

Lobsang Namgyod  
Tibetan Children's' Village  
Dharamsala, India  
June 23, 2011  
Interviewer: Rachel Atterstrom

:07 Where were you born?

I was born in Tibet.

:10 Where in Tibet?

In the eastern part of Tibet, just near the borders of China.

:17 And when were you born?

Sorry?

:20 When were you born?

In 1985

:23 1985?

No, 1988. Not 1985. 1988.

:27 Oh 1988, okay. Do you have brothers and sisters?

Yes, I have one older brother and one younger brother in Tibet.  
Both of them are in Tibet.

:37 They're still in Tibet?

Yes.

:40 Are your parents still in Tibet?

Yes, both of my parents are in Tibet.

:43 How did your parents earn their living?

My father is a driver and my mother is just a housewife. They do some farm work and stuff like this.

:55 Okay. Did you attend school in Tibet?

Yes, just elementary school plus sixth. I just learned a little bit of Chinese.

1:05 You learned Chinese there?

Yes

1:07 Can you describe what the curriculum was like?

Sorry?

1:10 Can you describe what school was like?

School? At that time I felt that school was very good.

1:15 That it was good?

The teachers were very good, I felt. But nowadays I feel that school is not good because they just give the Chinese education that is all.

1:26 Did you learn anything Tibetan in school?

No, definitely not, always not, always Chinese. I also felt that I was like Chinese, like this.

1:34 You felt Chinese?

Yeah.

1:39 Can you tell me about your memories from living in Tibet?

I feel that my life in Tibet was quite fun and very happy. At that time I don't know anything about Tibet and China and the difference between Tibet and China and also the Chinese occupation of Tibet like this. I forget this kind of .....

2:01 You said your family is still (Have him wait...) Oh, you said your family is still living in Tibet, do you still keep in contact with them?

Yes, yes I –

2:14 How?

Sometimes I just call them, sometimes get emails, and sometimes get (2:20) .... Chat or google chat or skype chat like this.

2:24 And how are they doing?

I hear that they're quite fine. There are not problems in families and every family member is very fine and happy.

2:36 When did you leave Tibet? When did you leave?

After, when do you mean?

2:48 How old were you when you left?

15 years.

2:54 15 years old?

Yes 15 years old when I left Tibet.

2:57 Why did you leave?

I just dropped out of school when I was 14 years old and then at that time I did not have anything to do, so my parents feel that it is better for me to get education. Then under supervision of my grandparent they sent me to India for education because they heard that in India every Tibetan child can get a free education.

3:23 From where did you leave? Did you leave directly from home or did you go somewhere first?

Yes, directly from home to get the passport at that time.

3:33 You got a passport?

Yeah a passport because in my hometown, in my area, there were no political problems. There it is very easy for people to get passport

3:45 Okay. Did you leave with a group of people or did you go alone?

Yes I was alone.

3:52 You were alone.

Yes, my grandfathers contacted, and introduced me to a lot of people. He told me to go there, to go there, so then I did not have any problems.

4:07 Okay. How did you cross over from Tibet into India?

For me that was a very easy part because I had to go by a bus, and a train but some people I heard that they faced a lot of problem because they just come across the Himalayan mountains. But I did not face any kind of problem on the way from Tibet to Nepal.

4:36 How long did that journey take?

The journey took almost 10 days I think.

4:43 Almost 10 days?

Yes, from my hometown to Lhasa I went by a big (4:49)..... it took almost 4 days. Then in Lhasa I just stayed for 3 days. Then from Lhasa to (4:55).... One night and then from (4:57) .... To Nepal it's few hours like this.

4:59 Okay. Did you have to pay for your traveling?

Yes, definitely. I had to pay.

5:06 How much? Do you remember how much you had to pay?

From my area to Lhasa, my father already paid the money to the driver and from Lhasa to (5:17) ....it cost 300 Chinese Yen and from (5:20) ... to Nepal it's one, it ended in Nepal it's Nepal is (5:25)

5:29 Did you encounter any difficulties on this or was it...

No, I did not face any kind of problem but in (5:39) ... I actually did not face any problems but my friend he suffered to (5:47) .... But he said that he just got a document from the Chinese had been selected. Then he told the house manager there that he wanted to go to India to visit His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and the very next day two people knocked on our door and took him away. I don't know where he is.

6:07 You haven't spoken to him since?

Yes, yes. I haven't had the chance because our language is very different. He used his own local language and I used my local language. He didn't understand the Chinese language, and I only know the Chinese language when I keep contact with other people.

6:24 Okay. Where did you arrive after you left Tibet?

Where, you mean?

6:32 Where? I think you said Nepal.

Yes

6:34 Where in Nepal did you arrive?

In Nepal. at the Tibetan refugee center.

6:38 Can you describe what that was like?

I did not feel that that the Tibetan refugee center was very good at that time because in Tibet we had a lot of things to do and the parents give out the best food and everything. But I do feel that it was very good because many people at the refugee center faced a lot of problems because of the Nepal policy and Nepal police. They are a lot of the problem in Nepal.

7:05 Did you encounter any of these problems?

No, no, no.

7:08 Personally?

No.

7:09 No...

I did not have any problems. Also the facility gave out a lot of their things, even if they did not have money or clothes and shoes. All things they provided for us.

7:20 How long did you stay in Nepal?

In Nepal, 15 days.

7:25 15 days...

Yeah

7:26 Where did you go from there?

From there to Delhi.

7:33 To Delhi?

Yes, from Delhi to Dharamsala (maybe) (7:36) and from Dharamsala to ....(7:38). This is the place where I have studied for almost 7 years.

7:45 Can you tell me a little bit about your education in India? What you've been doing?

Right now I am not an educated person. I do not get the education that I want to get but I feel that education standard is quite good because if I lived in Tibet I would be nothing. I would just be what I was in past. But now I know a lot of things even just writing and reading. It's not quite as good as other students and other people but I feel that I'm quite educated because I learn a lot about Tibet, a lot about the Tibetan Buddhism and tradition and Tibetan culture. If I lived in Tibet then I would know nothing about this even though Tibetan Buddhism is my culture. I can recognize it because of reading you know.

8:47 Did you say that you were educated in a TCV or TCA school?

TCV

8:54 TCV?

Yes, TCV.

8:55 What was that like?

I found that TCV feels like my home, the second one. I consider TCV as my second home and the members and the staff members and the staff and the teachers are like my second parent. They are very caring and very loving and very good to the students, especially students who come from Tibet. They know they have a lot of the problems, mentally, physically and financially so they treat every student very good, especially the students who come from Tibet. They are very good to us.

9:28 How has that education prepared you for your life in exile?

Actually, I do not want to live in exile. After graduation I manage to get an .....(9:41), I want to go back, I want to go back to Tibet to do something there. But I feel that I can, I can become self ....

9:47 Sorry.

I'm sorry.

9:50 Okay go on.

Yes, I feel that the education I learn here can make me self reliant. I can do what I want to do in the future. I do not want to depend on other people for my living. I think I can help other people in terms of education especially people in Tibet that do not know anything about Tibet. The people, especially people in my area, they do not know anything about Tibet. They just consider themselves as Chinese, so I can use my education to teach those students, the younger generation, I think.

10:23 How would you say that Chinese has affected Tibetan students in Tibet?

Affected?

10:31 Affected them.



I feel that their education, the education provided in the Chinese schools make the Tibetan student feel like a Chinese student. They do not feel or have sense of nationalism and a sense of love for their own country.

10:47 Do you view that as a negative thing?

Oh, definitely. I feel that is very bad. That is ....(10:53) of Chinese.

10:55 Why?

Because they do not provide us with the chance to learn our own language. They just make Chinese language disappear in school and there's not... In some other places they have Tibetan language taught in the schools but in my hometown there's not Tibetan language. People used to feel that Tibetan language and that Tibetan is just a .... For... (11:20) and then none like this, so that is very bad. I feel we must learn Tibetan inside Tibet and also that school must provide Tibetan language and Tibetan teaching in school.

11:39 You mentioned that you want to go back to Tibet. Is that to teach? Is that what you were saying?

Yeah I want to go back to Tibet in order to help the Tibetan people. To use my education and what I have learned here, especially from His Holiness the Dalai Lama and from the TCV. Many people feel that people living in India are very poor; they don't have anything. They just have nothing because the Chinese government gives a lot of information to the people so they feel that Tibetan refugees in India face a lot of difficulties. They do not have anything like this so I want to use all this knowledge, the things that I have seen, what I have heard, and what I learned and impart this skill of knowledge to the Tibetan people. That makes me feel very happy, taking hope will .... (12:35) the mind.

12:38 Okay. We tend to simplify the Tibet conflict into two camps, autonomy and independence, would you say that's correct?

Mmm, and I agree with an autonomous Tibet.

12:58 You feel autonomous Tibet?

Yes.

13:00 Why?

Because there is almost no chance of getting independence, from my view point. There is more hope for autonomy because the Chinese say that Tibet, that they are giving Tibet autonomy but the autonomy given by them and what we think as autonomy are totally different. The degree is different because they just give autonomy to Lhasa areas but not all three provinces of Tibet. I think that is easy to get but not is the easiest way.

13:34 How would you define a true autonomy?

How, autonomy means that all the people of Tibet, I mean the people living in all three different provinces of the Tibet get the chance to, they have the right to protect their language, to preserve their culture and learn their religion. And they can live in a place happy like they were living in the past.

14:09 Okay. Tibetans recently elected a new prime minister, Lobsang Sangay. He's only the second prime minister, he's young and not from the monastic community. What do you think is the significance of this?

I feel that this proves the authenticity of democracy and gives a message to the Chinese people that what we are doing here is pure democracy. There is no bias, there is no nepotism, and there is no favoritism. We are doing what democracy stands for.

14:47 His Holiness recently announced his retirement from political life, um, how do you feel about this?

Yeah, I feel that it's the time for His Holiness the Dalai Lama to retire from political life because His Holiness the Dalai Lama is also immortal. One day he will .... (15:15). When he is present if there is a loophole in the function of the government then he can guide them and he can advise them. If he does not retire from politics, if he retired just before his death then we may face a lot of problems and people may not select or they may not accept the newly elected people. If His Holiness the Dalai Lama advises people to do this and this, then Tibetan people will definitely follow his helper.

15:54 So do you think that His Holiness should play a more, should continue to play an active role in politics?

I feel that His Holiness will play an active role because he is part of the Tibetan people. He also has the right and responsibility as a Tibetan. As long as freedom is the Tibetan problem, the Tibetan issue is not resolved, and every Tibetan has the responsibility and every Tibetan should play an active role in order to get our freedom back.

16:30 What kind of role do you play in getting freedom back?

You mean me?

16:36 Personally, yes you.

Yes, personally I study very hard right now because I do not have any influence to do big things. The main thing is to get an education. If I have a good education, then I can do better in the future. I feel that studying very hard and getting a good education is very important. Recently I study very hard that is, I think, the role of the student.

17:08 Are you engaged in any sort of political activity?

Yes, definitely. I like participating in politics very much. In fact if there are any protests then I just participate, if there's any .....(17:28)

17:36 Are you a Buddhist?

Yes.

17:41 Practicing?

Yes.

17:43 Yes...

But I don't feel that I'm the ....(17:46)

17:47 You don't feel....

Because Buddhism is not easy to practice. Buddhism is not everybody's cup of tea. It is very difficult to practice because it deals with our mental transformations. To transform our mind, to transform our heart that is very difficult, but I'm doing that.

18:04 Do you actively pursue the practice of nonviolence?

Yes, definitely. I feel that nonviolence is the best weapon in this 21<sup>st</sup> century, in this century of peace and in this century of doubt.

18:18 Do you feel that nonviolence will work against the Chinese government?

Sorry?

18:23 Do you feel that practicing nonviolence will work in fighting against Chinese government?

Yes, yes, definitely. Right now the Chinese government is a communist government and the communist government will never accept nonviolence. What they use is violence, you can see it in the news. If there are any protests in Tibet they post the marshal laws and the killing and the beating everywhere. I think the nonviolence will triumph in the future.

19:02 In your opinion what has been the role of the Dalai Lama in shaping Tibetan culture in exile?

You mean the Dalai Lama?

19:13 The role of His Holiness...

His Holiness played a very huge role. What Tibet is and who we as Tibetans are is because of His Holiness. If His Holiness did not escape from Tibet in 1959, I think that Tibet would be no more in this world. It's because of His Holiness escape from Tibet into India in 1959 that you can see what Tibet is today and that Tibetan culture and Tibetan religion all are alive. It is not dead. I mean all this is because of His Holiness. Also you see that when there is no democracy, it is not very easy to get for people. People have to fight for this, to sacrifice their life, but in our case it is different. His Holiness gave us democracy, just like a gift to children.

20:12 Do you think that the current Dalai Lama will return to Tibet?

That is my hope and my belief. I believe this because His Holiness has announced that he will live up to 130 years old and I believe that he can. That is the hope of people both inside and outside of Tibet.

20:39 Regarding your return to Tibet, do you have any idea of when that will happen?

Yeah, yes, I want to go to Tibet this year.

20:46 This year?

But unfortunately I didn't get a passport, and now I plan to go back to Tibet after graduation. I mean to get my bachelors degree, so I can do a little bit better. If I just return from school I mean just after finishing my ....(21:03) then I do not get areas of what to do in Tibet like this. If I get a certain degree, then I can get a good job. If I have a good job, then I can help other people. If I'm not able to stand on my feet then it would be difficult .

21:28 Is it difficult to return to Tibet for people in exile?

Yes, nowadays, I do not know what the policy of the Chinese is. It is very easy for Tibetan people especially from here to go back to Tibet. I think it's just a ....(21:46) like Chinese government because they want the refugee people....They want the people in exile, the refugees in India to know how much improvement there is in Tibet. I think it's because of this, but I have applied for a passport, so I think I can.

22:13 Okay. Do you have anything that you would like to add, anything that you would like to share that we've missed in this interview?

I usually find that for Tibetan students there is not much help. I want you people to impart your knowledge and impart your education in a political role and to make your country better and say what your hope is for the future. How you get an education for the benefit for not only yourself but for the people of the world in general and the people of your country, United States of America in politics. That is very important.

23:02 So you would like to see a bigger American role in the Tibetan struggle?

Yes, I want you to help us. I mean because America is a superpower in the world. They have the power to influence the Chinese government. It is not just because they have the power. Even though China is one of the fastest emerging economic powers in the world, they have to at least respect America because they are the superpower of the world.

23:28 Alright, all of us involved in the TEXT project would really like to thank you for your time.

Sorry?

23:42 We'd like to thank you for your time.

Oh, you're most welcome

23:45 It means a lot and it was a good interview. Thank you

Thank you very much.