

Ngawang Khetsun  
Drepung Loseling Monastery  
Mundgod, India  
June 18, 2011  
Interviewer: Bobby Howard

00:12 Tell us when you were born  
(00:20) 1941

00:23 Where were you born?  
(00:30) In Tibet

00:36 Go ahead and tell us any memories you have about Tibet,  
tell us what it was like there?

(1:42) When I was 8 years old, in 1949, I became a monk. At  
that time there was harmony and peace in my hometown  
in Tibet.

(2:10) In 1950, I witnessed the Chinese come into my homeland  
and watched my people fight them for 6 months.

(2:26) My hometown is called T????? (2:28)

(2:37) Eventually, we were defeated? (2:40) and 400 of us were  
imprisoned.

(2:58) On a daily basis 90 people were executed. The Chinese  
issued a notice that each family should send their family  
head or otherwise be considered revolutionaries and face  
the consequences.

(3:47) In 1954 the Chinese started the so called "liberation" of  
Tibet. Many people were enslaved and tortured. At that  
time, there was one good family in my village, one  
wealthy family and the Chinese people in the name of  
heaven??? (4:11) enslaved them and tortured them  
especially because of their status.

(4:42) The Chinese wanted to divide society. They singled out  
one family, the Chala??? 94:46) Chalatsong family, and  
they arrested all family members and confiscated all of  
their possessions. They distributed??? (5:10) their things  
to the poor saying "the Chalatsongs have taken  
advantage of you for so long," in order to encourage

animosity and hatred toward this family and the high class in general.

(5:46) In 1959, His Holiness the Dalai Lama was in that by monks in Peking China??? (5:54) and at that time chairman Mosedem??? (5:57) has clearly implicitly said that in Mongol and Tibet in the poison of original spirit??? (6:05)

(6:30) And also the Vice Premiere ----(name) (6:35) clearly said that we should exchange the land of the Tibetan land with the Chinese people Army, in fact they mean Army, so they and then he says have send up over one one one crow??? (7:06) army into Tibet

7:07 Can we pause here and ask questions?

(7:10) Ya

7:11 When the Chinese invaded do you remember how old you were?

(7:19) Just 12

7:20 Tell me a little bit about your parents. Who were your parents, were they or any of your family enslaved by the Chinese?

(7:54) I had a simple family of 6 brothers and 3 sisters. My mother lived past 90 years old, and my parents were not imprisoned nor suffered any especial torture.

(8:37) As I said, the Chinese arrived when I was 12, and my friends and I and other young children used to say things such as “we won’t be defeated because we have the support of America.” So today I am very glad to meet you American people.

(9:24) When I came to Lhasa I remember that the institute aqua??? (9:33) .... We were in the middle of circumambulation, walking around the three rings: outer, middle, and inner. We made a figure of an American in the center ring. People instead of ????? (9:45) ....I saw Chinese people throwing mud at them and saying “we will defeat imperialism from Chinese???? (10:06)

- 10:09 What was it like as a 12 year old in Tibet with an invading force in your homeland?
- (10:53) The area surrounding my village is densely wooded; while our village members went to fight the Chinese Army, the children and elders would seek shelter in the forest for safety and security. From the trees we could watch all of the Chinese forces occupying our home village.
- (11:59) For ?????????????? and uhh ??????? , to Chinese ??? Even after 6 months the Tibetan soldiers were unaware that they would be living in that forest for up to 6 years. Even after leaving my village to go to the monastery I heard talk of how my village knew they could not defeat the Chinese but continued to fight and hide in the woods.
- 12:44 Did your family fight against the Chinese? And if so did they all survive?
- (13:00) Yes, in fact my father went to the resistance.
- 13:05 Your father fought?
- (13:06) Yes, he fought
- (13:26) I went to the resistant army, all we had to fight with was old fashioned guns that can only operate on one cartridge, one bullet at a time. One had to light it to shoot it, these old Tibetan guns. We fought with these, however we did have the advantage of the dense forest to escape into.
- 14:00 Aside from fighting, what did your parents do for a living; how did they earn money?
- (14:12) They were farmers.
- 14:16 Please Continue
- (15: 11) In 1956 at the age of 18, I came to Lhasa in Central Tibet to study Buddhism. When I came to Lhasa I saw Chinese people and army officers paying berrars (15:34) and going to the monasteries to make offerings and other such rituals. Having seen the severe degree of torture inflicted on my home village (15:50), I was surprised to see the deception the Chinese were attempting. I was

- very surprised (16:17) to see them giving off the impression that they were respecting our Tibetan religion.
- (16:46) Initially, the Chinese tried to impress the Tibetan people. They ?????(16:57)... they paid very handsomely to the Tibetan people by going ????? (17:12) letters... they even paid one time to that small bunch of letters so obviously people are very happy you know they are getting (17:32)... You know that famous saying the Chinese people are very grateful and it rains with diamonds??? (17:41) they seem like that they are just trying to impress us and show off ????? (17:53)
- (18:09) I saw though in 1959, and there was a fair appraising??? (18:13) you know, Around one million people were massacred there, and it was in that year that I went into exile.
- (18:47) Coming into exile we had a difficult time at first in ?????? (18:53) and then we were shifted here in 1978. At that time it was dangerous for us; it was (19:00) very bad and (19:09) ... As for Geshe La, at that time there were no good facilities like you see here at Drepung Loseling for studying Buddhism. It was very hot and difficult to study, so very few monks took the path that Geshe La took. He and his classmates had great difficulty in finding ways and time to study and practice Buddhist philosophy. Despite these hardships, he excelled; completed his studies and went on to accomplish many things.
- 19:54 Could you go back to 1959 and explain for us the journey into exile, over the mountains?
- (20:57) Actually, I associated with one former export??? (21:02) of Drepung Loseling Monastery. My older brother was an attendant to him so I along with my brother had the privilege of following the lead of His Holiness Dalai Lama into exile. We had less difficulty coming into exile because we followed him and his party who had come earlier.

- 21:34 So, during your journey into exile your troubles were lessened because of your close relation to the Dalai Lama?
- (21:43) I was not directly connected to the Dalai Lama, but to one former abbot that we followed. We didn't straightaway follow the Dalai Lama.
- 22:05 Do you have family still in Tibet?
- (22:13) I still have 4 brothers and 2 sisters there.
- 22:18 Do you ever hear from them?
- (22:43) Yes, in fact I was just recently communicating with them. Also, one of his students who recently went to Tibet has returned with photos of them. They are requesting my return to my native home of Tibet, but the situation in Tibet is still dangerous, especially in my home region because of its close proximity to the uhh ???? (23:13) Monastery. Even if I was to apply for a Visa, I don't think I would get it so I have no immediate plans to visit.
- (23:35) I wish to see my family but not this year; maybe next year or two years from now I will be able.
- 23:44 Have you learned from your family what the conditions are like as a monk in Tibet?
- (24:30) Though the Chinese claim that Tibetans have every right and even religious rights, these things are just to put on a face in front of ??????? (24:46) ... The Chinese feel that if they reveal the truth of Tibetans rights or admit that we don't have freedoms, including religious freedoms, then they might receive harsh criticism from other countries and thus their relations with other countries might suffer. However, the Chinese's core belief is that religion is poison. If they consider religion is poison then that ultimately means they will not give religious freedoms to Tibetan people nor their own Chinese people. Because of this it is very difficult to become a monk in Lhasa and all over Tibet. There are many restrictions.

(26:31) In 1979 the Chinese went from a more liberal policy to ...???? (26:41)... Because of that there were some developments and progress in the practice & study of Buddhism, especially in Central Tibetan, Lhasa and the Amdo region. But after 2008, the Chinese changed their minds and now they have decided to again suppress religious freedom to the fullest degree. Our resources are very limited now, there is no availability for quality Buddhist study, the monastery attendance has dropped so much because very few monks are let in and few original monks are left.

27:32 What is your hope for the future of Tibet? Do you think Tibetan culture will survive in India? Do you think the Dalai Lama will ever return back to Tibet?

(28:07) Seeing the changes happening globally as well as in China I hope that in a few years there may be some good news for Tibet.

(28:45) I have no doubt that Tibetan culture in exile will survive during my lifetime, but I don't know what will happen after that. When there is no Dalai Lama, because you know even he was like ??????? (29:00)

29:22 Do you have anything else to say for an American Audience, for a global audience about the situation with Tibet and China, about life as a Tibetan monk in India?

(30:33) I know as long as the Dalai Lama is pursuing our Tibetan cause, through purity and non-violence, and He requests global involvement, especially from America, a country that has the potential to pressure China for continued support for our Tibetan cause, we will continue towards a solution.

(31:53) As you might have noticed, I wear an extra robe ??? (32:03) monk, In Tibet we all wore yellow but due to the climate here, we now wear dark red for its lightness, and its very hot. I hopes that as soon as we return to Tibet the situation will... ????(32:30). I mean that there are many problems here, problems we didn't face in Tibet.

The Tibetan people suffer a lot, and not only the Tibetans suffer with them. I mean that metaphorically speaking.

32:55 Anything else?

(33:15) I don't have not much to add, but once again I want to thank my people for the continued support for the past 52 years

33:32 Thank you very much

(33:42) And we do look forward to the future and hope that you can support us until we reach our goal; our destiny.  
Thank you

33:56 Thank you very much it was an honor to speak with you