned to go towards Norbulingka through Chakpori since all the monks were armed. [We] planned that way but could not succeed because of the continuous and innumerable firing by the Chinese. Some of the men were killed. [We] could not go through and returned to Sera. It was in the evening, just before sunset.

Q: Is this about a thousand monks?

#9C: Yeah, yeah. Some people were killed.

Q: Is there a leader of the group at this point?

#9C: Two reincarnate lamas acted as leaders. Otherwise, there was no specific leader as such for we had left as volunteers.

Q: And then?

00:38:14

#9C: And then we returned to the monastery. After returning to the monastery, we were not to remain there but deployed as guards to protect the monastery's grounds. After sometime in the night [someone] said, "All the monks are fleeing. The reason for all the monks taking flight is that the deity has been consulted for a divination and the advice being that it is better for all monks to leave. Nobody is to stay back. For a start let us flee to Phenpo."

Q: What's Phenpo?

#9C: One would reach Phenpo after crossing a pass from Sera. The divination predicted that it is better to flee and not remain for the time being. So everyone was fleeing and [we] too did.

Q: I want to go back to...They went back to ask the God what to do? Was there an oracle or who transmitted the message from the God?

#9C: The deity did not speak as such. There is some sort of a dice you throw that's written with the words "Better to go" and "Better to stay." So whichever came out of the bowl, we went accordingly. The deity did not speak. The divination is a dice that is used.

Q: I understand that. It's a message that's given through this kind of communication. So then the group decided to go to Phenpo.

#9C: Yeah.

Q: *Pa-la*, can you please tell us what happened after you got the guns and you were with the other monks? You were in lay clothing and then where do you go next as a group?

00:41:30

#9C: We wore lay clothing on the way to getting the guns. [I] felt sad in removing the monk's robes but there was no other way. We were helpless as [the situation] was similar to the sky falling on the earth. However, I felt sad but helpless.

Q: How did they travel and where did the group go?

#9C: After leaving the monastery we fled the whole night into the interiors, crossed a pass and arrived in Phenpo. Phenpo is a very large place. Then each went his way and there was no time to form groups.

Q: Just continue your story.

#9C: Then I walked home. I spent three days at home and met all my family members. Initially when [we] met, everyone sobbed loudly and hugged [me]. The first day was

extremely sad but then they became calmer on the second and third days. Those without guns stayed back, none [of them] left. I possessed a gun and my relative had one. We did not own horses then. So my relative bought horses from a neighbor. [We] bought two horses each, one to ride and the other to carry stuff. Then [we] left towards Lhoka.

Q: Is that after Phenpo?

#9C: After Phenpo. One would have left Phenpo behind to reach my home.

Q: Were [you] nearing India or...?

00:44:42

#9C: No. [We] were making plans to leave my home.

Q: To Lhasa?

#9C: No. [We] were planning to go towards Lhoka where the *Chushi Gangdrug* was.

00:45:26

Q: Did [your] older brother also have a gun then?

#9C: A relative from my mother's side had a gun. We left together.

My older brother [mother's relative?] had been a trader and was rich. He bought horses for me too and helped me.

Q: It was another older brother?

#9C: It was another older brother. [We] traveled together from Lhasa.

[Interpreter interprets as: The brother, he is from a well-off family and he was doing some business. So through his help he bought some horse. I went with him and we went back to Potala to fight.]

Q: How interesting! What happens when you go back?

00:46:24

#9C: [Speaks before question is interpreted] Then we went to Lhoka and spent seven days there. There was an estate belonging to Sera Mey where we met the *Chushi Gangdrug* troops. We wished to go and fight but they said, "You cannot leave this army camp." We were 12 men that were all armed with guns. "You cannot leave from here. You must fight alongside us." [They] were telling us that they were going to go back to Lhasa and reclaim the territory. "You stay here and we will give you provisions." They provided rations and left us at an estate.

Q: *Pa-la*, can you remember the actual days or dates that was or what month and year?

#9C: [I] cannot remember the days and dates at all. Except for the number of days spent [at a place], [I] cannot remember the dates.

Q: Do [you] know the year?

#9C: Yes?

Q: Do [you] know the year?

#9C: Yes.

Q: 1959?

#9C: Yeah, 1959.

Q: 1959 after...

#9C: 1959, maybe it was in the 2nd Tibetan lunar month. The corresponding month is March, I think.

Q: Can you describe what you saw with your own eyes in Lhasa?

#9C: In Lhasa?

Q: What was happening in Lhasa then?

00:49:07

#9C: Every year the Monlam ‘Great Prayer Festival’ is held in Lhasa. During the Monlam assembly, there is the *thorgya* ‘offerings of pyramid shaped-dough’ ceremony. It was held on the 21st day of the 1st Tibetan lunar month. The Monlam *thorgya* was conducted on the 21st day. There was snowfall on the day of the Monlam *thorgya*. Snowing on that day is considered a very bad omen. Since long ago, snow blocking the route of the Monlam *thorgya* was considered a very bad omen. We considered it a very bad omen when it snowed on the day of the Monlam *thorgya* then.

Monlam is when the [monks of] Sera, Gaden and Drepung [Monasteries] assembled.

00:50:46

Shall I continue [the story] from Lhoka?

Q: Yes, do that.

#9C: Upon reaching Lhoka we stayed seven days with the *Chushi Gangdrug* men. One day we went to get [our] quota of provisions when none of the *Chushi Gangdrug* men were present. They had all left. Then we returned and followed them. [We] rode following them continuously for three or four days and nights without any sleep. Then [we] found the *Chushi Gangdrug* men sleeping in a valley having loosened [their] horses.

Q: Where?

#9C: A little before reaching A-Chumdhagya. It is very close to the Indian border. They had fled and we followed later. We followed them and camped in an enclosure where sheep are kept during summertime. And then Chinese troops arrived. Chinese troops surrounded [the place] and there was great commotion. Then we were forced to flee suddenly once again.

00:52:52

It was some kind of a valley.

00:53:00

Here all the *Chushi Gangdrug* troops were sleeping after having ridden without sleep for three or four days and with the horses untied. Then Chinese soldiers pursued and fired.

00:53:42

And then some people including my relative went to fight. Two of us were left with some horses and a mule that carried provisions. “You stay here while we fight there,” they said and left. We were left at that place, the two of us. They left to fight the Chinese troops and there was a lot of cross firing with the Chinese soldiers. [I] do not know if people got killed or how many. While we waited there, they detoured; [I] could see those I knew on horses waving at us to follow. It was not the route we were on but a different one towards the tribal region.

There were two of us and a third one. I led a mule and a horse. Down in the valley many people dressed in Tibetan costume were approaching. We were relaxed believing them to be Tibetans who later turned out to be Chinese soldiers. Chinese soldiers dressed in Tibetan costume had come in pursuit of us.

00:55:38

[The Chinese soldiers] fired in large numbers.

00:55:51

At that point I was leading the horse and driving the mule along with my colleague. His horse was hit on the thigh. Then he ran away. And at that point the mule I was driving was felled. My mule carried provisions like *tsampa*, wheat flour and utensils. The mule was felled there. I acted quickly but the mule could not get up. [I] wanted to remove the *tsampa* and stuff but it was impossible. There was so much firing that it was a cloud of dust. [I] had a very good protective amulet and was not hit by the shots. [To interpreter] Please translate that.

My mule was killed.

00:57:52

[I had protective amulets] worn around the neck. Gunshots did not hit the body but raised dust all around [me].

At that time my mule was already down. [I] was helpless and leaving the provisions, wanted to ride the horse and flee. However, when [I] mounted the horse, it had been hit on the front leg and was injured. It was limping and then bolted from [my] hands. [I] found that it had been hit on the front legs when [we] reached there. There was nothing for me to do but run on [my] feet. [I] looked down and saw many people in black, those that were attired in Tibetan costume. Standing, I fired many times but have no idea if any hit [the Chinese soldiers in Tibetan attire]. [Laughs] [I] did shoot many times and then fled away.

00:58:59

When I reached a mound, our colleagues...they had been blocked by firing from another direction. Our colleagues had been waiting by the road. I reached them and then saw that my horse was injured. It had been hit on the hoof. We were never hit by the gunshots.

[Interpreter concludes interpretation as: At that time all my other groups were captured.]

00:59:57

When I reached there, all of us hugged each other for having escaped death. We were so happy to see each other!

Q: Were they not captured?

#9C: They were not captured but obstructed by the firing Chinese soldiers. They knew they were Chinese and retaliated.

Q: Were they not captured by the Chinese?

#9C: No, [they] were not captured.

01:00:54

Thereafter we fled together on foot for perhaps two or three days. My horse was limping badly and though [I] wished to leave it behind, it kept following. Then [we] advanced and were close to the Indian border. All the *Chushi Gangdrug* [warriors] had abandoned [their] horses and left. All those that preceded us were gone. Horses were abandoned and [people] carried the provisions. Due to the extreme cold horses could not be taken along. There was a hanging bridge between two mountains. Ten men at a time could walk across the bridge between the mountains.

01:02:32

We carried our provisions like *tsampa* and for clothes, were wearing fur coats. [We] carried those and a lot of tea. There was much horse feed lying around. I abandoned my horse there. [I] found half a bag of horse-feed that [I] opened and created two halves. [I] placed these before the horse. It kept its mouth on the feed but did not eat and shed tears. [I] think the horse knew something. It was a very sad moment. [I] touched [my] forehead to the horse and carrying the *tsampa* and other provisions, went away leaving the horse there.

And then we had to cross the bridge. While we were on the middle of the long bridge, 5-6 people said, “Death is imminent wherever [we] go. Going to India would mean death and remaining in Tibet would bring death. [We] are not proceeding further.” And they went back.

01:04:38

[We] had to cross many such bridges. One day while [we] were at a bridge, it suddenly rained and there was a flash flood. A child was washed away. There was so much panic. The child carried a big pack on his back. The child’s parents had crossed to the other side. While he was in the middle of the water [bridge], suddenly a flash flood occurred. I was also in the middle of the river [bridge] but I went back. The child was there and the sudden onset of flood washed [him] away. A little further away was a steep drop and [the child] was swept away. The child’s relatives on the other bank ran up and down crying.

Then [we] walked for many days and after 10 days or so—[I] had walked for 28 days—after 10 days or so, [my] shoes became worn out and [I] was barefoot. On the journey thereafter, there were large numbers of leeches in the hot tribal region. Leeches stung and stuck everywhere [on the body] sucking blood. Everyone became extremely weak.

Initially, we had a good amount of *tsampa* and tea and ate *pa*. [I] had walked for 28 days and on the 25th day or so we ran out of *tsampa*. For two days [we] were hungry. There was no food. [We] carried dried tea, so made and drank tea.

01:06:57

One day [we] came across a very high mountain pass that had to be overcome and there was no *tsampa* that day. It was a high pass. One took 10 steps and then rested. [I] found it very difficult to walk. It was mountain sickness. So struggling like this, [I] went away.

Q: And this is in what area are we in?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: That one is getting close to India.

#9C: Close to India border.

Q: Pemkoe?

#9C: It is Loyul, the region of the tribal people.

Q: Loyul?

#9C: Loyul.

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Now it’s getting really close to Indian border.

Q: Because if you are having leeches that’s not in Tibet.

#9C: Yeah, maybe I think Indian border; it is beyond the Tibetan border.

01:08:53

We were hungry and stayed in the house of a *lopa* ‘tribesman’ at night.

Q: What’s a *lopa*?

#9C: *Lopa* are people, jungle men. [We] were staying in a tribesman’s house but there was nothing to eat. Inside the house was a fireplace with a small pot that contained nothing. They had nothing to eat, so how would we! Perhaps they fished...Some had nothing to eat. And then [we] were in a tribesman’s house. What did we do?

...Yes, [we] went to a tribesman’s house and the tribesman had chickens and pigs. We entered the chicken coop in search of eggs. There were eggs and [we] broke them to eat but they had hatched! We could not eat. Even though [we] were hungry, [we] dare not eat [them].

01:10:43

[We] did not know the tribal language but the men were fighting a lot.

Then one day some of them [Tibetans] wanted to kill an ox belonging to the tribesmen. [They] send me and another person ahead to a tribesman’s house that could be seen saying, “Go in there, boil water and get ready. We will bring meat.” While the others stayed back, the two of us went ahead to the tribal house but a few tribesmen would not allow us in. They were armed with a sword and a dagger each. [They] would not let us in. We threatened [them], as the tribal people were terrified of guns. [We] removed the guns and pretended to take aim. They were terrified of guns. They pulled [us] by the hands and called [us] inside.

Q: I want to ask, you didn’t want to eat the egg because there was some form of life in it but yet you were going to go and kill an ox, which has a lot of life in it. Can you explain?

01:12:59

#9C: One would have to kill many chickens. For some that is the difference. One cannot satiate hunger by eating one egg. One would have to eat several. Killing a big ox would satisfy the hunger of a lot of people. That is one life and not many lives. It looks like that is the difference we thought about.

[We] did not get ox meat...

[Interpreter to interviewee]: [The interviewer] wishes to conclude.

[Interviewee to interpreter]: [She] wants to stop?

[Interpreter to interviewee]: No, no, a little bit later.

#9C: We did not get ox meat and then continued the journey. On the last day, a few tribal girls were carrying balls of rice wrapped in banana leaves. [We] asked them if they were

for sale and they were. We gave them buttons and bullets, which the tribal girls liked. Hence, the 12 of us got to eat rice packed in banana leaves of this length [indicates with hands about 1.5 feet].

01:15:14

The next day we came upon the Indian Government's Military camp where we were given [food] rations.

Q: A very, very powerful exciting story. Thank you.

#9C: [Nods] Thank you.

Q: Because we have to wrap up soon, I wanted to ask a few questions at the end. When you mentioned that you met the Dalai Lama later on in your life, you said you were regretful that you didn't keep your monastic vows. Can you explain to us why when you stopped becoming a monk and what was the reason behind that?

#9C: The reason for renouncing monkhood was that I had this thought. I had signed up to go to America as a logger. Having signed up to go to America and made up [my] mind about going abroad, [I] felt that being a monk would not work out. Many people commented that in going abroad, one would not be able to retain monkhood. However, though I did not feel so in the beginning, there were the comments about one not being able to retain monkhood by going abroad and [I] felt strongly about this. Secondly, there is passion and aggression that do not leave you. However much you may try to think good things, the power of passion takes over and due to that, I lost my monkhood.

Q: We're going to now...*pa-la*, we're going to wrap up the interview but I have just a few simple questions.

#9C: Okay.

Q: *Pa-la*, what do you think is important for the next generation of Tibetan children to understand about Tibet and the Buddha dharma?

01:19:23

#9C: In regard to the Tibetan culture, unlike in Tibet in the past when people did not have education, after coming into exile the younger generation has had the opportunity to get an education. Not just the opportunity for education but His Holiness the Dalai Lama imparts advice time and again, "We must never forget the culture of Tibet." Dharma and culture are the most important and never to be forgotten. His Holiness the Dalai Lama advises frequently about the importance of Tibetan culture. I do not believe that Tibetan culture will decline.

Q: *Pa-la*, thank you so much.

#9C: [Joins palms] Thank you.

Q: I have a final question. If this interview was shown in Tibet or China, would this be a problem for you?

#9C: [I] do not think showing this in China will cause any problem. What I have recounted is what truly happened and witnessed [by me] and [I] have not spoken one word of untruth.

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

#9C: Of course, it is okay.

Q: Thank you for sharing your story with us.

01:22:44

#9C: [Joins palms] Thank you so much. Thank you very much.

Q: I've got one quick question. Considering the Middle Way approach, what can the rest of the world learn from that approach, the way that the Tibetans approach the Chinese Government but also what can we do in the context of the world in these troubled times that we can learn from that approach, from that way?

01:24:22

#9C: That is as proposed by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. His Holiness has taken many things into consideration, in the past and in recent times and finally, under the Chinese...Nothing better than the Middle Way Approach. His Holiness has understood the futility of seeking independence. Therefore, His Holiness has proposed that following the Middle Way Approach is the best solution.

If every Tibetan follows this path, [I] think there will be great mutual benefit for both the Chinese and the Tibetans. Besides, if we follow the protests and policy of the Tibetan Youth Congress...Actually it is right to have two propositions but by pursuing this, there is no acknowledgment from the Chinese side. Therefore, [I] think pursuing the Middle Way Approach will result in great mutual benefit and hence, my hope is that it would be good if [we] continue to follow this approach. [To interpreter] What else can I say besides this?

Q: What can the people learn from it?

#9C: Yes?

Q: The people?

#9C: Majority of the Tibetan people accept the Middle Way as proposed by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. A few do not but one need not pay much attention to a few. One should go by the majority.

01:27:09

Besides [I] believe there are many Chinese scholars who are in agreement to this approach.

Q: Thank you.

#9C: [Joins palms] Thank you very much.

END OF INTERVIEW