

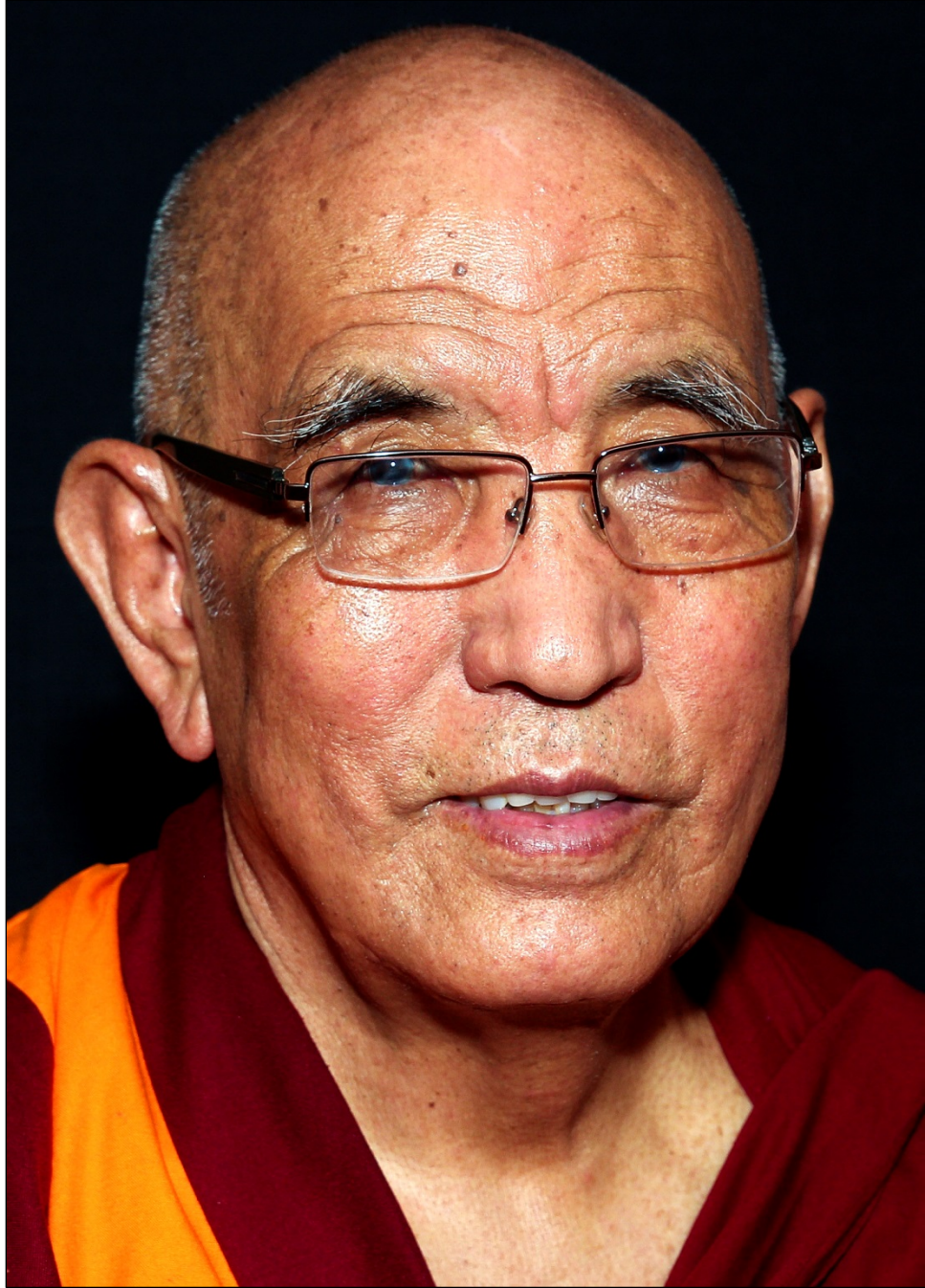
Tibet Oral History Project

Interview #14B – Lobsang Tenzin Rinpoche, Jangtse Choje
January 4, 2014

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INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

1. Interview Number: #14B
2. Interviewee: Lobsang Tenzin Rinpoche, Jangtse Choje
3. Age: 78
4. Date of Birth: 1935
5. Sex: Male
6. Birthplace: Lhatse
7. Province: Utsang
8. Year of leaving Tibet: 1959
9. Date of Interview: January 4, 2014
10. Place of Interview: Sera Monastery, Bylakuppe, Mysore District, Karnataka, India
11. Length of Interview: 1 hr 17 min
12. Interviewer: Marcella Adamski
13. Interpreter: Tenzin Yangchen
14. Videographer: Pema Tashi
15. Translator: Tenzin Yangchen

Biographical Information:

Jangtse Choje Lobsang Tenzin Rinpoche was born in Lhatse in Utsang Province to a poor family. He was the middle child among three siblings and remembers being inducted into monkhood in the local monastery of Lhatse Choedhe at the age of 7. He learned to read, write and then memorize scriptures.

Lobsang Tenzin Rinpoche recounts his 20-day journey to Lhasa to join Sera Monastery at the age of 16 where he began his study of the various subjects of Buddhist philosophy. He had only partially completed his studies of the Five Great Treatises of Mahayana Buddhist philosophy when the Chinese army attacked Lhasa in 1959. He narrates the bombardment of the Potala Palace, Norbulingka and Sera Monastery, which ultimately forced him to flee from Lhasa.

Lobsang Tenzin Rinpoche returned to Lhatse Choedhe Monastery where there was a 2-month calm period before the Chinese arrived. He describes Communist propaganda lessons and witnessed *thamzing* 'struggle sessions' and the imprisonment of the prominent people. He escaped to India via Nepal and resumed religious studies in exile in Buxar. He helped during the initial days of building the settlement in Bylakuppe and later served as the abbot of Gyumed Monastery. Lobsang Tenzin is presently the Jangtse Choje, second in line to the throne of Gaden, the head of the Gelug lineage.

Topics Discussed:

Utsang, monastic life, invasion by Chinese army, life under Chinese rule, *thamzing*, escape experiences, life as a refugee in India.

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Interviewee: Lobsang Tenzin Rinpoche, Jangtse Choje

Age: 78, Sex: Male

Interviewer: Marcella Adamski

Interview Date: January 4, 2014

Question: Please tell us your name.

00:00:10

Interviewee #14B: Name?

Q: Yes.

#14B: The name is Lobsang Tenzin.

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

#14B: That is all right. I spoke about the matter earlier. It is okay.

Q: Thank you for offering to share your story with us. 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, please let me know.

#14B: Okay.

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

00:01:54

#14B: If it is a true story I will have no problems. I do not think I will have any problems.

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

#14B: [Nods]

Q: *Rinpoche-la* ‘respected lama,’ can you please tell me when you were born and what place you were born?

#14B: I told you about it the last time [during the pre-interview].

Q: Can you please say it again?

#14B: We Tibetans do not have the exact month and year. [I] think I was born in '35...in '35. It is July 1935 similar to His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

Q: And the birthplace?

#14B: My birthplace is Tsang Lhatse in Utsang [Province] of Tibet.

Q: In your family, Rinpoche-*la*, how many people were part of your immediate family?

00:03:38

#14B: Our family was a poor one, not rich. There were my parents, older sister, me and a younger brother. There were three [siblings].

Q: What kind of livelihood did your family engage in?

#14B: Father did a little bit of tailoring and mother engaged in weaving, weaving clothes though there was not much.

Q: What are some of your memories of your childhood that you would be willing to share with us?

#14B: There is not much recollection about my childhood. I was small and joined the monastery as a monk. [I] cannot recall anything before that. Besides playing [I] cannot recall much.

Q: Lhatse, was it a very large village? How many families were there?

#14B: It is a big town though not a very large town. Lhatse, Ngamrim and Phuntsoling were the slightly bigger towns in Tsang region. There were not very big cities in Tibet.

Q: How many families in Lhatse...?

#14B: What?

Q: How many families were there in Lhatse?

00:05:40

#14B: Families?

Q: Yes, families.

#14B: Perhaps there were about a hundred families.

Q: In your boyhood, was there any task that you were required to do before you went to the monastery, any way to help the family?

#14B: The tasks to help the parents were cleaning and such. There were not any other duties. Parents did the cooking.

Q: How did it happen that you were planning to go to Sera Monastery? How did that come about?

#14B: I told you earlier that there is a monastery called Lhatse Choedhe in our village of Lhatse with around 400-500 monks where I became a monk at the age of 7.

Here, as a child, I learned to read and write and memorize many texts. [I] learned to read and write and memorized and took tests in the monastery. After passing these, one received the opportunity to join the great monasteries [Sera, Drepung and Gaden Monasteries] to study debate. Then one memorized the fundamental root texts on debate and studied it.

00:08:33

Though facilities for debate studies and debate sessions were available in our monastery, yet studying in the great monasteries was better and there was the old tradition of joining the great monasteries to study the debates. Therefore, I decided and joined Sera Monastery at age 16.

Q: Sixteen?

#14B: Sixteen.

Q: Perhaps before we get to that part of your story, when you were younger boy first learning how to read the scriptures, perhaps you could show us what they look like? Could you show him these?

Yes, many people do not know what scriptures look like from Tibet. So can you please show us what you learned?

[A scripture volume is handed to interviewee]

#14B: Generally, the scriptures... what we study from, like a textbook are the Buddha's words contained in the Kagyur having 100 volumes and another connected to it called Tengyur with over 200 volumes. Since the Kagyur and Tengyur are difficult to comprehend, Tibetan lamas have authored many scriptures that comment on the intended meaning. What [I] am holding in my hands is one of these. The one that wrote this scripture is Yongsji Pandit Yeshe Gyaltsen. The scripture written by Yongsji Pandit Yeshe Gyaltsen is about the birth of the Buddha and his activities that are all covered in this volume.

Q: Can you hold it up to see it?

[Interviewee shows scripture book]

#14B: All the scriptures I possess are like these, written by Tibetan scholars. What we study and regularly practice are these scriptures written by scholars of Tibet.

Q: Could Rinpoche-*la* hold it up so we can see the writing on the page?

#14B: [Shows a page] Like this?

Q: Can you see it?

Q: Very beautiful. Would that be...How many pages of that would somebody...would a student have to memorize, say each day or each week?

#14B: There are different types of students, some can memorize three pages, some can memorize two pages, some memorize one page and some just half a page. Each one possesses a different aptitude.

Q: In one day?

#14B: Yes, in one day.

Q: Say that volume, was it done by hand or by block print?

00:14:07

#14B: This looks like printed. In the early days there were wooden blocks and it was printed from that.

There are scriptures that are printed from wooden blocks and the modern ones that are saved in computers and then printed. There are different kinds.

Q: When people used to print them by hand how long would that take to print one set like that, one book, one volume?

#14B: That depends upon the words and deftness of hand. If one has dexterity of hand, one can write four or five pages in a day.

Q: Four Pages?

#14B: One can write two, three, four or five pages. Otherwise, if one is slow, one cannot write much. Long, long ago our main custom was carving [letters] on wooden blocks and then printing.

Q: Rinpoche-*la*...Maybe you want to take that away from him.

[Interviewee hands over scripture book]

Q: When the Chinese came and destroyed so much of the Buddhist scriptures, do you feel that there were some that were destroyed for ever or are there some or have they all been rescued in one way or another?

00:16:27

#14B: After the Chinese arrived and Tibet was lost...[the Chinese] came in '59-'60...No, they came earlier. They had already arrived in '50 or '51-'52. It is in '59-'60 that we fled. [The scriptures] were not destroyed prior to this. [The scriptures were] destroyed later and numerous scriptures were lost. Some had been hidden and a great number saved. Although [the scriptures] were destroyed in Tibet, there were many left in libraries in China.

Q: Where in China?

#14B: Some were there in libraries in China. When we were living in Tibet, some old scriptures had been kept in libraries in Sikkim in India long ago. The most important ones had been printed and kept in Sikkim.

Q: When the young boy becomes a monk and he has to memorize these scriptures, at what point do you think he begins to understand them? Does memorization come first and is that important for later when he has to deepen his understanding?

00:18:42

#14B: At first one must learn to read well, learn to read and write well. After mastering reading and writing one begins memorization. Not being accustomed, initially one cannot memorize much. Then as one gets used to it, one can memorize more. A test must be taken for the memorized [portion]. The test is taken this way. In the case of our local monastery, when tea is being served to the monk congregation and when the monks remain silent, one must recite the whole portion. That is how a test is taken. A recitation test has to be taken in the case of debate, scriptures too.

That is the practice followed in our local monastery. Different monasteries follow different methods of taking a test.

Q: In addition to repeating what you had memorized, were you ever asked questions to explain what your understanding was of the text that you had memorized?

#14B: Generally certain scriptures are prayers that are chanted. Besides these, there is memorization that pertains to the great fundamental root texts. In the fundamental root texts you must explain each word of the text. The teacher provides instructions and you must go through [the text] and debate on it. You debate and reach a definitive conclusion. Then it is for you to reflect and practice.

Q: What kind of a student were you, Rinpoche-*la*? Was it hard or easy for you to memorize?

00:22:10

#14B: When we studied in Tibet it used to be with great effort. However, studying hard came voluntarily as there were no strict rules in regard to studies in the great monasteries.

You voluntarily studied, memorized and participated in debate sessions at the *choera* ‘debating courtyard.’ In order to enhance what you have memorized and learned...on one hand there is the...[not discernible]. There are rules in the respective great monasteries for each month of the year. One must attend the *choera* and such.

Q: You had to learn to comprehend the questions and the answers.

#14B: While attending debate sessions you have to clear doubts and analyze by reasoning that pertains to the fundamentals root text and then the meaning of the fundamental root text reaches a definitive conclusion. Each person has a way of commenting on the meaning of the fundamental root texts. Each lama has a particular way of commenting. One must analyze by reasoning and bear in mind the meaning of the analysis over which you reflect and meditate.

Q: During your younger years, Rinpoche-*la*, did you have any teachers that you recall with great gratitude or affection that were very helpful for you in understanding the dharma or learning your studies?

00:24:58

#14B: Initially there was a very good teacher that taught me the memorization. Then during the course of studying debates based on the great fundamental root texts there were teachers that were incredible. I have had such incredibly accomplished teachers.

Q: Would you like some tea?

#14B: No, I do not.

Q: Rinpoche-*la*, I don’t think I recall the story of how is it that you were sent to the monastery? How was that decision made and how did you feel about it?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: Which monastery?

[Interviewer to interpreter]: The first one as a child.

Q: Initially you went to become a monk at Lhatse Choedhe Monastery. How were you sent?

00:26:05

#14B: I mentioned that there were 400-500 monks and I became a monk at the age of 7. [I] lived there until the age of 16 and took all the tests in memorization and then started studying the fundamental of debates. [I] studied the fundamentals of debate at this monastery until the age of 16. Most [monks from local] monasteries of Kham, Utsang and Amdo joined the three great monasteries of Sera, Gaden and Drepung to study the fundamentals of debate. So, I too went to study at Sera.

Q: Looking back on your childhood and adolescence in the monastery, what kind of a student would you say you were at that time?

#14B: Me?

Q: Yes.

#14B: I was not excellent in studies but when I was at the great monastery [I] put in a lot of effort in the studies.

Q: Tell us, please about the journey even if you talked about the journey earlier, we didn't have the chance to record the story. So we're asking you to please tell us what was the journey like from your home monastery to Sera?

00:28:43

#14B: In those days there were no motor vehicles and we did not have the finances to drive horses and mules while leaving Lhatse. So I journeyed from Lhatse to Lhasa carrying food and beddings on the back. The journey from Lhatse to Lhasa takes over 20 days. There is a general Tibetan saying *Tsang shag sum, U shag sum, Rong shag sum* 'Three days in Tsang, three days in U, three days in the valley.' The journey from Shigatse through the Tsang region takes three days, then the journey through the valley, which is a very narrow valley between mountains takes three days and then three days in U region that makes it nine days from Shigatse [to Lhasa].

We could not travel that fast. It takes around four days [from Lhatse] to Shigatse. Therefore, it took over 20 days. [We] carried packs and took shelter along the journey. [We] got up early in the morning and set off carrying packs. Around sunrise when it neared the time to make tea, [we] picked up firewood and dung along the way and then stopped close to a river. Then we made tea, ate *pa* 'dough made from roasted barley flour and tea,' rested a while and proceeded.

Q: Was that the first time you were so far away from your own village and what was that experience like to begin to see Tibet, the countryside, the mountains and the people outside of your village?

#14B: In our village on the first day when [we] set off, the parents came to see [us] off to a little distance and there was tea and offering of ceremonial scarves. I felt sad when the parents shed tears but otherwise there was nothing.

Q: Were there any dangers along the way? Was it difficult walking? This was a long journey.

00:32:57

#14B: There was fear in us because while walking through the valley for three days, the valley was narrow and so there was talk about the danger of thieves and such. However, we were just monks with nothing and did not come across any danger but there were doubts in the mind. One did worry over what might happen but we did not face any threats. Otherwise, it used to be said that thieves could be present in the narrow valleys.

We were not the only ones. Monks from Amdo and Kham must walk 2-3 months to come to the great monasteries. Everybody was the same then.

Q: Your parents, I could understand were sad. Had they given you permission to go? Had they told you they wanted you to become a monk? What were those circumstances? Did you choose it or were they encouraging you to go?

#14B: The parents did not have any objection—did not have any objection. They felt sad since I was going far away from them. The parents were happy for me and it was not as if I was doing something my parents objected to.

Q: It sounds like it was your wish to go to Sera.

00:35:34

#14B: Yes. There was [facility for a] good education in Sera and it was the tradition since long for monks of our monastery to go to Sera. There were many that had completed studies and I understood that joining [one of] the great monasteries would bring me good result. That was the reason for my going there.

Q: The idea of learning all of these scriptures and the debate was very exciting and appealing to you.

#14B: Yes, it has been very good. At Sera, first [I] learned the Riglam ‘Logic’ for three years and then graduated to learning the Pharchin ‘Prajnaparamita: perfection of wisdom’ from the great treatises of Mahayana Buddhist philosophy for one year and then studied Uma ‘Madhyamaka: Middle Way philosophy.’ Before the uprising took place in Tibet I had studied up to Uma. I was 25 years old then.

Q: Tell us what did you first see with your own eyes about the unrest in Tibet? What did you experience?

00:37:31

#14B: Prior to the unrest, at the time His Holiness the Dalai Lama took his *geshe* ‘Buddhist philosophy’ degree, the Chinese installed artilleries atop the houses and we feared during the prayer assembly. We were filled with great anxiety to learn about the conflict with the Tibetans when the Chinese invited His Holiness to the military camp. Later, the night of the attack...when the attack began many people were determined. When the attack began, we, the Tibetans, thought only about face-to-face combat and had no knowledge about attacks from the sky like dropping bombs. So just prior to the attack, [people] sought protective amulets and such.

Then Norbulingka was bombarded around midnight. The attack had begun. The Potala Palace was shelled many times the next day. We remained that day and then in the afternoon learned that the Norbulingka Palace was lost. Then Sera, where we were was shelled numerous times. As bullets whizzed by during the gunfire, all the people sort of became numb with fear. Nobody was around to be seen.

Sera was being bombarded. That caused [the monks to become] numb with fear. Since the monks of Sera possessed no weapons, that day [they] went to the Potala Place to get guns

from the armory, to get guns. I did not but many monks did. When these monks returned after collecting weapons from the government armory, the Chinese became aware and started firing machineguns. Those returning with the guns ran helter-skelter like peas being scattered. [They] were forced to run in every direction.

Q: Where were you?

00:41:39

#14B: I did not go [to the Potala Palace]. A great amount of gunfire had taken place in the night and [people] understood the difficult situation. We, who had not gone [to the Potala Palace], were sleeping that night. It had been said that there had be shelling at 11 o'clock in the night. Our colleagues called us since we were ignorant. Escape was the only way, so [I] went back the quarters. Should Sera be targeted my room was in the line of fire. So I was not there but in a secluded place. [The colleagues] came to call [me] at the secluded place.

I returned to the quarters but there was not any packing and [I] fled immediately. When [I] fled, the majority of Sera [monks] had escaped. There is a pass called Narenphu leading towards Phenpo. There were monks fleeing, soldiers fleeing, and so all of us fled together. Instead of going towards Phenpo, I crossed a mountain pass into Thoelung and went to Tsang for the time being. [I] planned to go to Tsang. My village is in Tsang.

Q: Why do you think that you wanted to go back home?

#14B: My hope was that at that time my monastery and village came under the Tashi Lhunpo Monastery...

Q: Under Tashi Lhunpo?

#14B: Yes. Tashi Lhunpo was faring better. So since Tashi Lhunpo was faring better [we] hoped there might be a better chance for the time being. Though there was unrest in Lhasa, Shigatse was normal except for the fort having been captured. The fort belonged to the Tibetan Government. Shigatse was normal.

[Tashi Lhunpo Monastery] belonged to the Panchen Lama.

00:45:04

When we reached Shigatse, as mentioned earlier [I] met people [I] knew and then went to Tsang. [I] lived in Tsang at our local monastery until the 7th Tibetan lunar month. I had a teacher, a *geshe* 'monk with Buddhist philosophy degree' who planned for us to escape in the 7th month.

Tsang was calm then. There was nothing except that the district administrators of Shigatse and Shekar had been taken away. Then a letter came from Tashi Lhunpo to the *geshe* that read, "If any one monk from the monastery leaves, the monastery will be destroyed. If any one member of a family leaves, the family will be ruined. Other than this, all those coming under Tashi Lhunpo Monastery are considered patriots, those that value the country. So nothing will happen [to them]." Such was stated.

Q: Country...?

#14B: Patriots, monasteries that value the country. Hence, nothing [untoward] will occur. Then fearing that the monastery will be destroyed on account of a person or two, we stayed back.

Q: *Geshe-la*, can you please explain for people who do not understand the role of the Panchen Lama and why his protection seemed to protect Tashi Lhunpo with the Chinese who were attacking Tibet?

00:47:59

#14B: When His Holiness [the Panchen Lama] initially came [back to Tibet], the Chinese decided to support it. So there was Chinese support for the Panchen Lama's coming. Generally, in the past there was nothing between the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama but due to a few people's dealings there was a little bit of friction between the Tashi Lhunpo Monastery and the Tibetan Government. There was not any such [feeling] between the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama but the situation came about due to this.

Q: Can you help us understand a little bit more about what that friction was about?

#14B: The main thing was that in the past...There are many factors involved. In general it happened during the time of the previous reincarnation that there occurred certain conflicts. There were certain reasons that forced the previous reincarnation of the Panchen Lama to go to China but that was when I was small.

Q: How many monks were at the Tashi Lhunpo when you got there? That's where you were staying...No, no, sorry at your own monastery?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: 400-500 monks.

Q: How long did you stay at that monastery?

#14B: Where? In Lhatse?

Q: You returned to the monastery...?

00:50:23

#14B: After escaping the attack [I] lived in Lhatse where it was calm. It was a relaxing time for around two months. After two months the Chinese and trainers arrived. There were the Chinese and the Chinese staff that were to impart lessons. When they arrived, we were bifurcated into a group of prominent monks and a common group.

Then the lessons began. During classes the main point was the denouncement of the three *ngadak* 'class of leaders,'—the government, the monasteries and the noble families. Those were the three oppositions and the two leniencies were leniency in repayment of loans and ...[not discernible]. There were lessons in criticism.

And then those that had held responsibilities and prominent people were criticized and they had to accept the criticism. There were some people among the Tibetans that collaborated with the Chinese. It is possible that there would be some such people. Initially one had to criticize in the absence of the person by stating what he had done and what bad deeds he had done. This was called *gyabki thamzing* ‘struggle session behind the back.’ *Gyabki thamzing*, criticizing the person behind the back. Naturally, the person would not accept for he has no culpabilities and then began the *dhunkyi thamzing* ‘struggle session in front’ that everybody must attend.

00:53:01

All the people assembled. During the gathering of the people, the person to be subjected to *thamzing* bowed next to a table. [He/she] stood hunched and the one conducting the *thamzing* stood in front and said, “You did this in the past, stole this. You oppressed us and did this to us.” These were stated and should he not accept [the charges], [he] would get beaten. Such things happened. When I was there...The assaults occurred later. When I was there, though beatings didn’t take place but having stood up for a long time, they fainted. [The persons being subjected to *thamzing*] had to stand for many hours. Such *thamzing* took place then.

Then all the prominent people were put behind bars. [The Chinese] influenced the poor people. So the *thamzing* took place in that way. Much later at the time of retiring for the night, the prominent people’s waistbands were collected. There was the risk that they may take their own lives. Though it did not happen when we were there, it has occurred later.

00:56:09

After the influential people had been imprisoned and the propaganda lessons came to a conclusion, most of the monks were sent to the villages if they so wished while some remained with the freedom to practice religion. Those that stayed back were few in number. We planned to escape and telling [the Chinese that I] was going to Shigatse to meet the parents, [I] fled. Because we were poor and had not been in any influential positions, we did not suffer anything bad.

Q: Were your parents in Shigatse?

#14B: Earlier my parents were living there [Lhatse] but my younger sibling was admitted to the school of Tashi Lhunpo and hence, they were living in Shigatse. I went to Shigatse.

Q: Then what happened?

#14B: Then [we] escaped from Lhatse using the ploy of going to Shigatse. We were five people. At that time the situation was not really bad in Tsang region. It was not bad in Tsang region. We took the route through Dhingri and Rongsha. There were numerous escapees on this route. Then through Rongsha we went to Nepal and stayed in Nepal for sometime. His Holiness the Dalai Lama was living in Mussoorie [India] then. Then we went to Mussoorie and saw His Holiness and His Holiness’ two tutors. Among us were two

scripture students. So the two of us went to Buxar. The other two decided to stay back to work in a school there.

00:59:26

[We] were sent to Buxar but could not get admission promptly [into the monastic camp]. Since [we] could not get admission directly, [we] went to Missamari where most of the people that came from the south had gathered. It was very hot and difficult in Missamari with everybody having developed boils. After two months in Missamari [we] were sent back to Buxar.

Q: After two months?

#14B: After staying for around two months.

There were 1,500 monks living in Buxar that were engaged in studies and aided by the Indian Government. We lived in Buxar for a long time and then moved to the settlement.

When we came here the land was empty. Then bulldozers cut the woods and we dug out the roots and created agricultural lands. There were 38 houses. We pitched in labor to build the 38 houses that were financed by the Indian Government. So that is how [we] survived for 2-3 years.

Q: Was it a jungle when [you] first arrived?

01:01:26

#14B: It was a jungle that was cleared using bulldozers. The inferior wood...good quality logs were transported and the rest was burned after taking away some for fuel. We dug out the roots and created agricultural lands. The Indian Government paid a wage of two rupees and 50 paise per day. That was our work and there were 38 houses, which we labored. We also constructed the assembly hall earlier.

Therefore, initially those monks from Buxar had worked very hard, cultivating lands, guarding [the crops] from wild pigs at night, guarding against elephants, building houses and everything has turned out very well. Then facilities for studies began and also admission of new monks. The result is incredibly good.

01:03:34

And then my studies in Buxar...In the meanwhile, having left from Tibet in difficult circumstances, [I] became sick with tuberculosis during the journey. Many Tibetans were afflicted with tuberculosis in Buxar. [I] was in a hospital in Cooch Bihar for a little less than a year. Then the Indian Government sent me to a hospital in Ajmir in Rajasthan where [I] was for a year and underwent lung surgery. Then [I] was cured and returned to Buxar and continued studies. [I] took my Geshe Lharampa [highest of the four levels of *geshe*] examination and then went to Gyumed Monastery. That is how all these happened gradually. That is in brief.

[I] went to Gyumed and became the abbot of Gyumed [Monastery]. That is how it happened.

Q: How long were you the abbot at Gyumed?

#14B: It is mandatory to take the responsibility of Lama Umze [ritual master/second highest ranking monk] for three years before becoming an abbot, and then [I] was an abbot for three years. It was in 2082, '83...

Q: Nineteen hundred...?

#14B: Nineteen hundred, yes. [Laughs] It was in the nineteen hundreds.

Q: Quite a very difficult and challenging journey. So, Rinpoche-*la*, I'd like to ask were there any teachings of the Buddha that gave you strength and courage to go through all of these great changes in your life and great suffering?

#14B: What?

Q: The Buddha's...

01:06:30

#14B: The main subjects of our studies are the great treatises of Mahayana Buddhist philosophy. From the great treatises Pharchin teaches how to develop realizations of the path to enlightenment and Uma clarifies the view of dependent origination and emptiness. We have to study these and practice. If one has the capability, that is what you study.

Q: Many people who are interested in Tibetan Buddhism would find it helpful if *geshe-la* could...I know it's a complex subject but just say what those areas of study are, wisdom, Uma...could he please name them for us? It would be very helpful to a lot of people.

#14B: The first is Dhueda, which is to study the Riglam and then the Lorig and Tharig that are the study of functioning of the mind and logic. Subsequently, the treatise of Pharchin is about the perfection of wisdom and how to develop realizations of the path to enlightenment. The Uma, the Middle Way philosophy, clarifies the view of dependent origination and emptiness. Next is Dhulwa, which is the ethical code about learning how to live a moral life as set out by the Buddha. Then Zoe, is about phenomenology and Buddhist psychology, and teaches about karma and the different aspects of the mind. The *kaboe nga* 'five treatises' are Namdel...

Q: *Tsema Namdel*...?

01:08:57

#14B: Tsema Namdel 'Pramana-logic and epistemology, commentary or elucidation 'Valid Cognition: Learning how to use valid reasoning in analyzing the scriptures,' Pharchin, Uma, Dhulwa and Zoe. Those are the main five great treatises that we study for

around 25-26 years. It takes around 26 years from the time one starts to study the scriptures and until you take the *geshe* examination.

Is that satisfactory?

Q: That's very good.

#14B: Yeah, yeah.

Q: I don't want to end the interview, just one more second. So *Geshe-la*, this has been very, very helpful for many people who can hear your experience and your expression and teachings and summary of the special teachings.

#14B: Okay, that is good.

Q: Is there anything that you would like to say to the Tibetans about what you wish they would preserve about the Buddha dharma? What do you think is the most important thing to preserve in their lives and in their children's lives?

01:12:36

#14B: The main teaching the Buddha taught is the Four Noble Truths. If one understands the meaning of it, this will benefit one's mind and others as well. It will help in protecting us from committing transgressions and studying the Four Noble Truths will be beneficial in every way. The Buddha taught the Four Noble Truths after his enlightenment.

Q: What has the Buddha's teaching...how has it affected you in terms of how you think about the Chinese today because you've been through much suffering because of them?

#14B: Feelings?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: You mean how Rinpoche feels towards the Chinese?

Interviewer to interpreter: Yes.

#14B: There is no reason for us not to like the Chinese. The effect of both the Chinese and our past negative actions led the Chinese to do what they did and for us to suffer. The Chinese themselves were mired in obscuring minds of the three poisons resulting in what has occurred. It has not been good for them [too] because they have no choice and are caught in the obscuring minds of the three poisons.

There is no reason for us not to like the Chinese or anything. There should be a dialogue as initiated by His Holiness the Dalai Lama in order for peace and there is no reason for us not to like the Chinese. The Chinese themselves are caught in obscuring minds of the three poisons due to their destiny. The suffering we underwent and what they did are effect of karma of both sides and there is no reason for hatred.

Q: Very good. One last question. Do you think it's helpful to record the stories of the old people of Tibet before they are gone?

01:15:46

#14B: Yes, yes, it is [important] because these are stories of Tibet's past. The old generation knows everything about it while the new generation does not. The past stories of Tibet contain both good stories and bad stories. If one goes through all the stories, it would be very beneficial for the future generation to receive good lessons from the good stories. It is very good.

Q: Rinpoche, thank you so much for sharing your story with us. We appreciate your time and your teachings and your wisdom. Thank you.

#14B: That is all right. This will help spread the issue of Tibet and that is the reason I have shared [my story].

END OF INTERVIEW