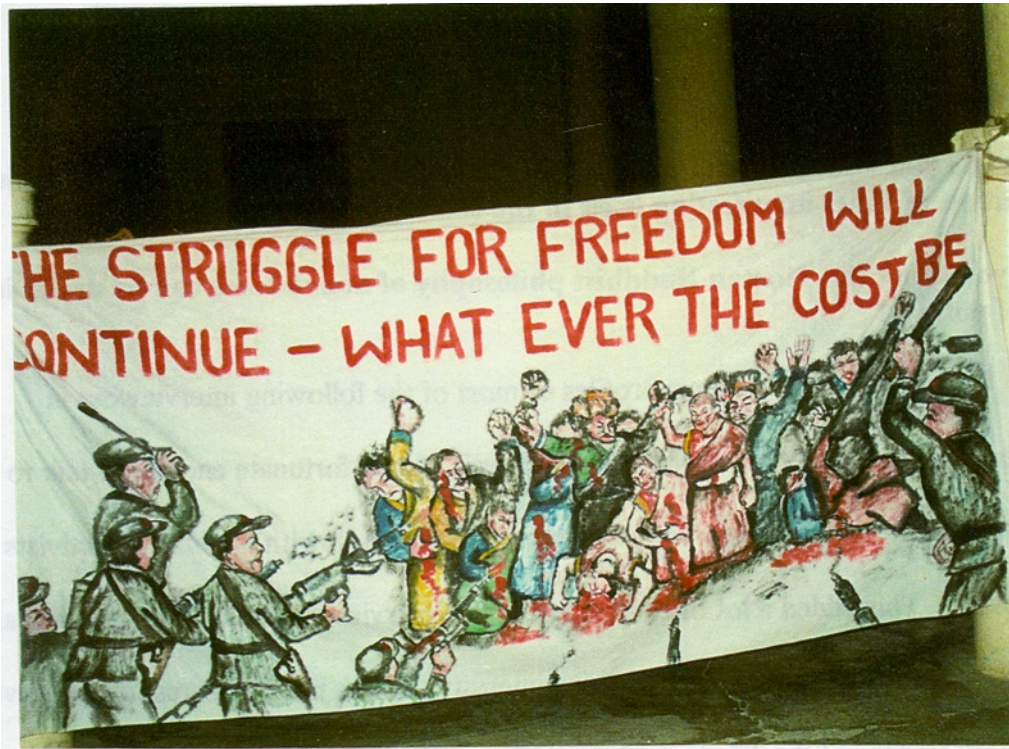


# Chapter Five



**The Interviews: Will Tibet  
be Freed without Force?**

**T**

he history of Tibet, though immensely interesting, does not shed much light on the personal perspectives of the people living this history. The Dalai Lama and Gompa Tashi Andrugtsang's versions did this to some extent, but I felt much more was needed. Therefore, I asked Tibetans from various walks of life the following questions,

**1) How do you visualize the Dalai Lama's policy of nonviolence against the Chinese occupation of Tibet manifesting itself in the coming years?**

**2) Do you think the Tibetan Buddhist philosophy of nonviolence can be useful in the area of politics?**

I have already given short profiles of most of the following interviewees in Chapter Two, and therefore will not repeat myself. I was fortunate enough to talk to some very high-ranking Tibetan officials, whose views clash with the brasher activists of Dharamsala. This added a lot of excitement to the interviewing process, as emotion and ideas flowed through the city with feverish intensity. It was just as interesting, however, to see how citizens of the Tibetan refugee camps and members of the monastic community reacted.

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**Tsering Dorje—Secretary at local Tibetan Government Post, Bylacopy, India**

**1)** "China is very populous. Tibet is battered, with less population. Nonviolence is the best way. Tibet would not have a big enough army to use violence. We are followers of Buddhism, and nonviolence is central. We are getting supporters from the UN and the American Government. They have love for us due to the nonviolence and peace approach. That's why they support us."

2) "Nonviolence is helpful in society; however, politicians will have to change their minds to have peace. Nonviolence makes a good society. Nonviolence should be used. America says, "your country should be de-militarized," but still uses bombs to achieve their aims. Tibet can teach other countries, as it is a peace-loving nation. Now the tension is high in India, waiting for China to shoot. Tibet would help to reduce the arms in India and China, and be a peaceful buffer zone. America is very helpful with Tibet. They have appointed people to look into the Tibetan predicament and put pressure on the Chinese to have a dialogue with His Holiness."

### **Tendar—Salesman of Tibetan Carpets, Bangalore, India**

1) "At present His Holiness has no other choice because the Chinese are so powerful. Tibet is so small, that it cannot fight against the Chinese. If we did fight, other countries would have to support us economically and militarily. At present, this is not possible. So right now nonviolence is the best way to get our country back. All humans know good and bad, other's sorrows. Buddhist followers have to share each other's struggles. Especially in Tibet, the Chinese are becoming the majority. If China becomes a democracy, they may vote whether they want independence, but the Tibetan Chinese will say they are Chinese and then China will completely control Tibet. His Holiness is asking for negotiations to bring about a semi-autonomous state. The Chinese can have military power and control the foreign relations, but in the Tibetan Autonomous Region, Tibetans will control their own affairs. This will help both Chinese and Tibetans.

"At present His Holiness says, 'nonviolence, nonviolence; we don't want to fight, we don't want killings.' If it is viewed as the only choice, however, violence may come next. Nonviolence may not be possible. The Chinese have kept our country for too long. This violence may come, who knows? So now, to succeed, Tibetans will have to decide whether they want freedom or occupation—they must fight for democracy in China. Because some other countries like East Timor and Burma got independence through violence, but didn't get freedom. If the Chinese continue not to listen, we may have to turn to violence to get our motherland back. The most dangerous thing is the population transfer—Tibetans are becoming endangered. So His Holiness may eventually think like this (turn to violence) when things get worse."

2) "It would help a lot. Their teaching is not to harm any people or animals, but to treat all as a family. Buddhist followers know what harms others, so they try to stop fighting, because this makes others unhappy. It is the same with country to country. If some are sensible to Buddhist philosophy, they can make an impact. Every year there is fighting, fighting—many lives are lost. They want to settle the problem, but don't know how. The Chinese have not been listening for many years. Our country has its own currency and its own government—there is no other country in Tibet but Tibet. China made up history about owning Tibet

through wars many years ago. The English didn't respect the autonomy of Tibet early this century—they went right through Tibet without permits. Then Nehru was tricked into saying that Tibet is a part of China. China gave him half of Tibet. But then in 1962 China took away most of it in a war (except for Ladock). So then the Indian government felt bad and gave a lot to Tibetans, all these settlements and educational opportunities. But they still had to stand by the statement that China was a part of Tibet, or otherwise they might lose Kashmir, and Ladock to China. Politically, India is trying to maintain friendly relations with China so they will never say Tibet is independent.

“We are man; we can harm animals and insects. They can't do anything about it. This is just like the English occupation of India. We must stop those who are trying to kill small animals so they can escape. Just like Tibet—Tibetans were uneducated throughout the land. The Chinese knew this and said they wanted to help Tibetans, but they didn't say they would occupy our country. They said His Holiness requested their help, and spread all kinds of lies among Tibetans. So the Indian government and Chinese took the opportunity to capture Tibet. Every country takes opportunities to get benefits. His Holiness doesn't want to fight; he wants to talk. He doesn't want full independence—just a compromise to benefit both sides. Everyone wants happiness, so his policy is suitable for both sides.”

### **Norbu—Settlement Officer (Chief Political Figure), Bylacopy, India**

1) “I don't think there is any option other than nonviolence for liberating Tibet. We have learned a lot of lessons from World War I and II and the final conclusion is that everyone wants to ban weapons of mass destruction. The U.S. and Russia are reducing their weapons. Now, throughout the world, everyone wants a peaceful solution, mutual respect. His Holiness is a Nobel Prize laureate and the head of the Buddhist Schools, so he will stay with the Buddha's teachings. China is a Communist super power and we cannot touch them militarily. Nonviolence will definitely liberate Tibet.

“Internationally, when China is accepted into the WTO, economic growth for individual citizens will enhance, and a democratic system will gradually penetrate into the Chinese heart. Democracy in China combined with His Holiness' nonviolent approach will have a great impact on the push toward liberation. We may not expect full independence, but hope for semi-autonomy. In a democratized Tibet, we can't rule out violence, but if we used violence now it would make the situation worse. The younger generation has hot blood; they want everything done in a short period. They have less patience and therefore sometimes talk about taking up arms.”

2) “Yes, it can definitely be useful. The principles, morals and ethics of Buddhism would be most useful in politics. A good politician with these qualities is as good as a religious practitioner. I think that politicians should have more focus on nonviolence and Buddhist philosophy. Once these things are in the

heart, the jealousy among them will decrease and they will not try to gain power with a selfish motivation. Now you see in most countries, for the sake of maintaining and increasing their power, they use violence directly and indirectly in a number of ways. Buddhist ethics, when put into practice, would have a great impact.

“Many politicians say ‘nonviolence,’ but practicing it is another thing. His Holiness is a great influence on politicians. Within India, in the last ten years, there has been a great change among intellectuals, politicians and the general public about nonviolence thinking. After he won the Nobel Peace Prize, many officials are seeking out His Holiness for help and getting an audience with him. The nonviolence example of His Holiness impacts the hearts of the politicians, but it is difficult for them to put into practice. There is a feeling of doing something wrong when they use violence, but it is hard to change what one has done for hundreds of years, just like with Tibetans and meat eating.”

**Dr. Tenzin Tsephal—Director of Tibetan Medicine for the Bylacopy Refugee Camp**

1) “I think His Holiness’ middle path of nonviolence is the most suitable for this period in time. Weapons are very advanced in China. Tibetans are limited in their capability to fight with a military. They have a very small status. The Chinese have a lot of money, veto power in the United Nations and a strong military. From many angles, Tibet can't compare with the Chinese superpower. At the moment, it is best to follow His Holiness’ middle path. Chinese and Tibetans will both profit with this solution.

“Now the Chinese don't want to give up Tibet, as it is very valuable to them. Many years have passed since Tibet first made its demand for independence and there has been a lot of suffering. If the population migration of Chinese into Tibet continues, the Tibetan race will eventually be extinguished in Tibet. Compromise is best achieved through dialogue, through the middle path. The fastest way to achieve a solution to the Tibetan problem is through nonviolence. Forced family planning and the outright killing and imprisoning of Tibetans in Tibet is very dangerous to the Tibetan population there. Many good jobs are reserved only for the Chinese, while a lot of the labor jobs are just for the Tibetans. There is a lot of discrimination like this.

“Now days they have discos and bars in Tibet as well as brothels and such things, to give the younger generation the notion that their lives are happy and that China is a nice place to live. This way, they will forget about freeing Tibet. The older generation suffered a lot, but if the younger generation doesn't suffer, then they will like China. China continues to use propaganda to show that Tibet was a very backward place and that China is helping it. It's getting pretty desperate as far as saving our culture there. That's why it is very important to compromise so we can get a grip on our own country.”

2) “Nonviolence itself is not just a concept for Buddhists. Gandhi's *ahimsa* strategy in freeing India from colonial rule was very successful. Many countries now are power-hungry, making more and more bombs. India and Pakistan keep fighting for supremacy; killings happen all the time at the border and in Kashmir. But within the nation of India, there are a lot of problems that need money—poverty, bad roads; there are countless areas where military money could be better spent, better suited for the people. The game most countries play of trying to gain military superiority is against the philosophy of nonviolence. It is much better for them to focus on their domestic situations to build up their own nations. India is spending far too much on defense. Nonviolence is very much necessary. There is a lot of fighting among leaders, who don't compromise or understand each other. Violence is destructive on a national as well as an individual level. If a husband is violent, it will lead to a lot of family problems. The wife might revolt with violence and then there will be a divorce. With violence, a conflict will never turn out properly. The result of violence is never good; the solution doesn't last. It is bad for both you and your opponent. Solutions achieved through nonviolence are ones that last.”

**Chunee Tsangma—Regional President of the Tibetan Women's Association, Bylacopy, India**

1) “In regard to the middle path, I am very supportive of it. A mighty nation like China cannot be convinced of anything through violence. Everyone knows that Tibet is not a part of China. The condition in Tibet is going from bad to worse. China uses terrible treatment against the Tibetans. There are no human rights for Tibetans in their own country. Complete independence is not possible with the Chinese. The middle path is the best thing—it will work out if we compromise. The Chinese say they will have a talk with the Dalai Lama if he doesn't bring up independence and if Tibetans stop spreading the message of 'Free Tibet.' But this is not reasonable for us. We will have to reach a compromise with them. You have to give up something to gain something. His Holiness is not an ordinary man. He thinks for universal peace, for the benefit of all. If China talks with His Holiness, this will solve many problems for both the Chinese and the Tibetans. Nonviolence is the first and most important step in getting Tibet back. We are Buddhists and we believe in nonviolence. Gaining victory with violence is not a joyful gain. I would prefer not to win than to lose innocent life.”

2) “Yes, definitely, especially in this crazy world. If one really learns and practices Buddhism, we can achieve peace and can make the world a nice place for all. In the case of politics, the mentality of politicians has gotten pretty selfish. A Buddhist politician will have a different approach to politics and will bring harmony and peace to society. Telling lies, stealing, wrong judgment—these are all sins to Buddhists and we respect that and try to avoid them. Politics in India provide a sharp contrast to Buddhist ethics. A Buddhist politician would help a lot.”

*Question: What is the Tibetan Women's Organization?*

“The Tibetan Women's Organization is a non-governmental organization that was started in 1959 after many women revolted in Tibet on March 12th, and several women gave up their lives. To remember these sisters of ours, we started the organization. Until 1984, it was dormant, but at this time His Holiness requested that it be reactivated. Immediately women in Dharamsala mobilized and restarted the association. In 1985, there were 12 branches in India. Now there are 30, as well as nine in other countries and 10,000 members. Our aim is to maintain the rich culture of Tibet under the leadership of His Holiness and to uplift the standards of Tibetans. We do grass-roots level activities such as demonstrations and hunger strikes in Mangalore and Bangalore. We try to be a voice to our sisters and brothers in Tibet who get killed for saying two words like 'Free Tibet.' I have been to prison several times, trying to give a memorandum to Chinese officials and things like this. The police in India treat you very badly. Life in exile is hard, but nothing compared to the problems they face in Tibet, so I don't complain.”

**Geshe Tenzin Dorje—Sera Je Monastic University**

*Note: A group of several monks gathered for our interview, and the Geshe was very theatrical in stating his opinions. He made us all laugh on a number of occasions.*

1) “It is very important that the fundamental issue of Tibet should be solved through nonviolence. I think it will come out good this way. Violence is not good—it involves war. I think one day the Chinese will leave Tibet—but it will take a long time. It is good if the Western countries help, but I don't think they will bother to help much because Tibet has nothing, economically speaking. When there was a war in Kuwait; America, France and Germany helped in a great way. There's one reason—money. This is a definite reason. In the case of Tibet—they won't help. That's my personal opinion. So what are we to do? Tibetans must study well. Everyone should be well educated. Slowly the communist system in Tibet will die—that will be the best thing for the Tibetan issue. Then China will become a democracy and the educated Tibetans can help regain their country. Other countries won't help much, though.

“Now His Holiness is talking about peaceful ways to solve the Tibetan issue. Although he often proposes having talks with the Chinese, they're not responding. Some Tibetans say that we've been practicing nonviolence for forty years and nothing has resulted, so it's time to try violence. The Chinese haven't responded to nonviolent strategies. Right now His Holiness is talking only about peace. Maybe one day Tibetans will have to act in a violent way. It will become like Sri Lanka. If the Chinese continue to ignore us, we may have to turn to violence. The Tibetan population is small so we do not have many weapons. Some countries may help us with a military effort. We may be like the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka.

“China is very, very big. America is helping China a lot. I think one day China will become rich and all their money will be spent on making atomic weapons. Then America will be in trouble. Right now America is the most powerful nation in the world, with lots of wealth and weapons. After 15 years, China will make many atomic bombs and weapons and will be more powerful than the U.S. Trade relations between the U.S. and China are very good and China is going to become rich. One day they will think they are stronger and greater than the U.S. Now there are many Chinese in America. Chinese are very nationalistic. Some day maybe the Chinese in America will become enemies of the U.S. and will make U.S. a part of China. In an American atomic lab, there was a Chinese employee who stole nuclear secrets. Maybe there are more Chinese who work in nuclear factories in America who are actually spies.

“In 1998 Clinton went to China and said that China should talk with His Holiness and become a democracy. China didn’t like this. There may be a war with China and the U.S. If China becomes too powerful they will challenge the U.S. hegemony and there will be a war. If His Holiness tours around the world and preaches Dharma there will be peace in the world. If Dharma spreads, the world will become more and more peaceful. Now people have a violent and selfish mindset. But if Dharma spreads and the mind improves, then the world will become more peaceful. Everything depends on the mind—if the mind is good, then everything will become good. Why do you think America helps China so much? Because money is the most important thing for the U.S. and China is profitable. Generally, money is good, but if something happens—if an atomic bomb blows up the world, what good does it do?”

2) “In France, Germany and now in India and Pakistan, they make bombs and weapons with their money. I don’t think this is a good thing. The money is not benefiting the people. This is very strange. They make bombs and rockets to kill people. This is not suitable work for human beings. America has many bombs, but tells other countries like China and India that they shouldn’t make them. It’s really strange. If countries didn’t make bombs, then the world would be very peaceful. They say “peace, peace” from the mouth, but make many bombs at the same time with their hands. How can this be possible? Making bombs yet talking peace is not real peace. For real peace, all bombs should be disbanded—then it will be peaceful. In the search for peace and happiness they do all sorts of bad things, like make bombs. With this they will get no happiness, only pain and suffering.”

*Question: Will there be a war between India and China?*

“India made nuclear bombs because it was afraid the U.S. wouldn’t sign the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. Firstly, the U.S., China and Russia should disband their nuclear arsenals—then they will have the authority to tell India what to do. So India won’t sign the CNTBT. If there were no bombs in the



world, it would be wonderful; there would be great, lasting peace. The money that is spent on bombs, if used on people, would make them very happy. Priorities are very strange. Making bombs is crazy work—the main aim is to kill someone. The motivation in the bomb maker’s heart is to harm. If we use this money for the betterment of the people, the roads and the schools, than that would be best. If I were President Clinton, I would help the poor. I would not just help humans but as many beings as I could. The real Clinton, however, is a businessman with selfish and money-oriented motivations.”

**Geshe Gepal—Sera Je Secretary, Bylacopy, India**

1) “According to Buddhism, we believe His Holiness is enlightened. If he decides to use more firm methods—hit China around a bit—it is his enlightened decision to do so and we believe in it. I used to be badly beaten by my teacher, Geshe Khentse. He would hit me with an iron pipe on the back of the neck and shoulders. It would bleed a lot, and there would be large open wounds. However, he beat us with good motivation, to teach us something, and the wounds healed very quickly. I never needed antibiotics or ointments or anything, because the wounds were inflicted out of kindness. The master knew best, so he would hit us. His Holiness may decide to beat the Chinese in a similar way if the current approach doesn't work. So, if he decides to use a more violent method, it is all right, because he is enlightened. When the Tibetan man in Delhi (during recent hunger strikes led by the TYC) immolated himself, I really didn't like it. Most people supported him for giving up his life for the Tibetan cause and the publicity, but this kind of thing is self-inflicted violence. According to Buddhism, he did something really bad. A hunger strike is the same—it is violence against one's own body. His Holiness has the right motivation, so if he decided to use some kind of violence, it would be best.”

2) “For people who have faith in Buddhism, it will be useful. For people who are really practicing the Dharma, they may be able to use Buddhist ethics in politics. Though it seems that their followers would have to have faith in Buddhism too, like in Tibet. If I tell something Dharma-oriented to some Buddhists, they will appreciate it and understand it. But if I tell it to my parents or my cousins, they will think I'm crazy and will not listen. So I think practitioners can understand other practitioners, and the political situation would have to be as such for it to work. You also have to practice what you preach. If you are a real Buddhist practitioner and teach with your own actions, then you can use Buddhism in politics. Most politicians are hypocrites, however, so this would be quite rare. His Holiness is a real practitioner, so he has a lot of authority when he advises politicians. Others talking like this, however, may be ignored unless they are strong living examples of the Buddha's teachings.”

**Penor Rinpoche—Supreme Head of the Nyingma Order and Abbot of Namto Ling Monastery, Bylacopy, India**

1) “The whole point of freeing Tibet is to make it a place of peace and compassion. Therefore, a compassionate and peaceful methodology is essential in achieving freedom. His Holiness is a smart man. He has the skill and Buddhist prowess necessary to regain Tibet's past glory. It is essential that His Holiness continues to practice compassion and nonviolence in interactions with the rest of the world community as well as in any other matters regarding Tibet. If Tibetan Buddhism is to retain its integrity and to continue to help sentient beings, it is essential that when Tibet is liberated from Chinese occupation, it is done through unending patience and compassion. Violence is terribly destructive and would have a disastrous effect on the Tibetan cause if used in its name. Therefore, His Holiness will continue to use the Buddhist approaches of patience and nonviolence in the effort to free Tibet.”

2) “Buddhist practice is very difficult. It takes many years of dedication and diligence to get fruit from Dharma practice. So, I don't think it has much of a place in politics, where the importance is placed on quick results and power. It is essential, especially in a sacred lineage like the *Longchen Nyinthig*, that the teachings remain pure and uncorrupted. That is why Chatal Rinpoche is hesitant to teach Westerners. There is a fear it will be corrupted. Politics has corruption as its very essence, and using the Dharma for political purposes would be like pouring nectar into a pot with hundreds of tiny holes. It would be wasted. So, as far as *samsaric* games like politics are concerned, Buddhist teachings do not necessarily play a role. The Dharma is for people who are weary of *samsara* and want to dissolve themselves into the realm of perfect emptiness, and then help others to do the same. It is not for raising money for campaigns or making policies or reforms. If the Dharma can help people via political means, this is fine, as long as it is not corrupted or diluted in the process.”

### **Chonjure Rinpoche—Sera Je Monastic University, Bylacopy, India**

1) “I think nonviolence is the best method. The first thing to think of is who will fight against China through violence? If all the countries in the world, including America, would lead their armies against China, then there would be something. But I don't think that will happen. Tibet's population is only six million. We fight for a free Tibet because these six million people need rights and freedom. If one or two million people would be killed in the process of fighting for six million Tibetans, it would make no sense. Both sides are human beings. From a Buddhist point of view, it makes no sense to kill many people for the happiness of a few. Although it will be difficult to achieve a free Tibet by means of nonviolence, the result will be much more reliable and stable. If we get a free Tibet through violence, I don't think it will be a happy situation. There will always be reoccurrences of violence with neighboring countries. If we want happiness in the future in Tibet, it is possible only through nonviolence. In the long run, the nonviolence method is the best for freeing Tibet.”

*Question: Will Europe or America be useful in the mediation process between China and Tibet?*

“It would be better if the whole world would help to mediate. China says, ‘Tibet is a part of China.’ Therefore they have to prove it. What we are saying is that Tibet is not a part of China. It is a different country. Our religion is different. Our culture is different. The way we eat is different. Habits and the nature of the people are different. It would be good if the people of the world would see these differences. His Holiness is really working hard by traveling around the world and telling people about the problems in Tibet. If the world knows about Tibet, it will be very helpful for our issue.

“I think complete independence is very difficult for Tibet to gain, if not impossible. If you ask whether or not Tibet will become a semi-autonomous region, then there is a chance for this. If China becomes a democracy, this will help Tibet a lot. There are many conditions that might cause China to become a democracy. One reason is that old people and old thoughts are dying off. People with new ideas, liberal people who are relatively young, are coming into power. They have stronger feelings for democracy. If these people come to power, then change will surely come. If such changes come to China, Tibetans will again live in freedom, if not have complete independence.”

*Could you talk about the “zone of peace” idea?*

“This is what His Holiness says Tibet will become. For example, these days the government of India spends a lot of money for its border security with China. If Tibet becomes a zone of peace, India does not have to be frightened about its security. Because there is no military threat from Tibet, demilitarization will naturally come from all of the countries that border Tibet—but most importantly India and China. A big army will no longer be necessary. Before, there was hardly any military presence on the border between India and China. A free Tibet would bring the situation close to the way it was.”

4) “I go to many foreign countries, especially Europe. The most important thing I have discovered is the idea of non-harming or nonviolence. A country is managed by its people. If the people who run the country are nonviolent to sentient beings, naturally the country will be peaceful. This must be inside the politician's heart—it can't be purchased or obtained by a signature. We Buddhists call it listening, contemplation, reflection and meditation. Meditation may be too much to ask for politicians, but at least they can listen, contemplate and reflect about non-harm, cause and effect, and that injuring beings causes harm. By harming others, they become unhappy—this is a general Buddhist principle. If you know these basic things, you can respect the laws of karma. So when you grow up and have kids the kids will be influenced by your ideas. They may become president, leaders of the nation. If this basic idea of nonviolence becomes ingrained in their ideas, then the nation will be peaceful. If the whole society gets

the non-harm idea, then that will be very good. The people will be happy. If they are selfish, motivated, by name and fame, then this isn't good.

“So generally, human beings have nothing when they're born, they need a house, et cetera. When animals are born, they are born with talents—they can swim or walk. If human beings live under water, they'll die. But we have one thing called mind, which is quite powerful. If you didn't have this mind there would be peace. So basically when one says they have no mind, they are talking about *nirvana*. No mind equals peace. If you have ten guns, naturally you will have stronger guts to fight than those who have no guns. This is not what I mean by not having a mind. Violence is reflective of an ignorant mind engulfed in the flames of the five poisons of anger, attachment, jealousy, greed and ignorance. Having no mind means dissolving all of these things and all thoughts into great emptiness.”

### **Hlasang Tsering—Freedom Fighter and Activist, Dharamsala**

“There is some somatic difficulty when we discuss nonviolence. In English, there is no problem. The problem arises when we talk about it in Tibetan. In the Tibetan language, the direct translation of nonviolence is 'non-harm' and it is more of a spiritual term. The term 'peaceful' could be used to discuss the realm of political action. In Buddhism, the body, mind and speech are supposed to follow this 'non-harm' philosophy, yet there are very few day-to-day human activities which don't do harm. We kill bacteria when we breathe. Businesses profit from somebody else's hard-earned money. I have suggested that the political act of nonviolence should be called *shegur*—peaceful struggle. Nonviolence is an active force, not pacifism.”

1) “I have openly and repeatedly expressed the view that nonviolence cannot and will not work against the Chinese Communists in Tibet for several reasons. My view is for nonviolent action to succeed in general, if we want to achieve results and not just perform a philosophical exercise, then one of two conditions must be present. Firstly, your opponent must be vulnerable to nonviolent action. With a labor strike at a factory, the management is effected and the strike can produce results. In my view, the Chinese in Tibet are not vulnerable to nonviolence. I initiated the Chinese goods boycott, but to me the political symbolism of this was more important than the outcome. I asked people, 'will you have sweet dreams under a Chinese blanket knowing that they are murdering our people, destroying our temples and desecrating our land?' If the first condition doesn't work out, then the opponent has to be responsive to reason. In my view, sadly, the Chinese Communist rule in Tibet has repeatedly demonstrated that they aren't responsive to reason. One of the most glaring and massive examples of this is the Tianamen Square massacre. The Chinese sent troops against their own children in front of the international media. What do you think they have done to the Tibetans, whom they look down upon as savages and barbarians, when the media was not looking?

“In spite of all the calls for negotiations, I have one simple question that hasn't been answered. Why should the Chinese talk to us? Tibet is firmly under Chinese control, Tibetans in exile pose no threat to their power, and no country in the world has found the courage to question Chinese power. In *Time* magazine, in naming the most evil man, no one had the guts to mention Mao. The world knows about evil leaders who have lost their governments and power, but there has been no glimpse into China, as they are still in power. The skeletons in their closet remain tightly shut. Having said that, I always take care to add that I would be the happiest man alive if I were wrong—if the Chinese would walk away and admit their mistakes. But deep inside, I know that they aren't going to leave Tibet. So I see no grounds for using nonviolence in an economic or political approach against the Chinese occupation.

“Foreign policy is not based on love and compassion, it is based on self interest. The price of freedom is not in the currency of dollars, it is in the currency of life and blood. Unless Tibetans wake up to these realities, their country will be gone. But obviously we need His Holiness to tolerate these ideas, and not to discourage them. Imagine yourself being in Tibet: your brother is dead, you are wounded. And the one person you laid down your life for, the one person you risked your life for, condemns your action. It would kill the struggle. So the first thing I did as president of Tibetan Youth Congress (TYC) was to go to His Holiness and appeal to him not to condemn violence, not to condemn the ability to try to defend yourself and your wife and your family. Not to condemn the ability to try to defend your country. The right of every individual of every nation to defend themselves is enshrined in the charter of the United Nations. ‘I can understand, you can't condone it, but please don't condemn it. Because that would kill the struggle.’ He didn't give me any commitment.”

2) “Briefly, I strongly believe that Buddhist nonviolence can be useful in politics, whether domestic or international. Yet I believe it is not just a question of nonviolence. Truth and honesty are far more important—when one achieves a high degree of truth and honesty in their personal and public life. We very much hope that the exemplary life that His Holiness has led is followed by others. He has led a life of complete selflessness, unprecedented by others. He has devoted his entire life to the benefit of the faithful. It is to be hoped that when politicians around the world meet with him, that in some small measure they will take to heart the example that he represents—the life that he has led. It is plainly visible that he has no army and police, yet he has the intense devotion of his people to a degree that no one else can claim. Politicians may learn from this—they don't need prison walls to keep their followers.”

*Question: How did the guerillas in Mustang take the Dalai Lama's request that they put down their arms?*

“It was very hard. We know for a fact that some of our key leaders committed suicide. First of all, the very fact that he had to send a tape-recorded message

shows the difficulty of the decision. Suicide is the clearest example of how hard it was on the freedom fighters. They couldn't disobey His Holiness and they couldn't stop fighting for Tibet. So the only option was to kill themselves. It was tragic. His Holiness made it safely into exile due to the courage and sacrifice of the Tibetan armed resistance. Tibetans can't forget that. It is evident through study of that period that the guerillas would have achieved independence if the government and nation were behind them. They continued fighting until 1974. That's over twenty years of armed resistance. However, this was a battle that was lost before it even begun. The nation, government and the rest of the world did not support them. The CIA was quite helpful to us—many of the guerillas have the fondest memories of the people who trained them. We are all grateful that the CIA gave us a fighting chance. Personally, I would like another chance. If it is the last thing I would like to do in my life, I would like to die in Tibet.

“Essentially, the problem with the Tibetan struggle is that as a nation we need to make up our minds first. What do we want to do? What are we prepared to do? There has been enough finger-pointing at the rest of the world. My school teacher used to say that when you point a finger at others, three more are pointed at you. I want Tibetan people to know, they can't keep putting blame on the U.N., India or the USA. We lost our freedom and failed to defend our nation and it is we who continue to fail to fight for our rights.”

*Question: In your view, is the younger generation of Tibetans supportive of using violent methods to combat Chinese occupation?*

“My own understanding is that there's a wide-spread, growing sentiment for a more active struggle. The TYC plays an important role in reflecting the deep-felt desire of the Tibetan people to have independence as their number one goal. There are two positions that the TYC has maintained. Number one, that the primary goal should be independence, and number two, that any and all means should be used for achieving this goal. I continue to make an appeal to our political leaders to firstly, restore independence as the primary goal, and second, to be allowed to walk on both feet—to be able to use violent and nonviolent means. When I talk of violence, I don't say that nonviolence isn't good, I am just recognizing the need to use force under certain circumstances.”

*Question: By what means do you think Tibet can be freed from Chinese occupation?*

“Freedom is a luxury. The issue is survival. It is not a question of freedom, but whether or not Tibet will survive as a nation. In the struggle for survival any nation has the right to use self-defense. This is enshrined in the charter of the UN, which the Government in Exile is so fond of quoting. As far as I'm concerned, they're reducing the Tibetan issue into one of human rights, religious freedom and environmental protection. All of these spring from political freedom. You can't control these without political power. What are we going to do with these

freedoms when we're all dead? The right to life is the most important—other rights are useless without this. All other rights spring from this.”

*Question: How has the Tibetan Government in Exile reacted to your desires?*

The Tibetan government reacts to my desires with silence. Jamyang Norbu, author of *The Mandala of Sherlock Homes* has written many essays criticizing the government's China policy. They enraged the Government in Exile, and Jamyang got beaten up. At the time, he was the director of performing arts. They accused his operas and dramas of threatening the government, so a mob led by local politicians beat him up. He had written many scathing articles on the Government in Exile's policy. This was in 1984. Even later, when he was publishing the most widely spread newspaper in Tibetan history, called *Democracy*, he received many threats of violence and death. The Tibetan approach to nonviolence applies only to the Chinese. Somehow it doesn't apply to its own people who we can beat up when we want.

“I, perhaps, am so far the only Tibetan who has refused to serve in the government because of the issue of independence. Before I was President of the TYC, I was a government official. Under normal circumstances, I would have rejoined the government after finishing with TYC. Because of the Middle Way approach, the Five-Point Peace Plan and other things that basically threw the idea of independence aside, I wouldn't join the government. I took this position and made it public. I refused to rejoin a government who's sole motivation wasn't independence.

“It's sad that a lot of people seem to agree with what I say, but can't speak up openly as I do. I know they support me. Total strangers come up to me and greet me warmly. The elderly sometimes hold my hand to their foreheads. I express for them the deep longing for independence they cherish and hold in their hearts. In Tibet, except for a few traitors, there is no doubt that my message would go down well. I develop my inspiration and strength from the people of Tibet. The reason I struggle on is because of their courage and strength. After all of these years of suffering, they haven't lost the courage and will to be free. For them, we cannot be armchair patriots—it is a matter of life and death. That is all I have to say.”

### **Hlakpa Dorje—the Dalai Lama's Religious Translator**

1) “Nonviolence is simply the most effective and intelligent way to go about solving conflicts. His Holiness is aware of this, but his primary reason for using nonviolence is that he is a religious leader, and he lives his life by the ethics of Buddhism. Killing, harming and maiming—strategies of violence to inflict fear in your enemy—are not acceptable in Buddhism. Therefore, it is not really a policy for His Holiness to use nonviolence, but more of a natural part of his outlook, considering how central Buddhism is to his thinking. His Holiness has

stood firmly and consistently behind nonviolence as the only way to solve conflicts from the very beginning. This consistency is what earned him the Nobel Peace Prize and the support of countless people worldwide. Almost all in the Tibetan community believe in His Holiness' nonviolent approach. A few, however, especially young radicals and ex-freedom fighter guerillas, question His Holiness' policy as ineffective. I admire these people's dedication to the Tibetan cause and their desires for independence, but they must realize that His Holiness has the most comprehensive understanding of the Tibetan issue in the world. In addition to this, he has acquired an inconceivable amount of wisdom throughout his 14 incarnations. Therefore, he is going to do what is best for Tibet.

“Those who want short-term gains through violence fail to see the whole picture. At all levels—personal interactions, regional disputes and global challenges—nonviolence and dialogue are the most effective and sensible ways to reach a solution. Leaders in some countries, such as Saddam Hussein in Iraq, can claim a few close followers as truly dedicated and the rest of their countrymen as followers due to coercion and fear. His Holiness, however, has the unwavering loyalty of all Tibetans with his kindness and love, and also the support of countless other world leaders for the same reasons. If he used violence against China, there is no way he would get the same kind of support. Since we are a sparsely populated country, support from other nations is crucial in our push for autonomy.

“Along with nonviolence comes reasonable demands. Considering the Chinese interests and the current situation, full independence is not a reasonable demand. His Holiness understands this, and is therefore requesting autonomy that would benefit both sides, as well as the political stability in the region and in the world. You have seen the signs, ‘*Free Tibet for World Peace*,’ ‘*Tibet's Independence is India's Security*’ and so on. These messages are really true. This region of the world is very dangerous right now. Pakistan, India and China are very tense and are hurriedly building up their militaries. The borders of these countries feature countless armed men ready to kill each other. If Tibet were a ‘Zone of Peace,’ or a politically strategic buffer zone between these emerging super powers, both regional and world peace and stability would be greatly enhanced. It is in everyone's interest to come to a solution in Tibet.”

2) “A nonviolence approach is all-inclusive. It does not intimidate or invoke fear or bring subsequent impulsive and hate-filled reactions. It is like water. When a river flows against rocks, it does not blow them up or hurl them out of the way. It gently massages them, changes them, eventually dissolves them into soft sand. It is not a quick process, but it is the most effective and longest lasting. Just as water is the most dynamic and influential element in nature, nonviolence is the best method to solve any type of conflict. Tibet is fortunate to have a wise leader who realizes this and uses it skillfully in the area of politics.”



## Pema—President of the Tibetan Youth Congress

1) “The Tibetan Youth Congress is supposed to be a radical organization. Complete independence is our only goal. Therefore, our methods are going to differ from those of His Holiness, who is only trying to get sovereignty. To get complete independence, I think we are going to have to broaden the nonviolence policy of His Holiness to include more direct and effective methods that have immediate results. Thousands of Chinese immigrants are coming into Tibet because the Chinese government pays them to do so, but they don’t tend to like the climate and would otherwise not come. Therefore, we need to create fear for the Chinese coming into Tibet by blowing up bridges that connect Tibet and China and blowing up missile silos. We don’t suggest killing people, and are therefore not necessarily violent; we just need to employ more methods. So I think certain kinds of violent strategies are necessary.

“Peace and love have their place, but in the urgent situation of Tibet, if you want complete independence, you’re going to have to get serious. The Chinese haven’t been listening to nonviolent complacency. It is easy to ignore. Blowing things up would make them uneasy. It is frustrating, however, to try to strategize acts of terrorism or resistance inside of Tibet from exile. When Tashi Tsering (In October 1999 at the National Minority Games in Lhasa) took down the Chinese flag and replaced it with the Tibetan flag, the explosive he had tied to his body didn’t go off because of rain. He had worked on making the explosive and was planning the act for many months, but it didn’t work out. Still, he got beaten to death and his entire family to this day faces unfathomable tortures in prison.

“As far as protests in exile, I think a fast-to-the-death is the best way to get across one’s message. The relay fast they are doing in Delhi right now is just kind of a token, it is not going to get real attention. If independence is what you want, then you need absolute dedication. You need to sacrifice your life if necessary. This is one of the mission statements for the TYC, fighting for independence even at the cost of one’s life. The Tibetan government is not serious about independence, so that’s where we come in. Therefore, our strategies aren’t necessarily going to be approved by His Holiness, but that is because our goals are different.

“Let’s say I have a house that my family has owned for many generations. I own it and am living in it happily with my family. My neighbor owns a large corporation, and he wants to use my house to make offices. He is very wealthy and powerful and wants my house. So one day he comes into my house with guns and torches and forces my family out onto the street. I am not prepared to fight him, as I am a peaceful man. The other neighbors don’t offer much support and I am left on the street. Now it has been several years and the corporation that has taken over my rightful house has not been affected by my candle light vigils and peaceful protests. They have destroyed all of my paintings, burned my books, trashed centuries of cultural items unique to my family. My son is coming of age. Am I to tell him to keep on living on the street like a bum, or am I going to

encourage him to fight to get our house back? It is a hard decision, but I don't think we can keep living without a home. That is not an adequate life. So I encourage him to fight, to pester the corporation until he leaves my house. This is how I view the situation with Tibet. We can't let the next generation sit homeless and scattered. We need to fight for our freedom and bring the young generation back to Tibet. Therefore, we need to use some forms of violence. This way, I think, is the only chance we have at getting our country back."

**Lobsang Tsering—Director of the Center for Human Rights and Democracy, Dharamsala, India**

1) "Nonviolence works best for the Tibetan situation. Tibet does not have a military option, and any kind of violent uprising in Tibet would result in a massacre and years of prison torture. It would make things worse. The Tibetan strategy of nonviolence is getting more sophisticated. American professors like Gene Sharp give several workshops annually in Dharamsala on nonviolent conflict resolution. His Holiness' leadership is remarkable, and he has the complete devotion of his people. Due to his compassion, the international support we receive, the unwavering consistency of the policy, and the experience of Gandhi in obtaining Indian independence, nonviolence is clearly the superior method. Some of the younger folk get impatient with it and say it takes too long and hasn't accomplished much, but this is not an educated view. His Holiness has accomplished a lot with nonviolence. He got the Nobel Peace Prize, he has countless international supporters; Tibetan culture in exile is thriving. I think nonviolence will bring autonomy to Tibet and that we will one day return to our homeland."

**Tenpa Samkhar—Political Secretary of the Kashag (Equivalent to Prime Minister), Dharamsala, India**

1) First of all, I'd like to talk about the difference between the Buddhist philosophy of nonviolence and the use of nonviolence as a political tool. It is very important for Tibetans to know the difference between the two when they look at Tibet's situation. His Holiness follows a nonviolent policy against the Chinese occupation of Tibet because he is a Buddhist monk, and all of his thoughts and actions reflect the Buddha's teachings. It is not a choice for him to adopt a nonviolent strategy, but rather a natural application of the Buddha's teachings. As far as nonviolence as a political tool, this is a far more complicated issue. It is definitely true that nonviolence is the most effective way to solve a problem. Violence only leads to quick, short-term solutions that will never last and will never lead to peace. Nonviolence is really the only solution to any conflict. The methods of nonviolence are another matter.

"We Tibetans have been practicing the basic methods of nonviolence, such as letter-writing campaigns, petitions, memorandums, hunger-strikes and general protests. A professor from the United States named Gene Sharp has introduced to

us many new methods of nonviolent political strategy through workshops he holds for the Tibetan community. Some of these strategies are not practical for us, like sky writing for instance, but some we are considering employing. So nonviolence as a political tool is something Tibetans are still learning. His Holiness employs nonviolence for religious reasons, to remain true to Buddhism. The political results of a nonviolent policy are also superior to violent tactics, but that is just a bonus rather than the primary motive. Buddhist ethics are the reason His Holiness employs a nonviolent policy against the Chinese occupation and why he won't compromise or waver from that stance."

**Jamyang—Employee of the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, Dharamsala, India**

1) "We've given the Chinese 50 years to respond to nonviolence, but the Communists just view it as passivity. They find it very easy to ignore. Tibetans need to change their mentality if there is any chance of getting back independence. I'm not happy here. I'm not a resident of India. I'm a Tibetan and I belong in Tibet. Being displaced is not fun. I think that nationalism is more important than Buddhism. As a Tibetan nationalist, I focus on ways to unite the people of Tibet to get our country back. I think one of the major reasons we lost it was because people put too much emphasis on religion and not enough on materialism or adapting to the modern age. So, when the Chinese invaded, most of the young men that would normally be in the army in a modern country were in the monastery. Because of the focus on religion, we did not modernize, and did not have adequate weaponry, communications or roads. For the most part, we didn't have anything modern or developed at all in Tibet. So when the huge Chinese military came, we couldn't defend ourselves. People were using swords, bows and arrows, even rolling boulders down hills to try and faze the Chinese—but they just got blown away with rifles and cannons. So I think that young Tibetans need to put their country first and Buddhism second. It is important to develop a materialist mentality, to become educated and rich, to make weaponry for the Tibetan cause. If the Tibetan youth can modernize in exile and become more materialistic and military-oriented, then we may be able to get independence. Getting our country back is the most important thing. Once we accomplish this, then religion will be able to flourish again in Tibet and our lamas can help the rest of the world with religion. But now, we need to help ourselves and put religion second. His Holiness is saying that he wants to get autonomy for Tibet, yet keep it as a part of China. I don't want anything to do with China, and think that only complete independence will be satisfactory."

**Dawa Tsering—Head of the Welfare Office (Mayor)**

1) "Nonviolence is really the only sensible way to solve a conflict. China's military is bigger than Tibet's total population. We do not stand a chance against them using any kind of violent resistance. His Holiness' policy of nonviolence has been consistent and firm, and this has earned him the respect and support of

countless people and political leaders. Nonviolence is the only way we can free Tibet. I don't think it's possible to get complete independence from the Chinese, but autonomy is a realistic goal. The young kids who say that His Holiness' policy is too slow and that the Chinese don't respond to it are often those who just sit on their butt and complain and judge others. It is easy for them to say they'd fight and die for their country when they know they'll never get the chance to do it. In the meantime, they are not really doing anything for Tibet, but just sitting on their butts and complaining. They lack the patience and wisdom of His Holiness.

“Violence may accomplish something in the short term, but it will never lead to lasting peace. His Holiness knows best. It is foolish for the younger generation to criticize his wisdom. Even if Tibet were freed through violence, the Chinese could easily invade again and take Tibet back. So only dialogue and compromise will bring about a solution. There are a number of scholars in China who realize that Tibet is an historically independent country. Now they are silenced by the Communist press and police, but the government of China is in trouble. There is a lot of squabbling among the aging hard-line Communists and the younger generation of politicians in China. I think the new generation is much more open-minded and has more of a democratic consciousness. So, I think the future is bright for an autonomous Tibet. When these younger minds democratize China and the scholars are given more of an opportunity to educate the people about the reality of Tibet's history, I think the Chinese people will give Tibet back to the Tibetans. I really think this could happen, but never would have if His Holiness had not been consistent with his nonviolence policy.”

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It was interesting to me how those who supported a nonviolent strategy for religious reasons also brought up the feasibility of a violent approach, which was almost unanimously agreed to be nearly impossible to pursue, due to the population and military gulfs between Tibet and China. I suppose this implies that these people are not just blindly following their religion, but are instead, to a degree, thinking in terms of political strategy. They have sincerely contemplated the fate of their country and possible ways of getting it back. Following their leader, the Dalai Lama, seems to be the most reliable solution for most in the perplexing challenge of recapturing one's homeland.

It was also interesting to see how Pema, the TYC president, was seriously strategizing the use of violence in Tibet, including the destruction of bridges and missile

silos. Although not included in my interview with him, Lhasang Tsering also had a strategy, which he called “The Mosquito.” It involved constant, small-scale harassment and terrorist activities too secretive to crush and too persistent to ignore. I suppose his strategy could be considered intellectual guerrilla warfare—precise bombings and psychological strategies to annoy the enemy to a point where they are forced to act.

There are many other interesting subjects in the Tibetan political sphere that are relevant to my overall topic and that I would like to include in this chapter. The following is an assortment of information that came from informal interviews with Tibetans in the Bylacopy Refugee camp. They shed light on ways of dealing with conflicts, give political and social insights, and relate recent happenings in the Tibetan community.

#### **Lobsang—Monk at Sera Me Khampa House, Bylacopy, India**

“There are many problems inside the refugee government. There is a big political conflict between the Khampa guerillas and the government. The Khampa army killed a lot of Chinese in '58 and '59. They used force against the Chinese. After this, His Holiness came to India and did a lot of work to try to free Tibet with dialogue. When the Dalai Lama's brother went to China, he talked a lot with the Chinese to try to make a compromise. They wanted to 'give and take' and work things out. A lot of the Tibetans thought this was crazy, since there was nothing to give, as the Chinese had already taken it all. But they decided that U-Tsang and Dormey would go to Tibet and Kham would go to China. The people in Kham didn't like this; they wanted to stay under His Holiness and asked why they were going to China. So there was an argument about this. Today, this argument is still alive, to some degree.

“Then there is the Dorje Shungten cult. It was believed that Shungten was Manjushri's emanation. There were many books written about him and a society was formed. Three years ago, there were big problems with this society. I just leave it alone, without taking sides. The government blamed Shungten for the killing of a Geshe, but Shungten said that they never kill and that there was no proof, that the government was lying and framing them. There are a lot of Shungten practitioners that come from Tibet; everyone knows this. There are a lot of Shungten people here at Sera. Many high lamas followed a Shungten Geshe, who had been His Holiness' teacher. The Dharma is democratic and free,

so we can't tell people what they should do. I don't like force, forcing people to not be Shungten. I came to India because I was tired of the Chinese using force on us."

*Note—The Dalai Lama has banned the practice of Shungten. In December 1999, he led a week of teachings in Bodh Gaya and told all participants of Shungten to leave as they were disrupting his practice and threatening his health. Followers of Shungten are virtually the only subpopulation of Tibetans who protest against the Dalai Lama, which creates a fair amount of discontentment in the Tibetan community.*

"As far as the Tibetan problem, Tibetans have to think about it, and deal with it—decide what they want to do. Many, though, just want to ignore it—it is too intense to deal with. They want to be free and happy, they don't want problems. They don't want to deal with the Tibetan issue. I just enjoy having a happy life at the monastery, so I don't get involved in any of the problems."

### **Drolma—Young House Wife Looking to go to America, Bylacopy, India**

"The majority of the monks coming from Tibet now are Chinese spies. They go through Nepal to Dharamsala and are uneducated and don't know English, so they become monks, as the monasteries will take anyone and they get everything free. So a lot of them are Chinese spies. You never know which ones. The Chinese pay them to work at giving Tibetans in India a bad name. You can never trust any of the monks. It is a bad sin to talk bad about the monks, but it's true. A lot of them these days are very bad."

### **Tsering—Father of Nine Children, Bylacopy, India**

"Never make this mistake about the Tibetan people. Tibetan people aren't necessarily Buddhist and don't necessarily understand Buddhist philosophy. Thinking otherwise is a Western romanticization. A high level of philosophy is only possible in the monastery. Westerners put Tibetan people and Buddhism in the same pot—that's not possible. Tibetans are not educated, they don't know what they have; they only do what tradition and monks dictate. His Holiness advocates independent thinking, finding out for oneself. For most Tibetans, a critical mind is lacking and they tend to follow the tradition blindly. For young people, it is important to be critical and to become political minded. Before, we had the chance to have a political mind and keep our country, but believed only in gods. This is slowly changing."

### **Elsa—Swiss Woman with Tibetan Husband**

"There are a lot of thieves in the Bylacopy area. If they come and steal something, the Tibetans just let them do it because if someone goes out alone at night—the Tibetans think they will kill them. For example my husband's uncle, he had wood. So there were some Indians coming to take all the wood—all the

people were watching, Tibetans were watching, but they didn't say anything because if they said something the Indians will fight against them. When they meet them alone somewhere they might hurt or kill them. So they don't fight against them. It's not possible to leave the house unattended, because the Indians may break in and steal all of the Tibetan's valuables."

*Question: Do any Tibetans own guns to scare away the thieves?*

"I don't think Tibetans in Bylacopy own guns because people accept that the enemies are our teachers and in the Buddhist philosophy we don't kill people—something like that."

### **Happening—Bylacopy, India, February, 2000 (As Related by Losam)**

On February 12th at Camp Four near Namto Ling monastery, somebody opened up a bar and disco in their house. A woman from Belgium came with two of her male friends to the party. As the night progressed, some Tibetan boys offered her hits of a drug that Losam called "smak." She took a few hits of the drug, and later that night they brought her to a field behind the house and raped her. All of the rapists were Tibetan, and there were up to ten of them involved. Losam remarked, "These kids have no vision of their future, only the present. This kind of thing has never happened before. It's a real tragedy and it's going to do great harm to the Tibetan community." Within a matter of days, everyone in Bylacopy knew of this incident and was disparaging over it.

I asked Lobsang, the monk at Sera Me, about the rape. He told me he gets very angry at rapists and thinks they should be killed. He told me a story of his confrontation with rapists,

"About five years ago I was walking back from Kushal Nagar (the town nearest Sera) when I came across an auto rickshaw parked on the shoulder. There were two legs from a woman kicking out of the back and when she saw me go by she said "Kushu-la (honorific for 'monk'), help!" I turned around and the rickshaw was coming right at me. I yelled, "Stop!" in Hindi and the rickshaw went around me. I grabbed onto the back and it kept going—dragging me on the pavement. I cut up my leg and arm pretty bad at this time, but I had enough strength to pull myself into the front part of the rickshaw. There were two Indian men in there,

kidnapping a Tibetan woman. They were going to bring her to a field and rape her. As I got in the rickshaw, the guy in the back kept hitting me on the head as I tried to steer the rickshaw into the ditch. Finally I overpowered the wheel and turned the rickshaw around, at which point it stopped. I kicked the driver in the stomach and knocked him out of his seat. Then we got out and started fighting. I punched him in the face, and then blocked his punch. As I tried to punch him with the other arm, my hand got caught in my robe, so I gave him a roundhouse kick to the head and knocked him down. Then the other guy from the back seat of the rickshaw hit me in the back of the head with an iron pipe. I turned around and kicked him like a cannon in the chest and knocked him down. Then as he was down, I kept punching him in the face and saying, “You disgusting rapist! You should die for this! You don’t deserve to live if you are going around raping our women!” Then I looked around and there was a crowd gathering so I took off my robes and got up to fight them off, but they were all Tibetans. I sat down and put my shirt back on and pretended to be practicing meditation. I was so embarrassed. They said I was a hero, that I saved her life, but a monk shouldn’t fight like that.

“In Kham, I used to get in knife fights and brawls all the time. I still have many scars. When I get angry, I forget everything. I forget my lamas, my monastery, my vows, and I just fight. I think that those (recent Tibetan) rapists should die. It makes me sick and very angry—so angry. They should really just be killed for what they did.”

### **Happening—Dharamsala, India, 1994 (As Related by Elsa and her husband Kama)**

In 1994 there was a cricket match between Pakistan and India, which India lost. One Tibetan boy was laughing about how seriously the Indians in Dharamsala were taking the loss and fighting words turned to fighting, and knife stabs were exchanged, and the Indian guy died and the Tibetan guy was badly injured. A day or two later, a mob of tribal Indian villagers came into Dharamsala with shovels, crude weapons, knives and torches and burnt down Tibetan stores, threw rocks at houses, and tried to kill any Tibetans on the street. Elsa and Kama came the day it started and because Kama’s long hair matched the description of the boy, Kama got pelted with rocks. They ran as fast as they ever had, finding shelter in a nearby Tibetan house. They spent two nights there and then were one of the only ones to leave their house and get food. Other Tibetans were



boycotting anything from Indians and didn't buy food. An Indian-run hotel had the only food available.

Then they went to the top of a hill and hid out there for two days. Most Tibetans stayed in their houses for the entire time. Some were hot-headed and threw rocks back and wanted to fight with the Indians. These young people wanted to protect their house, family, property and stores. But His Holiness, who was in England at the time, said he did not want them to use violence and told them not to fight back. Most obeyed, some did not. In the end it was the Indian army who stopped it, three or four days after it started. Several stores had broken windows. Kama tells me,

“The tension came from jealousy over the Tibetans’ economic success and the treatment by the Indian government that caused them to be in a better position than the locals. There's something political there. Tibetans owned a lot of the area businesses and were quite successful comparatively.”

Some told Elsa and Kama to throw rocks and fight the Indians, as they were less “under His Holiness’ powerful influence.” After His Holiness came back he told the Indian government, “Maybe I shouldn't be in Dharamsala. Maybe I should change places. I don't trust the Indian government any more since the police didn't respond or try to stop it.” But Dharamsala would be nothing without the Tibetans, Kama tells me, so they convinced him to stay.

When I told him this story, Norbu, the settlement officer, told me, “There have been some minor spats between the Tibetan community and the local Indians, but many of these were created by local politicians or people with Chinese motives. Mostly, we follow His Holiness’ advice on how to live with the local Indians.”

**Kama—Adopted by Swiss Family Forty Years Ago**

"I could go in the army to get my Swiss passport, but for us there is some kind of philosophy problem. I don't want to go to learn how to kill people and be hostile. As a refugee, you don't have rights, you don't have nothing."

### **Tenzin—Elderly Man Imprisoned by Chinese for 27 Years, Mysore, India**

"All of the people who worked in the Tibetan government did what the Chinese asked them to do. Those who rebelled against the Chinese were killed or taken away to 'another place.' They would ask me two questions before torturing me. One was, 'How does the Dalai Lama view Chinese occupation?' (They thought he had connections with the Dalai Lama through his job, as he was the district headquarters officer for five districts in the Western part of Tibet.) The other was, 'What is your connection to the Khampa guerillas who rebelled in 1959 and 1960?' For both questions I said I wasn't involved and didn't know and then they would call me a liar and torture me.

"In one torture method, my thumbs were tied to the ceiling and I would hang there until I lost consciousness from the unbearable pain. Then I was thrown in a prison cell where I would slowly regain consciousness. Another torture method was to take me to a public area where I would be asked the same two questions and then people would call me a liar and kick and hit me in public. Sometimes my hands would be cuffed behind my back day and night. Sometimes I would just be beaten up in my cell. This torture lasted for three years. After that, there was no more punishment, I was just asked to work—breaking stones, carrying things on my back to construction sights. After that I worked in a pork factory and then at an electricity plant. During those 27 years the hardest part was there was no food. I was always starving. The torture and work was nothing compared to the hunger. I would try to steal the pig food, but would get beaten for it. Once I gathered some cigarette butts and made a cigarette out of it by collecting all the tobacco. The night I smoked that hand-rolled cigarette was the only night I slept well in prison.

"After I got out, I noticed that Tibetans in Tibet are under Chinese gunpoint. They have to do as they say. They are forced to say that they are happy under Chinese rule or they will get killed. They are forced to say they are doing well when asked by Chinese or Westerners. Everyone is unhappy, trying to stay out of prison. They are not allowed to speak, and only say what the Chinese force them to say."

### **News Story in the "Tibetan Bulletin," August 1998**

#### **ONE KILLED AT NEPALI BORDER**

"A group of 52 Tibetans clashed with police at Katari Village, 415 km east of Kathmandu, on September 15 after crossing into Nepal. Police said the fleeing Tibetans had attacked the police with stones and dagger-type weapons which they swung on the end of ropes after they were confronted by a security patrol. The

police had to fire in self-defense' inspector Santosh Chudal said. Four police were wounded in the clash as well as two Tibetans. A 23-year old man, Namjung, was killed by police. Tibetan refugee officials in Kathmandu said the fleeing refugees were frightened and had reacted to avoid being captured as they saw the Nepali patrol."<sup>40</sup>

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Members of the international media tend to strongly emphasize the conflict between the younger, less patient elements of Tibetan activism and the Dalai Lama's persistent nonviolent approach. The Tibetan communities I lived in were well aware of this media slant and were rather annoyed by it. Those elements do exist, but there is no real conflict between the Tibetan people and the Dalai Lama. Chinese Communist media tries to over-hype these differences of opinion, as do a good number of Western journalists hungry for drama.

I was approached after my return to the U.S. in my father's church by a seemingly educated woman who had gotten the impression from newspaper articles and television programs that the Dalai Lama was in danger of being overthrown by his own people. She really believed this. From my experience, nothing could be further from the truth. Aside from Dorje Shungten cult members angry over the Dalai Lama's ban on their group, I did not meet a single Tibetan that did not revere, respect and have complete faith in the Dalai Lama. Even among the younger generation with a terrorist slant, the Dalai Lama is given the highest respect. He represents all things good about Tibetan culture and controls their fate with his wise religious and political leadership.