

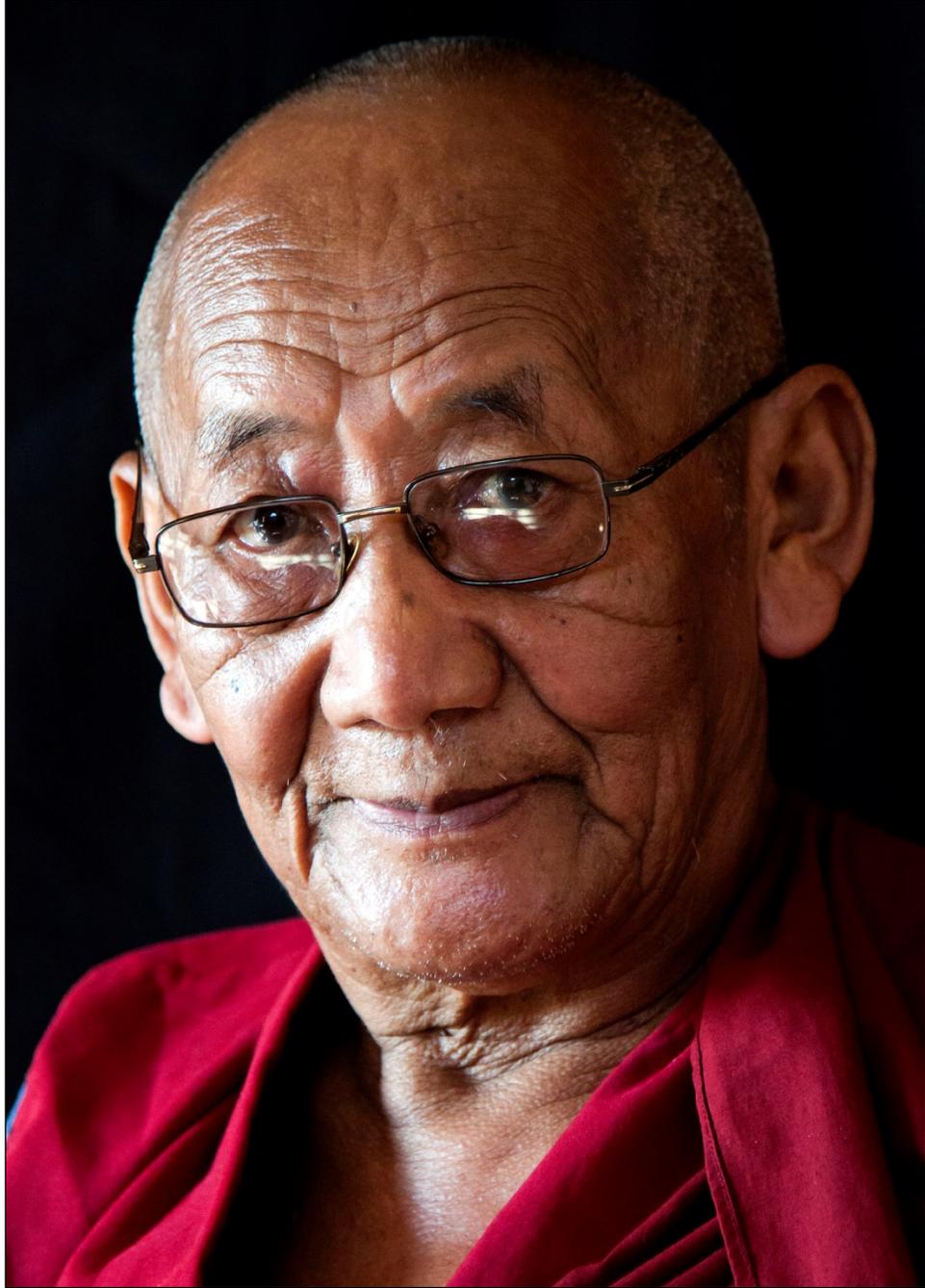
# **Tibet Oral History Project**

Interview #9B – Yeshi (alias)  
December 27, 2013

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# TIBET ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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## INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

1. Interview Number: #9B
2. Interviewee: Yeshi (alias)
3. Age: 78
4. Date of Birth: 1935
5. Sex: Male
6. Birthplace: Gyangtse
7. Province: Utsang
8. Year of leaving Tibet: 1960
9. Date of Interview: December 27, 2013
10. Place of Interview: Private Residence, Old Camp 4, 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:**

Yeshe lost his parents at a very early age and was raised by his grandparents. They were poor and did not own any land so they earned a livelihood by catering to travellers. He recalls being ordained as a monk at the age of 8 in Lhatse Choedhe, the local monastery, and successfully memorizing the Buddhist texts. When he was 23 years old, Yeshe left for Sera Monastery in Lhasa to study advanced Buddhist philosophy.

Yeshe remembers that he was at the *choera* 'debating courtyard' of Sera Monastery when the Chinese army bombarded the Potala Palace in 1959. He hid in his room as bombing of the Palace continued for two days and the shelling of his monastery as well. Many monks went to gather weapons and defend the monastery. Yeshe recounts the story of his escape from Sera Monastery back to Lhatse Choedhe hoping for a normal monastic life.

The Chinese army soon arrived in his village and introduced the Revolution of Democracy. The monks continued to try and practice Buddhism but also had to grow their own crops, which they had never done before. The Chinese held indoctrination classes and forced some monks and laypeople to rise against their past leaders. Yeshe witnessed many *thamzing* 'struggle sessions' of the senior monks of the monastery. He then gives an exciting story of his escape to Nepal.

### **Topics Discussed:**

Utsang, childhood memories, monastic life, life under Chinese rule, *thamzing*, escape experiences, life as a refugee in India.

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**Interview #9B**

**Interviewee: Yeshi [alias]**

**Age: 78, Sex: Male**

**Interviewer: Marcella Adamski**

**Interview Date: December 27, 2013**

Question: *Gen-la* ‘respectful term for teacher,’ can you please tell me what year you were born and where you were born?

00:00:22

**Interviewee #9B: I was born perhaps in 1935.**

Q: Where were [you] born?

**#9B: The place of birth is my village. Is the name of the village required?**

Q: If you are comfortable giving that name.

**#9B: The place is called Gyangtse.**

Q: How many people were there in your family?

**#9B: At that time there was my maternal aunt. My mother had passed away at 34. Father also had expired before the uprising. There was the younger maternal aunt and her parents that were my grandparents. They brought me up from a young age. There were only a few members.**

Q: What did they do for a livelihood, your grandparents and your aunt?

**#9B: The grandparents were quite poor at that time. They took care of travellers that came home from around the region. [They] did not own lands and borrowed grains from the monastery and brewed *chang* ‘home-brewed beer.’ There was only one cow and no lands. The condition was poor.**

Q: What kind of memories do you have of your childhood?

00:03:07

**#9B: When I was small, mother had come as a junior *nama* ‘bride/daughter-in-law’ into a rich family.**

Q: *Nama*?

**#9B: There was a rich family and the father [of the rich family] was a landlord owning much land and many servants. The father was the secretary of our district. They already had a *nama* at home with children. The father had to visit the district headquarters often and my grandparents' condition was poor with three daughters. My mother was the middle daughter and she was accepted as *nama* in that family.**

Q: Do you have any memories of your own childhood when you were 5, 6, 7? What was your life like?

**#9B: When I was small, my grandparents made me a monk in the monastery at the age of 8. Since mother expired at a young age, the grandparents brought me up from a young age, the major part of [my] young life. Mother had become the *nama* of a rich family and there was plenty of *chang* and strong tea and she passed away due to poor health. Later [my] grandparents made me a monk and they helped me. Grandmother expired at the age of 72 and grandfather around 60. And then I was sort of permanently living at the monastery.**

00:05:46

**We were three siblings. I, the oldest, became a monk and the middle one lived with father in the rich home and worked there permanently. [He] lived there permanently and they treated him well. I was in the monastery and after mother passed away, the rich family did not take care [of me] and [I] did not have warm clothes for the winter or appropriate clothes for the summer. [I] faced some problems.**

Q: It sounds like your childhood days were very hard.

**#9B: Yes, [I] faced problems. My father had constructed a house in town and taken my mother as *nama* [there], while he lived in the actual house and visited on and off. After my mother expired, he left one of his daughters in the house where my mother lived.**

Q: His daughter?

**#9B: Yes, father had many daughters from the first family. [She] lived there with a husband. So when we went to my mother's house as children, [we] never wished to stay there.**

Q: And that's why you had to go and live with your grandparents.

00:07:58

**#9B: [I] actually grew up with [my] grandparents and later became a monk at the monastery. Then I left the local monastery and went to Sera [Monastery] in Lhasa.**

Q: When your own dear mother died early, at an early age from alcohol poisoning it sounds like, was that a common occurrence? Did people get sick from drinking this *chang*? Did that happen very often, [fall] sick and die?

**#9B: Generally it was the custom in our region to drink a lot of *chang*. Young girls gathered together and drank a lot of *chang* and strong tea. These were the causes [of**

**mother's death] together with not maintaining good health. Following death it was the practice to take the bodies to the mountain. When I was young, after mother's passing away I heard that her liver had greatly enlarged.**

Q: I see. So it was cirrhosis of the liver it sounds like. In the monastery, it was the local monastery where you first went. How many years was that again?

[Interpreter to interviewer]: At age 8.

Q: At age 8 to the local monastery, and how long did you stay there?

00:10:19

**#9B: I became a monk at age 8 and lived there until age...8 to 25. No, not 25. [I] lived in this monastery until around 23. Then I left for Sera in Lhasa. The uprising took place in the year '59 and at 25 [I] came to India.**

Q: Can you tell us a little bit about what you were learning and studying in the local monastery that would have been the Lhatse Choedhe?

**#9B: At that time we did not have the custom of learning to write in the monasteries. Tibetan writing was not taught. The practice was to learn to read and memorize the scriptures a lot.**

Q: Did that come easy to you or was it difficult to memorize?

**#9B: It was very difficult. There would be a page this long [gestures off camera]. A [page of] scripture has six *ting* and one had to memorize three *ting* a day.**

Q: What's *ting*?

**#9B: *Ting* is a line of words. There would be six of that.**

Q: Pages in a scripture?

00:12:30

**#9B: There would be six lines in the long scripture and one must memorize three of that. There were no clocks in Tibet then and one memorized the scriptures according to the sun.**

Q: Did you have your own teacher or was there a teacher for a group of boys?

**#9B: The local monastery had around 500 monks and there were two groups similar to a class that engaged in memorizing the texts. Most of the children joined these two groups. I memorized in my teacher's quarters. Because I did the memorization and possessed good aptitude and was reticent, [I] did not suffer much beating.**

Q: You must have done very well to not get beaten.

**#9B: Yes, [I] was reticent and did not have any scars on my head from beating. There was an older brother from the rich family who shares the same father with me and a different mother—the father of the rich family [I] mentioned earlier—who was a monk in the same quarters with me and he received a lot of beatings.**

Q: These texts that you were memorizing, did they begin to have meaning for you? Did your teacher help you understand what you were memorizing or were they just words?

00:15:31

**#9B: At the time when we were small there never was the practice of giving any explanation. One must take an annual test of 60-70 pages. After one has memorized the 60-70 pages, a test must be taken. How the test takes place is like this. There were around 500 monks in the monastery. Tea would be served during a prayer assembly. Six cups of tea was served in the first morning assembly during which all the monks remained silent. Within the monastery [assembly hall] stood a long pillar near which you recited. It took around five days. The entire 60 pages must be recited. There were eight similar tests, tests in memorization.**

Q: Eight times, you mean in your lifetime or in a year or in that day? I'm not sure.

**#9B: There are eight tests in our local monastery. If you failed you were not eligible to join the debate school.**

Q: Was the annual test taken eight times?

**#9B: No, not eight times in a year. One set [of memorization portion] took nearly a year. One began as a small child of 6 or 7 and it took until one was 12 or 13.**

Q: It took around eight years to take the eight tests?

**#9B: It takes nearly eight years.**

00:18:19

**If one managed to pass the tests in four years, one can join the debate group. If one does not manage to pass, he engages in performing some tasks for the monastery like working in the kitchen or taking letters to and fro. Our town is known as Gyangtse and one must engage in taking letters to Shigatse, Lhasa and other places. Those that failed must perform these duties.**

Q: So they were still able to be monks. They just had to use their abilities in a different way?

**#9B: Yes, they must perform some duties, any kind of duties for the monastery that may arise. [They] could not join the debate sessions. We have the *choera* 'debate session' here [at Sera Monastery]. [They] would not be able to join it.**

Q: Was there any shame or embarrassment because people have different capacities for memorizing. So if one could not do this, were they looked down upon or did you say, “That’s your karma”?

00:20:20

**#9B: There was nothing like that. They have to take another route, as they cannot join the debate group. They used to be called *dhopdhop* ‘obstinate monks’ in Tibet.**

Q: *Dhopdhop*.

**#9B: Known as *dhopdhop* and they tied their dress in a different fashion from the regular one. [They] wore it with many pleats, as was the tradition in Tibet.**

Q: What happened to you?

**#9B: From a young age I took the four tests and could join the group that studied the scriptures. Not only was I in the scripture group, I entered Sera Jey in Lhasa. During the uprising in ’59 I fled from Sera.**

Q: Was there any difference in the boys that came from, say, very wealthy families and boys that came from very poor families? Was there any group that did better in the memorization or did it, even really a rich boy could have a hard time and even a very poor boy could become very bright in memorizing?

00:22:30

**#9B: There were various types. A boy from a rich family was not necessarily smart. There were many from poor families that were good at the scriptures.**

Q: Even in our country America there is an understanding that some children have reading disorders called dyslexia or attention deficit disorders. Was there any recognition that some children might have these kinds of difficulties in learning?

**#9B: There were some weak students that fled from the monastery back home. Take for instance my older brother. My father’s home is around 20 kilometers from the monastery. Elder brother fled during a very cold period in winter but could not reach home. The Brahmaputra River flows through our region and he spent a cold night on the banks.**

Q: Did he make it home okay?

**#9B: [He] reached home but our father was very strict. [I] used to be very scared of Father when I was small. The very next day along with a servant father brought [him] back to the monastery. Father rode the horse with the servant behind him and behind who sat older brother. [He] was brought back the next day to the monastery.**

Q: How much longer did your brother stay in the monastery?

00:25:56

**#9B: Older brother was later able to join the debate group. [He] did okay.**

Q: Did he remain a monk his whole life or did he leave?

**#9B: [Speaks before question is translated] Older brother did not possess good aptitude to memorize the texts.**

Q: Did older brother remain a monk or did [he] leave the monastery?

**#9B: [He] did not leave and was a monk then. When the attack happened in Lhasa, our local monastery was nearly closed. Older brother then left monkhood, left monkhood and had many children. He is expired now. There are the children.**

**His wife who is 80 years old still survives.**

Q: Who?

**#9B: The wife of my older brother that left monkhood still survives. [She] is 80...81 years old.**

Q: Did you ever begin to understand the dharma besides memorizing and debating? Did the dharma, the teachings of the Buddha, ever begin to make you feel very happy or very glad that you had those teachings or was it all work, all memorization?

00:28:02

**#9B: I went to Lhasa and lived there for around two years. I was there for around two years but from my part [I] was not able to study the scriptures very well. Time sort of passed and then [I] fled from there. [I] could not complete the studies and later we arrived in Buxar West Bengal]. We came to Buxar in India and I lived in Buxar from '60 to '69. [I] studied a little bit while in Buxar. However, I have not been able to complete studies because from '69 I went to the Central Institute for Higher Tibetan Studies in Varanasi [Uttar Pradesh]. [I] was nine years in Varanasi and a Tibetan teacher for 22 and half years.**

**I do not feel I studied the Buddha dharma to the best of my ability and regret it very much now. However, there was no time since [I] had taken a different route. Buxar [monks] were shifted here in 1970. Had I been living there then, I would have had the chance to complete my scripture studies. But I had gone to Varanasi and could not complete my studies.**

Q: What was going on in Lhasa that made it impossible for you to study for those two years that sort of preoccupied you? What was happening and what years are we talking about? 195...what?

**#9B: It was probably 1957 that I went there [Lhasa]. It was the winter of '57 and then I was [in Lhasa] in '58 and fled in '59.**

Q: What was happening in Lhasa then?

00:30:57

**#9B:** When [I] fled in '59 there was a large number of Chinese in Lhasa. There was disagreement between the Chinese and Tibetans. Disagreement in the sense that the Chinese were doing what they liked and the Tibetans stood ground. There were a lot of talks about an impending war. Finally, when the Chinese invited His Holiness the Dalai Lama to the army camp, the people requested His Holiness not to go and stopped it. When all the people collected at the Norbulingka, the uprising took place.

Q: Where were you when that was happening? In 1959 you fled, were you in Sera Monastery?

**#9B:** I do not know the exact date the attack took place in March. That evening, we of the class called Shung Sarpa [freshmen of Pharchin class] were in the *choera* 'debating courtyard.' The Shung Sarpa and Uma Sarpa [freshmen of Uma class] must participate in debating alternately throughout the night at the *choera*. The Shung Sarpa students were in the *choera* the night of the attack. The session must be conducted throughout the night in the *choera* without falling silent. The attack and shelling on Lhasa took place around 2 o'clock.

Then we fled from the *choera*. We fled from the *choera* and were ensconced in our quarters. We were among the younger lot and were not confident enough to go anywhere. Some [monks] went to the Norbulingka and to the Potala Palace to get weapons. A large number of Sera monks did that. The attack took place at night and the whole of the next day we remained in [our] quarters at Sera. The Potala was shelled and the dust...one can see the Potala Palace directly from Sera. At times due to smoke and dust from the shelling one could not see [the Potala Palace] and then again it could be clearly seen. We were ensconced in the rooms.

00:34:57

The day following the attack many older monks...The next day Sera was shelled many times but the monastery was not damaged much as most of [the shells] fell on the mountain. Some remarked it was the Tibetan Government that fired to indicate [the monks] to come to fetch guns. So many older monks left through the plains to get artilleries...there may not be artilleries but guns. Numerous monks left and returned in the evening. Once again Sera was shelled many times in the evening. As we stayed ensconced in the rooms, the windows rattled from the impact of the firing. It was very scary.

Q: And then what happened?

**#9B:** The whole of the day following the attack [we] remained there. The next evening all the monks of Sera took flight. We too fled the next evening. [We] fled to a place called Thoenung but could not get through.

Q: Where to?

**#9B:** There is a place called Thoenung. It is called Thoenung.

Q: Thoenung?

00:36:46

**#9B: Yes, Thoening. Most [of the monks] fled there and to Phenpo. We, a few of us, took a deviation towards Tsang and reached our village. Otherwise, most of the Sera [monks] fled towards Phenpo and some to the base camp of the *Chushi Gangdrug* [Defend Tibet Volunteer Force].**

Q: How far away was your village?

**#9B: We fled a day and night without any food. We were around 10 people hailing from Tsang and then we reached Tsurphu. [We] came upon a river in the evening. The water came up to here [interpreter interprets as “up to your waist”]. We had reached Tsurphu. At Tsurphu His Holiness the 16<sup>th</sup> Karmapa had just fled and here we could get some *tsampa* ‘flour made from roasted barley’ and things to eat. Then we went beyond Tsurphu and finally reached Shigatse.**

Q: Why did you think it was important to go back to your village?

00:39:19

**#9B: Because we knew nothing else besides the village. A major part of the monks of Sera had gone to Phenpo. Most of the monks of Sera hailed from Kham and Amdo and there was no way [they] could go back because the Chinese army was coming from there. So [they] were forced to flee where [they] did. A small number of us Tsang [monks] journeyed towards Tsang. We were a small number from Tsang.**

Q: And that’s near Shigatse?

**#9B: Our village is near Shigatse, a little further away from Shigatse. Shigatse comes under Tsang [jurisdiction].**

Q: What happened when you got to your village? What did you see? What happened to you?

**#9B: After we reached the village...village in the sense, [we] had returned to the monastery, the local monastery. [Monks] of the local monastery had no correct knowledge about the attacks taking place in Lhasa and they were holding group prayers to avert an attack. The prayers had not been beneficial.**

Q: Had they heard about it [the attack]?

00:41:07

**#9B: Yes, [they] had heard. Having heard about it they were holding prayers, holding prayer assemblies day and night and chanting prayers. There was nothing else to do.**

**After our arrival everything became clear to them because we had escaped from there.**

Q: And then what happened?

**#8B:** Then we stayed together with the monks of the monastery for 3-4 months. And then the Chinese arrived in our monastery. The Chinese said, “Revolution of Democracy will be launched and you have to undergo education.” [We] were separate into different classes. Then [we] were taught the process of revolution of democracy and other propaganda lessons. They gave a lot of talks for nearly two months. There were classes day and night.

Q: How did they start the revolution in your monastery? What did you see and what happened to you?

**#8B:** During the Revolution of Democracy it was portrayed that there would be no religious [freedom] on one hand but on the other hand [the Chinese] said that [we] could remain as monks in the monastery. [They] said such things and finally from the 500 monks in the monastery, around 400 returned to [their respective] villages. Around 100 of us remained to enjoy the right to religious practice. We were nearly 15 monks from Sera. The older ones believed it was no good to stay back and they planned and fled to India.

Q: What were the conditions for the 100 that chose to remain? They said you couldn’t practice religion, so what were you allowed to do in the monastery during the day or night?

00:45:02

**#8B:** They did not exactly say that one could not practice religion. It was portrayed that religion does not exist and that one must return to one’s village due to which most [of the monks] left. They [the Chinese] said, “You can remain and practice but unlike earlier times there will be no food provided to you.” In the past the monastery used to provide. “There will be no [food provided]. You must cultivate lands.” From the 100 of us, around 40 were older monks that had earlier held responsibilities in the monastery and 60 of us were younger monks. I stayed back with them.

A group of older monks that had returned from Sera planned to flee to India and one told me, “Now it is futile to remain. It is good if [you] come to India shortly.” I did not understand and stayed back with the group. They [Chinese] allotted us lands that we cultivated. We were given lands. When there used to be around 500 monks in the past, the toilets were many. We entered [the pits] and removed [dirt from] the toilets, packed them in sacks and transported on carts to the fields.

00:46:25

As soon as we got up in the morning [we] donned monks’ robes and assembled for prayers in the monastery. After the assembly got over [we] removed the robes, put on pants and shirts and worked [in this way] for a year until harvest time.

Q: This was working in the fields...was not something that the monks were used to doing. So who directed them how to work in the fields?

**#9B:** There was no layperson to direct us but we had seen laypeople working in the fields in the past. Based on that we did all the work. We worked there for almost a year until harvest time. At the time of harvest a new [Chinese] official arrived. He was to carry out enquiries. The second part of the working committee had arrived that said, “You are no

longer to work.” We were interned and classes held. “You have not received enough education. You have to be re-educated.” We were held for nearly two months. There were around 40 senior monks who were criticized and subjected to *thamzing* ‘struggle session’ and such things. Some bad monks among those monks that had left in the past were put into our class who said, “What did you do during the freedom to practice period? You performed a lot of prayers.” They said such things. Finally, all the 40 monks were subjected to *thamzing* and imprisoned.

Q: They brought some of the monks who had left earlier and had they come back to the monastery or were they caught in the villages? I didn’t...

00:50:52

**#9B: They were the ones that conducted *thamzing* and voiced strong opinions [against the older monks]. Some of them were put into [our] class and they were to educate us. “Didn’t you do this?” [The Chinese] made them question [the older monks].**

Q: Had the Chinese trained them?

**#9B: It seemed like they were trained and told to conduct *thamzing*.**

Q: This was after Lhasa was attacked. So we’re now at 1960, 1961?

**#9B: Lhasa had been attacked. It was around ‘60. It was ’60. The attack happened in ’59 and it was ’60 when we were in Tsang.**

Q: Did you witness any of the *thamzing* that was going on and who was being subjected to that?

**#9B: Among us were monks who had in the past served as managers and stewards. They were subjected to *thamzing*. Some [of the bad monks] did it. Laypeople also came to conduct *thamzing*. Yes, came to conduct *thamzing*. During a *thamzing* the past aristocrats of the Tibetan Government, they were named and stated how bad they were. Such things were said.**

Q: What kind of beatings took place and where was this done that you saw with your own eyes?

00:53:34

**#9B: Beat in the sense...they [the victims] sat bowed below a table while the speaker stood up saying, “You have done this and this in the past.” *Thamzing* is criticizing. They were criticized a lot. All the people had been called and collected at the *thamzing* venue and [the victims] sat stooped below a table. Then one by one people stood up and did it [criticized them]. There were cases of assaults too. The 10<sup>th</sup> Panchen Lama was subjected to *thamzing*, beaten and a lot of things. Presently the picture is there at the door of the Tashi Lhunpo [Monastery]. The picture is there.**

Q: Picture of what?

**#9B: The picture of the 10<sup>th</sup> Panchen Lama when [he] was subjected to *thamzing*. The picture can be seen there now at the Tashi Lhunpo.**

Q: It didn't happen in your monastery just in the 10<sup>th</sup> Panchen Lama's monastery?

**#9B: It did not happen in our monastery. In our monastery around 40 were subjected to *thamzing* and imprisoned.**

Q: Why did they pick on these 40 monks?

00:55:38

**#9B: They [were picked] because earlier they had served in various capacities in the monastery. [They were the ones] in the monastery that had refused the introduction of Revolution of Democracy. It was called Revolution of Democracy. "We refuse the Revolution of Democracy. Please postpone it," there had been such talks in the monastery earlier. Now these were the bad [monks]. Since they were not happy with the Revolution of Democracy, they were the bad ones and subjected to *thamzing*.**

Q: The other monks, what kind of feelings were you having when you saw your teachers, your revered leaders being beaten? What did you feel as a monk and as a person?

**#9B: We would naturally feel a lot of grief. We felt grief but could not speak about it. Should they [the Chinese] come to know [we] had spoken about it; there was fear of imprisonment.**

Q: Absolutely. It sounds like they also made some of the monks be involved in the *thamzing* or some of the local people were made to do that?

00:57:47

**#9B: During a *thamzing* all the people and monks had to gather together. Then the person to be subjected to *thamzing* was called there [and charged], "When you were the district administrator/manager of the monastery, didn't you oppress the people?" Such things were said.**

Q: So what happens to you after these 40 people are taken off to prison? What happens to the monastery then?

**#9B: Now there were around 60 monks left in the monastery. Then what we stated was, "It is absolutely certain that religion does not exist. We want to go to the village." Instead of returning to our homes [we] went to another village. In the other village [we] were given houses, like a cowshed or a donkey shed. [We] went to another village and I stayed there for a few months. Then a colleague and I escaped. Likewise, the others escaped. Many escapees from our village did not manage. From the 500 monks hardly 15 from our village managed to escape.**

Q: Where?

00:59:23

**#9B: To India. Around 10 have arrived.**

01:00:03

**The majority [of the monks] married. Those of my age have died since long.**

**It so happened that in the 1960s and '70s there was no food and many died of starvation. That happened in our village. There were cases of deaths in the fields while plowing. When others went to the dead person's house, there were just some dry radishes and bones but no *tsampa* 'flour made from roasted barley' or anything else. Many died in that way.**

Q: How did you decide to escape? What did you do?

**#9B: Initially, my colleague and I planned with 10 other people to escape. However, they were not able to manage. So I and another who was 7 years older than me fled together. We fled together at night. It was around the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the 12<sup>th</sup> month of the Tibetan lunar calendar. Rivers were frozen and it was extremely cold.**

Q: Rivers were frozen?

01:01:45

**#9B: Rivers were frozen like stones. [We] fled during such a time at night. We had never been around those regions in the past and did not know the way. We planned to reach Shakhumbu in Nepal and escaped with that aim. There is a snowy mountain in our region called Gangphuri. We had heard that there were nomads close to the snowy mountain and it would be okay to stay for some time with the nomads. We journeyed that night and the following day.**

**The next day [we] could see a snowy mountain. Believing that to be Gangphuri we went there. Around 2 o'clock in the night we reached the top of the snowy mountain. However, once on the top there was no way of advancing in any direction! [We] were ignorant and then returned, made some tea and returned. Then after some time my colleague and I lost each other along the way. [We] became separated. I, being scared moved speedily up the hill while the companion was older and got left behind. Now I had no companion. [I] faced great problems during the journey.**

Q: When you got separated, did you ever find each other again?

**#9B: [We] met up later along the way. That night I climbed up the hill and then came down walking through snow and after a while fell asleep from exhaustion. Instead of taking the normal route, we had planned to go through the mountains but did not know the way. The next day when I woke up I was close to a motor road. Then I followed the motor road and reached a village. I made some enquiries. In Tsang the first Losar 'Tibetan New Year' is celebrated on the 1<sup>st</sup> of the 12<sup>th</sup> month and they were celebrating the conclusion of Losar... This was a different region and they were happily celebrating Losar. I had lost my colleague and spent a night there.**

01:05:41

The next day [I] left from there and walking for around 20 kilometers reached another village. In this village [I] was requested to read prayers and stayed 2-3 days. [I] read Gyaythong ‘summary of the Prajnaparamita in 8000 verses’ and Zungdhue ‘collection of Buddhist religious works’ and stayed 2-3 days. And then I arrived in a bigger town called Dhingri. I requested for a divination from an old man who normally did divination. [I] asked, “I have lost my companion. Will [we] be able to meet or not?” [The divination foretold], “Yes, you will meet the companion.”

Q: What did you say about the Losar?

**#9B:** I had left after Losar but in the south they were still celebrating Losar. [The divination foretold] that [I] would meet my colleague. I retraced my steps from Dhingri where I stayed 2-3 days reading prayers. To get to Shakhumbu one must cross over the Khumbu Gangla, a mountain pass. At Dhingri they said, “There are [people] going to Shakhumbu tomorrow driving yaks. You can go with them.” I decided to go with them and did so in the morning. I spent the night beyond the mountain.

1:06:58

My colleague arrived at the place from where I left in the morning. Upon [my colleague’s] enquiry, “Did a monk pass by?” “A monk spent three days here and left for Dhingri. This morning they crossed the pass. There is a village called Shalung beyond the mountain and you can meet [him] there tonight. They will not travel further than that.” After hearing this, my colleague set off at once.

I had some stuff that [I] threw away along the way and now possessed nothing. On reaching the village, the yak drivers engaged in looking after the yaks, while not having anything, I went to the village to beg for some *tsampa*. Someone came and said, “Come, your colleague has arrived.” My companion had arrived there.

Q: What was that reunion like? Was he upset that you were ahead of him or just happy to see you?

**#9B:** Where nomads used to live there are piles of dung. [He] said that he made a fire hoping that I would come down on seeing the fire but I did not see any fire. [He] said [I] was speeding up the mountain.

Q: Did the two of you continue your journey together then?

01:10:39

**#9B:** [We] met and did not leave with the yak drivers but rested for a day or two. And then continued. In two days [we] reached the base of the mountain pass of Shakhumbu. There were caves formed in the rocks where [we] spent a night. We spent the night there and could look for goat droppings to make a fire.

The next day [we] had to trek through snow. [We] trekked through snow for quite a while. For around half a kilometer [we] walked over snow. There were crevices that were one or

two stories deep. On the top of the pass was a dead man. [He] had frozen to death. The next day we continued our journey. Both of us did not face any problems along the trek. After covering the snowy path, [we] had to walk on rocky surfaces. And then once again [we] spent a night in a rock cave.

Q: And then, *gen-la*?

**#9B:** Then in another two days we arrived at the first village of Solokhumbu [Nepal]. They grow a lot of potatoes in the fields there. The potato is very tasty unlike the potatoes found in Tibet and India. One could subsist on just potatoes. In Khumbu there are villages like Thangthoe and Thangmay. We stayed around six months in Khumbu.

It was mentioned that going to India would mean getting sick from the heat. [We] spent a long time in Solokhumbu. It is in the south and all those from the southern part of Tibet had arrived in Shakhumbu. They had pitched tents with...[not discernible] inside it and had meat. We were from the north, which is right in the middle. The southerners were living in style there. We went there to read prayers and they provided [us] meat and much food.

Q: This is in India?

01:15:02

**#9B:** It is in Nepalese territory, Nepalese territory.

Q: So you have left Tibet and you're now in Nepal.

**#9B:** [I] had arrived [in Nepal]. We were very relieved now because there had been great fear during the journey.

Q: Yes, there was a great deal of relief to arrive in a safe place.

**#9B:** Yes, we were very happy being young then. [I] was 25 years old. My colleague is seven years older. We were extremely happy hoping to see His Holiness the Dalai Lama and thinking of going to India. [We] were happy.

Q: And so you are now 78 and we know many things have happened between that time, but maybe that is a good place to end this part of your story.

**#9B:** Okay.

Q: I want to thank you for sharing your story with us and we appreciate all that we learned about Tibet's history from you.

**#9B:** Okay. Thank you.

Q: Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW