

# **Tibet Oral History Project**

**Interview #10N – Kalsang Chime Womatsang  
April 7, 2015**

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# TIBET ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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## INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

1. Interview Number: #10N
2. Interviewee: Kalsang Chime Womatsang
3. Age: 73
4. Date of Birth: 1942
5. Sex: Male
6. Birthplace: Polu, Derge
7. Province: Dhotoe (Kham)
8. Year of leaving Tibet: 1983
9. Date of Interview: April 7, 2015
10. Place of Interview: Hotel Norbu Sangpo, Boudha, Kathmandu, Nepal
11. Length of Interview: 2 hr 24 min
12. Interviewer: Katharine Davies Samway
13. Interpreter: Tenzin Yangchen
14. Videographer: Dhiraj Kafle
15. Translator: Tenzin Yangchen

### **Biographical Information:**

Kalsang Chime Womatsang was born in Derge in 1942. His father was a senior minister in the King of Derge's council. He talks about his studies in Gonchen along with the Prince of Derge, which came to an abrupt end when the Chinese forcefully launched the Democratic Reformation. He gives us an account of how a revolt was planned and implemented. As a young boy, he fled to the mountains with the women and children while the men formed resistance groups.

Kalsang Chime Womatsang gives an account of the multiple encounters with the Chinese, outlining how and where confrontations took place and naming many of the casualties. His father was shot many times by the Chinese while trying to secure an escape route for the townspeople. He describes the Chinese military's huge strength and sophisticated arms, while the resistance forces were not only outnumbered but ran out of weapons and food. His mother was also killed by the Chinese as well as a group of 27 children all killed by grenades launched by the Chinese.

As a teenager Kalsang Chime Womatsang took part in the resistance and he reveals many details of close encounters with the Chinese and how he was eventually captured. He talks about conditions in the prison, torture, solitary confinement, starvation and forced labor. A failed plan to escape from prison led to further torture and solitary confinement. Altogether he was sentenced to 10 years in prison and seven years as a forced laborer.

### **Topics Discussed:**

Kham, childhood memories, education, invasion by Chinese army, resistance fighters, imprisonment, brutality/torture, starvation.

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## **Interview #10N**

**Interviewee: Kalsang Chime Womatsang**

**Age: 73, Sex: Male**

**Interviewer: Katharine Davies Samway**

**Interview Date: April 7, 2015**

Question: Please tell us your name.

00:00:09

**Interviewee #10N: I am Kalsang.**

Q: His Holiness the Dalai Lama asked us to record your experiences, so that we can share your memories with many generations of Tibetans, the Chinese and the rest of the world. Your memories will help us to document the true history, culture and beliefs of the Tibetan people.

**#10N: [Nods]**

Q: Do you give your permission for the Tibet Oral History Project to use your interview?

**#10N: Yes.**

Q: Thank you. Thank you very much for offering to share your story with us. During the interview if you wish to take a break or stop at any time, please let us know.

**#10N: [Nods] Okay.**

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

**#10N: Okay.**

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

**#10N: There will be none.**

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

**#10N: Thank you.**

Q: Thank you. You've had a very interesting life, but first I'd like to start with some information about you.

**#10N: [Nods]**

Q: How old are you?

00:02:35

**#10N: I am 73 years old this year.**

Q: In which year were you born?

**#10N: I am 73, so when was it? [I] am not able to say immediately.**

Q: 1942, I think.

**#10N: It is around that.**

Q: You're two years younger than my husband.

**#10N: Okay.**

Q: And where are you from in Tibet?

**#10N: I am from Derge in Kham, Tibet.**

Q: Is that a town or a village?

**#10N: There was a king in Derge. The King [ruled] Derge. Derge extended to both sides of the Driчу [Yangtze River]. The capital is called Gonchen and was considered large in the old days. [I] wonder if it should be called a town. In general, the population of Derge was 75,000 people long, long ago.**

Q: How many?

**#10N: There were around 75,000. Under the King of Derge were the ministers and my father was one of them.**

Q: Is Derge in...which province is Derge in?

00:04:51

**#10N: In Kham.**

Q: Thank you. Did you marry?

**#10N: Yes, [I] did and my wife passed away. It has been five years.**

Q: Since you married?

**#10N: Yes, since marriage. No, [I] did not mean that it has been five years since marriage. It is five years since my wife passed away.**

Q: Oh, I'm sorry.

**#10N: [Nods]**

Q: Do you have children?

**#10N: [I] have two children, a daughter and a son.**

Q: Do they live here in Nepal with you?

**#10N: My son was recognized as a reincarnate lama by His Holiness the Dalai Lama and is in Sera [Monastery], the great seat of Sera.**

Q: ...which is where?

**#10N: Sera Mey.**

Q: Which place? India?

**#10N: It is [in] Bylakuppe.**

Q: And your daughter?

**#10N: Presently daughter is in America. [She] is in Washington where her husband is working as the director of Radio Free Asia. Daughter's married.**

Q: Washington D.C. or Washington state?

**#10N: D. C.**

Q: Radio Free Asia, is that a Tibetan...?

**#10N: Yes, Tibetan language.**

Q: So your father worked for the king at Derge and you were a child at that time. What memories do you have of your childhood?

00:07:25

**#10N: When I was small and lived in [my] hometown, [I] learned to read and write a little bit. After that I was sent to study in Gonchen where the king lived and studied along with the king of Derge. I have a photograph of us together as little ones.**

Q: Could we see the photograph?

**#10N: [I] have not brought it here.**

Q: Maybe we could see it at a later date if we can?

**#10N: Okay, [you] can.**

Q: What did you study with the king?

**#10N: The learning was Tibetan, grammar and spelling. It was around the year '54 when I was sent to study in Gonchen. No, it was in '53 that [I] was sent. Then in the year '54 His Holiness the Dalai Lama left for China. I can remember that like a dream. I was very small then. There were the aristocrats of the Tibetan Government and a large number of Chinese that escorted [His Holiness]. There was one called Tang Jiun [?] who was said to be the leader of the Tibetan Government. I can recollect this like a dream now.**

Q: And you were there. You saw that?

00:09:50

**#10N: Yes, I saw [the Dalai Lama].**

Q: What do you remember of it? Can you describe it to us, to those of us who weren't there?

**#10N: Okay. At that time we were studying there. When it was said that His Holiness the Dalai Lama was travelling from Lhasa to China, my father and around 10 or so ministers of Derge went to receive [His Holiness]. The Chinese had established an office in Chamdo to launch the liberation movement and its vehicle came to receive [the ministers] in Gonchen. Along with the ministers of Derge, they left for Chamdo to receive [His Holiness].**

**Then [His Holiness and entourage] arrived in Gonchen. We were in the palace. [His Holiness] was invited into the palace. There were Chinese, Tibetans, the aristocrats of the Tibetan Government, the Karmapa and the entire entourage stayed in the palace. A great number of people stayed there. I can remember that. [I] can recall [His Holiness] going [to China] and recall that during the return journey [His Holiness] spent a night or two and then left for Tsechendo. The Karmapa went a month earlier to Palpung and then came to Tsechendo and together [with His Holiness the Dalai Lama] left for Tibet [Lhasa]. I have a dream-like memory of that.**

Q: I just need to clarify. So the Chinese had established an office?

**#10N: At that time?**

Q: Yes.

**#10N: There was. There was a whole lot of Chinese then and many offices at Gonchen. There was a county, a Chinese Derge County, a court and a bank. All of these had been established then.**

Q: Bank?

**#10N: Yes.**

Q: This was in 1954?

00:12:54

**#10N: Yes, yes. It was the year '54.**

Q: As a minister to the king, was your family an aristocratic family? And were a wealthy family?

**#10N: In Kham the term “aristocrat” is not used. One can say something like a “minister.” Generally, in Derge there was the one called *dhunkor* ‘council of ministers.’ Here it may be called aristocrat. There were 30 *dhunkor* families among which we were one. [Senior] among them were *nyerpa* ‘supervisor’ and *chanzo* ‘treasurer’ of which my father was one.**

Q: What was the process by which your father was selected to be a minister to the king?

**#10N: I do not know clearly how the selection process took place. I was young then. Generally one was selected from among the 30.**

Q: How were the 30 selected?

**#10N: The 30 *dhunkor* existed for generations, passed from father to son. The supervisor and treasurer were selected from among them. Hence, my father and his siblings had served as supervisors and treasurers of the King of Derge.**

Q: Was there just one business manager?

**#10N: Yes and my father was the chief person then.**

Q: So the ministers, it was like an inherited responsibility?

**#10N: Yes, it was.**

Q: Your father as the treasurer, did he have to have special training to be the treasurer?

00:15:58

**#10N: I do not know much to talk about it. [I think] one should have knowledge and education and everybody will observe that. [I] do not think there was any special training.**

Q: I'd like to go back to your own childhood and your own education. Who were your teachers?

**#10N: When the Prince of Derge and I studied together the teacher was the abbot of Maya called Kunsang Namgyal; Khenpo ‘Abbot’ Kunsang Namgyal who was later killed by the**

**Chinese. He was the one. In my home in the village it was a lama called Gyurme Loden. He taught the alphabet. It was like that.**

Q: So all of your teachers were monks?

**#10N: Yes, [they] were monks. The one that taught handwriting and spelling was the Secretary of the Chief of the Derge Printing Press.**

Q: Derge Printing Press?

**#10N: Yes, the Secretary of the Printing Press.**

Q: Did you have any brothers and sisters?

00:18:18

**#10N: I have a sister from the same set of parents who is younger to me.**

Q: Did she receive an education?

**#10N: The same [education], the same. It was the same in our hometown, but in Gonchen it was just me.**

Q: How long did your own education last? At what age did they begin until what age?

**#10N: I did not get to study much. The reason being that initially I studied in the hometown for around two or three years along with my siblings. There were many relatives who were not from the same set of parents but we were one family. We studied together there and then I went to Gonchen.**

**In Gonchen [I] studied for only around two years for then the Chinese launched the Revolution of Democracy. The Chinese brought about changes and then I was sent across the Yangtze. After going to the other side, due to the turmoil with the Chinese [I] did not have much opportunity to study. I [might have studied] for 5-6 years. At times I studied for a year and then at times had to flee from the Chinese. In all [I] might have studied for around seven years or so. It was just Tibetan.**

Q: So when you were sent to the other side of the Yangtze, how old were you and what were you doing?

00:20:54

**#10N: How old was I then? Perhaps around 11? Perhaps, yes.**

Q: If you weren't going to school, were you working?

**#10N: After returning home?**

Q: Yes, after [you] came to the other side of the Yangtze.

**#10N: After reaching the other side [I] studied for around two years and then the Chinese launched the Democratic Reforms. [To interpreter] Do you know the Democratic Reforms?**

Q: Yes. Is Derge Gonchen on the other side of the Yangtze?

**#10N: Yes, it is on the other side.**

Q: Oh, [you] were already on the other side to study.

**#10N: Yes. The Chinese brought about changes while I was studying there. When the changes began taking place I was sent back, back home. The Derge royal family was preparing to leave then.**

Q: So what happened then?

**#10N: After I was sent home, the Prince of Derge had submitted an application to the Chinese to go on a pilgrimage to Tibet [Lhasa]. Having received permission, [he] came to Gyamda. From Gyamda [he] did not proceed to Tibet [Lhasa] but made preparations for the whole of Derge to revolt against the Chinese. [He] stayed in Gyamda for nearly 15-20 days making preparations and then came to my hometown, Polu where I was living.**

**All the ministers in the western part of Derge made preparations. Initially, the Chinese stated that they would not launch Democratic Reforms and that the implementation of Democratic Reforms depended on our wishes. Later [they] claimed that it should be implemented without fail. So a meeting was held in Gyamda whether to implement it or not.**

Q: So did your family go to Gyamda with the Prince?

00:24:56

**#10N: My family was living in the hometown, right in the hometown. I was the only one who had been to Gonchen while the rest were living there. My father had to accompany the Prince of Derge while the rest of the family was living in our hometown.**

Q: So you stayed in Polu?

**#10N: Yes, I stayed in Polu. [I] was in Polu but there was no opportunity to study then. Everybody was in a state of chaos. The Chinese were attacking from the other side of the Yangtze and retaliations from this side. Such was the chaos. We, the family members, were left in nooks in the mountains. All the things were brought there. [We] dare not stay much at home. We were in a position to see both the sides of the Yangtze and the Chinese were on the other side. The Chinese continuously attacked from there. It was like that. It was so for many years.**

Q: How old were you at this time?

**#10N: Perhaps 13 or 14.**

Q: Were you involved in the resistance yourself?

00:27:08

**#10N: I was not involved then. We, the *zanyor* members of the family, were on flight.**

Q: All the family members? What's *zanyor*?

**#10N: *Zanyor* means sons, daughters, aged parents and such that were hiding in the mountains. All the men were fighting then.**

Q: So when you are up in the mountains, how did you spend your days? What were you doing?

**#10N: All the children played. We were happy, which is a child's way of thinking because all the friends and relatives had gathered in one place. [We] played and ran here and there. When the shout, "The Chinese have come" was heard, [we] were happy. Strangely, that is how a child thinks. "The Chinese have come" and then the Chinese attacked and killed a few men. Then the Chinese left.**

Q: Did your family and the other members of the community have enough food during this time?

00:29:17

**#10N: [We] did at that time. [We] did at that time. It was much, much later that there was no food. There were many stages. We had food at that time.**

Q: So did you have enough to eat because your family members had taken enough food with you to the mountains or was there enough food in the mountains for you?

**#10N: No, no. All the provisions had been carried to the mountains. [We] had taken all the household stuff to the mountains because otherwise, the Chinese raided the houses. All the stuff had been moved. At that time there was food as [we] were close to home. [We] went back and forth.**

Q: Did you actually see the Chinese raiding homes?

**#10N: The Chinese...now let me narrate everything. When the Derge [royal] family arrived in Gyamda, all the Derge ministers gathered for a meeting. The Chinese announced, "Will you [agree to] launching Democratic Reforms or not? It must be decided whether it is yes or no. If yes, raise the hands."**

Q: The Chinese said so?

00:31:12

**#10N: Yes, the Chinese put such pressure at Gyamda. When pressure was put Chime Gonpo said, "Your hand is your own." Should they not agree to Democratic Reforms that**

day, the Chinese had already surrounded them. So [they] raised [their] hands agreeing to Democratic Reforms. So, [the Chinese] did not make any arrests that day. After around three days everybody fled to the mountains. The western part of Derge was divided into two groups. Khamdo Chime Gonpo and Rari Tenam took one division and moved to the upper part of the western side.

Q: What were the names of the two men?

**#10N: Khamdo Chime Gonpo.**

Q: Chime Gonpo?

**#10N: Yes, and then there was another called Khamdo Kathok.**

Q: Khamdo.

**#10N: Yes, Kathok. [They] belonged to two families, and Rari Tenam.**

Q: Rari Tenam?

**#10N: Yes.**

Q: The western part...

**#10N: They were [to lead] the western division. They were to fight in the upper part and my father, Womatsang Rinam, in the lower region.**

Q: What was your father's name?

**#10N: Womatsang Rinam. It was Rinchen Namgyal but [he] was called Rinam.**

Q: Rinchen Namgyal.

**#10N: Yes, and then Gyangkhar Gonam.**

Q: Gyangkhang?

**#10N: It is Gyangkhar, Gyangkartsang.**

Q: Gyangkhar Gonam.

00:32:41

**#10N: Yes, Gonam and then Shatsa Tobden Dakpa. Then Namchung Woser, Jongkhong Getop. They belonged to one division and were to fight in the lower part of Derge. And then they left Gyamda and came to our place, Polu.**

Q: Did the soldiers arrive?

Q: Did they arrive?

**#10N: Yes, they arrived. As they were on the way [to Polu] believing that there were no Chinese at the place called Keley, they stopped for the night. The next day...That night around 70-80 Chinese vehicles arrived and surrounded them that night. The next morning they began fighting and Namchung Woser was killed then. Our servant called Tashi was killed then.**

Q: Woser?

**#10N: Yes, Namchung Woser. The family name is Namchungtsang. The son's name was Woser.**

[Interpreter to interviewer]: I will translate this.

**#10N: Okay.**

00:36:25

**#10N: Along with Namchung a servant of ours was killed.**

Q: Tashi?

**#10N: Yes.**

Q: How old were you when this happened?

00:36:40

**#10N: I was living in the hometown then and was around 15.**

Q: You mentioned earlier that for a while your life in the mountains for a child was enjoyable. You got to play with children. You were with families and neighbors but then you said things changed. When did they change and how did they change? I'm sorry it's two questions.

**#10N: It was like this. Then after deciding to revolt they came to our hometown. Generally, ours is a remote region, a village. Even if the Chinese attacked, the region is secure. There were places to fight and places to hide. So the Derge sang lived for a year or two in our hometown.**

Q: Derge sang means the king...

**#10N: Yes, the king and all the retinue were living there. Palyul is located on the other side of the Yangtze from our hometown where Democratic Reforms were in progress.**

Q: In Palyul?

00:38:16

**#10N: Yes, in Palyul, ...[not discernible] and Meshay. A few attacks were launched in that direction. I did not join because I was small then. Those like my father and others launched many attacks and seized many weapons from the Chinese. [They] stopped vehicles when the army arrived. [They] stopped army vehicles that passed by and seized weapons. Then the Chinese wanted to have a talk and said [they] would not implement Democratic Reforms but...[not discernible]. A meeting was held then.**

**It is like a dream and I do not know much. [I] heard about this. Such was happening. [I] will cut the story short. Now it is '59 and the Chinese surrounded from every direction, attacking from Palyul, from Gyamda, from Markham. When such attacks took place, the people of Derge...we were in the mountains and decided to flee up the mountain pass but it was blocked. Then there is a valley called Jugeyda through which everyone went.**

Q: What's the name of the place?

**#10N: Jugeyda.**

Q: Jugeyda?

**#10N: Yes, a place called Jugeyda and fled near the Yangtze. There was a lot of fighting then and many were killed. There is no time to recount everything. Then we fled from there.**

Q: From Jugeyda?

**#10N: Yes, fled from Jugeyda and through Tselakha.**

Q: Tsela?

00:40:01

**#10N: Yes, it is called Tselakha.**

Q: Tselakha.

**#10N: When all the people of Derge gathered, there were around 1,500. That is my estimate though I would not know the actual count. Those of us managed to escape but the Chinese captured the majority there. Some were captured and some killed. After we escaped to the other side of the river in Tselakha and fled from there, we had lost everything we owned. There were just the guns and bullets and horses. Everything else was lost. All belongings were lost and many people killed.**

**From then on as we trudged from Tselakha in the night...I have something more to say. At the place called Jugeyda, when everyone had gathered there the bridge was blocked. [The Chinese] fired machine guns from Palyul and blocked the bridge. When people ran across in groups of three, many got killed. Then my father and others went up a secure area and**

fired from there. [They] destroyed all those that were blocking the route. And then we, the *zanyor* were able to go across the bridge.

[Interpreter to interviewee]: I'll translate this.

#10N: Okay.

Q: [You] managed to escape with guns and horses and then?

00:43:55

#10N: Then as we travelled in the night we came across two men. The two men were from Linkashipa. There was a group from Linkashipa from the other side of the Yangtze that had rebelled against the Chinese long ago. There were around 300 people. [The two men] said, "Our camp is established on the other side of the pass. [We] could hear the sound of your gunfire. So we were sent to find out what was happening. Come to our camp." [They] guided us there in the night.

Q: Did you join their resistance group? Did the two resistance groups work together?

#10N: Yes, [we] joined [them].

Q: And then?

#10N: We joined [them] but did not have anything to eat or wear, not even a pot to make tea; everything was lost. So the Linkashipa [group] extended us great help. They had been staying there for a long time. Although they had fled after fighting the Chinese, yet they possessed some things that [they] gave us. After that many meetings were held between the Linkashipa and Derge people. Following the meetings an army camp was set up and rules formulated. Then commanders, colonels, captains and such were appointed. "We will go to Shotalhosum as a group." And then it was decided how to make the journey with some spies going ahead and some spies remaining behind and keeping the *zanyor* in the middle.

[We] left after a few days and encountered the Chinese twice along the way. Chinese planes flew overhead every day. It seems the planes were watching everything, where we were going, what we were doing and relaying information. However, since the Linkashipa and we formed a large group, perhaps [the Chinese] thought it was not easy. Then [the Chinese] collected a large army from everywhere and were pursuing us from a distance. They informed the [Chinese] army from Markham to slow down or those from Gyamda to come speedily and were pursuing us in this manner.

Then we reached the place called Dayab Sershung where there were no Chinese. Though Chinese planes flew overhead there were no Chinese who appeared. "Let's halt here for a few days as there is good grass for the horses to feed and [we] can replenish the food stock." There were many nomads in Dayab Sershung from whom one could obtain grains and *tsampa* 'flour made from roasted barley.' "[We] should remain for a few days." Then [we] stayed there.

00:47:22

The next day when dawn broke...The Chinese had planned everything while we halted there that night. Our spies had not gone very far, just nearby. Artilleries had been set up on all the hills. As dawn broke there was the sound of *bawk, bawk*. We had pitched a tent that was torn away. Some of my family members were killed in the firing. Everybody stood up. Holding guns in their hands the Chinese came crawling up the pasture in groups of around 10.

Set up upon a hill nearby were machine guns and artilleries. There was nowhere for us to run. From up there [the Chinese] could fire any number of shots at the escape route. "There is no way [for escape] without capturing this spot. Not one person can escape. This must be captured." Hence, my father, a Linkashipa [man] called Lingtuk and one called Dhotay Bhupop charged towards that direction.

Q: Dhotay Bhupop? Bhu?

#10N: Yes, the name was Bhupop as he was plump. He was called Bhupop. Then there was another called Dhotay Chisup. He too charged there. As [they] charged...the Chinese had constructed an enclosure with rocks. It was said that even as they fired [the Chinese] returned fire. As [they] reached the enclosure, my father was brought down. They charged there even as the Chinese were firing because without capturing this spot, none of the large number of *zanyor* could have escaped. So [they] charged there and my father was felled. My father was shot around 20 times. There was Lingtuk from Linkashipa who was the oldest then. He was around 50-60 years of age. Not yet 60, maybe around 50. [He] had white hair but was very agile. He was killed there. He had a *lajor* in his hand that he flung.

Q: What's *lajor*?

00:49:31

#10N: Bomb, hand grenade. Both of them were killed along with Dhotay Chisup. After they were killed, everybody arrived there. Around 30-40 Chinese were killed there. Then everyone went down the valley. I had a gun at this time. I had a gun. I went up there and found my father injured. Father had been shot here [indicates two spots on left wrist], here [indicates right arm], here [indicates right shoulder] and everywhere here [indicates left belly region]. The intestines were hanging out. They pushed the intestines back and stitched [him] up using a person's hair.

Q: Hair?

#10N: Yes, and stitched [him]. Then [we] put father on a horse. The Chinese were there and I had a gun then. We fired and then were able to wrest the spot. Then most of the *zanyor* managed to escape. However, many people surrendered at this place believing there was no escape as the Chinese shelled from the planes. Shells and bombs dropped from the planes. Then there were the cavalry and infantry. There was fierce fighting that day and we probably lost around 700-800 men. As for the Chinese, a huge number was killed. The Chinese came crawling and we fired on them, but do not know how many died and how many did not.

[Interpreter to interviewee]: Shall I interpret this?

**#10N: Okay.**

Q: How many of our people died?

**#10N: Around 700-800 got killed. It was later said that 700-800 were killed.**

Q: A large number of Chinese were also killed?

**#10N: A large number were killed, much more than us. Maybe around a thousand Chinese were killed.**

Q: So the Chinese had very developed military. They had cavalry; they had infantry; they had planes. What kind of armaments did you Tibetans have?

00:55:44

**#10N: Everyone did possess weapons, but there were not many machine guns and such. There were three large machine guns and the rest were regular guns. However, there was a fair amount of ammunitions then. Much later, after killing the Chinese we seized their guns. Most of the people used these.**

Q: So before you tell us the next part of your story, I want to just clarify something. So these events that you have been telling us about, were you part of the resistance?

**#10N: Yes, now [I] was in it. [I] was with the resistance from Sershung onwards.**

Q: Sershung?

**#10N: Yes. Since my father got injured I was in the resistance.**

Q: How old were you when you joined the resistance?

**#10N: I was around 16 then.**

Q: Did your father survive the injury?

00:57:50

**#10N: Oh, no. There was no chance of survival. Just imagine. Machine guns had been fired from within the enclosure where there were around 50-60 Chinese. Without capturing this spot none of us could have escaped. We were around 2,000 people. None of the *zanyor* could have escaped as the Chinese held their post and fired. Seeing no other alternative, they charged upon it. They fired from their guns and flung hand grenades that scattered [the Chinese] but my father was killed. Dhotay Chisup was killed. Lingtu was killed. The rest managed to capture the spot after the three had been killed. A large number of Chinese had been killed. After hand grenades were flung upon the enclosure and exploded, the**

**Chinese fled and the spot was captured. When we went there, the Chinese were running away and we fired. My father was injured.**

Q: I'm so sorry. Did you see this? Did you see your father being killed?

**#10N: Of course, [I] saw it. I was just behind, following father. When father fell, I held him up. Everything, all of this [indicates frontal area] was red with blood. The firing was from machine guns and not artillery shelling. That day they were bombing from the planes and firing machine guns.**

Q: Were you injured at that time?

01:00:57

**#10N: At that time I was shot twice on the thigh and two red water-filled spots developed. However, except for the holes in the pants, the flesh was not touched.**

Q: It sounds like your father was very brave, the other men too.

**#10N: Yes. The two were killed on the spot but my father did not expire immediately. He was injured and taken away on a horse. Then there was cross firing and our servant called Chala Dorjee was killed.**

Q: Chala?

**#10N: Yes, Dorjee. [He] was called Dorjee. The family name was Chalatsang. He was killed and then there was one called Sha Phuntsok who was killed. That day we lost many men. There were many casualties from other families, too.**

Q: How did this affect you? How did it...?

01:02:44

**#10N: I felt my heart break. Looking at father there was no chance of survival. However, father pressed his lips and said, "It's okay. It's okay." Following that we once again took flight. Many had been captured there and many killed. That night we managed to flee and at dawn, at a flat ground...There were nothing to eat. We camped and boiled some water.**

**Some men had been sent out as spies: Telpatsang's Jamyang Tsephel, and Dhongtse Kargay who's here [in Kathmandu], then Talha Tenzin, who was our servant, and Tagyu Ridho, who had come here earlier. They had been left as spies. Just as the tea was about to boil, we heard the sound of gunfire. As we looked up, the spies were running down. After running a short distance they lay down and started firing upwards. The Chinese who possessed many machine guns were shooting continuously. That day between the spies and them, the Chinese were quicker. The Chinese were faster and the spies got left behind. A little distance away my late father was once again hit by gunfire in the intestine.**

Q: Once again?

**#10N: Yes, after the injury. Then a little further away Telpatsang's Jamyang Tsephel was killed. Telpatsang's Nyapa was killed there. Then our servant Pochung Gondhe was killed. Eight or nine men were killed there.**

Q: Where was this place?

**#10N: The place was in Markham called Marlhayung or something.**

Q: Mar...

**#10N: No, it was not in Markham. It was in Gonjo. It is called Marlhayung.**

Q: Marlhayung?

**#10N: Yes, Marlhayung.**

Q: Many people were killed in Marlhayung and father was once again hit...

01:05:51

**#10N: And then we fled. Many of our able men were out there as spies, among whom some were killed and some got left behind. Then we, the *zanyor* fled—I do not know the name of the place—and Chinese cavalry appeared at the end of a valley to lay in wait for us. There were no able or older men, all were left behind. We were just the *zanyor*. The likes of us were the ones. We were 16, 17, 18 year olds, old men, and women with guns who were very fierce. The cavalry came galloping. There was a hillock and if they reached it, there was no way for our escape. We had to reach there and so we raced.**

**Once there, leaving the horses, we lay down and took aim while the [Chinese] horses came rushing. We fired and when the horses got hit, they raised their tails like this [makes rotating movement with index finger] and then the horse fell. In the firing all the men fell on the ground but [we] did not know how many were killed and how many not. We were able to hold them off that evening and the *zanyor* fled through the valley.**

**There were 4-5 girls with guns who had been forced to fight when able men were gone. Among them was a girl from Linkashipa who was around 18 or 19 years old then. She was very fierce and had a very good aim. Then there was another girl from Linkashipa who surrendered [to us] from the Chinese bringing seven guns of the Chinese.**

Q: Surrendered to the Chinese?

**#10N: Long ago the Chinese had taken her to school and then she was inducted into the Chinese army. [She] had come to fight us and fled from there taking the Chinese guns. All her family had gone. She was Tsewang Lhamo. They were with [us] then. We resisted and succeeded in stopping the cavalry. Then from there we...**

Q: [You] succeeded in stopping?

**#10N: Yes.**

Q: The cavalry was stopped and then?

01:09:23

**#10N: Then we escaped from there. My father was very seriously injured. Then we arrived at a valley. My father asked all the people of Derge to assemble and said, “You must all go in the direction of the north towards Shotalthosum.” The King of Derge was there then. “Escorting the King, you have to go and so shall my entire family. I know my condition and am alive just for today or tomorrow. By lingering around me, you cannot fight and you cannot flee and that will result in everyone being destroyed. So except for a helper or two, I do not need anybody with me. You have to go.” [He] requested this of Gyangkhar Gonam, Shatsa Tobden Dakpa and...[not discernible] Tulku. “Please go and do not care about me.”**

**They replied, “We cannot leave you. We will either die together or succeed together. Even if everyone gets killed, we are not going.” “You cannot do that. You have appointed me the Commander and this is my order. Every one of you should go away. [I] do not want anyone to stay with me. I am alive just for today or tomorrow. [Becomes emotional] You do not have to stay, not one person. You are in a position to save [yourself]. Escort the King and leave. I have the authority as the Commander.”**

01:11:47

**“Please leave. I need only one or two men to care for me. I am alive just for today or tomorrow. Therefore, if everyone stays back for my sake, nobody can be saved. So you have no choice. You appointed me as Commander and it is my order that everyone leave.” So it was decided then. As this conversation was going on, an airplane flew and dropped many flyers that said, “You must surrender. If you surrender, [we] will enforce the policy of Not Doing Four Things.”**

Q: Yes?

**#10N: The Chinese said that [we] have to surrender. [They] knew we were desperate. “Surrender and [we] will enforce the policy of Not Doing Four Things. They dropped flyers from the plane.**

Q: What policy would [the Chinese] enforce?

**#10N: The Chinese would implement the policy of Not Doing Four Things: will not imprison, will not execute, will not subject to assault.**

Q: Will not imprison...

**#10N: Yes, that was deception. That was nothing but deception.**

Q: Will not imprison...

**#10N: Yes.**

Q: And then?

01:12:57

**#10N: Will not assault...**

Q: Assault?

**#10N: Assault meaning incredible beating that was normally done.**

Q: And then?

**#10N: That [the Chinese] will not do these four. That is four, right?**

Q: No.

**#10N: Will not imprison, will not assault, will not execute. Yeah, something like that.**

01:14:05

**And then everyone remarked, “Never mind the boys, even if girls are the only survivors, we will never surrender to the Chinese. We will proceed to Shotalthosum as advised.” Then [the group] was sent away. All our family members were sent. I have a younger sister who was 14 or 15 then. I had many other relatives.**

**[To interpreter] You know Kargey’s wife? They were there. All our family members were sent. My late mother refused to go saying she would not leave until father breathed his last. I stayed back. He asked for two people but they would not heed and five stayed behind. [Each of the helpers] remarked, “I want to stay” and would not leave. We stayed back and from then on they [larger group] left towards Shotalthosum. We remained as father was injured.**

Q: Went to Shotalthosum?

**#10N: The others went towards Shotalthosum while we remained there.**

Q: What’s the name of the place?

**#10N: It is a place in Markham called Sungwakhatoe. Sungwakhatoe.**

Q: The name of the place?

**#10N: Yes.**

Q: Sungwa...?

**#10N: Yes, Sungwakhatoe.**

Q: Sungwakhatoe.

**#10N: Yes.**

[Interpreter to interviewee]: I will interpret this.

**#10N: Okay.**

01:16:23

**Then they were gone while my parents, I and the few helpers remained. Father was gravely injured with no hope of survival. While the Derge group left, the Linkashipa group was still there. They numbered around 300 and were on the other side of the pass. The Linkashipa's Commander was called Gyapon Chime Dorjee. The family was called Gyapontsang. As we hid there, he sent some people to seek us out [with the message], "Move to our camp." "We shall remain here for it is just a matter of a day or two." But around 10 of their sturdy soldiers arrived with a stretcher and carried father to their camp.**

Q: Stretcher?

**#10N: Yes, a stretcher made using wood and carried [father]. Then Chime Dorjee himself checked my late father's wounds. The wounds had festered and formed pus. There was a gash from here to here [indicates left belly region], from here to here [indicates left shoulder] and from here to here [indicates right elbow region]. He cleaned the pus with cotton and sucked out the pus with his mouth and threw it out. He inserted a cotton thread into the wounds and moved it within. Then applied medicine.**

**[He] did so much. Such things are difficult even from a son. [He] did so much. [He] treated [father] incredibly well. And then both of them had a talk. My father said, "Please do not do such things. There is nothing left to save [me] as [I] am just alive for today or tomorrow. Please do not do it." He might have said something like look after our wellbeing.**

Q: Meaning your mother and you?

01:18:32

**#10N: Yes, to look after our wellbeing, as the rest of the Derge group was gone. Then my father passed away in two or three days. Following Father's passing away...The Derge group had gone in the direction of Shotalthosum. "Let us go there," said our servant Dasha Losar who was the older one and a fine man. He was my father's friend and main confidante. "Let us follow our Derge group." However, Gyapon Chime Dorjee would not let [us] go saying, "Father has spoken to me before breathing his last to look after your wellbeing. Hence, if the Linkashipa succeed in escaping, you shall and if it fails, you shall too."**

Q: Chime Dorjee said that "Your father has asked me to look after you"...

**#10N: Yes, at the time of [his] death.**

Q: ...“and if we succeed so shall you.” And then?

01:21:15

**#10N:** And then we made up our mind to remain with Chime Dorjee following Father’s demise. And after that we...I will narrate the incidents briefly. Then [we] reached the region of Markham called Sungwakhatoe...no, not Sungwakhatoe. Dothigong. [We] arrived at Dothigong. No, it is not Dothigong either. [We] reached Shisongong. When we reached Shisongong there was not much grain left as everything had been consumed. So taking the *dzi* ‘special beads made of agate stone,’ corals and the little money, we went to acquire grain from the villagers of Shisongong. [We] were men from three families that went there, including me.

One could see the other side of the Yangtze where the Chinese were. It seems the Chinese had been observing us through binoculars. That day we went there, purchased grain by paying *dzi* and corals and readied the *tsampa* to be transported back the next day. The next morning as [we] opened the door; there was the sound of gunshots. The Chinese had surrounded. Our horses were in the stable and there was no chance of getting them.

We did not have anything to eat and tied the sacks of *tsampa* to our waist and told each other, “Let us make a dash. Otherwise, the Chinese will capture [us]. Let us run whether it is death or success.” There was one called Tashi Rabten of Janatsang who had a pistol. I was behind him with a machine gun. Then [we] ran. Along the route they [Chinese] had laid a wire with mines that would explode should we step on them. [I] was told to leap and there was no explosion. A little further away, we started exchanging fire. Except for one person that was injured, we managed to escape.

Q: One man was injured at this place and then?

01:24:54

**#10N:** We just about managed to escape. Though a large quantity of grain had been purchased [we] could not bring them. From there we moved towards Ba and then from Ba to Dothigong and reached the river Salween through Dayab Lachu. [We] had to get boats ready at the Salween.

Q: Salween?

**#10N:** Yes, at the Salween and then the Chinese started pursuing us. We had another encounter with the Chinese during which there were three dead. Many had been killed from their side. The spies had remained to block the Chinese march as we had moved forward. When we reached the Salween...we had three boats that were readied as night fell. The spies had been holding ground at a distance. The Chinese had had an encounter with the spies and then they had taken a detour around a hill and had reached us ahead [of the spies]. As we readied the boats to cross that night, the Chinese began to fire. They possessed a certain flare that lit up [the night] like day and then started firing.

There were many people then that started to jump into the boats in panic. Chime Dorjee said, “Do not do this. Everybody is similar with a life each. Whoever is ordered to should

go.” Chime Dorjee pointed to those that were to enter the three boats. Except for a nun who was hit the rest reached the other side and then continued over a pass in the night.

01:26:41

Some of us men—the spies had been left behind—waited there. The Chinese had arrived ahead [of the spies] and swarmed about in the nearby village. When dawn broke and the sun rose, as we looked up, [we] saw the spies coming. They had no knowledge that the Chinese had already arrived and descended grandly. The Chinese saw them and moved here and there on the mountain to hold ground. We tried calling out but [the spies] were unable to hear. Then we fired at them yet they would not understand and continued to walk directly. And then the Chinese fired at them. Many got killed there. Many of our people got killed including a servant of ours who was elderly. He was around 60 years old called Gongdu Palden.

Q: And then what happened?

01:28:50

**#10N: Where was I?**

Q: [The group] managed to escape from the Salween.

**#10N: [The group] escaped from the Salween. At the Salween many of our spies were injured and many killed. At the Salween was a man called Reting Zinga who was also like us [an escapee].**

Q: Reting?

**#10N: Reting.**

Q: Zinga?

**#10N: Reting Zinga.**

Q: Zinga?

**#10N: [He] was called Zinga, a tall man with around 200 soldiers. They were very good to me. It was Losar ‘Tibetan New Year’ of the year ’60. It was the year ’60. We halted there for two to three days and then we went to the place where the spies had had the encounter. Some were killed and the injured were lying there. We brought the injured towards the Salween. Our elderly servant called Palden could not walk and the Chinese were pursuing us. [We] left him in the care of a family with some *dzi* and requested, “If peaceful times return we will come back. If not please take good care of him. Eventually we will come back.” And then we arrived at the place called Tongyul.**

01:30:16

Arriving at Tongyul Chime Dorjee said, “We will soon reach Zayul. Zayul is close to India. We must move very carefully. It is better for us not to have any encounters with the

Chinese if possible. We must succeed in escaping. There are not many ammunitions left.” Then we proceeded directly and came upon a muleteer driving around 30 mules. Behind him were a few Chinese, 6-7 Chinese. Everybody started firing immediately killing six Chinese while one escaped. Though a large number of shots were fired at him, but due to some kind of destiny, he could not be killed. He was hit on one of the arms. At every shot he rolled over and as the dust settled he was up.

He ran to the place called Lopanang where was established Zayul’s main [Chinese] army base and informed that Chime Dorjee was coming. It seems he was very famous there. [The Chinese army] telephoned Chamdo and back up arrived from many other army camps around Zayul. Then at the place called Tongyul we found the bridge was blocked. There was no other route but this. So we ran over the bridge and around 16 of our people got killed. The rest managed to escape after losing the 16. In Zayul we encountered [the Chinese] every other day. Then we went up the snow but could not make headway in the snow and were forced to return.

Q: Mount Kailash?

#10N: No, not Mt. Kailash. There are many snow-covered mountains in Zayul. Descending lower down would mean reaching Burma. Assam was located on the upper side. Now [we] were in Zayul.

Q: Assam and Burma?

01:32:25

#10N: Yes. [We] had reached that place. There were many children that could not walk and could not be carried. Many children died during the encounters. One day we climbed up the snow-covered pass but could not advance and returned. There was no food for the children and the Chinese were in pursuit. Everyone discussed, “The Chinese will not harm the little children. Perhaps they may keep [them]. Taking [them] along like this will kill all the children. Let us leave all the children here.” All the children were left together. There were also two injured adults that had been shot in the knees. We left them too and proceeded.

That night they had made a fire, which the Chinese had observed. However, the Chinese did not dare approach them immediately. A little later, around midnight the Chinese flung hand grenades and killed—there were 27 children—all the 27 children, except a few that were injured. The next day when we came back after the unsuccessful attempt over the mountain pass, some children were without an arm, some without a leg and some headless.

One of the children’s fathers was among us who was called Rinchen of the Chadhatsang family. He said his son who was 3 years old was missing. [We] looked everywhere and found him in a rotten pine tree. One of the legs was missing. He [the father] removed his clothes and wrapped [the child]. Gasping a few times, [the child] passed away. There were 27 children who were killed in that manner. We suffered so much.

Q: So what happened next?

01:37:45

**#10N:** From then on...now we had nothing to eat, nothing to eat. We continued to walk and after some time found a few horses and mules that we captured, killed and ate their meat. If not in the morning, [we] encountered the Chinese in the afternoon and if not in the afternoon, [we] encountered [them] in the night. In this manner [we] continued to fight each other and kill each other. There used to 300 people and the number grew less and less. The Linkashipa people had suffered immensely while on the other side of the Yangtze and they knew what the Chinese would do if captured. [They] exclaimed, “Leave aside men, even if women are the only survivors, [we] will never surrender. [We] would rather be killed.” So not one sought to surrender.

At every attack, we became separated and could not regroup. Chime Dorjee and a few others got separated [from us]. They’d reached a place called Tithang in Zayul. Here Chime Dorjee...fought for many days and nights. Finally...ammunitions could not harm Chime Dorjee—they [non-Tibetan interview team] will not accept that ammunitions cannot harm one. Finally, he ate all the blessed pills in his amulet and threw [the amulet] in the river. Immersing half his body in water, he fired from his machine gun and finally after firing from the machine gun, he went underwater. He had a *chanzo* ‘business manager’ called Kapi who joined him [in the river].

Q: And died in the water?

**#10N:** Died in Zayul.

Q: Why did [he] do it?

**#10N:** Because [Chime Dorjee] would never surrender to the Chinese and there was no way out.

Q: Chime Dorjee passed away and...?

01:40:29

**#10N:** Yes, Chime Dorjee passed away. After trudging for a night we were once again surrounded by the Chinese while we had been sleeping. [We] had boiled and eaten horsemeat and fallen asleep for a while. As soon as [we] woke up the Chinese started firing. We grabbed our guns and fled. I had a colleague called Sonam Samdup who was around 19 years old then. He was older. He held a gun like this [indicates right hand]. I had drawn mine. As he was holding the gun a Chinese suddenly appeared there. Coming face to face with the Chinese, [he] was unable to fire. [He] caught [the Chinese] like this [indicates hugging] and they started grappling. He threw the Chinese underneath.

Then the Chinese rolled over and came on top. [I] tried to shoot but they were moving and [I] might hit him [Sonam Samdup]. Then I quickly put the gun down. I had a knife of this size [indicates a gap of around six inches between hands], caught [the Chinese] from behind, stabbed and pulled out [the knife]. The Chinese died. There was a river nearby. We

held hands—it was a very large river—and managed to go across. My late mother and others were waiting a little distance away. And then we...is it better to sum up now?

Q: And then to sum up, your mother was waiting a little distance away...

01:42:44

**#10N: Yes, mother was waiting a little distance away and then we...waiting a little while everyone that had scattered regrouped. Now we were down to 18 people. There was one Chinese among the 18 people. The reason for the Chinese presence was that [he] was in the Chinese army. [He] was a leader in the Chinese army. He had surrendered to Reting Zinga and we had been told to take him along. He fought the Chinese. Poor thing, he was with us.**

**We continued to travel eating mule meat along the way. My late mother refused to eat it and had nothing in [her] stomach. We descended from the Chemakara pass in Zayul and could no longer walk. [We] rested for a while. It was nighttime. Around daybreak it was said, “We should make a move because the Chinese are close by.” As [I] got up [I] saw images of heads covered in grass moving about. [I] looked closely and realized [they] were Chinese who had encircled [us]. Someone said, “The Chinese have surrounded! Now we have to fight as there is no way out.” We exchanged fire. There were not many bullets left. It was said, “Before we run out of bullets, let us make a dash whether [we] succeed or not. Otherwise, [we] could be caught alive. It is better to die than be caught.”**

**[We] stood up and our servant Dasha Losel who was father’s best friend was hit and fell. After he fell, the one called Sonam Samdup jumped over a pine tree and called out to me, “Come, come.” Once behind the pine he was slain. Then as I leaped over the pine tree—my mother was following—mother fell. I dropped my gun and immediately held up mother and asked, “Mother, what happened?” Mother was breathing but could not speak. I reached for my gun and started firing at the Chinese who were approaching. There was cross firing.**

**After sometime I sort of woke up from sleep. The Chinese had tied me with a rope [puts hands behind back]. I was hit here [gestures off camera] and everything had burst open. All this area [indicates lower front] of [my] shirt was burnt. [I] was shot twice in the thigh and could not walk. [I] sort of woke up and found mother slain right there. Our father’s friend was killed and there were many casualties on the Chinese side. Around eight Chinese had been killed. There were eight Chinese killed nearby and many...**

**We were bound with ropes. Pointing at the bodies of the Chinese they said, “Look, you have killed [them].” [The Chinese] beat us but [I] did not feel any pain. Mother was killed there and me captured. The Chinese [fighting on our side] was injured. He was captured. A boy from Nyarong who was injured was also captured. [He] was shot here [points to neck] and died around an hour later. It was then that I was captured.**

Q: So after you had been tied up, what happened to you then?

01:47:30

**#10N: [I] was bound with a rope and then put over a mule that they used to transport artillery like this [bends forward with arms stretched out together] bound here [at the hands] and at the legs. I was told to walk but refused saying, “Kill [me] here.” One just does not die easily. So they bound, put [me] over a horse and took [me] to Tsethang. At Tsethang [I] was interrogated and assaulted and different things done. Actually I was young then.**

Q: How old were you?

**#10N: I was around 17, 17 or 18 perhaps, maybe 16 or 17.**

**And at the time they had captured me, [the Chinese] made [me] stand like this [stands erect] against a tree and bound [me to a tree] with a rope. Then lit a fire in front, a huge fire such that [I] started sweating. [The Chinese] did this for long periods that I nearly burnt and lost consciousness. Then they sprinkled water. Such was done many times. [I] was assaulted many times such that it is impossible to narrate everything.**

[Interviewer to interpreter]: He’s told you other...[not discernible] that it is too long to relate?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: It’s too long to narrate everything, about the beatings and everything.

Q: Why do you think the Chinese didn’t kill you given that they had killed so many other people like in the villages and the children in the mountains?

01:50:09

**#10N: I was put in jail.**

Q: Why do you think they didn’t kill you rather than...?

**#10N: [Interrupts] Why I [was not slain] with the 25 children that were killed?**

Q: No. The Chinese had killed many children, killed many people, killed in the villages, killed resistant fighters.

**#10N: Right.**

Q: However, why didn’t they kill you but put you in jail? [They] could have killed [you].

**#10N: Yes. It would have been better for me to be killed. It would have been [better] to be killed at once instead of having to undergo the suffering of so many parents and the suffering of all those that died and survived. I could not kill myself. I do not know, perhaps they wanted to continue to torture me.**

Q: Do you think they wanted to torture you to get information or just to be cruel or some other reason?

01:51:30

**#10N: Yes, yes, it could be that.**

Q: Where were you in prison?

**#10N: After being captured in Zayul, [I] was in many different prisons along the route. The longest was in Chamdo, in Chamdo, in the prison in Chamdo.**

Q: Could you tell us about your experience in prison, please?

**#10N: Okay. Initially, I was imprisoned in the Chamdo Gonam. At Chamdo Gonam...there were no prisons as such constructed by the Chinese then.**

Q: Chamdo Gonam?

**#10N: In the Chamdo Monastery. *Gonam* means monastery. All the assembly halls of monasteries served as prisons. The assembly hall where we were imprisoned was called the Sheching Dhukhang of Chamdo. It was the biggest one.**

Q: Shiching?

**#10N: Shiching Dhukhang.**

Q: Shiching Dhukhang?

**#10N: Yes, *dhukhang* means *lhakhang* ‘temple.’ Shiching Dhukhang. It could house around a thousand people.**

Q: Was that monastery filled with prisoners?

01:53:14

**#10N: It was filled with prisoners, filled with prisoners. Let me tell you. There were many *dhukhang* in the monastery all of which became prisons. I was in Shiching Dhukhang. Then there were Dhukhanang, Songdhue Shatsa, Yidhamkhang and such *dhukhang* that were filled to the brim with prisons. A great number of prisoners died because [they] were not provided with food then. Breakfast was a tiny quantity of *tsampa* along with a mixture of hot and cold water. The same was given in the evening.**

**So most of the people died from starvation. How men died was...in the morning there was a group of around 10 people that checked each prison for the number of dead. The bodies had to be brought out and kept together in a room. At times there were 20 bodies and at times 25 bodies, all within a day. It was Sunday or some day when all the corpses were taken and thrown beyond the monastery of Chamdo.**

Q: In one day?

**#10N: Yes, in one day. It was Sunday or so. Otherwise, the bodies were collected for a week in a room.**

Q: Could you describe what a day in prison was like for you?

01:55:33

**#10N: Okay. The Shiching Dhukhang was where I was initially confined. Later [I] was put in Sithokten.**

Q: Where?

**#10N: Sithokten.**

Q: Sithokten?

**#10N: Yes. Here it was a prison that they had constructed. It was very strict.**

Q: By the Chinese?

**#10N: Yes, the Chinese.**

Q: And then?

**#10N: After getting up in the morning one must exercise, exercise even though there was nothing to eat. Some fell and died even as they were exercising. And then one must jog. At times there were meetings. During the meetings some people were shackled and put in tiny rooms. There were dark rooms for confinement. They were confined there.**

Q: During the meetings?

**#10N: Yes. Stating that the person had broken some rules, [he] was scolded and instantly handcuffed, shackled at the feet and confined to a tiny room. Such things used to be done.**

01:57:15

**At that time there were around 10,000 prisoners in Chamdo that had been captured from various regions. Then judgment was delivered here sentencing [a person] to 20, 15, 10, 14 or 18 years. Everyone who was sentenced thus was taken away to Pondha, driven to the airport at Pondha. Those sentenced to life in prison and execution after two years were taken to Tamo.**

Q: Those sentenced to 20, 15 years were taken to Pondha?

**#10N: Yes, taken to the place called Pondha.**

Q: Those to be executed...

**#10N: Those to be executed in two years and those sentenced to life in prison were taken to Tamo.**

Q: I see, life in prison.

**#10N: Yes.**

Q: To Tamo?

**#10N: Yes, and those of us were detained at Chamdo at ...[not discernible].**

Q: How long were you in prison?

01:58:49

**#10N: I was sentenced to an actual prison for 10 years. I was in prison for 10 years and seven years as *lemey rukhak* ‘working group,’ that was not an actual prisoner and could go out a little bit. Seven years of this. Seventeen years. My youth was spent in prison.**

Q: You were sentenced to 10 years for what?

**#10N: [I] was accused of killing Chinese, of having rebelled and also that my attitude while in prison was not good. We tried to escape once and failed. Then [I] suffered incredibly being handcuffed and shackled at the feet. [I] was handcuffed like this [keeps hands behind back] and confined in a dark room for many months. [The Chinese] delivered the 10-year sentence on account of these.**

Q: How long were you confined to the room?

**#10N: I was kept in darkness for six months, and handcuffed like this [holds hands in front] for two years.**

Q: In prison, amongst the Tibetans, was there any organizing amongst the prisoners?

02:01:01

**#10N: It happened. Which is why this incident [of trying to escape] occurred. How it happened went like this. There were men belonging to a *toptsang* ‘communal eating group.’ We were four men. The four discussed, “It is no use living under the Communists. If [we] succeed in escaping, that is good. In case [we] do not and get killed, there will be no regrets. One cannot survive like this.” So we planned to escape.**

**“If [we] escape, how do we do it? Will we be successful?” “Perhaps 70% [chance we] will not succeed. However, it is better to die than remain like this.” Such discussions took place. “How shall we plan?” We used to be provided with a little amount of *tsampa*. Every day we saved half of it, which we were to take along [during the escape journey]. We used to be driven to work with five guards in the front and five at the back. “Let us stay together either in the front or at the back. Then [we] should grab the guns from the guards, shoot them at once and flee regardless of whether [we] live or die.”**

So we had saved *tsampa* that was packed in a sleeve cut off from a shirt and wrapped it around here [indicates waist]. One day we decided, “It will be today.” Among our guards that day were two Tibetans and a Chinese who was very good to the prisoners. “It is them today. We cannot kill them. They treat us well, let us not kill [them].” There were many bad people [prison guards]. “Let us do it when they are the guards.” So we postponed that day. Another day when [we] were going to do it... There was a senior person among us called Yangi Jamyang who said he could not go that day, as he was sick. In this way [the escape] got postponed. One day...

02:03:16

All men belonging to the same *toptsang* used to be questioned. If you two are friends, you will be taken separately to be questioned. “What did you talk about? What plans do you have?” One day the four of us were separated and put in different cells. They [Chinese] had become suspicious. The senior man was questioned. First the senior was handcuffed and shackled at the feet and confined to a room. It seems he did not reveal anything.

We had taken a vow that even if our necks were being cut, we would not say anything. Then once again they asked the senior man saying, “The others have spilled everything which is why they are not in shackles. You are in shackles because you do not speak up. If you want the shackles to be removed...It is okay for you to reveal, as you have not carried out anything. This was just an idea.” Then he revealed [the escape plan].

After he revealed everything, we were assaulted a great deal such that we suffered hell on earth. [We] were suspended with ropes and electric rods used. When the electric rod is touched here the heart is pulled away and the person drops to the ground. However, we never accepted [the escape plan]. The three of us never accepted because [we] had taken a vow. Such things happened.

Q: When you were in solitary confinement, when you were in the dark room, I know that that was a very awful experience, what did you do to survive it?

02:07:25

**#10N:** Most of the Chinese in similar situations committed suicide. It was very difficult for me. For instance, there were innumerable lice crawling over. The lice too seemed to be disdainful. “What do [I] do? How can [I] spend life...” If my hands were free [I] would have hit out or if there was a bomb, [I] wished everything would explode. [I] contemplated a great deal. I had many colleagues in prison that used to advise that one must think broadly, that the dharma is very important, that if one believes in the law of causes and effects and be truthful, there is always a way out in the end.

[I] reflected over these and thought that I must pray to the triple gem for there is none else. [I] chanted the *mani* ‘mantra of Avalokiteshvara’ and prayed to His Holiness the Dalai Lama and others that one day our truth will prevail. Thinking of such things one was able to survive.

Q: Did the Chinese try to stop the Tibetan prisoners from praying?

**#10N: Yes, [they] did. Even if one moved the lips a little bit [the Chinese] said, “What are you thinking? Are you praying to the Dalai Lama?” [They] said that always. If [the Chinese] knew, it would be a big issue.**

Q: So how did you pray that you wouldn't be caught?

02:10:20

**#10N: I prayed, “May our truth prevail one day.” That was how [I] prayed.**

Q: How did you do it because if you chanted with your lips the Chinese would know?

**#10N: I was confined in the tiny room, so they would not know. No one kept watch in the tiny room, which was dark. The main thing is not the mouth but feeling in the mind.**

Q: How long were you in the dark cell?

**#10N: Usually one need not stay there for more than six months.**

Q: How many times?

**#10N: Twice.**

Q: In those six months could you talk with anyone or exercise?

**#10N: Never, never, never at all. However, they took you away to be interrogated. Sometimes one was taken at midnight to be interrogated.**

Q: Did they come to you?

**#10N: Yes, they would open the door and take us in fetters to their office and interrogate, “What are you thinking in your mind? What are you thinking?”**

**Nothing happened to me but most people who had been in the tiny room died, maybe because I was young.**

Q: I was wondering...I've heard that when people are put in these cells in many, many countries that they often go insane. You clearly haven't gone insane. What do you think helped you remain healthy, mentally healthy?

02:12:58

**#10N: Perhaps it is the way one thinks. [I] do not know. At times you do feel disturbed and have a desire to be violent. [I] did feel like hitting them over the head with the handcuff but [I] felt this will not serve any purpose.**

Q: Is there anything else that you would like to tell us of your years in prison?

**#10N: [I] do not have anything special.**

Q: Questions that I have that relate to some of the things that you said earlier if I could ask them?

**#10N: Okay.**

Q: When did you leave Tibet?

**#10N: In the year '83.**

Q: And when did you leave prison?

**#10N: [I] left prison in [counts the years from 1961] '70. Then seven years in the *lemey rukhak*.**

[Interpreter interprets as: Then seven years under the supervision of the people.]

Q: What does supervision under the people mean? What happened?

[Interpreter interprets as: Is *lemey rukhak* supervision under the people?]

**#10N: Yes. We were kept in an office outside the prison. Most of the time [we] were made to labor, constructing houses. We were driven to Lhasa to construct the buildings of the Tibet Autonomous [office] and the Great Tibetan School. We were forced to construct all of those. One was not allowed out much. In case one wished to go out, one must seek permission. Should one fail to return at the appointed time there would be punishment at night.**

Q: [*Lemey rukhak*] isn't being sent to one's own home and living there under the supervision of the people?

**#10N: No, no, [I] was not sent home.**

Q: So you left the prison during the day?

02:16:07

**#10N: It was not a prison with doors shut. There were many office rooms and around 10 people lived in each.**

**One could even get married at this time though one had to inform and go through a long procedure.**

Q: Is that what you did?

**#10N: Yes, yes. [I] got married then. We used to have servants earlier who looked after me very well when I was in prison, bringing food and stuff. After [I] got out of prison and**

became a part of the *lemey rukhak* they made arrangements with a girl who hailed from a rich family. Her father had left for India along with the Tensung Maga ‘National Volunteer Defense Army.’ They were a rich family but facing difficulties.

[The ex-servants] told me, “Live with her.” I replied, “I do not have parents or anyone. I do not have any thought of getting married and will not do it.” But they insisted, “As a human being on earth, you must do likewise. Your thinking is very narrow, which is not good. Marriage will make [life] better.” So after consultation with her mother, the marriage took place.

Q: Between 1977 when you left prison and 1983 when you fled Tibet, what were you doing and where were you living? Six years from ’77 to ’83?

**#10N: Yes, six years. [I] married the girl and lived at [her] home because I had no one. I had learnt carpentry in prison and did some carpentry jobs. That is how [we] lived. Then my relatives living here came to meet me. My younger sister came to see [me]. It was like that.**

Q: How did you leave Tibet?

02:19:25

**#10N: [I] came on a Chinese permit. “A *lemey rukhak* who has even been in prison is allowed to visit relatives if you wish to.” The new Chinese leader called Fa Gu Hung [?] issued this statement.**

Q: What’s the name?

**#10N: Fa Gu Hung.**

Q: Fa Gu Hung?

**#10N: Yes.**

Q: And then I was very moved by the story of your father and your relationship with your father and it sounded to me like your father was a very extraordinary person and I wondered what you had learnt and had taken into your life from your father’s life?

**#10N: Father would always advise us like this, “In a person’s life it is very important to be truthful and honest, and to be polite to whomever it may be.” For instance, we came from a leadership [family], a junior leader of sort. While travelling about—we were a little older then—saddling the horses and making the beds used to be performed by the servants. [Father said,] “Do not let [them] do it. They are older than you. Do it yourself. Misusing your leadership position is not good. Be truthful and honest. It is very important not to harm anyone in your life. It is very important to be kind.” Father has sacrificed his life and everything else for the cause of Tibet and Tibetans. I too wish to continue what [he] did, come what may. I will never ever embrace their [Chinese] principle and stand.**

Q: How do you feel about Chinese when you see Chinese...How do you feel about them?

02:22:43

**#10N: Now I do not feel that bad on seeing Chinese. Earlier I used to feel very strongly about doing something to them. Now when I think over it is the policy of the Chinese that was at fault. It is not every Chinese for they had the same...Primarily it is the Communist Party, the Communist Party. Actually, even now I have nightmares because of the experience in jail.**

Q: I'm so sorry that you still have those experiences. Is there anything else that you would like to tell us about your life in Tibet?

**#10N: [I] do not have anything to say.**

Q: You must be very tired. Are you?

**#10N: [Laughs]**

Q: Thank you.

**#10N: [Nods]**

Q: If this interview were to be shown in Tibet or China—I've to ask you the same question—would it be a problem for you?

**#10N: [I] told you that there would be no problem. It is the same.**

Q: It's the same with your name?

**#10N: Okay. This is a true story and there is nothing one can do about it.**

END OF INTERVIEW