

# Torture Killing Me Softly

Bhutan Through the Eyes of Mind Control Victim

**Tek Nath Rizal**

**Friends of Bhutan**

## **Some Observations on Torture Killing Me Softly**

The book is an authoritative, rich and compelling narrative of the man who represents the movement for democracy and human rights in Bhutan. It might once again remind the present day Bhutan that there is no sustainable alternative to national reconciliation between the monarchy and the opposition forces. Bhutanese need national unity, and the new king has a meaningful role to play in this regard.

-Bipin, Adhikari  
*Spotlight Magazine*

It's evident from the annex under the heading of "suggested reading" that the author has researched a great deal about the use of electronic devices to control one's mind. The epilogue reads: "The global agencies must

verify the tall claims of the government of Bhutan independently whether it is 'Gross National Happiness' or the 'Gross National Sufferings.'" Indeed, the cases of gross human rights violations as documented by Rizal in *Torture* cast a shadow over so-called Shangri-La.

- Deepak Adhikari  
*Nepal Monitor*

Rizal has written in detail about the torturous moments he lived in different Bhutanese prisons. The book is really useful to know about how the authorities used torture against the freedom fighter and human rights activist.

- Bimal Gautam  
*Republica*

*Torture Killing Me Softly* is based on his ten year jail term in Bhutan. The book not only delves into Rizal's life but also details the extreme level of torture one human being can afflict on another human being. It talks about the use of 'mind-control device' to torture him and a number of Bhutanese freedom fighters. The device, internationally, is regarded a big human rights violation.

- Prakash Acharya & Kamal Dev Bhattarai  
*The Himalayan Times*

The book is a vivid image and recall of mind controlling tactics the Bhutanese government has been using for political prisoners. The author, who spent a decade in the Bhutanese jail, has well spoken of all such controlling measures.

- Association of Press Freedom Activists, Bhutan

The book has giddy details of torture called 'mind-control', a techno-savvy surveillance technique applied on him during his decade-long incarceration in Bhutanese jails, hitherto little heard of at least in this part of the globe.

- Achyut Wagle  
*The Kathmandu Post*

### **The best reason for reading *Torture Killing Me Softly***

Unlike the atomic bomb, there has been no meaningful public debate about mind control weapons because the weapons have been surrounded in secrecy for over half a century. In a democracy, this is wrong. Should the mind control weapons be developed without any public input? That's exactly what has happened. A letter dated January 22, 1947 by Albert Einstein described the importance of public debate;

“Through the release of atomic energy, our generation has brought into the world the most revolutionary force since prehistoric man’s discovery of fire. This basic power of the universe cannot be fitted into the outmoded concept of narrow nationalisms. For there is no secret and there is no defense; there is no possibility of control except through the aroused understanding and insistence of the peoples of the world.

“We scientists recognize our inescapable responsibility to carry to our fellow citizens an understanding of the simple facts of atomic energy and its implications for society. In this lies our only security and our only hope, we believe that an informed citizenry will act for life and not death.”

Since the CIA’s EMR mind control research began in the 1950s, not one U.S. EMR mind control weapon has ever been revealed to the public. How will the public ever find out when mind control weapons are developed? After reading Rizal’s book, you will want to protest and call for an investigation into the horrific allegations, and also advocate for new laws and treaties for secret mind control weapons.

Rizal eloquently warns the world: the major world powers have developed and deployed secret new weapons more powerful than the atomic bomb in very evil ways.

- Cheryl Welsh

*Director*

*www.mindjustice.org*

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## **Torture Killing Me Softly**

Bhutan Through the Eyes of Mind-Control Victim

**Tek Nath Rizal**

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## Unveiling the Atrocity

Every year hundreds and thousands of unlucky people are turned into refugees by natural disasters. Nonetheless, there are several other iniquitous reasons too, apart from those tragedies, which impel people to become refugees. Our history is replete with such examples where people are rendered refugees not by vagaries of nature, rather by the country's man made polity. Bhutanese refugees are one such example. In the name of a vindictive experiment of 'one country and one language' that has invariably failed wherever it is tried, one sixth of the country's population has been in exile. This is a shame on the Bhutanese regime where democracy is a mere sham. To help these hapless refugees who are reduced to destitution due to regime's ethnic cleansing policy, late Trailokya Man Singh had organized a small group called Friends of Bhutan (FOB). Within its means, the FOB has always helped these voiceless refugees and has tried to bring the issue to the forefront for its respectable resolution. In our endeavor to work for Bhutanese refugees, we came across Tek Nath Rizal, a refugee yet with resolute human dignity.

Although, king Jigme Singey Wamchuck abdicated his throne—a face saving attempt—and may continue to shine in sacrificial aura, the pending issue of more than one hundred thousand Bhutanese refugees looming large has subdued the reflected glow of his renunciation and drama of democratization. And, suddenly, the Lhotsampas who were so acceptable to the king Jigme's Bhutan became the dirtiest imposition hither. Rizal's book, *Torture Killing Me Softly : Bhutan Through the Eyes of Mind-Control Victim* not only excoriates the ugly face wrapped up in Shangri-La demeanor which the king Jigme and company is selling on a veneer of fatuous 'Gross National Happiness', but it is the regime's Lhotsampa script in the age of king Jigme's bathos as well.

When Rizal came to Kathmandu after his release from the Bhutanese jail, much to our chagrin, we found him a victim of mind-control. From the very first encounter, he had been trying to explain that he is a victim of a peculiar torture and the subsequent distress which he has no explanation. In the first place, people were unable to comprehend his case beyond schizophrenia. But as we heard him and read more and more accounts of horrific torture he had been subjected to, it was almost unbelievable to accept the existence of such a sophisticated contrivance in a tiny underdeveloped country like Bhutan that depends on foreign aid to feed its population and for development. However, it is truism to say that Rizal's case is the example of EMR (electromagnetic radiation) target of sub rosa violence perpetrated by the authoritarian regime of Bhutan to muzzle him. Many of his well wishers advised him to refrain from speaking out his state of mind-control in

public and penning his thoughts. Superficially, the incomprehension of the well wishers seemed to be their wariness, but more obviously, it was because it is extremely difficult to find the reliable information and hard evidence on the issue of EMR. The situation has given the perpetrators a benefit of doubt and succeeded in keeping the judiciary proceeding at bay. The book fills the gap and can serve as a prima facie evidence of the use of EMR. Rizal has braved the debility out caused by mind-control and vividly described the ordeal that he went through in the Bhutanese jail--a second generation of Auschwitz.

The book elaborately describes how the EMR affected Rizal's biological system and his brain in particular. To the general readers, it provides hard experienced facts to evaluate the level of threat to human body from EM mind-control. Looking at the ever increasing scope of EMR as a life threatening device, it is necessary to mobilize wide public attention to condemn the countries that use it, as 'rogue countries' as in the case of nuclear weapons. If the UN can see the proliferation of nuclear weapons is devastation for civilization, EMR is no less destructive to humanity which tears the human personality apart and obliterates the target.

We at the FOB, therefore, appeal to the world citizens to put pressure on the UN to ban all kinds of mind-control device and declare its use as a punitive action. In the quest for justice, this book opens a debate if, like the case of Slobodan Milosevic, the perpetrator king Jigme could be summoned to the International Court of Justice, it will prove a milestone in the annals of democratic movement for justice and equity where the regime has seriously violated the civilian human values.

For such thing to happen, there needs a democratic institution in the country that can countervail the muscle of the state when it is morally necessary to stand against it, so that, citizens in majority or in minority are not intimidated and bullied by any community or ruling elites in the pretense of norms and traditions. In the fourth century BC in Athens, the cradle of democracy, the greatest philosopher of the time was given hemlock, the most bizarre violation of human rights, simply because such institution did not exist then. Rizal's case vis-à-vis ethnic cleansing in Bhutan are horrendous violation of fundamental rights and commensurate to the misfortune of Bosnia Herzegovina's nightmare.

We, at the FOB, are floundering if Rizal could be resituated in his normal life by desanitizing him from the influence of mind control. What else could be a better way of helping him than to redeem his normal life? If that happens, the FOB will consider its endeavor to publish the book has been successful.

Dhruva Joshy  
*Friends of Bhutan*  
Kathmandu  
August, 2010



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## Dedication

This book is dedicated to all the human rights activists, journalists, legal experts, intellectuals, the head of the states of the democratic countries of the world and the martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the Bhutanese democratic movement.

## Acknowledgements

I am grateful to my friends, institutions, and well wishers, especially from Bhutan, Australia, Canada, Germany, India, Nepal, the Netherlands, Russia, Switzerland, the UK and the US, who helped me during and after my prison life. They have been magnanimous to extend their help, co-operation and assistance to me in countless ways, whenever required. There are many people who helped me financially, politically and academically while I was in jail and after my release too. I am indebted to those who helped me in the medical treatment and my visit to foreign countries for the noble cause of Bhutanese people.

Most sincerely, I wanted to acknowledge each person by mentioning his/her name. With this in mind, I started preparing the list. The list went beyond half a dozen pages and yet remained incomplete. Omission of any name in this list, by chance, would be very unkind to the concerned individuals who selflessly helped me. Therefore, I took a conscious decision to scrap the list. With all my humility, I gratefully acknowledge the help I have received from each individual since 1989 onwards and place on record my appreciation of their selfless help. Indeed, it has eased the journey of my life, riddled with hurdles and obstacles. I owe eternal debt to each of these persons.

Similarly, I would like to emphasize all the persons who had high hopes from me. I sincerely wish to seek their forgiveness at this juncture and hope that after going through these pages, they will realize why it happened, how I continue to be a victim of mind-control and how it has severely curbed my thought-process and shackled my activities, practically, my whole life.

I am fortunate enough to receive tremendous support from Nepali politicians, academicians, human rights activists, Bhutanese colleagues, medical practitioners, journalists and intellectuals. I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat, Dr. Prakash Chandra Lohani, Govinda Raj Joshi. I'm thankful to Prof. Dr. Mohan Lohani, Dr. Devendra Raj Pandey, Prof. Dr. Govinda Raj Bhattarai, Prof. Dr. Surendra K.C. I'm grateful to Dr. J. P. Rizal, Dr. Pradip Shrestha, Dr. Kiran Shrestha, Dr. Prakash Kayastha, Dr. Ramesh Acharya, Dr. Jitendra Man Shrestha, Dr. Gupta Bahadur Shrestha, Dr. Arjun Karki and Dr. Buddhi Prasad Paudel.

Likewise, I would also like to name the human rights activists, journalists and intellectuals who have helped in several ways: Krishna Pahadi, Purushottam Dahal, Late Bharat Bhurtel, Jeeba Lamichhane, Yadab Kharel, Subodh Pyakurel, Gopal Siwakoti 'Chintan', Nawa Raj Lamsal, Dhruvahari Adhikary, Kapil Shrestha, Dr. Tara Niraula, Prateek Dhakal, and Devendra Bhattarai. Thanks also go to Raju Thapa and Pramod Kaphley (publishers of the first edition of this book), Ishwar Khanal, Dharma Thapa, Uttam Dhungel and Muktinath Ghimire.

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It would be unfair if I omit the names of Bhutanese colleagues such as Dr. Bhumpa Rai, Bala Ram Poudel, Late R.B. Basnet, Dasho Thinley Penjore, D.P. Kafle, Hari Prasad Adhikari and L. N. Basnet (former members of National Assembly), Ratan Gazmere, Durga Giri, Dr. Laxmi Dhakal, Jogen Gazmere, Govinda Adhikari, Hari Kafley, Parshuram Luitel, Y.P. Dhungel, Narad Adhikari, Tom Adhikari, Ambika Sharma, Khem Kafle, Mohan Tamang, Tenzing Zangpo, Kamal Rizal, Tribrikram Rizal, Nripendra Rizal and Muna Rizal. I am grateful for their contribution.

I have presented here a true account of my harrowing experiences I went through and the human injustice I continue to suffer from, for which the king and his tyrannical regime are mainly responsible. I have been the victim of mind-control for the last 19 years but almost all of my acquaintances, close friends, family members with whom I shared these experiences, refused to believe me. My inability to convince them left me dejected and helpless.

Finally, I found knowledgeable persons who forthwith believed in my narration. Prof. Dr. Indrajit Rai has been kind enough to corroborate my experiences by expressing his views in this book. I am heavily indebted to scientist and researcher Dr. Arun Kumar Singh, G. P. Singh and Namita Singh, who helped in exposing the inhuman deeds of the regime.

This book wouldn't have come out in this form without the help and guidance of these people. I would like to thank Dhruva Joshy of Nepal for encouraging me to write this book and for preparing the initial draft with Thomas Hardakar of the United Kingdom. The first edition of this book was edited by Prof. Dr. M.P. Lohani, former Nepali Ambassador to Bangladesh. After it was launched in September 2009, I received several feedbacks—some mentioned that the book exposed the Bhutanese regime's dark side while others pointed out its linguistic shortcomings. So, I decided to bring out the second edition. For this, I sought the help of two journalists Deepak Adhikari and Nitya Nanda Timsina, who have been instrumental in bringing the book in the present shape.

I am likewise grateful to International Committee for Red-Cross (ICRC) and international human rights organizations for their unforgettable help. I want to make a special mention of the Friends of Bhutan, Informal Sector Service Center (INSEC), Human Rights Without Frontier, Nepal (HRWF), Group for International Solidarity (GRINSO), Indo-Bhutan Solidarity and Human Rights and Peace Society Nepal.

I also would like to thank all political parties, electronic and print media of the world for raising voice against human injustice of the regime.

## Preface

Spending ten years of my life in the most degrading and inhuman conditions in the prisons, I made a considered decision to share my experiences with the rest of the world. The primary objective behind writing this book is to reveal the other side of the so-called last Shangri-La, where ethnic cleansing is being practiced as a state policy, in the name of maintaining cultural purity.

The nature, extent and magnitude of mental and physical tortures inflicted upon hundreds of citizens in the prisons and virtually throughout the nation on a daily basis came to the knowledge of the world in 1990. The destructive method invented and employed by the rulers is aimed at crushing the human spirit and shackling liberty and is a crime against humanity. Should the ruler of a member state of the United Nations remain scot-free for such actions which are so blatantly contrary to the principles, letter and spirit of the United Nations? Does United Nations have guts to come out of its bureaucratic nitty-gritty to take up the cudgels for banning such anti-human devices by one of its member nations?

Torture was not confined to primitive physical assault by using whips, clamps, chains, ropes and electric shocks but also involved application of various scientific devices like light sensitivity, very high sound decibels, microwaves on my conscience. The objective was clear: destabilize the mind, induce anomalous behavioral changes and create dissociation. A combination of sensory isolation and beaming different kinds of energy in the brain were used to procure the desired result. Systematic efforts were made to destroy completely my senses but my deeper sub-conscious remained alive. This has been instrumental in my post-torture mental reconstruction process, owing to which I have recollected my experiences to share with the world.

The subject of mind-control has been kept under carpet by the concerned states; hence most of the people are not aware of it. Records and personal accounts of torture, identical to my experiences, are also available. This book bears testimony to the fact that the torture inflicted on me through scientific techniques is solely responsible for my bizarre physical and mental behavior. This account can be a starting point for all – in particular for researchers to adopt methods of detecting such torture in victims, for human rights activists to formulate tools to stop such unethical practice and for lawmakers to mete out stiff penalties to the perpetrators of such crimes.

I would like to express my most sincere thanks to readers for their overwhelming response to my earlier books, *Ethnic Cleansing and Political Repression in Bhutan*, *Nirusan* (In Exile, in Nepali) and its subsequent English translation *From Palace to Prison* to which some new chapters were added and the first edition of this book. Many of the readers, friends, well wishers, activists (social, human rights and political), doctors and others deeply concerned about the gross violation of human rights as well as the treatment meted out to prisoners in the country. Almost all of them are of the opinion that a more focused text on the aspects of torture in the Bhutanese prisons needs to be brought to light. The prevailing view was that the subject of 'torture' in my earlier book was discussed along with the various other relevant issues, and hence, it has got somewhat lost in the maze and become diffused. This book is primarily the result of working on these suggestions and hence some overlapping in the narration that could not be avoided.

I have attempted to present the true account of the torture in the jail through which I have unraveled the other face of the rulers of so-called Shangri-La. While doing so, I have tried to live up to the expectations of my readers. However, despite my sincere efforts, some errors might have sneaked in. I look forward to comments and suggestions.

-Tek Nath Rizal  
([tnrizal47@gmail.com](mailto:tnrizal47@gmail.com))

# Foreword

## *Mind Control Device on Tek Nath Rizal*

- Prof. Dr. Indrajit Rai

I knew Tek Nath Rizal as an internationally renowned human rights activist and a freedom fighter from Bhutan. From the time I became acquainted with his name about two decades ago, I was always eager to meet him and listen to his stories of struggle for the rights of the Bhutanese, especially the Lhotsampas – straight from the horse's mouth. Yet, I continued to keep myself up-to-date about him through the media. One day, unexpectedly, his son Kamal Rizal came to see me with his two books. I thought to finish them in two weeks time, but when I started reading them, I found his experiences of life so thrilling and absorbing that it was hard to put away. It did not take me more than a week to finish them with the adequate knowledge of why he was imprisoned and how he was inhumanly tortured, brutally persecuted, by the Bhutanese authorities using the mind-control device and other psychological tactics.

In May 1988, he fled Bhutan due to the well founded fear of persecution and finally arrived in Nepal to save his life and liberty. But he was arrested and handed by the Nepalese authorities over to the Bhutanese regime, a gross violation of human rights, with the secret conspiracy of two monarchs, King Birendra of Nepal and King Jigme of Bhutan. He was kept in several prisons where he was severely tortured, treated inhumanly and punished degradingly.

This time, Rizal has written a very fascinating book entitled *Torture Killing Me Softly*. I was honored to write foreword of this book. I thoroughly read it and found that how modern scientific methods which have massive and long-lasting detrimental effects were used against him.

Being a professor of War Studies, I found, during my military research, the mind-control technique applied to the war prisoners. It is an electromagnetic mind-control technique which can take full control of the person's body and mind permanently. It uses modulated microwave to produce audible voices in the person's head. It

is in the form of subliminal hypnotic command and the victim can be hypnotically programmed for years without knowing.

Thoughts are implanted in the victim's mind without letting him know. In microwave hearing, nobody can hear the voices except the targeted individual. The sound reverberates in the target's ear monotonously. In a solitary cell the high pitched sound gets amplified. Slowly it stirs the unconscious layer of the mind and deeply affects the nerves.

The motive of mind-control is to destroy the targeted person's life. He digresses from his goal, forgets his mission, behaves strangely with his family members and relatives and can't follow his routine life. It is used, by losing control of his mind, to elicit the required information from the prisoner as it hypnotizes him.

As a result, the mind works under hallucination that the victim sees different images in his mind which are implanted by the controller. It inflicts pain when he tries to divert the mind from the control. It causes breathing difficulties, terrible headaches, and high blood pressure, nose-bleeding and unbearable burning sensation while urinating. It makes one undergo deep hallucinations of dying, encountering ferocious tiger, eating flesh of one's own children and so on. Sometimes, he feels the food smelling noxious and it tastes like feces which causes vomiting sensation and nausea. I learned from those books that the Bhutanese government practiced mind-control techniques on Rizal as a means to inflict physical and mental pain in order to destroy his life. With a view to deviating him from his goal of fighting for democracy, the Bhutanese government used these devices on him and pumped out all his thoughts and feelings. From the experiences of such victim it reveals that there is an acute need to take extra care in handling them as their minds are highly destabilized. They always feel loneliest, most insecure, totally helpless and living in permanent terror and fear of unknown.

Thanks Almighty! You have made Rizal fortunate as, against the intention of the Bhutanese government, he is not only able to read and write but also share his experiences with us in spite of having been tortured with the mind-control device. I wish him every success, in the days to come in living up to his goal. Finally, I would like to appeal to the international community to ban all kinds of mind-control devices, not to apply them, under any circumstances, to anyone else in the world and provide proper security, necessary medical support and financial aid to Rizal, one of the historic political personalities and human rights activists of South Asia.

*(Prof. Dr. Indrajit Rai is a Member of the Constituent Assembly of Nepal as well as the Campus Chief of British Gorkha College, Nepal. Dr. Rai, an internationally known conflict and security expert did his M. Sc., M. Phil. and Ph.D. in Military Science. Earlier, he served for 15 years in Indian Navy as Lieutenant Commander and successfully completed various military courses, taught at the Army Staff College Kathmandu for seven years. In addition, he is a visiting faculty member of many prestigious institutes. He has also received many distinguished awards. He has published more than 100 articles in research journals, magazines and newspapers. He is the author of the well-known book The Great Military Thinkers of the World.)*





## Early Days

The valley was beautiful and calm. The river flowed continuously. And, it looked like a thread hung in between the valleys. The terraced field at the river bank looked like an art of nature, where the domestic animals enjoyed grazing. Pristine white snow around added the beauty to the divine serenity and made people oblivious of the freezing breeze that blew across. The hitting of the air stricken with the electric wires would produce unpleasant noise. But the same blow of the air forcing the pine trees to bend seemed as if it was teaching the human a philosophical lesson of life. In the evening, the stupas appeared to be deeply meditating monks, adding to the natural beauty.

The valley was decorated like a newly-wed bride. This face-lift was possible by bringing people from different parts of the country to work under the forceful labor system in the pretext of development. The forced laborers were made to work by the government under degrading conditions and were confined to the make-shift huts at worksites. Until then, there were hardly any shops supplying the basic needs, and hotels were non-existent. One was sure to remain hungry if one had no local acquaintance. There were no vehicles for transportation. People farmed for eking out a living. Horses, mules, oxen and even human beings were used in ferrying goods. In absence of modern transport, even the king used to travel on a horseback or on a pony.

The country was very backward. There was utter lack of sanitation. People urinated in open areas and spitted chewed beetle leaves here and there. The local residents were no different, either. Men and women took bath openly in river, stripping off themselves, a scene unsightly to the annoyance of the casual visitors. The food they cooked at home was wrapped in clothes and taken to the workplace. In lunch time, some people made a circle, spread the food on the piece of clothes and relished it without even washing their hands. These people

seemed jolly and amiable. When it was bedtime, for married couples, the clothes worn by womenfolk were used as bed sheets while those worn by men were used as quilts. Such was the state of poverty coupled with the customary practice of the time.

I was working in Sarbhang as a technical instructor in Bhutan Engineering Service in 1968 when I was called here for the renovation work of Tashi-Cho-Dzong. From Sarbhang, I left for Kokrajhar in Assam, and then I boarded a train for Hassimara, West Bengal. A local bus took me to Chamkuna (now known as Phuntsholing). I stayed here for a week waiting for a vehicle that would ferry me to the capital. The National Highway was under construction. Public transport was non-existent. Only the vehicles for the construction work would ply on the road. The Indian Tata truck owned by the government would ferry the laborers and the hitchhiked passengers of all kinds like patients, pregnant women, and the elderly people who were crammed into the vehicle. The 180 kilometer dirt-track was blocked by landslide in several places. It was a precarious journey--by the time the passengers arrived in the capital, they would be covered by dust, drenched by the rain and tanned by the sun because the truck was open.

There were no hotels or lodges on the way. With great difficulty, I reached the capital. It took me almost two days. Even the capital was bereft of hotel. It seemed as if the village was being transformed into a town. The darkness had already enveloped the capital. For a night, I took shelter in a temporary habitation of the Lhotsampas who had been there obliged by the state order to work. By the time I woke up, it was already nine in the morning. I hurriedly washed myself, ate breakfast and after dressing up, rushed to the office first and then to the worksite. It was a cold and dreary day: chilling air was blowing from the snow-capped mountains; even the occasional sunshine was marred by the wispy clouds drifting across the sky.

As I reached at the worksite, I was stunned to see people wearing Gho and Kira and also talking in a language I could not understand. I felt as if I had come to a different world. People were clad in old, torn clothes. They were busy carrying stones, mud and timber for the renovation of Tashi-Cho-Dzong. They also seemed quite scared. The workers were both male and female in equal numbers. A group of women sang in a chorus while working. The song echoed through the mountains. To me, it sounded like an expression of their agony. On the contrary, the rich and the powerful would play archery (the national sports). This made me sad.

I was also extremely surprised to observe marks which seemed to be made by rubber stamps on almost all of their faces. Out of curiosity, I asked one of them about that. A lady standing nearby retorted in Hindi, "What do you want to know?" Then, she elaborated in a breath: "We are here to work for the king, as ordered by the government officials; we have to work sincerely and continuously for a month without wages. Everyday at seven in the morning, the government officials stamp our faces; we have to have thirty stamps after a month, and then only we are allowed to return to our village. If the marks are found to be less than thirty, we have to work for another seven days as compensation. And, if we return to our village without the marks, our village head would either send us back or put us in the jail, with the charge of deceiving the king." Indeed, the marks on their faces were not only the attendance but also the certificates to show back in their villages that they had worked for the regime.

Even the travelers were not spared. The officials stamped the same seal on the travelers' wrist. In the entry points, especially in the police checkpoints, the visitors were required to undergo this process. Such dehumanizing practice reminded me of numbering animals in the herd by tattooing onto their bodies.

Because of such inhuman practice, none of the outsiders wanted to work there. In order to lure the workers, the government had a bizarre scheme of giving a Panasonic radio-set as a gift to those who worked for three consecutive years. The latent motive behind it was that in those days the Panasonic radio was the coveted thing to possess since the commoner had no access to such high quality Japanese radio-set, a valued item for them. This scheme worked wonder as the outsiders flocked to possess the prized item. These anecdotes I am narrating here are not of any foreign land but my own motherland, Bhutan.

Bhutan, a tiny land-locked mountainous kingdom located on the south-eastern slope of the great Himalayan range, is bordered by India in the south, the east and the west; and by the Tibetan Autonomous Region of China in the north. The northern border with China is closed. The early history of Bhutan is mired in controversy, so is the size of its present population which is approximately 600,000. The country was isolated until 1960. A few historians, who wrote about the country during the 19th century and subsequently, had to entirely depend on the government version. The country has three main ethnic, linguistic and religious groups--Ngalongs, Sharchokpas and Lhotsampas. Ngalongs, the ruling group, control the monarchy, the government and dominate the economy. They inhabit the north-west region of the country, belong to Tibetan ancestry, speak Dzongkha language and practice Drukpa Kargyupa sect of Mahayana Buddhism. Sharchokpas belong to Tibeto-Burman ancestry, live in eastern and central region and speak Tshangla dialects and practice Nyingmapa sect of Mahayana Buddhism. Lhotsampas (literally, Nepali-speaking people of the South) are restricted by law to the South and had to take the responsibility of guarding the Indo-Bhutan border as well. They speak Nepali language and largely follow Hindu religion. In addition to these three dominant groups, there are a dozen other groups, smaller in numbers, including Khengs, Brokpas, Mangdepas, Kurteopas, Doyas, Adivasis, Tibetans and others. All these ethnic groups migrated to Bhutan at different points of time before the turn of the 19th century. In fact, Bhutan has often been called a country of immigrants, ruled by an autocratic regime. For centuries, people belonging to these different groups had lived in perfect communal, religious and ethnic harmony. Tolerance, co-operation and compromise had been the hallmarks of the Bhutanese society. But such harmony saw a gradual loss with the ascent of the fourth King Jigme Singye Wangchuck. The third King Jigme Dorjee Wangchuck, who had been dynamic and had introduced several administrative reforms, unexpectedly passed away in 1972. His son Jigme Singye, who was barely 17, ascended the throne on June 2, 1974. The young monarch, who had hardly any knowledge of administration and was surrounded by a bunch of inept bureaucrats, began to rule the country with an iron hand. The subsequent policy adopted by the newly crowned monarch without the consent of the National Assembly had ominous effect on the Lhotsampas who predominantly lived in the South. From 1977 onwards, the newly-enthroned king started enacting several draconian laws, one after the other, especially aiming at the Lhotsampas. The first appeared the Marriage Act in 1977, wherein the process of becoming a Bhutanese citizen was tightened. Under this Act, Bhutanese people were barred from marrying foreigners. In practical terms, it meant that Bhutanese could not marry non-Bhutanese. Moreover, in all such marriages done after 1958, the wife and children of those Bhutanese nationals, who had obtained their citizenship, were again declared illegal when the Act came into force in 1985. On the pretext of decentralization, in 1980, the despotic ruler had captured the Lhotsampas historical and legal documents from the Commissioner Office of Sarbhang. After that, the regime, in a bid to erase the original names given by our ancestors, renamed the Southern districts and towns.

The Marriage Act was followed by the Land Act 1980, wherein a ceiling was placed on the size of land-holding, severely curtailing the economic activities of the Lhotsampas, as more than 80 percent of them were

subsistent farmers. In 1984, the so-called Green Belt Policy, which aimed to create a forest-belt along the Indo-Bhutan border, was brought about to displace the Lhotsampas. Yet, another revised Citizenship Act 1985 was promulgated and implemented with retrospective effect from 1958. Under this Act, every Lhotsampa had to produce a proof of domicile in Bhutan prior to 1958. Those who failed to do so were made to sign the 'voluntary migration form' at gun-point and were subsequently evicted from the country. Those who produced the documents were not spared, either. Their documents were confiscated. The victims were not allowed to complain. Moreover, their relatives too were barred from complaining on their behalf. The regime was unaware of the fact that Lhotsampas could produce the evidences that dated back to 1907, let alone 1958, even before the beginning of Wangchuck dynasty.

Then in 1986 came the 'One Nation One People' policy, under which National Dress Code was promulgated, making it mandatory for every man and woman to wear Gho and Kira, throughout the day, violation inviting stiff fines. Moreover, both Gho and Kira are designed for the inhabitants of the North which is extremely cold, hence unsuitable for the hot and humid climate of the South. Then, Dzongkha, a local dialect spoken inside forts, was declared the national language and was made a mandatory mode of communication throughout the country, simultaneously banning Nepali language in schools and offices. This was a severe blow to the Lhotsampas because the scripts of Dzongkha and Nepali are poles apart – the former is Tibetan while the latter is Devanagari. The imposition of Dzongkha also affected other groups such as Sarchokpas who had their own mother tongues. To add insult to the injury, for every religious ritual, the Lhotsampas, who predominantly followed Hinduism, needed permission from the Buddhist Lama well in advance, even to conduct the last rites. Finally, to degrade and humiliate, especially after 1990, the regime made it mandatory for them to procure NOC (no objection certificate) for services, including businesses, travel, and admission to schools, colleges, hospitals and agriculture. And, the police had prior instructions not to issue NOC.

Overall, the cumulative objective of these policies, laws and regulations was to bring about ethnic cleansing. As a final nail in the coffin, in 1988, a census exercise--undertaken only in the South--was implemented with retrospective effect from 1958. Under it, citizens were arbitrarily classified into seven categories, transforming a large number of genuine citizens into non-citizens, foreigners and encroachers. The net-effect of all these laws was that hundreds of innocent citizens were victimized by the coercive methods. And, the census teams were at the forefront of these activities. These acts not only denationalized the Lhotsampas, but also triggered subsequent eviction. As a result, they were forced to leave their movable and immovable properties behind.

## **Unraveling the Mystery**

In February 1988, the ethnically victimized people began to flock to my office in Thimphu. They complained about the excesses after the imposition of these policies, especially by the newly designated census teams. At that time, I was one of the public representatives from the South holding four offices -- Royal Advisory Councilor, Member of Royal Civil Service Commission, Member of the Cabinet and Coordinator of Nationwide Investigation Bureau. Hence, I was obliged to inquire about the issue. So, I enquired Dorji Tenzing, the Secretary of Department of Census and Immigration. I was told that it was a 'routine exercise'. I was not convinced by this and thought that the hand-picked teams had deliberately overstepped their mandate. The census teams, with the strong backing from the regime, randomly categorized the people. This affected the citizenship status of fellow southerners. I was distressed by the grave political consequences of the census on those victimized Lhotsampas. I, then, made up my mind to bring the issue, especially the

ramifications of the amended Citizenship Act 1985, to the knowledge of the king. I was waiting for an opportune time to meet him.

In the mean time, I was busy in investigating cases of corruption in high places. I had prepared detailed reports of frauds and malpractices committed by all the 20 Dzongdags, Home Minister Namgyal Wangchuck, Deputy Home Minister Dago Tshering and his younger brother with the same name; Sangay, Princess Ashi Sonam's father-in-law and Sonam Tobgye, Auditor General and Secretary, Civil Service Commission. Among those found guilty, a majority of them were Dzongdags, who were sentenced on the basis of investigation reports. The remaining cases were pending before the king for his final decision. The Bureau was surprised to discover that not a single Lhotsampa was involved in the corruption. Those who were the king's apple of eyes turned out to be most corrupt. The palace coterie was ashamed to acknowledge this fact. So, in order to put the issue of this shocking finding into the backburner, the regime engineered the census operation.

Concomitantly, I came under mounting pressure from king's uncle Namgyal Wangchuck, who had sent his emissary Tshering Wangda to pressurize me to withdraw the corruption charges involving the members of the royal family including Namgyal himself. He had contended that the charges would damage the reputation of the royal family in the eyes of India. He put immense pressure on me to withdraw the charges. I humbly told his emissary that it was up to the king to do so. Actually, the reports, substantiated with strong documentary evidence, were prepared by a team of chartered accountants from India.

Corruption permeated many areas of the country. There was no record of the export of firewood that cost millions to India. The tax collected from the plywood factories was not accounted. Huge amount of alcohol was smuggled to India from the only alcohol factory in the country run by Army Welfare Project. That too went unaccounted. Similarly, the sale of cement and dolomite was not in the record. Ugyen Dorji, the king's father-in-law was entrusted with running the supply of sand and the herbal factories. Its accounts were also not kept. We were told that Namgyal Wangchuk handled the food factory in Samchi. We were not allowed to investigate there. Millions of ngultrums were allocated to the Buddhist religious institutions. The money was not only taken from state coffers but also as donations from common people. These institutions lacked the system of book keeping. We were not allowed to probe this as well. Similarly, the Royal Bhutan Army had been able to emblaze by showing the exaggerated numbers of its personnel. There seems to have the record of purchasing the arms and ammunition. But it appeared that it had run out of it without using. We were not allowed to investigate that as well.

The rampant corruption had reached its climax during 1980s. It is testified by the official records. S. Penjore, the late Chairman of Royal Advisory Council (RAC), submitted an official note to the king in 1987 in this regard, stating that the government debt payable to public had reached such a level that total payments exceeded the funds available for one five year plan. Moreover, in the same note, it was explicitly stated that the members of the royal family were directly receiving cash and kind through Dzongdags and evidences were enclosed as annexure.

At the same time, the note stated that there should not be different standards in terms of the fees and the facilities for the European, American and Indian tourists. It must also be noted here that the regime deputed special guides to monitor the activities of tourists, especially the Americans and Europeans. In the note, he had stressed that since there were not many attractive destinations in the country for the tourists, the fees

should be reduced. This confidential issue came to the knowledge of many high-ranking officials and royal family members. Gradually, this matter also came to the knowledge of many public figures. Because of this scandal, the royal family started losing its sheen. Instead of punishing the corrupt, in 1987, the king dismissed S. Penjore. Overnight, the king proclaimed ex-Dzongdag and the king's confidant, Kuenzang Tangby of Tashigang, albeit he was indicted in corruption, as Penjore's successor. Present Chief Justice Sonam Tobgye, palace secretaries Pema Wangchen and Leki Dorji, Home Minister Namgyel Wangchuck, the Chief of Army Lam Dorji, king's father-in-law Ugyen Dorji and late Dawa Tshering (Foreign Minister) were actively involved in plotting against S. Penjore. He was not the sole victim; ex-councilor J.B. Chettri had earlier suffered a similar fate for unearthing high-level corruption.

One morning in late March, 1988, I sought an appointment with the king. I was readily granted the audience. As I entered the palace, the king gestured me to take the seat and asked me: "What brings you here?" I started explaining the recent developments in the South, especially the ramifications of the amended Citizenship Act 1985. After listening to me briefly, the king looked reluctant to talk. Instead, he told me to give everything in writing. Thereafter, I went back to my official residence and summoned a meeting of southerners who held key positions in the government. I briefed them on the unfolding situation. Evaluating the grave situation, those high-ranking Lhotsampa officials decided to help me prepare a petition to the king. The representatives at the meeting included Om Pradhan (Minister for Trade), Lok Bahadur Gurung (High Court Judge), late RB Basnet (Director of Revenue and Customs), Sangpa Tamang (Director of PWD), Bhim Subba (Director of Hydel), Hari Chhettri (Deputy Secretary, Foreign Ministry), Megha Raj Gurung (Director of Postal and Telegraphs) and Bidhyapati Bhandari (Councilor). The petition, undersigned by Bhandari and myself, was finally submitted to the king on April 9, 1988.

A week later, the king called me personally and suggested me to withdraw the petition. He told me in plain words not to get involved. His words stunned me. I was in a sticky situation. I started wondering: how can I unilaterally withdraw the petition? After all, it was prepared and submitted after receiving twelve thousand written complaints from the general public against the high-handedness of census teams. And, it was the king himself who had directed me to submit the petition. For the first time, I was deeply upset with the king's racist attitude. I had been working for the past fourteen years in that capacity and was his close confidant. In the later days, he appeared to be very servile to the foreign diplomats but cared nothing about the opinions or feelings of his own citizens. After visiting the South and being a witness to the unprecedented prosperity in the Lhotsampa households, the king was visibly envious. So, I assume, he could not bear the prosperity of the South, even though it translated to the overall growth of the country. This was crystal clear when he started changing the state policies one after the other. The unfolding incidents of suicide and restlessness in the South further agitated me. I was unable to console myself with what the king had said. I had lost my hope and confidence on him. After this unpleasant meeting, I left the palace and have never met the king again.

Soon after the incident, a sudden visit of the king to the South was organized by those officials who were irked by my role in the Bureau because I had conclusive proof of their misdeeds. Hence, no prior information was given to the aggrieved persons that a royal redress was being considered. At the same time, the administrative officers in the South were apprised of the king's visit and were instructed to follow a pre-decided course of reporting. The officials staged a drama in which only the persons unaffected by census exercise were presented before the king, merely to prove that I was misleading the government. I, being the

only elected representative of that area, was not allowed to take part in the royal entourage. Under the then existing law, it was mandatory for a councilor to accompany the king to his area during the royal visit.

Upon the king's return, neither was I allowed to participate in the Cabinet meeting nor was I given an opportunity to table the documentary evidences submitted by the people who desperately looked forward to the king to come up with solutions to their problems. The petition to the king was filed on this backdrop. But the persons in high places and connected to the royal family were annoyed with me and were desperately looking for an opportunity to teach me a lesson. The king wanted to save his image in the eyes of India and other donors, and thus, a measure was needed to silence the reformists and the critics, including me. More so, I was the most outspoken. So, the petition became a tool for them to take revenge on me and protect their skins.

To scare the people and to degrade me, the king branded me as an 'instigator' and an 'anti-national'. I was charged with sedition and treason and subjected to humiliation and injustice. I was removed from my positions, then arrested and detained in the prison without a trial for three days. No official warrant was issued against me. After the success of this well organized conspiracy, Deputy Home Minister Dago Tshering, whose brother was imprisoned due to the charges of corruption, embezzlement, and misuse of arms and ammunition, coerced me to sign an agreement in the presence of two High Court judges, Lok Bahadur Gurung and Dina Nath Katwal.

To add insult to injury, it was written in Dzongkha, a language that was Greek to me. My release from the prison was made conditional – neither would I go to my hometown nor meet more than three persons at a time. Non-compliance to the conditions would lead to my re-arrest and sentence for life. Threats were also issued to my wife and children. My sons were thrown out of school. Similarly, the documents I had prepared to present in the court as the evidence of the corruption were also seized.

Once I had been cornered, the regime started to suppress the high-ranking government officials and intellectuals who counseled and helped me in drafting the petition. These officials never intended to stand against the monarch. When the king had asked me to submit a written letter regarding the census, I had merely sought their consultations. These officials were not only well-known figures during the 1980s, but were also very hard-working, dedicated and loyal to the king. But the act done with a noble thought turned out to be treason in the eyes of the corrupt regime. We did not imagine that the monarch himself had engineered the so-called census which aimed at depriving the Lhotsampas of their basic rights. In fact, he seemed to be waiting for an opportune time to stifle us. I suspect that these innocent officials, who were denied an opportunity to clarify, were called one by one and targeted by advanced mind-control technique. Then, they were forced to make confession. Basnet, Subba and Chhetri were forced to leave the country while Pradhan and Gurung were coerced into standing against their own community. Later, Lok Bahadur Gurung was suspiciously killed in an accident. Meanwhile, Hari Prasad Adhikari, R.B. Magar, L.N. Basnet and K.B. Chauhan, Narayan Adhikari, the Assembly Members, were expelled from the country after confiscating their property.

It is obvious that every community comes together and defends when the entire community is under attack. Unfortunately, in the case of the South a handful of Lhotsampas guided by their vested interest even stood by the regime that committed atrocities to their own kin and kith.

Bhutan then was a closed society, isolated from the rest of the world. The people's voices had been muffled; they lived as prisoners in their own country. The United Nations office in Thimphu did exist, but it remained silent when half of the population was suffering. I began to ponder who would come to my rescue. Fearing serious threats to my life and liberty, I decided to leave my country. But, before that, I desperately needed a shelter. I initially went to Assam, in north-east India. It turned out unsafe for me, because I had a hint that I was under the surveillance of the Bhutanese agents. So, I decided to move to Sikkim, predominantly inhabited by Nepali-origin people, in the hope of finding a solace. Unfortunately, Sikkim also turned out unsafe for me due to the political turbulence in neighboring Darjeeling, a hill district of West Bengal, India.

Finally, circumstances forced me to enter Nepal. Yet, I continued to be concerned about the oppressed and voiceless people left behind. It is pertinent to recall that in my official capacity, I had traversed each and every part of the country and was deeply anguished at the plight of the poor families, including the Sharchokpas, Khengpas, Doyas, Brokpas and even Ngalongs. Due to this reason, on July 7, 1989, I launched a human rights organization: People's Forum for Human Rights in Bhutan (PFHRB). The primary aim was to work for the protection of human rights in the country. Unfortunately, before I could do anything, I was extradited to Bhutan. Adarsha Kafley, the organization's first General Secretary, has also been missing since my arrest and is presumably murdered. Later, D.P. Kafley was elected its General Secretary. In the history of our struggle, PFHRB became the first human rights organization to be launched in exile.

While I was in exile in Nepal, King Birendra, for the first time, visited Bhutan in the capacity of the SAARC chairman. The visit coincided with a series of developments in South Asia. Nepal was undergoing a political crisis. The political parties were fighting to restore democracy. The assassination of India's Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1984 had further destabilized the already volatile situation in the region. Rajiv Gandhi succeeded his slain mother, becoming the youngest prime minister of India. However, his relation with Nepal's King Birendra and Sikkim's Chief Minister Nar Bahadur Bhandari was strained. On the one hand, India had sealed the border with Nepal and on the other hand, Gorkhaland agitation waged by the ethnic Nepalese in Darjeeling had reached its peak. The Bhutanese regime and its supporters in India had tried to link the problem in the South with the Gorkhaland agitation and the annexation of Sikkim. After the merger, Sikkim began to be governed as an autonomous state of India. The Bhutanese regime suspected that the Chief Minister Bhandari, a Nepali-origin Indian leader, had a nexus with the Lhotsampas. The regime also propagated the false notion of Greater Nepal, an area transcending Nepal, India and Bhutan where huge numbers of Nepali-speaking people lived. On this backdrop, I decided not to meet King Birendra.





## When Two Kings Cozy Up

I spent about nine months in Birtamod, southeastern Nepal, living alone. My family--ninety-two-year-old father, wife Kaushila, and my three sons, Kamal, Tri Bikram and Nripendra--joined me. I learnt that life in exile is full of hardship. But I was overwhelmed by the response I received on the day of launching PFHRB. More than ten thousand persons, a large section from Bhutan, participated in the event. It made the king totally unnerved.

The king was enraged at my political activities and requested his counterpart King Birendra of Nepal to extradite me to Bhutan. On November 16, 1989, I was arrested in the midnight along with my colleagues, Jogen Gazmere and Sushil Pokhrel. The next day we were taken to Kathmandu and handed over to Colonel V. Namgyel, the *aide-de-camp* of the king, who was later appointed as the Bhutanese ambassador to Nepal and India. At the Tribhuvan International Airport, he was waiting for me in the Druk Air, the country's national flag carrier. The three of us were forced to board the aircraft and were flown to Bhutan.

On landing at the Paro International Airport, we were made to board two separate vehicles. My friends got onto a military vehicle while I was taken to the ADC's personal duty vehicle which drove to Motithang in the capital. I was ushered into a heavily guarded government guest house. Later, I discovered that Jogen and Sushil were also brought in there. But we were kept in separate rooms. I was kept in a small room where I made a bedroll out of torn sacks lying on the concrete floor. But it was not enough to cover myself from the bitter cold. The room was dingy with foul smell wafting from the dilapidated toilet in one corner.

The day passed slowly inside the detention. Afternoon became evening and finally darkness enveloped the area. Nobody came to see me as I spent the night struggling against hunger, cold and thirst. As I lay sleepless

in the solitary confinement, I grew restless and began to worry about my future. I was also deeply concerned about my family members, who were living in limbo in Nepal. I would remember the moment I was arrested in the middle of the night in Nepal. And, now in a few days, I was inside Bhutan, the country I had left a year ago.

Images of the historical events started rolling in front of my eyes-- prisoners were either pushed over cliffs or thrown into the rivers, after being stuffed in cowhide-sacks with their hands and legs tied. I was reminded of a book on Bhutan by David Field Rennie who wrote horrifying accounts of how people had to undergo gruesome punishment. He had mentioned that even for a minor offence, a man would be tied and then dropped into the river. Reminiscences of the assassinations of 7th and 8th incarnations of Shabdrung (known as Dharmaraja and revered and worshiped by a large number of followers even today, irrespective of faith and religion) also flashed in my mind. In 1921, one of the Southern Bhutanese, Garjaman Gurung was murdered because he spoke against the assassinations of Shabdrung. He was lured into the Royal Palace in Paro for amicably resolving the differences. But in an instance of utter betrayal, he was brutally killed.

In the spring of 1951, late Mahasur Chhettri of Chirang, who raised his voice against the autocratic system, and demanded democratic change in the country, was arbitrarily arrested and taken to the bank of the Sunkosh river. His family members and the villagers were invited to witness the punishment meted out to him. Against the principles and ethos of both Buddhist and Hindu religions, a cow was slaughtered, he was wrapped along with a big stone in its fresh skin, and was thrown alive into the river.

I also recollected the unfortunate incident at Manas Sanctuary where M. B. Rai, a forest ranger and my cousin Major Tarun Chhetri of Royal Body Guard (RBG) were killed. Assassination of Jigme Palden Dorji, the Prime Minister of Bhutan, in 1964, and Sonam Choki, a girl who allegedly committed suicide in 1987, after her affairs with a royal family member was disclosed, were still fresh in my mind. I remembered the stories of crucifixions of many politically conscious Bhutanese citizens. These images tormented me.

I have vivid memories of atrocities meted out to Tibetan refugees in the mid-seventies. The monarch associated the Tibetan refugees with the problem in the palace. The regime conducted an operation in which several refugees were killed, women were raped. The regime unleashed a terror and looted cash, valuables and jewelries from the refugees. Overnight, the refugees were deported to Jaigaon in West Bengal and Hattisar in Assam, India. These abandoned Tibetans took refuge in Salugara, Darjeeling. Some ended up in the Dalai Lama's Dharmashala. A few of them stayed on inside Bhutan. Those who stayed were not allowed to grow long hair and read books in their mother tongue. These acts were aimed at assimilating them with the culture of the ruling elite. The properties looted from the refugees were auctioned in Thimphu.

All these barbaric misdeeds of the despotic dynasty against the citizens are on the record. The train of my thoughts made me worried about Jogen and Sushil, who were arrested with me from Nepal. Sitting on the sack, haunting and hallucinating imagination weighed down on my mind.

Next morning at about ten, I heard the door creaked open. As I suspected, an RBG officer stepped in. The nameplate on his chest read 'Major Sangay Thinley'. He was accompanied by four soldiers. I was sitting on the sack. He positioned the soldiers around me. Then, he handed over a pen and paper and ordered me to write down my statement of confession. He politely said (in Nepali), "I have been ordered by the king to

obtain a written statement of your activities.” Without waiting for my response, he continued: “The king has said that he had considered you as one of his closest friends and continues to consider you so. However, he wants to know who was responsible for publishing the leaflets against the census and the provisions of the amended Citizenship Act. He also wants you to help him understand the real problems being faced by the Lhotsampas.”

Even though I was quite relieved when I heard the king was eager to know about me and my thoughts on the problem, I was well-aware that it was just a ploy. Had I been in a favorable situation, I would have given my detailed statement in good faith, without omitting the details of the wrong done to me in the past by the regime. In normal conditions, I would have asked the king many questions concerning the situation. As a people’s representative, I intended to request the king not to misunderstand the Lhotsampas and heap abuses upon them.

However, I was not in a position to write my views properly due to the physical fatigue, hunger, sleeplessness and the biting cold. The change of weather had also made me sick. My hands shivered with cold, making it difficult for me to hold the pen and scribble. I tried to explain my situation to Thinley. I told him, “Because of the situation I am in, will you please assign someone to take note of what I would be speaking? If you do not feel it inappropriate, please make arrangement of some food for me—I have not eaten anything for the last three days.”

Before I could complete the sentence, he thundered, “Am I here to carry out the king’s command or make arrangement to bring someone for you or to bring food for you?” I was taken aback by his outburst. He continued, raising the pitch of his voice: “This is the order from the king. And, there is no need for me to advise you any more.” He asked me to write the statement within half an hour and then disappeared.

With pen in my hand, for a while, I sat in a state of shock. I was absorbed in thoughts, trying to understand the situation I was thrust into. Suddenly, fully armed army personnel with menacing glances entered my room. Out of stark fear, I brushed aside my hunger, sleeplessness, pain and illness, and started to write down my thoughts. I described the problems of the South, referring to my earlier petition to the king.

The regime had begun its intimidation tactics. An armed soldier kept standing right in front of the room. Four RBG soldiers in civil clothes stationed at four corners of the bedding, stared at me with unblinking eyes. Comparatively, the situation of the previous day was much better as the room was locked and I had my privacy. Today, the room was open but the security personnel fixed their gaze upon me. My freedom and privacy was compromised. I was completely under their control. Outside the government guest house, armed forces were patrolling. The constables, posted inside the room to keep close watch on me, allowed me to go to the less-than-appealing toilet, but continued to gaze at me with unblinking eyes. It was a manifestation of the state’s totalitarian character, displaying its superciliousness in total disregard of human values.

In the small room, all my eyes could see was its floor and the ceiling. A bulb hung on the ceiling was lit for twenty-four hours a day. I was not allowed to open windows that were covered with thick curtains. Due to the complete isolation, I started to feel the irritation and hatred. The infuriating manner in which the constables incessantly stared at me increased the sense of hatred. I started feeling allergic to their unrelenting and hardened presence.

At first, when these constables were assigned, I was rather confused, not knowing the purpose of such tight face-to-face vigilance. As days passed by, I began to realize that their presence in the room was to instill fear in me so that I would be weak and vulnerable. I cannot remember the stage when I shunned looking at them. I despised their company with venom that I had never felt before. I covered my face with the blanket, an act that to a degree relieved me of my angst.

I was at a loss, not knowing how to cope with this intimidation, as it was totally new to me. But I was heading towards a deeper crisis in my life. My body's functions had collapsed; even removing excretion and taking food proved difficult. The timing of serving food depended on the constables' whims; there was no schedule and the food itself was of very inferior quality. Sometimes they served lentils only and I had to wait for rice for hours. At times, they served plain boiled rice and hours would just pass by waiting for lentils and curry, without which the food could not be forced down my throat. Normal functions became increasingly difficult. Eventually, I stopped waiting for food and totally lost my sense of appetite.

As I lay on the floor, my face covered with the blanket, it was as if I was in a comatose condition. I was not able to keep track of time, nor was I able to make any movements. Moreover, I was disconnected from the outside world. In this way, I realized that to make someone a prisoner does not simply mean putting one behind the bars. After being separated from his home, family and friends, a prisoner can still cope with the situation if he is in contact with other human beings and is able to share his feelings. But here I was experiencing an acute isolation and suffering in the most deplorable and inhuman conditions, besides being detached from my social milieu.

## **Gripped by Terror**

I was lying on the sacks in my usual position. Suddenly, I heard a noise. It was as though somebody had switched on a radio-set near me. It was just a sound without any words- hsssssssss. It was like the sound from a radio when it is not tuned into any station. As the sound reverberated and echoed in my ears; I felt good at the beginning, thinking that somebody had probably switched the radio-set on. I kept on waiting for it to play some music or even news. But the sound continued to ring in my ears atrociously.

With each passing second, the sound decibel increased and became deafeningly loud. Terrified, I removed the blanket from my face and looked around. The constables were standing in the same position, in the same mood, unperturbed by the sound that was blaring out so loudly in my ears. I could make out that they were least affected or not affected at all. The realization that I was the only victim of this deafening sound made me immensely terrified.

I wished to share my grief with someone, but there was no one to talk to. I was not permitted to talk with the constables. They too never exchanged a word among themselves. It may be noted that the effect of the high-pitched sound further intensifies and becomes amplified, when one is passing time without speaking a word, in complete isolation.

I felt this high-pitched sound was similar to the sound that emanates from a monsoon wasp. Slowly, the sound crept into my mind and consciousness. It gradually developed into a matured, clear voice that slowly entered into the sensory sections of my brain and deeply affected my nerves. A kind of sharp light pierced

right into the retina of my eyes. Its beam was like that of a hunting torch. The combined result of deafening sound and sharp light began to severely affect my psyche.

I closed my eyes under the cover of the blanket. I was anxious to know how such an intrusion was taking place in my mind and ears. I had never had such experience before and was unaware of these techniques that were apparently capable of turning one's mind into a tool. In addition, I also felt a strong beam of light, though my eyes were closed and covered. The presence of four soldiers further compounded the agony and excessive torture I was subjected to.

Now, along with the sharp light beam, unfamiliar voices started coming from the device, which formed images in my mind. These voices gradually became clearer and louder. It slowly began to flow into my ears, saying: "Tek Nath, I know you very well, but you may not perhaps know who I am." I heard different insulting and threatening voices but my mind could not visualize any figure, which resulted in acute torture to my mind. It appeared that many things functioned in a visual form, but nothing could be seen as an object. Thus, I realized that someone was using a powerful electronic device through which my past activities and my present thoughts were being monitored. And, after extracting information regarding my weakness, friends and acquaintances and my future plans, the regime started to weaken me.

Slowly, the voice started to ask questions. It wanted to ascertain the identity of people with whom I had working relations or was intimately related. It also probed into my acquaintances. I was somehow made to respond in a non-audible fashion and answered their questions, as if by telepathy. In the initial stage, I could not realize this and hence I was replying their questions verbally. Only later did I realize there was no need to move my lips. All I needed was to think about the answer and it would automatically be communicated. The voice would ask questions in a sequel about a place or a person I knew. I came to realize that I was able to see the image of the person or the place in my mind, about which questions were being asked by the controller. In this manner, the specific incidents and experiences of any place, related to questions being asked, were shared with the controller with the help of audible yet unseen system. Since the controller began to invade the depth of my mind and constantly interrogated me, it made him easier probe every detail about me, including my private life. If I tried to hide anything, the controller would inflict severe pain.

Because of the non-stop torture day in and day out and weeks after weeks, I was tired to my bones. One day, Sangay Thinley came to my room. I tried to explain him what I was experiencing. He annoyingly responded that there were no such voices or light, audible or visible to him. He also advised me not to hallucinate; otherwise I would go mad. His reply left me further baffled and helpless. By this time, I was absolutely convinced that somebody was not only constantly reading my mind round-the-clock but was also invading it. I was, therefore, no longer an independent human being. I began to wonder about my life.

On his next visit, Thinley asked me, "Who would you prefer to hear the verdict of your case: from the king or from the High Court?" He also told me to listen and respond to him accordingly, and not to concentrate on the invisible forces (about which I had told him). I told him that I would prefer verdict in my case directly from the king. He waited for a while, looked at the four corners and then left the room. After a couple of days, he returned and asked me, "What is going on with you?" I replied, "You are observing everything; there is nothing special or new." He hesitantly said, "Rizal, I put all your opinions and views before the king. He didn't like your opinion and is not happy with you. Because of this, he has commanded that your feet be

shackled. I have come to implement his orders.” He also said, “Rizal, I am sorry for this, and I understand your problem, but it’s my duty.”

Then I was taken out of the room. He instructed the soldiers to bring the shackles and chains. They fastened my legs and slipped the shackles onto them. When they hammered the nails into the shackles, the blows shuddered through my bones. Incidentally, in my right leg a sharp rod was attached which caused a nagging pain. I was treated worse than an enemy and the agony which I experienced cannot be justly expressed here. The scars caused at that time are still intact today. After the shackling was complete, I was taken to another room and made to sit on a chair placed in the centre. A guard was instructed to bring an electric wire and then asked to prod me with it. It gave a little pinch, nothing serious compared to the inhuman and cruel treatment I was already subjected to. But the wire must have had a hidden strength, as it left a large recurring cancerous wound on my back, which has remained unhealed till date.

From that day onwards, I was not only under mind-control, but was also under physical control, restricted by cold iron shackles within the four walls. It is difficult to translate into words the utter discomfort brought by these shackles, on both the legs and hands. Wherever I went, I had to bend to haul shackles which were bitterly cold. They caused damage to the skin. With the shackles on, the simple act of sleeping proved difficult. Going to the toilet and eating food also turned out complicated, especially when the authorities decided to shackle my hands behind my back. The regime refused to see me as a human being and tried every trick it possessed to degrade my condition.

In the pitch-dark night, my bare feet chained and shackled, the RBG sometimes took me to familiar places, like Sangyegang Radio Tower. On many such trips, I saw Sushil and Jogen, but we were not allowed to talk to each other. I was totally unaware why we were taken around these locations, that too in the night!

I felt awkward when I was taken to the private houses of my acquaintances. What surprised me was that in these houses not a single soul was present. It occurred to me that the residents had been ordered to move. Immediately after my return, the controller would make my mind travel to these residences. I faced a volley of weird questions soon after the roundabout trip, an act that further agonized me. Once my mind started to roam around the rooms, the kitchen, the toilet, and the pictures hanging on the walls, I would focus on whatever the controller wanted me to focus on. It was not possible to divert my mind from their control and they could extract any information that was stored in my mind.

At times, I was made to stare at a specific spot or an object on the wall. No matter how hard I tried, it was impossible to divert my attention from that spot or object until I hallucinated. Images of unwanted and unnecessary objects such as the king’s naked images would come to my mind. I was continually subjected to hearing a voice in my head which repeatedly scolded and threatened me. I often lost power to think. For example, I thought of God and tried to chant mantras, which I knew by heart since my childhood, but failed to do so. I felt that my culture and identity was on the verge of extinction. I even forgot the names of my family members. On many occasions, I could not recall my wife’s name and had to struggle to recollect it, a practice which could last for hours and sometimes even for days. When I finally remembered the name, it appeared as though I had made a great discovery.

I was pushed into a situation where I found it difficult to make distinction between different human sentiments. Since my emotional facilities were totally drained off, I reacted and responded irrationally. Sometimes, the guards, in order to irritate me, would tell me that my wife was having an affair; but it would make no effect on me. But, in other occasions, minor information such as delay of my food or my friends' inability to meet me would put me in tantrum.

I would feel sudden pain in my eyes with burning sensation, as if chili powder had been thrown into them. It was so severe that I felt as if I was dying. Sometimes, I used to feel that my hands were stuck inside my mouth which was full of hair. It is a well-known fact that human body reacts to various stimuli in different ways. The physical body and the psyche are interlinked, yet, functionally different in many respects. I believe that the techniques applied on me were capable of attacking both these aspects separately as well as in conjunction.

Once I was taken to Taba, the old radio station, about four kilometers away from Motithang. From there, I was taken to the army mess in Lungtenphu, near Thimphu. Thereafter, I can recall being taken to Ashi Pem Pem Gurung's residence, very close to the Dechenchholing Palace, which I had visited a few years ago. During this time, somewhere I fell unconscious. Later, when I regained my consciousness, I came to know that one constable tried to wake me up. When I finally rose, some kind of sound emanated from the ground and reached my ears. The left side of my body and the clothes had stuck to the enamel paint poured on the floor. The place where I fell unconscious was used for storing old items, worn out pieces and scraps.

Why was I taken there? How did I lose my consciousness? How many days did I remain unconscious? All these were beyond my comprehension. But the condition of my clothes and the crackling sound while making efforts to get up made me feel that I was probably lying there for a few days. Throughout this, I had slept in the same posture, testified by the paint glued to my clothes and the nagging pain on the left side of my body. I must have used my left hand as a pillow. As a result, I was not able to sit straight. My eyes, however, could see the sunlight visible in the faraway horizon for the first time since my detention. Seeing the light in an unexpected manner was a different and shocking experience. At a glance, the lush green forest stretched far-off covered with alpine trees.

I found myself inside a store room. I was wearing my own trousers but the black vest on my body was not mine. I felt something strange and uncomfortable inside my trousers. While unconscious, I had urinated and defecated. I felt ashamed. I asked myself: What was the point of living such a wretched life? My life and death, however, was not in my own hands. I knew that I had to pass this phase of life too, no matter how hard it turned out to be.

I was asked to move from there and was taken to the first floor of the same building. One can imagine the great difficulty in taking the trousers out of my legs with the iron shackles. It would have been impossible for me to undress hadn't the soldier torn my trousers. I was given some time to take bath and change my clothes. But, due to the chilled water, cleaning turned out to be a torture. I again fell into deep slumber. When I woke up, it was not the residence of Ashi Pem Pem Gurung. I was thinking all along that it was her residence. But, I realized that it was the same old place in Motithang, where I was detained after my abduction from Nepal. The place was swarmed by the RBG personnel and Major Thinley was also present.

From then on, I lost track of time and place and hence am unable to describe the events in a chronological sequence.

The device was capable of manipulating my dreams and disturbing sleeping patterns. I experienced terrible nightmare. I was made to bite my tongue to wake up from the deep slumber. This caused heavy bleeding. In the nightmares, I found myself reaching atop a big cliff where death was physically standing before me. I had to undergo many hallucinations as though I was dying. The experiences of having reached a dreadful place and standing before a deadly animal, like a tiger, occurred to me regularly. In addition, I suffered sudden breathing difficulties from an unseen pressure. I had terrible headaches, severe fever, choking from food, increased palpitation of my heart, high blood pressure, nose bleeding, unbearable burning sensation, among others. The flow of my urine was interrupted. I had burning sensation on my hands, legs and eyes, throbbing pain on my feet. I also experienced excruciating itching. I had countless pimples all over the body.

As a result, whenever some food was placed before me, although I felt like eating, the food smelt like filth. It did not stop here. It occurred to me that the food was physically converted into sewage. Overcoming it, if I managed to put food into my mouth, it became insipid and tasteless. Thereafter, I started to develop a phobia towards food: throughout the day, I had vomiting sensation and nausea. In spite of all these distractions, if I somehow managed to swallow the food, my stomach would reject it by churning it out. The situation was made further creepy when I experienced the intake of food through my nose, something which was not only unnatural but also extremely painful. Concomitantly, I began to suffer from light surges of varying intensity penetrating my eyes.

The mechanism was torturing my inner soul, leaving me with unbearable pain. My slumber and appetite were not under my control. I had been transformed into a dead body with only the consciousness alive. I still struggle to put the agony and grief of the enslavement of my spirit and consciousness in black and white.

## **King Tours Southern Districts**

After thoroughly exploring my mind, the regime extracted the details especially about my contacts. In January 1990, on the basis of that information, RBG arrested more than forty-three prominent Lhotsampas from the South. They were taken to separate guest houses in Thimphu. Surprisingly, they were treated nicely and were provided with good food and drinks. They were involved only in the betterment of their community and I had met them in my capacity as a public representative. They were released after the regime failed to prove their involvement in the so-called conspiracy against the king.

Even after garnering the facts and knowing clearly that neither Nepal nor India had backed me, the regime kept on torturing me. The regime continued its torture because I did not comply with their demand to withdraw the corruption report.

Instead of providing proper justice to me, the king with his ill-motive, decided his next action: visit Sarbhang. He left the capital along with his four queens. His mission: garner public support against me. Ahead of the whirlwind tour, the king's father-in-law Ugyen Dorji, along with concerned Dzongdags, called a meeting of the local influential persons. The Dzongdags had a list of persons who had contributed generously on the



occasion of the king's marriage, birthday and coronation and believed to be faithful to the king. In reality, these persons were coerced and squeezed to pay huge amount by the regime.

They were briefed by Ugyen Dorji to the effect that the king was deeply concerned about the 'betrayal' of Tek Nath Rizal, whom he had hand-picked to promote the welfare of the Lhotsampas. I later came to know what had actually transpired then. The king never thought that such a situation would arise in Bhutan and hence there was no law to deal with this case, Dorji reportedly said. He had said, 'The king may ask you what should be done with Tek Nath Rizal as deserving punishment for him. At that time, all of you should tell the king that 'Rizal deserves to be shot dead for his crime.' The Home Minister Namgyal

Wangchuck had also played a pivotal role in manipulating the situation against me.

As per the plan, in September 1990, the king visited Sharbhang where locals as well as people from Chirang and Gaylegphug were assembled for the royal address. But, the coveted seats in the royal address were reserved only for those who presented costly gifts to the king. The forty-three detainees, who were released after a month, were not allowed to participate in the royal address. The reason cited by the regime was that they posed a security threat to the king.

Before the king left the guest house to deliver the royal address, the four queens made it to the venue. They were there not just as the customary royal entourage, but were tasked with winning the hearts of the local people. Therefore, momentarily shedding their royal privilege, they distributed wine, whisky and raksi (a local alcohol) from their own hands to those gathered for the royal address.

After all the preparations with the four queens and their father actively involved, the king finally arrived. Like before, he gave false promises to the people. He talked about his grandiose plan to develop the area, under the then seventh five-year-plan, by constructing schools, hospitals, roads, etc. At last, the king talked about my activities. He informed the audience that he had got me arrested from Nepal and brought back to the country. With a clear mind-set to punish me, he asked: "What punishment should be given to Tek Nath Rizal?" These persons (as briefed by the king's father-in-law and intoxicated by the four queens) replied that I should either be shot dead or hanged to death. On this note, the meeting ended. But, there was also a publicity campaign in which leaflets in Nepali language were circulated to the masses in the South in a bid to tarnish my image. Two days later, the king left for Kalikhola to deliver a similar address.

Those who were arrested on the basis of information obtained from me and later released learnt what had transpired at the meeting in Sharbhang. They scolded the participants for their foolishness. When they realized the king's conspiracy, some of them immediately rushed to Kalikhola. Their goal was to brief the locals to ensure that similar drama was not enacted. The king arrived and delivered the royal address. Towards the end, he raised the issue of my punishment. But to his utter dismay, not a single person uttered a word and the meeting ended.

Subsequently, Kalikhola became the first town to take out rally against unlawful policies implemented by the census teams. The public also demanded the protection of human rights. As days passed by, the king continued his tour, pretending to be calming down the people, who were fleeing homes in fear of repression. Instead of resolving the crisis, he was deceiving the public. During the day, when he appeared

before the public, a relative calm prevailed. But when darkness fell and the king retreated, the security personnel in civil dress and the dreaded criminals in the guise of volunteers toured the villages and terrorized the people.



## Rabuna Prison: The Living Hell

By this time, I had lost track of the date and the place. One evening, I was lying on my bedroll when three top officers whom I personally knew, came to my cell. One of them, Major Thinley, said, "Today the king has ordered to send you to Lingzhi jail." I realized that I would be leaving the building attached to Motithang guesthouse. The guesthouse was especially built for hosting Rajiv Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India on his first visit to Bhutan. Many times, late Jyoti Basu, the former Chief Minister of West Bengal, had stayed there with his family.

Accompanying the three officers, the constables came forward and handcuffed me. I thought that perhaps I was being handed over to the police by the RBG, in the presence of the army, which had now completed its interrogation. I was ushered into a vehicle and tied up with a thick nylon rope from my neck to hip. I saw Jogen and Sushil on the other side of the seat; both were tied up in the same manner. On coming across them after such a long time, I experienced both the pain and relief. Pain because like me they were tied up with ropes and were not allowed talking. Relief because after all they were still alive. We merely looked at each other. We exchanged glances in a way which conveyed out circumstances. We were entering into a bizarre and unpredictable phase of our life.

From Motithang, the vehicle geared towards an unknown destination. The van, compared to the previous one, was quite spacious: it accommodated three of us and about twenty armed security personnel. The evening surrendered to the night. Soon, we were unable to see each other. But even in the darkness, I felt that the vehicle was moving from Simtokha to Wangdiphodrang.

During the journey, my mind controllers started nagging me. A voice thundered, 'Teke (a derogatory name given to me by them), you want to be a leader? You want to be the king of Bhutan? Now you'll face the consequences!' The controller said this was the result of working against the king. This further increased my agony.

On our way, the weather got colder, and snowfall started. We reached Dochula, a hill that borders Thimphu and Wangdiphodrang. It had been half an hour and despite the snowflakes, I could not enjoy the nature's bliss. Moreover, my whole body was aching. It was impossible to make a slightest movement. My arms and legs were freezing. All of a sudden, my body started itching, perhaps due to the change in body temperature or the torture. The unbearable pain all over my body suffocated me, and I felt that if I shouted loudly, it would give me relief. But, I controlled myself with great restraint because I realized I would not get any reprieve.

About two hours later, we reached Wangdiphodrang. We were told to get off the vehicle. Then, I realized that the information about taking us to Lingzhi jail was a lie and instead we were headed to Rabuna prison. Though the vehicle could drive up to the prison complex, we were made to walk on the graveled road, bare-footed and shackled, with our hands cuffed and body tied with ropes. This made our movements very painful. The pointed stones underneath the bare feet caused unbearable pain, but under the police custody, we had no choice except to drag on.

It was drizzling and the night was pitch-dark. We walked in silence. As they marched, the constables' boots pounded on the road, its sound penetrating deep into our ears. At times, the stones tossed off by the boots hit on my ankles causing severe pain. Worse, the guards with their heavy boots, recklessly pounded on my feet. Failing to keep pace with the marching soldiers would fetch me extra penalty. So, I struggled to move my shackled legs as quickly as I could. The constantly blowing wind further exasperated the precariousness of our journey. Drenched to the skin and chilled to the bone, I stumbled along the slippery road. The sole voices echoing in my ears were waves of the river Wangdichhu generating its own rhythmic noise, the rustling of the trees in the breeze producing mystic sound in the adjoining forests, and dogs crying and whining at full throttle.

Rabuna prison is known for housing people branded by the regime as 'anti-national'. Unlike other detention centers, I found this one eerily silent, except for the occasional thud of the prison guards' heavy boots and the wheezing of wind from the valley where the river meandered. A few years ago, while on a tour as a government employee, one of my colleagues had shown me this prison. Quiet and secluded, Rabuna jail lies on the bank of Wangdichhu River in Wangdi district. My friend had told me that the Tibetan refugees--alleged for hatching a conspiracy to foil the coronation ceremony of the fourth King Jigme Singye Wangchuck in 1974--were imprisoned here.

We finally arrived at the dimly lit, ominous-looking prison building where I was allotted an individual cell. My body was almost numb. I sat on the floor and tried to forget the torture I had endured. I looked at the four corners of the room. Terrified as I was, I found many things with which I had to become familiar with. Immediately, a bevy of soldiers removed the shackles from my legs. Instead, iron bars were fixed, joining both feet. For many days, my hands were tied at the back, and later at some point, my hands were untied but

I don't know the precise moment. An abundance of snakes were found in the vicinity. The area was infested with frogs, rats, cockroaches and mosquitoes.

There were not many constables for monitoring me except some on the routine patrol. The room I was holed in was never opened. I had to pull the food with the help of my teeth through a narrow aperture underneath the door. By kneeling on the ground, I had to push the plate back through the same hole with the aid of my teeth. Whenever I felt thirsty, I turned the water tap on and off with my teeth. The position of the tap next to the toilet made this an unenviable practice. The flow of water from the tap was never regular, while the water supplied by the jail was dirty. The quality of the food was low--it was not only inedible but also unhygienic and unfit for human consumption. The RBG adulterated the food with nails, pieces of glass, fish bones and dead insects, among other hazardous materials. I felt miserable when I had to have that food and drink the polluted water. Consumption of such unsafe food resulted in persistent health problems which I suffer from even today. I was given a container to wash myself after using the toilet. I had to use the same container for drinking water.

It was entirely left to the whims of the guards or commanders to decide the kind of treatment I would be given. At times, my hands were tied at my back. While eating food, I had to eat like an animal, slathering with my mouth from the plate. Sometimes, they left my hands free unexpectedly as part of their mind games. As in Thimphu, the application of mind-control device continued. For the first time, I felt as if my whole body suffered from acute pain from a bee-stung. The intensity of the pain depended upon the waves being released in my mind. At times, I was in a slightly normal state of mind, and was able to function, although in the limited sense of the word.

I spent my time under the grip of the unknown device. Science, the best means to make human life easy and comfortable, was being brutally practiced to dehumanize me. As time passed, my hair and beard grew along with my fingernails which caused great difficulties while eating. I remember how I had to grate my nails against the wall in order to limit their growth. The regime was completely insensitive towards the rights of prisoners like me, as if we were less human and more Neanderthals.

During most of my stay here, I was positioned with the barrel of a gun pointed at me through a hole in the wall. I was living in constant fear of being shot any time. At times, I was blindfolded after being told that I was sentenced to death. Perhaps it was a ploy to increase my tension. The image of the gun barrel still haunts me today. It is very difficult to describe living in a situation where at any moment you can be helplessly shot dead. It was like sitting on an electric chair with body stripped and waiting for the switch to be put on.

Days in Rabuna prison were passing by slowly under constant fear. I think it was the pressure from international powers that saved our lives in jail, which was also corroborated after my release. I also learnt that Kaushila had appealed to the US government through Nepalese human rights activist late Hrishikesh Shah regarding my whereabouts and safety. In response, the US government had written her that I was safe in a Bhutanese prison and it was their (US Government) responsibility to save my life.

My line of thinking was justified. One day, suddenly, the prison officers' attitude towards us changed drastically. At around ten in the morning, Thinley opened the door and instructed the guards to remove my handcuffs and shackles. I was asked to shave my beard and nails, take a bath and put on new clothes. As I remained unshaved

for nearly two years, my beard had grown very long, the black beard flowing up to my belly. A guard, with a single blade in hand, started shaving my hair. Then, without applying soap or water, he shaved my beard, using the naked blade. I was terrorized and thought he would cut my throat. Almost true to my conjecture, he made injuries in my cheeks.

Moreover, to whitewash the international community, the regime organized a fake picnic in which all the prisoners would participate. When I was taken to the banks of the Wangdichhu River, I was pleasantly surprised to see Ratan Gazmere, Sushil, Jogen, Devdutta Sharma, Bhakti Bhandari and Vishwa Nath Chhetri. Though it was difficult to anticipate what next the regime was concocting, I was very happy to see them all once again. My fellow inmates seemed to enjoy different types of food served by the prison staff. But, unfortunately, due to my skewed perception of food, under the torture, I could not eat anything. It will be relevant here to mention that I really wanted to eat the food but a command was sent to my mind: "Teke, you only eat food you take daily. You cannot eat this." So, I gazed hungrily at the display of food, while everybody else munched their way through huge bowls of rice.

Thinley himself had come all the way from Thimphu to participate in the so-called picnic. Instead of the military uniform, he was dressed in Gho (national dress). Surprisingly, he treated us like his guests. Throughout the day, a bunch of security personnel were recording the activities through video and still cameras. The regime was probably planning to send these pictures to international organizations to show them how humanely we were treated. This orchestrated picnic lasted the whole day and in the evening we were taken back to the prison.

Once the drama of picnic was over, I was asked to remove the good apparel I had donned throughout the day. I was told to redress to the black prison uniform. Once again, my legs and hands were shackled and handcuffed. The remaining days in Rabuna prison were less harsh. Marginal improvements were seen in the living conditions as well as in the quality of food.

Though I was restricted to a solitary cell, every inmate knew its location. It was so located that while going to the bathroom, every inmate had to pass in front of my cell. So, whenever there was an opportunity, other inmates would stop and talk to me. This gave me a great relief. Secondly, after 30 months of solitary confinement, under international pressure, the regime had arranged for an outdoor picnic. After the picnic, the jail officials relaxed a little, and allowed prisoners to meet for an hour everyday in the evening.

I took this opportunity to share my experience of the torture. When I described the symptoms of the abuse and the feelings that irritated me, the inmates hardly believed it. They denied the existence of such sophisticated techniques in the prison. But, later I saw them stuffing cotton wool into their ears, supposedly to block out the sound. I found that they discussed it with jail officials and were supplied cotton wool. The inmates did not realize that this technique did not involve the use of ears, and voices would directly penetrate the mind. Finally, I was convinced that they were also privy to the same reality. This was further confirmed by the narration of their dreams that turned out to be similar to mine.

My observation is that when I was brutally subjected to mental torture, the other inmates were only being subjected to very mild relay of sound waves, without any torture, just to keep their minds under observation. Their apparent denial was beyond my comprehension and unknowingly strained our friendship. On this huge jail building which had the capacity of hundred prisoners, only seven political prisoners including me were

detained. After this, Jogen, Sushil, Devdutta and I were left behind, whereas Ratan, Bhakti and Vishwa were taken back to the capital and released.

One day, the jail officer unexpectedly barged into the cell. We were taking meals. He told us to get ready to move. I explained to him that I was eating, but was told to eat faster. However, the guard failed to return. Subsequently, I learnt from a constable that Sushil and Jogen, too, were taken to Thimphu, thereby leaving me alone in the huge jail. But, after fifteen days, I was pleasantly surprised to see both of them back. When I met them, they shared their experience of the sojourn: they were able to meet some visitors in government guest house. According to them, my narration to jail inmates about the torture, through mind-control techniques, was publicized as idiosyncrasy and was the talk of the town. The government gaggle was deployed to the hilt to prove me insane.

By taking my friends out temporarily, the government intended to further intensify mental pressure on me. My friends were not ready to believe and thus unwilling to accept my painful experience. By allowing them to regurgitate stories of my unpopularity directly to me, the regime tried to kill two birds with one stone – to demonstrate to the world that I was getting insane and to buttress credibility about my insanity, as it was coming straight from my friends. In this manner, my friends were unwittingly used by the regime. This was yet another attempt to demoralize me. But, I was aware of the fact and power behind the propaganda and the rumor against me. Hence, I was unaffected and undeterred.

Actually, I knew what was happening to me and who was behind it. For instance, in the continuous process of thought-conversation with the mind-controller, at times, he would say something which would make me laugh or cry. So, when a guard passing in front of my cell would see me in such a state, he would think that I was getting insane, and unaware of the reality behind my action. Most of the activities were in fact the result of or reaction to the command. But, anyone seeing me doing these things would have considered me a lunatic.

A few days later, Sushil and Jogen were again taken to Thimphu. Among those detained in Rabuna, five were granted amnesty by the king. Three days later, Devdatta was also taken to Punakha. Though losing friends was painful, I was gradually becoming accustomed to it.

Once all my friends left the jail, I was inhumanely restricted from daylight. Once again, for a month, I was served food mixed with pieces of broken glasses. The jail officials earlier used to provide five cigarettes, before and after each meal, to the prisoners. Once other inmates were taken out of the jail, I was provided two packets of cigarettes before each meal. I was allowed to eat my food only after smoking forty cigarettes. This was the worst kind of torture I ever endured during my incarceration in Rabuna. After a month of this degrading treatment, I was shifted to Dradulmakhang.



## In the Shadow of Fear

**E**nduring the torments at one after another prison, I was moved into Dradulmakhang prison, whose very name evoked fear. Known in Thimphu as detention centre, it was worse than the Rabuna jail. Apart from being disgusting, some of the dreaded criminals served their sentence here. The menacing presence of not only Bhutanese, but also notorious criminals from India and Bangladesh scared me to death. The prison reminded me of the stories told about Nazi Concentration Camps, during the World War II. The turreted stone-walled prison with iron-gate and barbed wires was surrounded by a few dark pines which stood like sentinels guarding the prison. In fact, the prison buildings and forts were built a century ago with the forceful labor and the contribution from the inmates.

I was stunned to find that the jail buildings in both Rabuna and Thimphu looked similar. In Rabuna jail, I was kept on the ground floor, but here my cell was on the first floor of a dilapidated building. Some obnoxious odor wafted through my cramped and damp cell causing constant nausea. The ceiling, like in Rabuna, was made of wood except there was an iron hook hanging menacingly in the centre. The difference between the two jails was that the Rabuna accommodated only political prisoners, while Dradulmakhang had petty criminals, too. These criminals were kept on the ground floor and I was kept alone on the first floor.

The criminals were allowed to make fire to warm their bodies in the winter, which was justified from a humanitarian angle. However, the hidden intention was to create problem for me through the dense smoke emanating from the fire. As if this was not enough, they were provided with heavily moist or wet wood or coal for making the fire. When the criminals were taken out on labor duty, prison officials threw chili powder in the fire. One can imagine the suffocation created by the fumes of burning



chilies in a room without the ventilation. Actually, the walls as well as the floor were made of the wooden planks with gaps between the two planks, through which the rising smoke crept in my room.

Let me describe the structure of the detention centre. The area where I was kept was actually a big bathroom attached to a living room. When I was brought here, the room was allotted to six policemen, who were duty-bound to guard me. The bathroom was converted into a living room by erecting a five-foot wooden partition, though the height of the wall was seven feet. It was done on purpose, as I learnt later. Whenever I started eating my food, one of the guards or inmates from the ground floor would always come to use the latrine. The foul odor would make eating impossible.

The most disgusting part was that the toilet was without running water. This caused the stink unbearable with the foul smell emanating out of the heaps of human excreta that kept piling up each day. I was given only five liters of water per day for latrine, bathing and drinking, making it a precious commodity so that I could not afford that to flush. Thus, the room had an air of a garbage dumping site. The room buzzed with flies and mosquitoes. The old quilt-cover--laden with dust and infested with bedbugs--was not long enough to cover my body. I was neither able to ward off the biting cold nor fend off the mosquitoes. As a result, some part of the body was always exposed to the attack by mosquitoes. The toilet was flushed only when international humanitarian groups visited the prison. Once the visit was over, the prison authorities would resort back to the same inhuman practice.

In addition, I was not permitted to wash myself or my clothes for a long time. Living constantly in dirty environs was terrible. Bad smell emanated from my clothes and it obviously was extremely hazardous to my health. After a few months, on my repeated pleadings, I was provided with a small piece of detergent soap and water. After washing my clothes, as per the rule, I gave them to one of the guards to get them dry. However, I never got those clothes back. The guard told me the clothes had been blown away. I protested saying, "What would I wear now?" But he shrugged and left. After some time, this guard was transferred and a new one replaced him. When I inquired about my clothes, he feigned ignorance. Deliberately, I was not given the clothes for next six months and had to manage by wearing the battered quilt-cover and a stinking bed-sheet.

I was passing the lonely and torturous moments inside the detention center. One day, a constable came hurriedly and asked me if I was interested in smoking a *bidi* (a rolled tobacco leaf). I replied affirmatively. He whispered, "Come on! Light this *bidi*." Gesturing persuasively, he thrust on me a piece of *bidi* along with a matchbox and disappeared. I opened the matchbox and found out that it contained only a few match-sticks. I lighted the *bidi* and felt satisfied as I was smoking after a long time. To my amazement, there was something else inside the matchbox: a brand new razor blade. My whole body shivered at this. I could not believe that the officials would stoop so low because the prisoners are strictly denied access to such hazardous articles. It was difficult to guess why an item like a blade was left. Perhaps, the regime hoped that I would commit suicide in utter despair.

It was not the first time the regime had provoked me to commit suicide. It reminded me of a rope which was left in my room just a few days ago--it would have been a convenient appendage to the iron hook on the ceiling. The jail officials deliberately chose the time to keep the rope when I was attending hearings in the court. Incidentally, the judicial process took four years to begin. It began only when all the options to keep

me detained illegally were exhausted, due to the ever-mounting international pressure. The most brazen effort to exhort me in committing suicide took place when a technician, on the pretext of repairing the electric wiring, opened the wiring system and spent the whole day doing nothing. In the evening, he left the live electric wires exposed, went out of the room and did not come back. Thus, the wires remained dangerously exposed for a long time.

A similar incident occurred inside the jail. There was no provision for storage of drinking water in my room. Whenever I requested the guards to provide me drinking water, they tended to turn a deaf ear. But, whenever they supplied water to me, it was always brought in an empty beer bottle. This happened many times. It is strictly prohibited to provide the prisoner anything made up of glass, as they may hurt themselves or others. Clearly, they wanted me to make use of the bottle either to end my life or, in a fit of rage, to attack the guards so that in the name of self-defense they could justify my killing. In this way, they evolved different strategies to get rid of me and started provoking me towards committing suicide. For this purpose, first, they made me depressed through mind-control technique and then conditions conducive for me to commit suicide were created. Thanks to my immense inner strength, I could resist the regime's relentless efforts to end my life. That is how I survived ten years of rigorous torture inside jail.

The regime left no stone unturned to entice me to commit suicide, but eventually failed. I was seized by a sudden pang of conscience in spite of all these provocations pushing me to the edge. Fortunately, I escaped such a fate. This was also due mainly to the lesson learnt from my mother, which would often come flooding back to my memory. There was a time when women committed suicide in my village after their husbands were forcefully taken to labor camps. When the breadwinners were missing for a long time, the women, out of helplessness and overburdened by having to nurture children, jumped into the river. I have a vivid recollection of my mother narrating those stories and counseling the neighbors not to commit such acts. Since childhood, she always told us that life, in due course, might create some moments, inflicting sorrow and pain on us, but at such times, we should never think of ending the life. Hence, it was my mother's teaching that helped me survive those days of extreme brutality.

## **The First Visitors**

In normal times, one hardly notices even after the passing of a whole year. But each day in the detention cell felt like a year. I was suffering from untold stress. I was subjected to solitary confinement since my extradition from my shelter in Nepal in November 1989. Ever since, I had not met any visitor, friends and family members, which could have given me a sense of solace. It was only on January 26, 1993, a delegation from the International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC) came to observe the conditions of the jail. After a long time, two white men entered my prison cell. They introduced themselves as representatives of the ICRC. One of them assured me that I will be given an ID card and my case will be recorded thereby preventing me from disappearance or extra-judicial killing. They also assured my safety and asked to narrate everything I had gone through so far. A doctor had accompanied them. This is one of most memorable moments of my jail life. They somehow filled the void in me created by the long separation from my near and dear ones. For a while, I thought they were my long lost friends.

I was delighted to have this opportunity which I was desperately longing for. I thanked them profusely for visiting me. I left no stone unturned in expressing my predicament. I informed them that I was being tortured

through mind-control techniques. I narrated all the experiences I had gone through. They were shocked to hear it because they told me it was for the first time they were hearing about it. They never thought that it would happen in a country like Bhutan. They said they would talk to the king about it. I forgot the name of the doctor but still recall Studer, the head of the delegation. I cautioned him that even the conversation between us would not remain secret as the controller had been listening to our conversation, right at the moment.

It was the first time I had an opportunity to see the outsiders. Prior to this, the regime had initiated legal proceedings against me. Both the events (ICRC visit and my trial) took place within a few days. The ICRC visited me first. Before its visit, I was given a Gho, underwear, socks, and shoes to put on. Whenever I was taken to the court, I was given these clothes to wear and had to hand them over back to the guard, who would then hand me the old, dirty uniform. Actually, the uniform was first worn by guards and once it became dirty, old and torn, it would be handed over to me. This was done exclusively in my case.

During his visit, Studer saw me handcuffed and shackled, an act that continued even while appearing before the court. After witnessing my plight, he raised the issue with the king and argued that keeping prisoners in jail, handcuffed for twenty-four hours, was inhuman and against the normal practice in a civilized society.

The response he received from the king was touching and sentimental, but blatantly false. The king told him: "As a result of my affection for Tek Nath Rizal, he has been handcuffed. As far as I know, he had made several attempts to commit suicide. Since you are also among his well wishers, kindly do not advise us to remove the handcuffs." When profanity is prowess of a king, common people have to live under feudal hubris of ruling elites. Studer informed me about this and said that the king's response silenced him. At the same time, he assured me not to worry, as my execution was nearly impossible since the regime was under the watchful eye of the international community. He also informed me that the king had directed the High Court to initiate hearing in my case without any further delay. Moreover, the king had to be personally informed of court proceedings and the final judgment.

I don't know to what extent the ICRC representative was satisfied with the reply he received from the king. But, when the king himself told Studer that I attempted to commit suicide, everything became clear to me. The king tried his level best to make me commit suicide by supplying the blades, ropes, beer bottle, the iron-hook on the ceiling and the live electric wires left unattended. And, that was why he started propagating to the whole world that I was on the verge of committing suicide and had gone insane. He was very careful about the plan which was carried out in a subtle manner.

## **All the King's Men**

The High Court in Thimphu known as the Royal Court of Justice was established in 1968. It is the highest court of the land. The judiciary is not impartial by international legal standards. Since the judiciary functions under the command of the king, he exercises direct power over it. It is corroborated by the fact that the judiciary has never declared any government action unlawful. Provisions for defense attorneys, solicitors and jury trials simply do not exist. Judges do not need any legal qualification and training. Arbitrary arrests and detentions are in vogue. Judges investigate cases, file charges, prosecute and deliver the verdict. The sitting judge assists the police in the prosecution and decides the cases. The entire aim of the judicial system is to

extract a confession of the crime, usually under physical and mental duress. On the whole, the judiciary is disparate vis-à-vis civilized society.

In the name of justice, people are made to suffer for crimes they never committed. Those working for the interests of the royal family are more iniquitous than the royal family itself, as they carry out their work with impiety towards the people and their rights. The torture system of medieval times still continues in all the district courts, police stations and in the prisons. A person whether innocent or a criminal, is bound to be confronted by three things. He is either caught or arrested for enquiry and presented before a court. This is followed by investigation either by the court or the police. Sometimes the suspect is arrested and incarcerated without trial. But, more likely, he/she is condemned for life imprisonment or a termed sentence. Even those prisoners who were given a termed sentence, often times were not found in their supposed detention centre. Surprisingly, their whereabouts did not cause restless nights to the regime. In fact, the regime was fully aware of their whereabouts. Relatives do not have the right or guts to enquire the authorities about their family members in prison.

The suspects arrested for trial have to undergo various tortures through traditional methods, from the police and the judges, in person. Flogging, with a variety of cow hide whips is one such method. The subordinate judges under the designations of Ramjams (the royal attendants) were specially trained to use whips.

The use of bowstrings in place of handcuffs is also a regular practice. The black string woven from Yak hair for binding criminals is called Nagthang. Twin sticks are commonly used for coupling thighs. It often causes involuntary defecation and urination, and ultimately breaks the thigh bones, making the person disabled for life. At the royal command and wishes of the elite, wooden neck wheels are unceremoniously clamped around a prisoner as additional torture even after receiving a life sentence. The equipments used for torture are exhibited openly in the court rooms even today as a barbaric splendor of the judiciary.

The regime had a way of hiding the prisoners in remote places, when international organizations would come to inspect the prisons. This way they could imprison people without formal court hearing. The prisoners who knew some kind of crafts and skills were used as slaves and were never released even after the completion of their sentence.

The condition of the female prisoners was more pathetic. It was unavoidable for such women prisoners to work like personal slaves in the households of the prison officers and those in power. They were made to handle the odd works in their houses such as washing dirty clothes, taking care of their cattle, cooking, gardening, working in orchards, cleaning their pots, pans and kitchen wares. Not only men and women, but even juveniles were exploited inhumanely. They were especially forced to undergo sexual exploitation at the hands of jailers. Once I saw this first-hand, I began asking myself: What kind of justice can I expect in a country where judges and advocates are not educated as per the requisite standard, where verbal and arbitrary law is the basis of all decisions, where people are not given a chance to defend themselves, where the court is held in an alien language, where ministers abuse their positions, where the common men are dogmatized in school from a young age to bow like a slave to government officials and are taught to accept without question whatever they are told?

## **The Trial**

It was around noon, all of a sudden Kipchu Namgyal, the jail officer, came to my cell and said, "Rizal, get ready, today onwards the court proceeding has started." After a fit of nervousness, I hurriedly undressed and put on the new clothes he had brought in. In a few minutes, I was limping out of the cell as fast as I could with my shackled legs. At a glance, I could see an intimidating presence of a truck-full security personnel armed to their teeth, who were waiting to ferry me to the court. A short while later, I was forced into the police van, two army vehicles trailed it. The distance from the prison to the court was merely three kilometers. The regime's gimmick to portray me as a dangerous extremist before the Thimphu locals as well as the international community could barely convince anyone. On the way to the court, I was treated as if I were the world's most wanted terrorist. I could hear constant police updates on the walkie-talkie mentioning the location of my vehicle.

For over four years, I had been illegally detained under solitary confinement. I was not allowed to shave my beard or trim my hair throughout the whole ordeal, to give an impression to the locals that I was a hardcore criminal. Though I was arrested on November 16, 1989 in Nepal and extradited to Bhutan the very next day, in official charge-sheet, the case was registered against me only on December 29, 1991 – more than two years later.

In fact, the charges against me—which were frivolous, legally-flawed, and devoid of any legal substance—could not have been upheld in the court of any democratic country. For instance, all these charges were related to the events and activities that occurred in 1990 and afterwards, whereas since November 16, 1989, I was under the detention of the RBG. The regime knew that I was not involved in any manner in any of the incidents mentioned in the charge-sheet. Throughout the legal proceedings, I was in a state in which my mind was under the influence of mind-control techniques. I was accused of the following charges:

1. Fomenting and masterminding the disturbances in the South
2. Deliberate misinterpretation of the government census policy in 1988
3. Planning, directing and co-ordinating subversive activities against the regime

It was specially mentioned by Tshering Wangda, the spokesperson of the Ministry of Home Affairs that "Every charge against Tek Nath Rizal could be categorized as treason since they constituted serious violation of both the Thrimshung Chhenpo (General Law of the Land) and the National Security Act, 1992", as reported in the *Kuensel* on January 2, 1992.

The fact is that the National Security Act was not in force when I was arrested or even when I was charge-sheeted. The law came into effect in 1992, as if merely to frame me, making a mockery of the judicial system.

Earlier, during my tenure as Royal Advisory Councilor, I had indicted several corrupt officers in the reports. Some of these corrupt officials, including Sonam Tobgye (who later became Chief Justice), Krishna Bahadur Ghale, Karma Sherpa and Dina Nath Katwal were deliberately deputed as judges in my case. The officials filled the court room with hundreds of people in an attempt to degrade me. With their scornful eyes all about me, there was no glimmer of hope of getting justice. On seeing the crowd, I took it as an opportune time to speak out from the bottom of my heart thinking that the occasion might never come again. Moreover, I had already spent some of my glorious days; I had nothing to gain and nothing to lose from the court proceedings. Realizing this, I turned my back to the judges, and facing the crowd, said loudly:

“My dear fellow countrymen, brothers and sisters! For a people’s representative like me who was always committed to the good of the country, the king and the people, the type of punishment I’m receiving from the government is not justified at all. By producing me before you all in this manner, the administration is trying to frighten you, scare you and, at the same time, trying to make me frustrated and ashamed. But, you should not be frightened and I, too, will not be frustrated nor will I lose hope. It is good that all of you have come here; now I will expose all the corrupt officials in front of you. The money given by India for your development is being pocketed by these corrupt officials. Please come daily to witness this trial so that you will know who is right and who is wrong.”

The same applied to the Chief Justice Sonam Tobgye, who knew me well. I publicly told him that I had the evidence to convict him as well as all the other judges sitting there. He remained silent behind a large vase of flowers and it seemed comical as if the big flower urn had been used to hide his hypocrisy.

In the hearing, Jigmi Y. Thinley, who is now the Prime Minister of the so-called pseudo- democracy, was also present in the capacity of Home Secretary to witness the court proceedings. Despite being the first western-educated elite from his community, he hated the Lhotsampas with a racist mind-set. He was one of the master plotters like the wily Sakuni of Mahabharat, a Hindu epic, who advised the king for ethnic cleansing of the Lhotsampas. He was the one, who had espoused destruction of properties, arson, and rape in the South along with day-light robberies by the retired army personnel. He crouched down in his seat in the public gallery like a chastised school boy fearing the wrath of his teacher.

To my utter surprise, the next day, the courtroom was completely empty and only the judges and I were present. They were rightly scared that I would open up their catalogue of crimes in front of the people.

I reacted furiously when Tshering Wangda, the Spokesman of Ministry of Home Affairs charged me as an anti-national element. Just prior to the hearing, he was an attendant of Nangyal Wangchuk. To grant him royal status, he was married to the king’s sister Ashi Dechhen Choden Wangmo Wangchuck. He was her third husband, but soon they got divorced following my verdict. Obviously, his inclusion in the royal family was a ploy, in the royal scheme of things, to frame me, demonstrating the conspiracies of the royal family. However, the royal status did not support him in the court because he had no answers to my convincing arguments. They were unable to restrict me to their time limit. I felt fully satisfied while speaking in the courtroom. I was also happy that I had been able to preserve my mental balance, despite the best efforts of the regime to destabilize my mind.

Earlier, on my way to the court, I asked the superintendent of police why and for what reasons I was charged in the court when the government was fully aware of my activities by exploring my mind non-stop for four years. The superintendent told me that the ‘thought conversation process’ (mind-control) between me and mind-controller was a matter between the two. The king may well be aware of it but the court might not have been brought into confidence. So, he suggested to me to disclose it in the court so that the matter could be discussed.

In my next hearing, I raised the issue of my mind-control through remote techniques. I humbly reminded the judges that the jail report of my mind-control must have been seen by the king; so he knew everything about me-whether I was guilty or not. I said, “Either you allow me to personally visit the king or ask for the jail

report and analyze whether the charges against me are correct or not." On hearing this, one of the judges, Dina Nath Katwal inquired to the Chief Justice about the existence of such a device in the country. Sonam Tobgey, the Chief Justice, responded affirmatively. In spite of this, neither was any discussion allowed on this subject, nor was instructions issued to the concerned authorities to stop the barbaric practice.

Instead, I was charged with several other false offences, like conspiring to seize political power by overthrowing the royal regime with the support of United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) and Bodo (an indigenous group in Assam fighting for separate autonomous region within the state). However, there was no evidence to substantiate these allegations. The Indian Military Training Team (IMTRAT) and Indian Police advisors work together to provide security for Bhutan. Assuming I have planned to overthrow the regime (with the help of ULFA and Bodo), where are the other perpetrators in collusion with me? I requested the court to make physically present other people, who had conspired with me in overthrowing the royal regime. Understanding the rationality of my argument, the judges quickly dismissed the charge. This was the first blow to the kangaroo court.

I also informed the court that a number of attempts had been made to encourage me to commit suicide. The food that was served to me was adulterated with bones, glass pieces and nails. I told the court, "Please conduct an inquiry into this, as in case I am sentenced and in future if I spend a long time in the court, then it will be unbearable for me." The judge informed me that no inquiry will be conducted without the permission of the king and it was beyond the power of the court to seek such permission.

However, false accusations did not end there. After the acquittal of this charge, fresh charges were clubbed on me. The court rejected my defense. They even tried to limit me by suggesting that I should hire a person who has completed three months of legal training and is registered as a Jabmi (lawyer), since it became impossible for the court to label my counter arguments as false, when I was personally defending. Outright, I declined this suggestion, as I was fully aware that the courts in collusion with the authorities would bribe or order the Jabmi to weaken my case.

I spent my days and nights defending my innocence and clarifying the accusations heaped upon me. I was not allowed to meet the king. I was also unable to raise the issue of my fellow refugees as the court proceedings kept me occupied. Since the whole establishment including the king, judiciary, police, army, and bureaucracy stood against me, I could not defend myself. On November 16, 1993, the regime charged me with a list of fabricated crimes and sentenced me to life imprisonment.

I was in solitary confinement ever since I was brought to Bhutan. I expressed my strong resentment at the verdict. For the first time in the court hearings, the Chief Justice decided to open his mouth. All he shouted was, "Take him away immediately", to expedite my exit from the court. The fear in his voice could be sensed by everyone. He was terrified of my potential outbursts in front of the crowd that had assembled to witness the drama of my sentencing. Before I could speak, within seconds, the representatives of the Home Ministry and the police constables got hold of me and dragged me from the court-room. They dumped me into a vehicle and took back to Dradulmakhang detention center. I felt that the only recipients of my arguments were the four walls of the court. But later I realized that it went to the international community.





## Protest in Chemgang Prison

In February 1994, three months after I was sentenced for life, I was shifted to the Chemgang Central Prison. DK Rai, another prisoner and the General Secretary of Bhutan People's Party, was also shifted from a jail in Thimphu to Chemgang. The jail located at a high altitude in the South of Thimphu, had a notoriety of its own as it is considered a death camp, where, during its construction, several Lhotsampas had been tortured to death. In the winter, the area would be blanketed by snow and hence was colder than the capital. In the jail complex, two huge buildings were divided into two blocks. Both the buildings were constructed by the arbitrarily detained prisoners.

Unlike Rabuna and Dradulmakhang, I was kept here with the Lhotsampa political prisoners. The other difference: at times, I was allowed to mingle with other inmates. The Lhotsampa prisoners informed me that they were forced to construct the buildings under extreme harsh conditions. They had to collect stones and mud by digging the soil with their bare hands. I also learned that many army officers and civil servants from the South were dismissed from service, and then mentally abused. After controlling their minds, many were turned into government spies and sent to the refugee camps in Nepal and India. Some were turned into slaves and forced to work inside the country. From their behavior, conduct and conversation, I understood that none of them were in a normal state of mind or, in other words, they were also the victim of torture. But they were blissfully unaware.

I was under the impression that seven of us were the only persons languishing in jail. The realization hit me hard as more than one hundred thousand Lhotsampas had been forced to leave the country at short notice

during my incarceration. While male members were detained, the regime summoned their wives and made to sign 'voluntary migration forms' at gun-point and evicted from the country. Those who were serving in the army, police and administrative services were singled out and imprisoned across the country.

While I continued to serve the illegal detention, the regime had demolished my house and all my relatives had been forced to leave the country. The regime's torture on the Lhotsampas was beyond comprehension and compensation that exceeded all norms of civility. The inmates continued to narrate their pains and sufferings. They were left for days, with their hands and legs tied with ropes, in such a way that they remained motionless while they were being tortured. They were kept without food for many days and whenever it was served, it was some flour in a rusted tin container with salt and water. These innocent villagers were also made to bend like animals and lick their food from the ground. Many had been killed in the South after details of their property and wealth were extracted. Some met their death under the boots of the guards in the most horrific manner. Since the king himself was supreme head of judiciary and the crisis was also created by his personal interest, there was no place to lodge the complaints, let alone redress the injustice.

In order to seek a solution to the deepening crisis, a team of women from the South had sought an appointment with Ashi Sonam Wangmo Wangchuck, Chairperson of Bhutan Women's Association to apprise of the situation in the South and the plight of helpless women, who were tortured and raped by the security forces. They were presenting a petition calling the attention of the regime towards a fresh rape case in which a group of security personnel gang-raped Januka Luitel, a school girl in Danabari of Gaylegphug, while her father was serving jail sentence on false charges.

The officials would to ask the village headmen to send young women to prepare food for the soldiers in the barrack. If they refused to have sex, they met with similar fate. It was the worst nightmare. The villages were under siege. The male members were arrested, with only women, widows and young girls left at home. With no men at home to guard, the security forces barged into their houses and raped women. The mayhem did not cease here. The security forces not only looted the properties, but also put the houses on fire. They also forced the remaining family members to destroy their own house.

There was no newspaper or television, nor any human rights organizations to report those incidents. Even though there was the presence of the UN, it was merely confined to the capital city and remained ignorant about the situation. As these atrocities increased, the women delegation decided to lodge the complaints but was denied an audience with the princess. The Association was established at my behest with a view to ameliorate the situation of women in the country. Disappointed, the women returned home.

Chemgang jail had a dangerous environment where the prisoners posed a much more threat than the prison authorities. On numerous occasions, I was attacked by inmates who were goaded into violence by the prospect of release if they were considered my opponents. At that time, apart from Lhotsampa prisoners, the jail housed dacoits and thieves. The daily routine was one of animosity towards me as guards misinformed prisoners about my supposed influence upon the authorities. On many occasions, I was stuck between the demands of the aggressive inmates and the guards. Ultimately, I could never win in such a situation, in which the regime had intended to turn the Lhotsampas against me. It was an attempt to kill me through indirect conspiracy hatched out by the Home Ministry.

Rain or shine, the prisoners were forced to work. Even political prisoners like me were not spared. I had to join other inmates in the work. The manual work confirmed my physical fragility, a consequence of my addiction to tobacco. At that time, I used to smoke more than one hundred cigarettes provided free every day. It turned me into a hopelessly addicted chain-smoker. Once, smoking came to me as a blessing in disguise. One day, I, along with other prisoners, was taken to a forest up in the hills. We engaged in tree felling. After working for about two hours, seeing me profusely sweating, a constable gestured me to take seat and relax. I followed his order and lighted a cigarette with a match-stick. The wind was blowing at a very high speed and the match-stick just extinguished itself after a flicker of flame. After a few attempts, I moved under a tree nearby, which blocked the wind and thus succeeded in lighting the cigarette. The moment I left the place, where I failed to light the cigarette, suddenly a whole heap of timber logs rolled from above and fell in front of where I was resting before. Had I not left the earlier place for lighting the cigarette, I would have been buried alive under the timber logs.

Chemgang jail was a standard prison where political prisoners were kept and was accessible to the ICRC. Other prison cells were at Rabuna in Wangdiphodrang, Lungzor at Tashigang and Lodrai at Gaylegphug. Rest of the prisons were normally open or mobile jails in remote caves and makeshift camps deep in the forests. The prisoners here faced torture while doing hard manual work under heavy chains. The persons imprisoned for crimes related to the royal family or under the royal command were kept in the remote, isolated and secluded private prisons.

Normally, in any country, when there is riot and unrest, martial law is declared in the affected areas to restore peace and stability. But in the case of Bhutan, the regime militarized the Lhotsampa region not only to create unrest and evict its people in order to cover its own crimes but also to seize the property belonging to the refugees. One can just imagine the condition of the people in a remote country as there is no political opposition, independent judiciary, human rights organization and the freedom of press. The head of the state neither understands the language of masses nor empathizes on their pain. The schools do not teach humanity; the large neighboring state is an accomplice of the regime's autocratic rule and condones the use of inhuman torture.

## Reading Nehru's Autobiography

Torture inflicted on me in jail was evidenced by my deteriorating health, like bloodshot eyes, bleeding from nose, loss of appetite, irritation, and many others. After their release, some prisoners informed Hari Adhikari about my illness and conveyed my opinion on mind-control. Adhikari, a former member of National Assembly from Gaylegphug, was living in the refugee camp. So deeply was he concerned that he wrote me a letter. It was sent in such a way that it reached to me; otherwise, it was impossible for any letter to get inside the prison. The letter was hidden in a book *An Autobiography* by Jawahar Lal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India.

I learnt from the letter that Adhikari was aware of the physical and mental torture I was subjected to. He had consoled me and asked me to keep my mind and spirit strong as the fellow refugees languishing in the camps were making their strongest bid to garner international support for my release and for their repatriation.

Hardly an hour had passed reading the book, when a team of policemen headed by Major Kipchu Namgyal, the head of intelligence, stormed the jail. They conducted a thorough search of the cells occupied by the political prisoners. Then, they seized their personal belongings, including beds and wooden boxes. The personal belongings, confiscated from the cells, were burnt in a bonfire by the police force. The incident occurred so fast that nobody could say anything, leave alone save anything. The prisoners stood with their tongues locked in a state of shock. This was the climax of the atrocities perpetrated by the regime on prisoners. It's well known that prisoners anywhere in the world will have threadbare existence, let alone possess anything. It's not difficult to imagine what the regime which indulged in extinguishing the prisoners' meager possession must have done to the Lhotsampas. A civilized society cannot imagine such barbaric acts.

The psychology of a person has two facets—one outside the prison and a different one while in prison. Late Pandit Nehru has succinctly brought out this fact, while narrating his own experiences in Naini Central Prison in India. "I felt rather lonely and depressed. The nights were full of strange noises. At times I felt as if I was on the verge of the forest, and the peasantry were shouting to keep the wild animals away from their fields; sometimes it seemed the forest itself and the beasts of the night were keeping up their nocturnal chorus" (*An Autobiography*, p 229).

Pandit Nehru has very eloquently described the mood and psyche that prevailed inside the prison: "One sees in the Indian prison the inhuman side of the state apparatus, of administrative repression at its worst. It is a machine which works away callously and unthinkingly; crushing all that comes in its grip, and the rules have been purposely framed to keep this machine in evidence. Offered to sensitive men and women, this soulless regime is a torture and an anguish of the mind. I have seen long-term convicts sometimes breaking down at the dreariness of it all, and weeping like little children. And a word of sympathy and encouragement, so rare in this atmosphere, has suddenly made their faces light up with joy and gratitude" (ibid. 235).

Nehru further writes: "Ordinarily solitary confinement is awarded as a special punishment... Thus an additional and very terrible punishment is added to the sentence of the court, without any reason therefore. This seems very extraordinary and hardly in conformity with any rule of law. Solitary confinement, even for a short period; is a most painful affair; for it to be prolonged for years is a terrible thing. It means the slow and continuous deterioration of the mind, till it begins to border insanity; and the appearance of a look of vacancy, or a frightened animal type of expression. It is the killing of the spirit by the degrees, the slow vivisection of the soul. Even if a man survives it, he becomes abnormal and an absolute misfit in the world" (ibid. 235).

At the time of Nehru's incarceration, the mind-control technology was not well developed. But his metaphor constituted an apt description of the device. The above passage testifies to a progression of terror tactics from the abstract to the actual. I gather that had someone been born in India with the same courage of Nehru to fight against a despot who curtails human rights in the most despicable ways; I would not have been in the situation I now find myself in.

## **A Hope Dashed**

A UN team, comprising many members, visited Chemgang prison. Two members of the team paid a visit to my cell. It was the first UN visit. The two members in the team included a Norwegian and an Indian. I don't recall the name of the Norwegian, who stood silent throughout the ordeal. I could not speak to him due to the language barrier. However, I looked at the Indian as my savior because I was confident of communicating with him in Hindi. On the contrary, he appeared as though he was the king's commissioned agent who came with fixed terms and conditions to further humiliate me. This was apparent when he arrogantly asked me why I was in the prison and why I was working against the government by producing anti-government pamphlets.

Shocked and dismayed, I asked him why he thought it was necessary to raise this issue. First, even the High Court had rejected the charge of pamphleteering. Secondly, I asked him to show exactly which part of the literature he believed to be 'illegal'. Lastly, I asked him why all the other co-authors of the same text had been released from prison. My response made him speechless, but his embarrassment could not be compared to the pain I felt at the way he deliberately tried to hurt me. The injury is always unbearable when the blows come from those from whom you expect support.

I tried to explain him about the murder of five villagers, destruction of my house in Lamidara and the gross violation of human rights. Extremely irritated, he accused me of being ignorant of human rights and told me to substantiate the events with eye witness accounts or evidence. I told him that there were inmates who were witness to the entire episode. Tara Gautam was the first-hand witness of dreadful events in Lamidara. He was immediately brought in front of us.

No sooner had he come to us than the Indian member aggressively directed him to recall the incidents without giving any reference to the subject. Since Gautam had no idea as to why he was called in, he appeared greatly confused at what the Indian member was talking about. So, I told him in Nepali to substantiate the event that had happened in Lamidara. But, before I could finish my words, the visitor uncouthly charged me with manipulating and guiding the inmate to make false statements. After this, he left the cell boisterously. Until then, I had no figment of imagination that a man deputed by the UN body would work in the interest of someone else flagrantly disregarding the UN mandate and the original purpose. He exhibited a degrading behavior and used derogatory terms to me that I am unable to express here in words.

The visit came at a time when some prominent Indian human rights activists including V.R. Krishna Iyer, the former justice of Supreme Court and Anand Swaroop Verma from Indo-Bhutan Solidarity, were exerting pressure on Bhutan for my release. This becomes evident from numerous letters and appeals from justice Iyer, Verma, Arvind Ghosh, D. Prempati and Swami Agrivesh of Indo-Bhutan Solidarity and Pramod Kaphley of GRINSO Nepal. It must be recalled here that in his appeal to the king, justice Iyer stated: "I do not think we should still investigate in details about the human rights violations in Southern Bhutan. Different reliable sources have reported to me about in which way people were driven away from the country and what type of inhuman behavior they had to go through. Amnesty International also urged against the human rights violations committed by the monarchy... I want to request the Royal Government of Bhutan to release Tek Nath Rizal, who is the founder of human rights movement in Bhutan and solve the crisis of human rights violations taking place there."

I was affected by the mind-control so much so that I was restless and disoriented. Since my mind was being controlled, I was bound to follow the directions received in my mind. Instead of helping me seek justice, the UN team started asking me irrelevant questions on the issues, which even the High Court, had dismissed during the trial. However, I was greatly disappointed by their attitude, the manner in which the Indian in the UN team talked and also the way he asked for evidence. He should have realized that a person in jail could hardly provide evidence. Yet, luckily there was an eye witness (the same person who informed me about the destruction of my house) but at the sight of him, the Indian member deliberately picked up an irrelevant issue and left the scene. After my release, I found that the name of the member was Kapil Sibal, a noted lawyer of Delhi, a Member of Indian Parliament and Minister for Human Resource Development in the cabinet of Dr. Manmohan Singh. It would have been great, had the 'intellectuals' like Sibal understood Nehru's sentiment.

The next day, a few inmates were granted amnesty and released the same night. They were forced to leave Bhutan. But, Tara Gautam has been missing since a day after the interrogation. Because he was the only witness, who narrated the destruction of my house to the visitor, the authorities made him disappear. Another inmate Santa Raj Rai, who hailed from Samchi, whom the jail guards had heard supporting the events of Lamidara, was also released. But, later I learnt that he was murdered in Sikkim immediately after he was forced to leave the country.

Fifteen days after its visit, the team released the report which mentioned that I was guilty of the events that had taken place in the country and that they supported the actions taken by the regime. This report was vehemently condemned by human rights organizations and people from India and Nepal. Later, the inmates, who were granted amnesty and deported from the country, unveiled the truth about the incident that occurred in the jail during the team's visit. The media carried the story and had brought the incident into limelight.

A year later, a team of three Norwegians, including one who accompanied Sibal in the previous UN team, visited me in Chengang prison. They apologized for Sibal's behavior and the fabricated report he released merely to disrepute me. The event that occurred in the jail due to the language barrier was deeply regretted. It is ridiculous to mention here that even the United Nations, the organization known as the custodian of global human rights, democracy and peace, has failed to show empathy and ignored the critical issues of the Lhotsampas, thereby compelling the innocent people to seek justice from no other than the perpetrator himself, which naturally has been an exercise in futility.



## 27 Days of Hunger Strike

The repeated failure of bilateral talks between Nepal and Bhutan over the issue of dignified repatriation of the refugees, stories of continued barbaric atrocities on the Lhotsampas inside the country and overall pathetic conditions prevailing in the jail were a matter of grave concern. In order to draw the attention of authorities towards the plight of my fellow citizens, I went on a fast-unto-death hunger strike. Through the ICRC, I appealed to the international community to put pressure on the regime for an early solution of the refugee crisis, to establish democracy and a Human Rights Commission in the country. I informed them about my plan to undertake a hunger strike. They had visited the cell one month before the hunger strike.

On December 17, 1997, the National Day of Bhutan, I finally went on a hunger strike. For twenty seven days, I was surprised to find myself never hungry or even thirsty. Later, I deduced that it was due to the excessive control over my mind. When I was on the hunger strike, they must have de-activated my nerves for hunger and thirst so that I never felt hungry or thirsty. By doing so, the regime would go scot-free even if I would die. Contrary to their belief, I was able to survive. I thought it was like some spiritual power, guiding my body without its essentials.

On the twenty seventh day, however, I fell unconscious and was put under a saline drip. Upon regaining my consciousness, I noticed that something was wrong with the saline: the water looked suspicious. It was not clean. This was corroborated by my inmate Ram Bahadur Rai who told me that it looked like the water from a sewage pipe. Despite my insistence, doctors refused to change it. After the treatment, I found my beard falling and the appearance of black spots on my back.

When I was staging the hunger strike, the cells were overflowing with prisoners. About 10-12 prisoners were kept in one room. After serving food, the rooms were locked at four in the evening and opened only next morning. A tin was placed in the room, in case any prisoner had to go for latrine or urination. So, the room was stinking the whole night. Now, the situation in the jails has improved following the regular ICRC visits.

During the hunger strike, I urinated in the bottle because I was surrounded by guards who never left me alone, to ensure that I had not eaten. But, even before this, there was acute problem of toilet for the prisoners. Later, I threw the urine, in the company of guards, in drainage. A few days later, surprisingly, I found that the place where I had thrown my urine had become white. Wherever I urinated, a thin white crust appeared. Actually, it was the sugar that came with the urine. Moreover, the urine could not be passed at one go and its flow was also irregular. This problem continues till date. I requested the authorities to check if I was a diabetic. But after examining me, the doctors declared that I was not. They told me a lie and my condition continued to deteriorate.

Following the hunger strike, I was supposed to take liquid food. But, I was served with solid food. For about two weeks, I did not pass any stool. When I tried hard, excessive bleeding took place. No treatment was provided in spite of my repeated requests. It continued for two months and was taken care of by my body's natural defense mechanism.

Today, I am a chronic diabetic. In jails, what I experienced was that insolent doctors inflict more torture than the police. Their behavior with the prisoners substantiated this. I never knew that these medics, who had the opportunity to do their MBBS on the expense of taxpayers' money, would come so rude. History is witness to the fact that generations of innocent farmers had humbly sweltered in the rugged soil and terrain to build modern Bhutan. But, their children, who had the opportunity to go to school and become doctors, would not hesitate to murder their compatriots to serve their interest. Perhaps, Ashley Eden in his book *Political Mission to Bootan* had rightly mentioned that "Booteahs are full of fraud and intrigue, and would not scruple to murder their own father or mother to serve their interest" (2005, p. 6). Ashley's description of Bhutan some decades ago had hardly changed. My encounter with medics in the prison was a proof of the epithet.

## **A Ray of Hope**

No matter how hard I try, I fail to remember the date. It must be some time following the hunger strike--I was still in the Chemgang jail--three top officials of Amnesty International visited the jail. On the day of their visit, my mind was completely manipulated by the regime to the extent that it virtually stopped working. Moreover, information was conveyed to me about my father's demise. So, I was totally blank and was in a different world. The visitors arrived at about two in the afternoon. Once their introduction was over, they informed me that they had distributed nearly five thousand leaflets around the world petitioning for my release.

Before leaving, they politely asked me to write whatever I had to tell them. They even provided me a pen and paper. I was not in a position to hold the pen and the paper. But, due to their repeated requests, I wrote something in Nepali and handed it over to them. After receiving my paper, they encouraged me by saying that I had a lot of support outside the grim walls of the prison and that they had been waiting for five years to see me. I didn't know for nearly six years what I had actually written on the paper.



Once released from the prison and after subsequently going to Nepal for the second time, by chance I met the person who had translated my statement into English. To my utter surprise, I had written: 'Provide food to old people around the world' instead of seeking to write: 'Release all political prisoners and help in the repatriation of the refugees with dignity and honor and establish democracy and human rights in Bhutan.'

I felt ashamed for writing such a statement. I shuddered at the memory of what the visitors might have thought about me. But, I consoled myself: whatever happened was beyond my grip. I was manipulated to write as per my controller's wish. This was deliberately intended to depict me as a mentally deranged person in the eyes of the international community. From this episode, I wonder what kind of diverse, laughable statements the other inmates might have given during visits from different institutions and organizations. This demonstrates the extent to which Bhutan follows the ethics of Buddhism and the principles of the UN.

The episode did not end here. Around this period, Dago Tshering (the then Home Minister) sent me a letter reminding that I should have been awarded the capital punishment for my 'anti-national' actions. He claimed that it was the generosity of the king that saved my life. The provocation to write the letter apparently stemmed from the news that I was somehow forming anti-government groups from the cell, which of course was totally false (after my release I sent this letter to Amnesty International). Bhutan follows the traditional practice of abusing any critic, who dares to provide well meaning suggestions. On many occasions, to obfuscate the issue, the regime had given maltreatment to those offering their suggestions.

At a time when I was totally alienated from my countrymen and hopelessly alone, the visit from the human rights organizations and the ICRC was a succor for me. I become emotional even today when I recollect the support provided by Ingrid Massag from Amnesty International, London, Christopher from the US, friends from the ICRC and many others whose names I still struggle to recollect. They were never related to me by blood, nor were they my fellow countrymen. Yet, in a true sense, they gave me the encouragement to carry on my struggle as a human rights defender, for which I was targeted and imprisoned, and it were they who offered me the most valuable gift in that pathetic circumstances—hopes for a better future.

## **Echoes of Pain**

Bhutan's criminal justice and prison system is cruel, barbaric, inhuman and primitive. The prisons were in bad condition. More than a formal prison, they were a brutal place for sentencing the opponents. The prolong detention and brutal punishment that follows here through highly unconventional means is hardly known to the outside world. I still recall a barbaric act in which a political prisoner, Dasho D.B. Subedi, was stripped off his clothes and the police personnel tied rocks on his genital. In another instance, an illiterate village woman prisoner was asked to undress and lie flat on the ground. After she undressed, security personnel inserted gun muzzle into her genital. Similarly, a prisoner named Tularam Rai was flogged repeatedly on his ankle until he fainted. Padam Lal Dhakal, Prem Bahadur Gurung, Kapil Mani Acharya, Narayan Acharya, Bishnulal Adhikary, Ram Bahadur Rai, Barmalal Adhikari, Tejman Chhetri, Loknath Dhakal, Mukti Paudel and Chakrapani Khatiwada recount stories of gruesome tortures in prisons. Such instances of brutality continued unabated. All that went inside the jails were seldom reported.

The RBG is given the overall charge of the prisons. The Royal Bhutan Army (RBA) and the Royal Bhutan Police (RBP) officials were placed under the control of the RBG. The political prisoners were mercilessly

tortured with impunity by the command of the king. People's right to freedom of expression had been severely suppressed. Dissidence and opposition to the government policies are considered anti-national activities. The law of Tsa-Wa-Sum (the three elements – king, country and government) bans criticism of these elements. This law declares any act of "making conversation and correspondence" criticizing the king and his government by the citizens as treasonable offence inviting life sentence or death. It may be mentioned that the draconian National Security Act (NSA) was enacted in 1992. It was given retrospective effect from November, 1989, the time when I was abducted from Nepal, to implicate me on false charges of treason.

Under the NSA, the government arrested about two thousand people who had participated in the peaceful demonstrations in 1990. As prisons had limited space in the district headquarters, hundreds of prisoners were detained in health and education centers as well as deserted houses of the royal family members. These institutes had been shut down which not only deprived thousands of students of education but also prevented the public from basic health care. According to Ram Bahadur Rai, a political prisoner who is still inside the jail, more than one thousand five hundred political prisoners were detained in the Dradulmakhang prison alone. Nine to ten prisoners were cramped into 9' x 9' cells.

The detainees did not receive adequate medical facilities. The doctors occasionally visited jails, but their rude attitude surpassed that of the police. If any prisoner had fever, the guards would take the patient to the river and throw him/her into the ice-cold water. In Chemgang jail, five prisoners had died due to such inhuman practice. Apart from it, the regime used mind-control devices--that made the prisoners unconscious--to extract confidential information. In such a state, the prisoners were taken to the court and made to confess and sign false statements. The victims, moreover, were kept in a state of fear so that they would not tell others about such a device being applied.

Once inside the prison, the prisoners were kept incommunicado for months. The relatives who came to visit the prisoners were harassed and humiliated. The hard-core criminals from the Ngalong community, serving life sentences, were used to torture the political prisoners.

The prisoners were forced to work at private saw mills and apple orchards of Namgyal Wangchuck and Ugyen Dorji. They had to endure long hours of labor that stretched from 4 am to 9 pm while being shackled. They were neither given time to wash their body nor were they provided any tools for digging soil or stones. They were also forced to work in the construction of schools, hospitals and roads in and around Thimphu for which the regime received huge amounts of foreign aid. On the one hand, the private contractors used the prisoners as laborers while they were forced to work on the construction of the police officers' private buildings, on the other. The detainees were not only forced to use their mouth to pick up anything that fell on the ground but were also forced to lick the paint droppings.

Beatings with canes, sticks, batons, chains, leather belts and rifle butts, on the back, head, arms and feet of detainees were routinely carried out. One night, Tshering Wangda stormed the jail and severely beat up the detainees. He did so to extract the statements of confession. They were kicked around like a football and were also forced to fight with one another. This had an ugly purpose: to entertain the RBG and the RBA officials. Such barbaric acts, while entertaining to the perpetrators, would often result in injuries to the

prisoners. On several occasions, detainees were tied to a post outside the jail compound and left overnight in the freezing and biting cold.

As if the above mentioned methods of torture were not enough, the guards, in their whims, would order the prisoners to run. Then, they would whip their backs and butts. Those who fell while running were overrun by the prisoners following them injuring the fallen ones severely.

Various acts of sexual perversion were ordered by the guards. For instance, prisoners were ordered to perform anal sex between father and son, to masturbate in their presence, and so on. In Thimphu prison, both male and female prisoners were brought to a room in pair and ordered to perform various perverse sexual activities, either alone or as a couple. Guards often hit the sexual organs of the prisoners with their boots and laughed at the expression of pain. The female prisoners were sexually harassed and abused.

If a prisoner died and his relatives or son is also in the same prison, the relative would be ordered to abuse the dead. One day, in Chemgang jail, a prisoner, who was unwell, asked his father for water. Overhearing their conversation, he ordered the father to urinate in his son's mouth. The father was forced to do so. In the evening, the father who came back from the forced labor, found his son dead.

Two prisoners in Lodrai prison were killed and shown as having committed suicides. Both were found dead, hanging in the ceiling with their hands and legs tied. How can a person, whose hands are tied, commit suicide? Their unnatural death was put under the carpet. No one was there to enquire. Manoj Biswa, a Lhotsampa jailed in Samchi, was found dead and shown as having committed suicide, when in fact he was murdered. When he refused a guard's order to drink water from a drum, the guard in a fit of anger, submerged his face in the water. He could not breathe. As a result, he died. Chakrapani Khatiwada, a priest from Lamidara temple, died in Thimphu prison due to excessive torture. Punya Prasad Dhakal, a student leader, was tortured to death in Chemgang jail.

Those arrested from the villages were never registered in the district police office, not even in the prison. The whereabouts of many ex-prisoners is not known. The officials claimed they were released. But, to this day, their whereabouts is unknown. The bodies of political prisoners killed by the police were never handed over to their family. The movable and immovable properties of the political prisoners were seized by the regime. It has not given so far a full account of the number of people arrested, detained, killed and released. It's only after the ICRC started visiting the jails that the regime has been obliged to keep the records of its political prisoners.

Even the personal possessions were never returned to them after their release. Instead of handing over the court verdicts to the concerned detainees, the prison officials confiscated it. The regime feared that the detainees would present the documents as evidence to the human rights bodies after their release. Even the cards issued to prisoners by the ICRC were confiscated at the time of their release. Instead of rehabilitating them, the regime seized their documents and evicted them under duress. While in Nepal, they were denied registration and have been surviving at the mercy of their relatives and sympathizers.

## **Bhutanese in Indian Jails**

The Indian authorities were well-aware of the Lhotsampas' contributions to Bhutan's socio-economic progress. On this backdrop, we had great expectations from India that it would help us in the hour of need. Sadly, however, our hopes were completely shattered. Adding salt to injury, law-enforcement agencies of the states bordering Bhutan arrested Bhutanese citizens fleeing their homeland. These hapless refugees were beaten, tortured and imprisoned in Siliguri, Jalpaiguri and Barhampur (Kolkata) jails. As recently as on May 27, 2008, one Bhutanese was killed in Indian firing and seven were injured, while they were proceeding to Bhutan. Some of those fleeing the country have been handed over to the Bhutanese security personnel. The stateless refugees are deeply anguished at this treatment meted out by India, a country that claims as a savior of democracy. It has further etched a permanent scar on their psyche.

## **Atrocities on Religious Grounds**

There are many ethnic communities in Bhutan, like Brokpas, Doyas, Totas, Khengs, Mangdepas, Lepchas and others, besides the three main communities – Lhotsampas, Ngalongs, and Sharchokpas. The Sharchokpas are indigenous peoples of Bhutan, but they too are neglected, discriminated against and humiliated. Neither their good services to the nation are appreciated, nor do the ruling elites allow them to prosper.

Sharchokpas are predominantly Nyingmapa followers but they have no right to elect their own religious head. The king selects one Ngalong abbot and imposes it on the entire Sharchokpa community. Sharchokpa monk, objecting to it or demanding to elect their own abbot, were either killed, tortured or incarcerated for long jail terms. Khenpo Thinley Ozer, one of the chief abbots of the Nyingmapa Mahayana Sect was imprisoned for eight years in solitary confinement. Another monk, Gomchen Karma, was murdered in day light by Lakpa Dorji, the Dzongdag of Mongar. Lakpa fired from a 9 mm pistol provided by the regime and remained unpunished.

Due to the suppression, members of Sharchokpa community were either forced to flee the country or stay back in a state of repression. Many of them are now living in the refugee camps. The relatives of refugee Sharchokpas continue to face barbaric treatment inside the country. Dasho Rongthong Kuenley Dorji, Dasho Thinley Penjore, Rinzin Dorji, Aum Deki Yangzom, Tenzing Zangpo, Gup Khilla and late Aappa Chheku are some of the distinguished Sharchokpas, who had escaped from their native land and have been working for establishing genuine democracy and human rights there. On April 6, 2009, Zangpo, a political leader, was arrested from Guwahati in India and deported to Bhutan. There are reports that he is in a prison inside Bhutan. But his whereabouts are still unknown.

Bhutanese people had great expectations of securing protection, justice and support for the ongoing democratic struggle from the so-called world's largest democracy. But instead, it brazenly violated the international laws by deporting a refugee leader like a criminal.



## Small Joys Amid Gloom

The desperation, frustration and uncertainty of life in prison cannot be expressed in words. In reality, there is no greater crime or punishment against humanity than being locked in a room and being deprived of any freedom. Certainly, it was the worst period of my life.

Is life in jail simply about torture and pain? If I say yes, then I will not be telling the truth. My description would be incomplete if I did not mention how a person can adjust even in these extreme conditions and still gain wide-ranging experiences.

I had nothing to do except peep through the hole in the door to see the gun pointed at me. Later, when the gun was removed, I realized the information that I was going to be awarded the death sentence was a concocted story to frighten me and break my morale.

Thereafter, I tried to return to normal life. But, in that isolated room, I had nothing to do, nor were there any friends to talk to, exchange views and spend time with. What should I do with all the time at my disposal? This question haunted me and the loneliness in the room further worsened my condition.

I was totally restless in Chengang jail. One day, out of sheer boredom, I was moving from one corner to another, I saw a cow in the distant jungle through a hole on the wall. I peeped again and again through the hole and I saw the cow with white and brown spots. With the cow's sighting, I felt the eternal presence of some goddess in the manifestation of this ordinary creature. Bowing towards the cow, I muttered: "Oh! Goddess, one of your innocent devotees is undergoing this harsh punishment here, which you are aware of.

If I have committed any crime, please punish me further. But, if I am innocent, kindly have a mercy on me and relieve my fellow citizens from all forms of misery.”

After I murmured these words, I continued looking at her. For hours I kept watching the strong and healthy-looking cow. She was, at times, grazing, raising her head above, yawning and waving her tail in order to chase the flies away. Her activities made me feel happy and I kept on observing till it was dark. Once darkness descended, it was time for her to go to the shed and I also decided to lie down on the bed.

From the next day, it became a routine for me to look for the cow which had suddenly appeared from somewhere as if to provide me company. I became so obsessed with her that I was not able to eat my food without getting a glimpse of her. As she came to its usual place, I bowed toward her for the prayer and sought blessings to provide justice to all human kind.

This went on for a long time. But one day, apparently, jail authorities learnt that I was peeping through the hole and looking outside. The jail commander then covered the hole in order to stop me from viewing the world outside, adding to my loneliness and depression.

But this did not stop me from looking for another hole. I found there was a hole in the bamboo which they would use to block the view, through the another smaller hole; I was able to look at the cow once more. This made me joyful, and I finally came to the conclusion that she was a Goddess. Once again, I bowed at her, offered my humble salutations and prayed.

The activities inside the room were not confined to watching the cow. During the ten years of solitary confinement, I had developed intimacy with other creatures such as birds and mice. While I was in Rabuna jail, a horse used to come for grazing on the northern side of the room. For hours I gazed at that horse, which was spotlessly white, elegant and clean. I felt very lonely when the horse did not turn up.

The intimacy I had developed with the animals at Rabuna jail was very deep. A few days later, after my arrival in the prison, a fleet of mice invaded my room. I considered the entry of the mice as a good omen. I thought, “Oh! Lord Ganesh (the elephant-headed Hindu God), instead of coming here to see me in your real form, you have come in the form of the mice.” I greeted them, welcomed them to my abode and murmured prayers, “Oh! Lord Ganesh, I feel hopeful that you have come to relieve me from the suffering.”

Since I had nothing to do, I started making small balls out of my food. Within minutes, I was able to make a good amount of these balls and scattered them everywhere in the room. The mice, greedy for the food, came squeaking into my room. I would take great pleasure and entertain myself in their movements. Initially, they had trepidation about my movements but as days passed by, they got used to me. Now, they jumped and played around me. Their activities remained my only source of entertainment.

After a while, I was able to recognize each mouse by its characteristics. Everyday, before eating food in the evening I used to sing devotional songs, using the table kept inside the room as a drum. With this sound, flocks of mice would enter my room, anticipating that the food was now ready for them.

As soon as they entered, they gulped the balls of food and vanished inside the holes where they had emerged from. This went on for a long time. One day, I wanted to play games with these mice. Instead of making

small balls from the food grains as usual, I tied the food balls in a piece of cloth and hung it under the wooden table.

The fleet of the mice entered the room at the scheduled time for their meal. There was no food anywhere in the room. They searched every nook and cranny; scurried from one corner to other. Unable to get their spoils, they seemed quite frustrated and tired. Finally, the mice returned to their holes: they seemed to have realized the futility of their search. But among them, one appeared so stubborn that it quit the company and remained there. I was sitting on the bed, watching its activities. I felt pity for it as it ran around helplessly looking for the food, but in vain.

I had tied the food at the time when my hands were set free for a very brief period. But now as my handcuffs had returned with shackles applied on my feet, I could not remove the food from the cloth despite my sincerest efforts. On the one hand, this made me feel guilty but on the other, the movements of the mouse evoked different feelings which brought a welcome change to my monotony.

For a while, the mouse remained quiet in one corner as though it was indulging in deep thoughts. After a while, it went running under the table where the food was temptingly hung. I was much carried away by the patience demonstrated by the mouse and the determined manner in which it searched for the food.

The mouse then started frisking to snatch the food that was hung beneath the table. This intrigued me all the more and I carefully watched its actions. It was relentlessly jumping up, missing the target and jumping again. While doing so, the mouse was shrieking. But it did not withdraw from its goal and finally it succeeded in its efforts. It was amazing!

Now the mouse was in a rather more difficult situation. Holding the food in its mouth, the mouse was hanging underneath the table. I became more curious to see its next move. As I could see, it was trying to cut the cloth with the teeth by holding itself with the feet on the lower part of the table. As the mouse jumped to keep its feet on the table, it simultaneously cut the cloth with its teeth. After a while, it was able to open the cloth and get hold of the food. When it was through by cutting the rag, it slowly yet triumphantly ran towards the hole. This lasted for about two hours.

I could not help laughing loudly at the sight of the mouse's relentless effort. The entire episode which I just watched was more entertaining than watching a comedy. Though it was a funny and joyful episode to observe, from the perspective of the mouse it was not an ordinary incident. Had a philosopher watched the scene, he would have recounted it in his own style, demonstrating it as an exemplary and inspiring work for mankind.

I simply kept on laughing for a long time. This was for the first time I laughed whole-heartedly after I was brought to Rabuna prison. It is difficult to explain why the relentless efforts of the mouse made me so happy. I suppose there was a common ground between us.

It was almost midnight by the time their determined efforts ceased. I covered my body with the quilt. I became drowsy and then abruptly fell into deep sleep. As far as I can recollect, I had never had such a sound sleep in the prison.

When I woke up, it was almost seven in the morning. I felt much lighter than before and was quite relieved. But I also noticed that a lot of changes had taken place inside the room.

The first visible change appeared in the quilt-- it was too short. I normally covered my feet leaving face exposed while sleeping. Now the quilt was tattered. The quilt's cover was torn apart and as a result the cotton scattered all around.

At first, I couldn't believe it: the room not only looked different but something also seemed afoot. But soon, I discovered what had actually happened. Probably, other mice would have come to know about the food. They seemed to have returned to my room with a sense of vengeance. Thus, they tore everything they came across.

I was managing with a small quilt, which was not enough to cover my whole body. Now even that had become threadbare. 'What am I going to do now? How would I sleep from now on?', I asked myself. But soon, I forgot this and started thinking about the previous night's inspiring incident, which triggered a smile, seldom on my face.

If a small creature like a mouse could retaliate with such vengeance, a man, who has the power to reason, can do anything if he is fully committed and determined. To me, the mice symbolized the Lhotsampa representatives and my quilt, which was lying in tatters, the Bhutanese regime.

Several such striking incidents took place during my life in prison. These are unforgettable moments. During monsoon, a lot of small insects could be seen outside my small cell. Even with frogs I was on intimate terms which I find hard to explain. Here I could not resist recalling an account involving birds and dogs.

In Rabuna prison, before having my meal, I would place a small portion of rice outside my cell, at a particular place. A flock of birds would visit my cell and devour the food. If I was late, the birds would start demanding the food. So, before doing anything else, I would apportion their rations. One day, unfortunately, I forgot to feed my feathered friends. I had had all the food. I realized this only when they started protesting. This they did after not finding their meals of regular sustenance on time. But now, I had no means to help them. Feeling ashamed, I listened to them with remorse. They continued to protest for a long time. Meanwhile, one of them managed to enter my room through a small hole.

The bird surveyed the cell as it entered and obviously it was frightened. The bird could not find any food because there was nothing left in the room. Though the bird had somehow entered the room, it was now impossible for it to find the same hole to flee.

Witnessing its helpless condition was a heart-wrenching experience. I tried to catch it so that I could put it right inside the hole. But my hands were tied with handcuffs. Hence the seemingly mundane task became impossible. The bird was furiously flying from wall to wall, in sheer desperation, and was repeatedly colliding against the rough brick wall. Its struggle continued for about an hour and finally the tired and helpless bird fell on the floor. As I approached the collapsed bird, I found that it was already dead. The death was expected after a number of collisions it encountered in its desperate effort to escape. A cloud of gloom hung over me as I witnessed its death. I was aggrieved because I had myself been responsible for its demise which almost bordered in suicide. Had I not forgotten to place the food for the birds at their scheduled time, the innocent



bird would not have entered my room and died in such a way. I wrapped the bird in a piece of cloth and requested one good-natured constable to bury it on the banks of Sunkosh River.

How can I forget the relationship I had developed with a group of dogs? After spending two years in Rabuna prison (located at a distance of about seventy-one kilometers east of Thimphu), I was shifted first to Thimphu jail and finally to Chemgang prison (which is about fourteen kilometers south of Thimphu). Chemgang is nestled in a dense forest in the foothills of the Himalayas. A brief comment on the structure of Chemgang jail might be relevant as it relates to the dogs' story. This jail is located on a hill and has two sections, one on the top (Block 1) and the second further down (Block 2).

As there was no fencing around, the dogs from far-off villages came to this place in search of food. I have a special predilection for animals. My fondness coupled with boredom attracted me toward the animals that are sometimes called man's best friends. With the co-operation of other inmates, I started to take their special care. In the beginning, the canine population under our care was small but with the passage of time, their number began to swell.

Time passed by as I played with the puppies that were growing up around the jail. Let me describe here the official daily routine. At seven in the morning, the constables opened the jail's door and returned at four to lock them.

Meanwhile, my health was deteriorating; so the prison administration made arrangements for my check-up at the Thimphu General Hospital, which is now named Jigme Dorji Memorial Hospital. Since my imprisonment, this was the first time I was allowed a medical check-up outside the jail. As I was taken towards the vehicle, a group of puppies came wagging their tails and cuddled around my legs. No matter how hard I tried to get rid of them, they tightly took hold of my legs. Even after I boarded the vehicle, they followed it for a while: I could see them trailing me even from a long distance. After reaching the hospital, I couldn't desist from thinking about the puppies that were so fond of me.

It was almost dark by the time I was brought back to the prison. We had to ascend an upward slope, which was about one hundred and fifty feet long. On the way back, I noticed that the puppies were still present on either side of the footpath. They had not been able to climb up the same path which they had no problem descending in the morning. They were trembling and whimpering in their lost state.

Those puppies, which had come to bid goodbye to me in the morning, looked as though they were waiting for my arrival to welcome back. I was concerned over their plight and carried them back under my arms up to the prison though I was not allowed to play with them. I reached the prison door--it was time to part with them, my only companions. The parting was painful. Tears rolled down my cheeks as I bade them adieu and returned to the same gloomy cell.

After I reached the prison, I was locked inside my room and was unable to dole out a share of my food to the puppies. I felt as if I was depriving my own children from food.

At Chemgang prison, I was relieved from the painful loneliness: I was allowed to mingle with other inmates. As days passed by, I also developed warm relationship with them which finally became a motivating factor for

our friendship. I urged them not to remain silent in that they were incarcerated in the most barbaric manner for crimes they had not committed.

The court was certainly going to punish them. I motivated them to appeal to the king. One could do that if one was not satisfied with the court's verdict. I felt it was appropriate for them since they were imprisoned without committing any crime.

Acting on my advice, they submitted their appeals to the king, due to which the court was compelled to reconsider their case. The prison administration was astonished by this incident. Even the Ministry of Home Affairs as well as the High Court prescribed more caution after this incident.

The Ministry of Home Affairs began analyzing the reasons behind the increasing number of appeals that were sent to the king, especially after my arrival in the prison. It was no surprise that they finally concluded that the remarkable increase was because of me. Consequently, the government decided to shift all the prisoners from Section 2 of the Chemgang prison to Dradulmakhang detention, except me.

Once again I was left alone, except for a few stray dogs and constables. I was hardly able to catch their sight in the huge detention building. Nevertheless, I found some solace in their companion. It was now almost a year after I was brought to Chemgang prison. By now, the number of dogs had swollen up to twenty-three. The dogs born after my arrival here were cute and lovely. Taking care of the puppies was a much cherished item of my otherwise monotonous routine.

But now, I was facing yet another problem. Earlier there were 2,200 prisoners in the jail and all of them in one way or the other had taken care of the dogs. Since most of the prisoners were now shifted elsewhere, managing food turned out a big problem. Earlier, the prisoners kept aside a small portion of their food, which was adequate for the dogs. Now, I was alone and even if I gave away my entire portion, it was not possible to feed them all. However, the dogs were not willing to stray from the jail, for they were habituated living and eating there.

Now, they appeared in front of my door and howled as if they were asking for more food. As this increased, I was helpless because I was unable to feed them. Probably out of hunger, they started to whimper. I had no idea how to solve this problem, for I had no options left. I was not in a position to watch them go hungry; by now they were like my family members.

I had to look for some means to arrange food for them. So, one day, I sent word to other prisoners living in Section 1 and requested them to send a small share of their food. As per my expectation, the inmates sent a wrapped pack of flour. I mixed and stirred the flour in water and gave it to the dogs. I was satisfied that finally I was able to arrange some food and they, too, seemed contented. At a time when I had to remain separated from my relatives and friends, the dogs not only served as my companions but also helped kill my boredom and solitude.

Once it so happened that a senior jail officer had come to supervise the prison conditions. When he got down from his vehicle and came toward my room, the dogs in a group jumped at him, trying to block his way. I was watching this from my room. The dogs chased and leapt upon him. The officer ran round the building in a desperate bid for help. On seeing the spectacle and the condition of the jail officer, I initially laughed. But, as

the dogs started to bite him, I ran outside and shouted at them. My scold silenced the dogs. The officer was very frightened and came closer to me in order to save himself from the angry dogs. I escorted him inside the room. When he entered my quarters, he had trouble in breathing and departed after a while without discussing anything. I walked with him up to the place where his vehicle was parked.

An hour after the jail officer left, I heard the sounds of gunfire outside my room. I looked outside and found that some constables were mercilessly shooting the dogs. Within minutes, the dogs were lying dead on the pool of blood. Following the bloodshed, an eerie silence crept in. Not even a single dog was spared; it was a gruesome massacre. I was deeply shocked and felt as if my own family members were being slain right in front of my eyes. The dogs were killed because the authorities found that they were my favorite pastime. I was left with a deep sense of guilt. The brutal killing of innocent lives, be it animal or human, goes against the basic Buddhist ethos. The massacre proved that the regime's propaganda to the outside world that it is a peaceful Buddhist country is an empty rhetoric. Despite being a Buddhist country, the shocking slaughter bears testimony to the brutality and repressive nature of the regime. While many poor and innocent people had bled for the cause of democracy and human rights, the dogs too, in my eyes, became 'martyrs'.



## The Final Week

With the passage of time, having come across brutal incidents one after another and having spent most of my times in locked buildings, I was recounting my long torturous life. It was a cold morning on December 12, 1999. A police constable barged into my cell and told me in harsh tone to follow him to the office. I thought I was, perhaps, being transferred to another cell. It took five minutes to reach the jail office. During this short route, I became a bit apprehensive, even though I was coming out of the dingy cell. I felt somewhat better, owing to the fresh air and the lush greenery. Many thoughts kept crossing my mind making everything blurred.

In the office, I saw Karma Sherpa with the jailer. He was a judge in the High Court. I knew him since childhood; both of us belonged to the same place. I saw him for the first time after the final verdict of my case. We greeted each other and the jailer left the room.

He asked me, "Are you all right?" After a pause, he continued, "The king has directed me to come here."

In Bhutan, not even a leaf flutters, unless the king beckons. So, a High Court judge would obviously not dare to meet a political prisoner like me without the royal permission.

I was curious to learn what had brought him to the jail. Karma did not keep me in suspense for long. He said, "The king has decided to grant an amnesty and release you from the prison." It took me some time to understand the gravity of his words as they slowly sank in me. I was ill at ease because this news was totally unexpected, just like his visit. Suddenly, the ten long years of my prison life flashed in my eyes. I felt as if an entire decade of my life had been an utter waste.

I was uneasy, primarily, due to this amnesty. Only a person who had committed a crime could be pardoned. So, amnesty for me? For what? What crime have I committed? The word 'amnesty' was not appropriate in my case. Though the use of the word 'amnesty' made me tense, I also felt a little happier. A thought struck my mind: the regime had relentlessly made every effort to make me incapable and useless but it had not succeeded.

Karma informed that I would be granted amnesty on the king's 25th anniversary of the accession to the throne. By giving amnesty, the regime was, in fact, admitting my innocence because they could not trace anything anti-national in my mind and behavior despite the fabricated charges. I knew the king would have loved to see me dead in the prison and all his efforts to push me in that direction had failed. As a result of tremendous pressure from the international community, the regime was compelled to release me in order to save its face under the facade of amnesty. All these show that the king had made himself the butt of jokes by granting amnesty. It was a matter of a sarcastic laughter.

He took out the king's order and started reading: "Though Tek Nath Rizal had left the country once, on the occasion of the silver jubilee of the coronation ceremony, I have decided to relieve him from his punishment in prison. Before his release from the prison, he has to submit his written commitment to the Tsa-Wa-Sum. Moreover, he has to write unambiguously that his release has been made possible due to the good wishes of Aliston, Regional Representative of the ICRC."

Not making any issue of these conditions at that time, I told him curtly, "I am thankful to the king for his decision to release me from prison." Karma was glad to hear these words. He was perhaps pleased because I openly expressed my gratitude to the king.

After a momentary pause, I said, "Would you kindly convey my thoughts to the king?" When he consented, I started speaking. He took out his diary and began writing.

I raised the issue of my conditional release and said, "I had never absconded from this country but was compelled to leave as the king denied justice to me and there was imminent threat to my life. I had mentioned all these circumstances in my written statement, which handed to Major Sangay Thinley for submission to the king. But far from delivering justice, my release is being made conditional. Ten years of my life spent in the prisons under sub-human conditions, without any fault, have been ignored completely."

I further said: "You have been in the government service for a long time and have attained a high position, as a Judge in High Court. You are fully aware of the problems inherent in the 1988-census, its manner of implementation and the masterminds behind the sinister design. As you yourself belong to the Lhotsampa community, do you really believe that foreigners are staying in South Bhutan?"

I told him how I was abducted from Nepal and extradited to Bhutan, the various forms of torture that had been inflicted on me under the direct order of the king. I also expressed my inner thought, "I am happy that a person like you had been chosen to bring the news of my release. Therefore, I hope that you will present my viewpoints before the king."

He encouraged me saying, "Kindly, tell me everything you want to convey to the king. I will put everything before him."

I asked him, "Who is going to be responsible for my security after the release? I could be physically attacked, as there is a widespread propaganda that I am responsible for plunging the nation into the present crisis. There is a threat to my life from people having vested interests who had been after me since 1988. It is also the responsibility of the government to relieve me from all these insecurities. Regarding South Bhutan, who would be held responsible for sending innocent people languishing in the prisons and in military custody?"

I also said, "I have heard that many persons working in the security department from the Lhotsampa community have gone missing and the army is responsible for it. I am also aware that many had been kept in the army prison for several years without access to any legal recourse. Many prisoners have wept before me, claiming their innocence and are outraged in that there is no one to deliver justice. Many people have been arrested on false charges and have gone missing while in custody. Many families have been disintegrated and separated. As the supreme head of the country, it is the prime responsibility of the king to deliver justice to his citizens. Please convey this to the king on my behalf."

Words started flowing uninterruptedly as he jotted down all the points in his diary. While talking, we had a cup of tea in between. I also narrated the entire story of my life in jail and told him how savage the jail administration had been towards me, when my life was fully under their control.

I raised a critical subject with him regarding criminals in jail. Many of the northern Bhutanese criminals, imprisoned for life, were legally allowed to live in the nearby forests in temporary huts, with their wives and children. Such a system existed nowhere except Bhutan. These prisoners have gone through very rigorous and severe hardships in prisons for longer duration. The king grants this facility to such prisoners on the guarantee of their families. I personally met some of them in the forest. I even worked with them hand-in-hand to chop the wood, pull logs and carry them.

This provision was in a way a good thing, but it also raises social issues. The family of each prisoner was thus stripped off their right to live in a free society. The family members stayed with the prisoners who were sentenced for ten to twenty years. Since the prisoners' children were living in the forest, they were deprived of education. As the children were kept aloof from their society, they were devoid of any socialization. They were raised in a condition where no real society existed and hence were totally ignorant of social norms and values. The so-called concern shown towards the prisoners by the king was, in fact, giving birth to a breed of anti-social human beings. The forest was thus becoming a breeding ground for future criminals.

I also discovered that these prisoners, along with the police and the army personnel posted there, were involved in hunting. For this purpose, they were allowed to use arms and ammunition. From this, it is easy to point the finger to the source of their weaponry, in case they are found to be involved in criminal activities. I came to know that the army and police worked hand-in-hand with these criminals. It was a dangerous trend to allow prisoners to use arms. I also feared that the army and police were hunting rare animals.

One day, I asked one of the prisoners, "Could you please tell me what type of animals do you kill?" He replied, "What else, sir? We kill wild pigs, deer and wild chicken." When I asked whether he also hunted musk deer, he kept suspiciously quiet. Hunting was not intended for personal consumption but used for smuggling. Is it a good practice where government officers, along with prisoners, are involved in hunting of the rare species? It should be a matter of grave concern.

I also told him about another observation. The police force lacked sufficient representation from the Ngalong community because after the defiance by Dasho Rongthong Kuenley Dorji, the king started mistrusting Sharchokpas. Due to the unexpected turmoil in the South, the Lhotsampas were already removed from services and imprisoned. Now, the king has only handful of the Ngalongs to trust.

In that situation, criminals from the Ngalong community serving their sentence for various hard crimes were directly recruited in the police force, even before their jail terms were completed, without any proper training. The police force enjoys special status in a state system and the recruits need to undergo a basic training regarding their duties and responsibilities. A person cannot become a policeman overnight just because he has been given the uniform and the post. As a result of the government's propaganda against the Lhotsampas, these criminals considered the community as their enemy. It was, therefore, natural for such criminal-turned-policemen to mistrust them. These persons, once hardcore criminals, transformed in their incarnation of neo-policemen, thus were free to torture other prisoners. This proved a great incentive for them to commit crimes. In this way, these criminals would have no hesitation in killing people from the Lhotsampa community. And, in due course, their insensitivity would stretch itself to anyone, regardless of community. What would be the condition of Bhutanese society if such trends continue?

After 1990, the government also started recruiting ex-army personnel from the Ngalong community for posting in the South. The only duty or responsibility entrusted to them was to harass the Lhotsampas. They felt that the degree of harassment they doled out to these people was a measuring yard for their reward from the king.

There was another related problem in the jail. The newly-recruited soldiers could not speak or understand the Nepali language. They hardly had any elementary knowledge of Dzongkha. They did not know the local dialect at all. These new recruits spoke a distinct hybrid language -- mixture of Khasi and Hindi. Due to the lack of communication, the prisoners had to suffer more.

As I investigated their background, I learnt that the newly recruited soldiers were brought from Arunachal Pradesh in India. Their forefathers had fled Bhutan to settle in Arunachal Pradesh. It was an irony that the community, that had fled the country and should not be considered as citizens, was trustworthy for the king, rather than his genuine citizens. These new appointees of the regime had become additional sources of trouble for the prisoners. To get a sense of this issue, I asked Karma to visit the prison and report the truth to the king. I also explained to him the methods of torture inflicted on the prisoners.

He listened to me in utter silence. I further told him, "We have no human rights organizations or free media. Security forces indulge in torturing innocent people, an act that is increasingly viewed as valid. Our jails can be transformed into reformation centers. Torture can never change the conviction of an individual, nor can it change his/her mental make-up. The practice of torturing people will eventually cause great damage to the nation."

I narrated these issues to him for a considerable length of time. I used the opportunity to convey my thoughts freely and frankly. The morning sunshine was crossing the midday threshold and was tilting towards the west. He had to go back to Thimphu.

We finished our conversation. I had neither given the undertaking in writing nor did he ask me to do so. At this juncture, he told me, "I fully respect your feelings and commitments, which you have expressed as a responsible person. I am very pleased and surprised that though you have been living in the prison for a decade now, you have raised some very important points which we ourselves, who have been living in an open environment and enjoying a normal life, had never thought of. Be assured that I will immediately convey your concerns to the king."

When he was about to stand up from the chair, I gently caught hold of his hands and requested, "The king's decision to release a person like me branded as an anti-national is gracious and magnanimous. I would be grateful to the king if other innocent prisoners could also be released. The king should show his kindness and magnanimity by repatriating the forcibly evicted the Lhotsampas, now refugees in Nepal." He once again assured me that he would present my views and requests to the king. Our meeting came to an end.

## **A False Dawn**

By the time Karma left, it was already dark. During my jail life, I spent many hours watching the sunrise and sunset. It was one of the few things which were visible from the four walls of the jail and this sight had become a significant part of my life. But, I felt this evening entirely different. I had wasted many an evenings in unjust captivity. My heart-beats raced at an abnormally higher speed and my senses awoke from a deep slumber. I felt as if I was experiencing a new sense of being, something difficult to put in words.

My prolonged absence throughout the day in jail became a matter of curiosity for the inmates. The moment I stepped in, they bombarded me with queries: "Why were you called at the office? What was discussed at the meeting?" I refrained from making any spontaneous response and asked them to wait.

Slowly, I surveyed all of them. I was not able to speak for a while. I just watched their innocent faces, gnarled from the momentous hardship they were enduring on a daily basis. After a while, I broke my silence: "Karma had come to the office and I was called to meet him." This news made them all the more curious. "And what happened?" one of them asked. I narrated the conversation I had with him and also told them that he had come to see me with a message from the king. I intentionally withheld the news of my proposed release.

For, it would have been a bitter pill for them to swallow. It would have meant leaving them in prison to suffer indefinitely, all by themselves. They had pinned their hopes on me and after my release, there would be no one to raise a voice on their behalf. I personally wished all the prisoners to be released simultaneously. Moreover, the decision about my release was in a preliminary stage; the king had imposed certain conditions and I was yet to decide on it. I was not sure how the king would react, and if the latest development would eventually become a reality.

After three days, Karma returned to Chemgang prison. I was once again called to the office. He told me, "I have come straight from the Royal Palace." Saying so, he handed me a paper. Instead of reading what was written on the paper, I studied his facial expressions. His face seemed to have hardened – it did not reflect the genial soft look he had three days ago. He was trying to assert himself firmly in a stern manner and had acquired a harsh tone.



He took out a document and told me that the king had instructed me to get this re-written in my handwriting. Then, he told me to write: "I, Tek Nath Rizal, am grateful to the king for releasing me from the prison on the occasion of the silver jubilee of the coronation ceremony. I swear to be committed to Tsa-Wa-Sum after the release. I am also aware that my release had been made possible as a result of the good wishes of Aliston, the Regional Representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross."

After this, he thrust the document in my hand and said, "I have conveyed your views to the king. The king has explicitly said that he does not want to hear from a traitor. So, there is no need for you to advise him. You just copy the content of this document without amending, sign it, and give it to me."

I studied the document and found nothing new in it. Karma had already explained everything to me. Going through the document, I felt agitated. I also felt humiliated because the king, even after imprisoning me for ten years, was hell-bent on heaping insults on me. He was deliberately asking me to sign a document which I found unacceptable. With fury, I tore the document into shreds and threw it away.

I had enough reasons to do so. The ill-conceived government policies had plunged the nation into a crisis. I had merely performed my moral and professional duty. In return, I lost my freedom. It was not possible for anyone to quantify the torture I endured in the last ten years and compensate it. Brushing aside the past, I had made efforts to correct the wrongdoings committed by the regime during the 1988 census. Through Karma, I had petitioned to the king for understanding critical issues. But my efforts had been ignored.

The moment I tore the document, Karma and Dorji Wangchuck, the jailer went out and presumably informed the king. They were waiting for the instructions to determine the next action. After this, both of them whispered and in no time two constables appeared in the room. One of them forcibly removed my clothes. It was the month of December and Chengang was extremely cold. I was made to stand still from ten in the morning to seven in the evening and was exposed to the bitter cold.

The surrounding mountains were snow-capped. The chilly wind from the mountains entered the room and ripped through my naked body. My senses and body parts were slowly becoming susceptible to an aching numbness. It seemed to me that soon the palpitation of my heart would come to a halt. I was losing consciousness and feared that I would collapse anytime. The severe cold, hunger and thirst, all took their toll and I began to lose control over myself. It was on this backdrop that I began to rethink my decision not to write and sign the paper of my conditional release.

Karma was not only the witness to the torture inflicted on me, but was also an accomplice. After all, he was hand-picked by the regime that knew no bounds for notoriety and medieval brutality. So, there was no point in expecting anything civilized from him. He was one of those Lhotsampas, who used his/her ethnicity to demonstrate the servility towards the royal family, betraying the community.

The king wanted to play it safe by compelling me to endorse my conditional release. He was instructed by the palace to have me sign the conditions, if necessary, by force. For him, it was a question of his career. If he failed to accomplish the task entrusted by the palace, he would lose his reputation and, finally, the favor of the palace and the privilege he enjoyed.

I felt I would not gain anything by not following his instruction. After all, I would not lose my commitment if I accepted the conditions laid by the king. I knew the decision to set me free was made due to the external pressure and, sooner or later, the king would release me. But, the longer it took, the more horrendous it would be.

I had to choose between longer duration in prison under severe torture and accepting the conditions for my early release. I knew the world outside the prison was waiting for me and I had a lot more to tell them, once I was free.

If I remained confined in the prison for long or am released after getting terribly weak, I would not be able to work. More importantly, the face of Bhutan as a derogatory blot on the human civilization would remain hidden from the world community. Future generations, too, would not be able to comprehend the struggle inside Bhutan. Reconsidering all these factors, I finally decided to rewrite and sign the paper.

I struggled to collect the pieces of paper scattered on the floor. I barely managed to put together the pieces and copied everything written there. Finally, I placed the finished copy on the table. All the time, Karma was looking at me in amusement.

He read the paper and departed after saying 'thank you.' I did not say anything. The officer turned towards the constables and they returned my clothes. After I dressed, I felt slightly relieved, even though I was unable to react due to the anesthetizing effect of cold.

I was again sent back to the prison. Unlike the previous occasions, there was only one constable accompanying me. He said, "Shall I tell you one thing, sir?" I turned towards him. In the soft orange glow of the street lamps, I could see tears glistening in his eyes. "These people should be punished for inflicting torture on an innocent person like you. This government cannot last long. Its days are numbered." While he spoke, he was wiping the tears rolling down his cheeks. I remember his words even to this day which have been a source of inspiration for me.

We reached the prison. By the time I went inside, all the inmates had been locked up in their cells. Once in my cell, I went to bed and covered myself with whatever was available. A little warmth generated by the clothes made me feel slightly more comfortable and I took a long deep breath.

I realized that 'happiness is merely an interval between two pains.' Just a while ago, I was under the impression that my frozen body would never recover. But now, I was experiencing a soothing relief. I was desperate for food; not a single grain had gone down my throat the whole day. I raised my head from the quilt and looked around. I saw that some of my inmates had brought food and left it for me. Though the food was already cold, I devoured it within minutes. I felt as if I were eating for the first time. The moment I hit the bed, I fell into deep slumber.

Next morning at around eight, I opened the doors. No sooner had the first inmate entered my room, I narrated what had happened the day before. They had mixed reactions. Some disliked the idea of accepting the regime's conditions, while others felt that in the absence of other alternatives, I made the right decision. Some expressed their concern about themselves. They were worried about their future after my release. I tried to assure them saying that I would be with them in the hour of need.

The prisoners were placed in two categories. One category of twenty prisoners was to be released along with me on December 17, on the occasion of the National Day while the rest were doomed to remain there. Those selected for release were jubilant, while others, understandably, looked dejected. I was in pain for those who were not included in the list. I could not conceal my sadness at the prospect of leaving others behind to languish for an indefinite period. Hopefully, they too understood the situation.

I became emotional when I thought about our separation--those who shared untold grief and brief spells of happiness together with me, those who helped me during hard times. The sentiment of the prisoners who were going to be released was not much different from mine. I have a deep sympathy for the fellow prisoners who suffered in various prisons for the same cause. There were nearly 70 prisoners and some of them are still missing, despite the regime's claim of their release.

Finally, on December 16, we spent the remaining time listening to each others' endless stories. An all-round sadness was in the air. We had plans to continue our struggle. But, here I was, going to be released from prison, as if by some design.

Assured of my release but with no idea of what the future has in store for me, I went to my room. I thought of my family members, their hardships, and their struggle for survival in my absence. I still remember the last night in my cell. My mind was filled with so many conflicting feelings simultaneously -- happiness laden with sadness, hope tinged with uncertainty, and so on. I did not know when sleep embraced me. This is how my last night in the Chemgang prison ended.

## **Blood, Sweat and Tears**

Comparatively less dusty and dry, the brightly lit prison cell in Chemgang relieved me from dust and discomfort. In fact, this prison was built on the sweat, tears and blood of innocent Lhotsampas and outshone all others, where I had spent the long and agonizing sentence. But the future was uncertain as it was unpredictable. Although, the pressure from the international community was instrumental in shifting me here, my hopes of escaping the regime's brutality thinned day after day. The gloom deepened as the regime escalated perpetration of injustice, torture and inhuman treatment to me. Recalling the solidarity and support demonstrated by the people across the globe brought tears in my eyes. The tears rolling down my cheeks were the symbols of the triumph prompted by overwhelming global solidarity that poured in my favor. They provided me strength to fight against injustice.

It was the morning of December 17, 1999. Though it was almost seven, I was feeling incredibly lethargic. I remained lying down on the bed for some time, looking pensively at the four corners of the room, where I had spent five years. Here I spent very difficult, painful and endlessly long days and nights. I had developed some kind of attachment for both the prison and the place. It was difficult not to be emotional about all the mundane things at the time of taking leave. There was something nostalgic about the prison building. In a way, the jail had got better of me and I was institutionalized in it.

Feeling ill at ease, slowly I got up from the bed. I looked at the flowers I had planted around the prison block. At a glance, I could see a small poppy tilted towards me, as though looking at me. Birds that flew from the nearby forests came and settled on the branches of a tree by the flowers. I felt that they were all gazing at me. I had been feeding them with a portion of my food and it was only natural that they seemed attached to me.

While strolling along, I reached the rear of the building. Long ago, I had inscribed a stanza from the *Bhagavad Gita*, on the wall:

*Gita Ganga Cha Gayatri, Sita Satya Saraswati  
Brahma Vidya Brahma Valli, Trisandhya Mukti Gehini  
Ardha Matra Chidananda, Bhavagni Bhaya Nashini  
Vedatrayi Parananda, Tattva Artha Gyana Manjiri*

To me, this particular portion imbued the essence of the *Bhagavad Gita* on the wall was like a holy place of worship. I used to perform my daily prayers before this makeshift shrine. Inmates too had begun to love and respect this place, especially when anyone got the news of a relative's death. We would gather here and pray to God for providing everlasting peace to the departed soul.

I sat down and closed my eyes, remembering lines and stanzas from the *Bhagavad Gita* and I asked God to give me courage and guide towards the right path in the future. It was my last prayer in the jail. After praying, I returned to the cell, where the inmates were waiting for me. They had made a small package of the articles that I used in the prison. One of them had prepared breakfast for me. Tears rolled down my eyes as I looked at them. One elderly inmate chided me to refrain from crying and served me breakfast. I requested them to join me in breakfast but none of them came forward. Ram Bahadur Rai told me, "We will be eating anyway." They were behaving as if one of their family members was going on an unknown journey and they were bidding goodbye.

So, I took my breakfast all by myself. I fleetingly looked at their faces and found it was hard for them to look at my face. I was also experiencing the same difficulty. Some, it seemed, were conversing with me in mimes and gestures.

Among the inmates, Kapil Mani Acharya, Ram Bahadur Rai, Fauda Sing Rai, I.B. Chhetri, T.M. Chhetri, D.K. Rai, Prem Bahadur Gurung, Barmalal Adhikari, Dandapani Bhandari and Dasho D.B. Subedi were from a distinct community, language, culture, tradition and distinct religion. They were compelled to spend a painful life in prison at the hands of a revengeful regime. Their family members had been evicted, their daughters had been raped and victimized, and some of their family members had been killed. Their belongings, properties, lands and animals had been seized and, finally, they were imprisoned and subjected to horrendous torture. Their only crime was that they were prosperous and hailed from Lhotsampa community.

On many occasions, we had wept together, at times we shared joyful moments in each other's company and at other times we also fought due to small misunderstandings. Hours were spent in animated debate over the future of our nation.

We had gone to the forest together for menial labor – to chop logs and break stones into pebbles. We had many things to remember and all the past memories raced through my mind. I was in the prison's Block one building while nearly half of the inmates were jailed in Block two. I was longing to see them, talk and listen to them. Unfortunately, the jail administration denied me the permission. Inmates of Block one were aware of the fact that I was deprived of meeting them. They had collected some money; in fact all the money they could contribute. The money was deposited with jail officials in their names by their relatives and friends

during their visits. One can imagine the paucity of fund in such circumstances. Nonetheless, the amount, which they had collected for me to help me on my journey, was handed over to me by the jail administration. I was deeply moved by their generosity.

At nine in the evening, a jail officer came and ordered me to come out with my belongings. The moment I came out, I was told to get inside a vehicle. As the vehicle lumbered out of the gate, a few inmates came to shake hands with me. Unfortunately, they were prevented. I waved my hands from a distance. I struggled to recognize them individually through my moist eyes.

As the vehicle sped away, I could not control myself. I started crying, in sync with the sound of the engine. There were only three of us-- the driver, the jail officer, and me. Slowly, I regained control of myself, sat down quietly and looked out of the window. The road we had built, the hospitals, the bridges, the places for chopping the logs and breaking the stones into gravel, I was leaving everything behind. Here, I recall a strange feeling in which the very place that I loathed as a prisoner was turning dear to me. Even today, recalling the jail complex, the cell, the fences around, and the garden, makes me nostalgic. The jail will remain the witness to both the sorrows and joys we shared there.

## **First Day of Freedom**

Within less than an hour, we reached Thimphu and went straight to the police headquarters. I had to complete some official formalities. It took an hour to complete it. The jail authority tried to find out someone whom they could hand me over. But there was no one. My mother had passed away much earlier in 1984 and my father too passed away while I was in jail. Other relatives died in the refugee camps, many friends were disappeared. My family was living in exile. A few of my relatives had managed to survive by keeping their relationship with me under wrap.

Had the police not accompanied me, the hotel owner would have refused to provide me the accommodation. I was escorted by the police to Hotel Gasel. It was just a publicity stunt. The regime wanted a proof of my release. I had three thousand rupees--presented by inmates--in my pocket. It was not enough to sustain me for long, but that was all I had.

From the police headquarters, we (Dorjee Wangchuck; the jailer, Major Kipchu Namgyal, present Police Chief and me) went to the hotel run by an ex-army whom I knew. All of us went inside. The jailer said, "We have brought a guest for you. But he would himself pay the bill." Because of my beard, unshaved for the last two years, I must have looked like a saint coming out of a cave. The hotel owner looked at me with penetrating eyes and greeted me only after recognizing me. I told him that I did not have much money and asked for the cheapest room available. At this point, both the jailer and the Major left me. The hotel owner took me to the uppermost floor. He opened one of the smallest rooms and said, "This would be the most convenient for you."

The room looked fine and within my budget. It was probably close to the place used by the workers of the hotel. I entered the room and rested on the bed. While on the bed, I wondered for a while: how long would I be traversing on life's uncertain journey?

Pictures of Chemgang jail unfolded before my eyes--the prison building, its surroundings, the gardens, the inmates--all were now left behind. After all, the human mind is perpetually traveling. I forced myself to get up for a wash. Locking the door myself, for the first time in ten years, I went towards the street. As I reached the crossing, I looked around in all directions. I was then overcome by a question, "Is my prison life really over?"

I was standing freely in Thimphu after almost twelve years, including two years in exile. I noticed a number of changes in the capital. Some new houses had been constructed. There was a new road and life in the town had changed for the better. In a sense, I felt it was a good thing. Suddenly, a thought hit me--my relatives, my close friends, and other faces familiar to me, were no longer its residents. Although now bigger for me, Thimphu had lost its charm. The reason: the people who built this place, who shed sweat and blood, were thrown out by the despotic regime.

On the street, I ran into a dozen persons whom I had known intimately before my ordeal. Some of them were unable to recognize me, while others looked at me in a non-inquisitive manner. A few looked at me with curiosity. These persons held higher positions in the government or society. Some of them recognized me and stared for a while but avoided coming closer and speaking to me. There were more whose faces I remembered but found it hard to recall. Afraid of being noticed in my company, they hastily walked away. While the regime was plotting eviction drama against the Lhotsampas, it was offering a welcoming mat to the unemployed outsiders. I was disappointed to see those people (both Bhutanese and outsiders) who should have been behind the bars walking freely whereas I was just released after spending ten harrowing years.

I felt as if I was the only person trying to defy the ruthless regime. But, I did not have a definite plan to proceed with my mission. In jail, my task was comparatively minimal. But now, circumstances demanded me to evolve in a new role. What would I do next? I was unable to focus, always moving from one thing to another.

The December days in Thimphu are normally short. I spent the whole day deeply engrossed in thoughts. A few of my well-wishers visited me, some were known to me while others were strangers. The past twelve years had dimmed my memory and I was not able to recognize many of them. Each was a relative of Lhotsampa and was now earning his/her livelihood in Thimphu.

It was late in the evening. A veil of darkness started engulfing the capital and lights were now visible inside the houses. I went to the second floor to watch the news on Bhutan Television. The news was focused on the National Day and towards the end my name was mentioned. The news reader said: "Tek Nath Rizal has been released as he has been considered innocent and the king, showing kindness and magnanimity, has pardoned him."

As I heard these words, I became upset and thought, 'If I am innocent, what does the word pardon mean? Hence, king's kindness and magnanimity does not bear any value. If I am innocent, then who is responsible for ruining ten years of my life by putting me behind the bars? Would the king now punish the judges and his uncle?'

After this, I lost my interest in the news. I got up and ordered a meal. I took food in the room. My mind was filled with the memory of the injustice and brutal treatment meted out to me. It was around nine in the evening when I went to bed.



## Battling for Existence

I had high hopes that after my release, the mental torture inflicted on me would cease. On the contrary, it continued and actually intensified. The regime was now using it to ridicule me in front of the general public. Whenever I approached a few of my surviving relatives and friends for help, they refused because the authorities had warned them in advance not to render me any assistance. Yet, the regime continued to make propaganda that it was extending all facilities to me.

Amid all the uncertainties and growing insecurity in the capital, sitting in my hotel room, I was pondering over my next move. Suddenly, the hotel owner knocked at the door and told me there was a call from Kathmandu. I was a little puzzled because I did not have anyone in Kathmandu. Who could this be? I started asking myself. As soon as I picked up the phone, a person, who introduced himself as Dr. Bhogendra Sharma, Centre for Victims of Torture, Nepal (CVICT), spoke to me. He expressed his desire to treat me. Neither had I met him, nor had I heard of him. Above all, I had no plans to enter Nepal without consulting my friends. Therefore, I informed him that I would take his help if I ever got a chance to visit Nepal. Despite this, he sent me some medicines through Druk Air. The package arrived at the hotel. But, I wondered how it was possible to send the medicines without my thorough check-up. Moreover, we did not know each other. I had doubts that it was sent with ill motives. Therefore, I flushed the medicines down the toilet.

Because of the tensions coupled with manipulation of my mind, I completely forgot to contact my wife and sons the day I was released. The next day, I received a call from Kaushila. Only after talking to her did I realize that I had committed a blunder. She learned about my release not from me but someone else. I regret it even today.



Meanwhile, my schedule became busy and owing to increased activities, my health started to deteriorate. I decided to visit a hospital. There are only three hospitals in Thimphu: Jigme Dorji Memorial Hospital, Indo-Bhutan Friendship Hospital run by Indian Military Training Team (IMTRAT), and Royal Bhutan Army Hospital. First, I went to the Jigme Dorji Memorial Hospital in Thimphu to meet Dr. Gado, who treated the prisoners. He referred me to an army doctor at Royal Bhutan Army Hospital. Why was I sent to the army hospital? Today, as I analyze it in retrospect, I infer that Dr. Gado knew the root cause of my illness and hence sent me to the military hospital. In the military hospital at Lungtenphug, Dr. Subba advised me to undergo a complete check-up. Immediately after the check-up, he informed me, "Your sugar has risen to extremely high level. Please get admitted in Jigme Dorji Memorial Hospital as quickly as possible." He personally took me to the hospital and had me admitted. I was surprised at this because Dr. Gado of Jigme Dorji Memorial Hospital had referred me to the military hospital. Whereas now I was sent back the same hospital. As I spent three days in the general ward of the Jigme Dorji Memorial Hospital, I experienced the apathy. the staff of country's biggest government-run hospital did their level best to deprive me from the basic facilities. Neither did they provide the food, nor did they pay proper attention to me. They presumably did so because I was branded as an anti-national by the regime. Moreover, it was quite far from the Gashel hotel to take food. So, I decided to be discharged from the government hospital.

I was not afraid of death, as it is the only certainty of life. But I was not willing to die due to my own carelessness. So, it was important for me to learn about the organs damaged or malfunctioning in my body. It was equally important for me to undergo medical treatment. I would be able to do anything in life only if I continue living! Sitting in the small hotel room, these thoughts crossed my mind.

Three days after I left the hospital, I was able to get an appointment to see an Indian doctor at the Indo-Bhutan Friendship Hospital (run by IMTRAT). To my utter surprise, I found that an RBG officer had already reached there. He was sitting next to the doctor. I waited for nearly 30 minutes before the doctor turned to me and inquired about my problems. I began narrating about the torture I underwent in the prison. But the doctor interrupted me and thundered: "Why do you talk about jail? If you want to talk about it, better go to the concerned authority." I had great faith on the Indian doctor. But, contrary to my belief, his behavior proved to be one of complicit with Bhutanese regime. It was a big blow to me and I was left with no alternative but to return to the hotel room in utter despair.

In the afternoon, I came across a friend who also knew the doctor. He told me that the doctor had informed him about the unpleasant incident and had regretted for being rude to me. According to him, the doctor also expressed his wish to meet me. Indeed, the doctor met me in person a few days later. He apologized for his behavior and made it clear that he did it due to the pressure from the RBG officer. He consoled me and asked me to have patience. This incident illustrated that the regime still harbored ill intention toward me.

Eight months after my release, Kaushila arrived in Thimphu. She had traveled all the way from Jhapa, crossing the Indo-Nepal border in Kakarbhitta and entering Bhutan via Phuntsholing. Harilal Sharma, a well-wisher of mine, accompanied her from there to Thimphu. It was late August and the dusk was falling as we met in a relative's home. I was elated to see my better-half after nearly 11 years. She appeared frail, probably from enduring hardships all the years, all alone. Nevertheless, her arrival also assured me that I will have someone closest with me on my battle ahead.

She informed me that Amnesty International (AI) was concerned about my deteriorating health. The news brought me some relief. Two months later, I was assured by the regime that I will get proper treatment. In order to raise funds for my treatment, we decided that Kaushila should leave for Nepal. As soon she left, I found myself all alone inside the hotel room.

Amnesty International had decided to take me to London for treatment. But the regime denied me the necessary travel documents. It stated that political prisoners would not be provided the documents for at least five years after their release. Mine was the first case of political prisoner that required treatment outside the country. The new law cited to prevent me from traveling to London was especially formulated in my case. The regime suggested that I could go to India for treatment, for which a visa is not required. Finally, the regime was forced to provide me the travel expenses. And, the human rights body would pay for my medical treatment. That is how I headed off to Kolkata in India.

First, I had to reach Bagdogra through Phuntsholing and board a flight to Kolkata. But to be there, making a halt at Phuntsholing was a must. Thus traveling by bus passing through the dense forest and rolling hills, I finally reached Phuntsholing, stayed for a night and headed off to Bagdogra the next day. On the way, I had high hopes that this long journey through the hinterlands would heal my trauma. We know the electronic gadgets like mobile phones and FM radios will not be able to catch the waves in such areas. Therefore, I thought it would be applicable in the mind control device as well. Yet, I could not get rid of the torture and my hope remained unfulfilled.

While I was boarding the bus in Thimphu, a young Lhotsampa approached me and offered his companion. I was reluctant to have this stranger as my companion, but he insisted. During the trip, I was apprehensive: I was thinking all along that he could be a government agent. Nevertheless, he took good care of me. But, I did not care much about his hospitality. The young man left me only after I reached Phuntsholing. As per the plan, Kaushila along with our two sons –Tribikram and Nripendra–came from Nepal to receive me. We stayed there in Hotel Himalaya for a day.

## **Endless Suffering**

Huge crowds of people greeted me as I entered the Indian side of border. They stood with flowers in their hands to welcome me. These included members of Bhutanese refugee community, natives of Siliguri, people from Darjeeling, Sikkim, media persons, and other dignitaries. The Nepali-origin Indians were late Madan Tamang from Darjeeling, Dr. Harka Chhettri from Kalimpong, Tilak Sharma from Duars and Tilak Katwal from Jaigaon. Bhutanese refugee leaders Ratan Gazmere, Mohan Tamang and Govinda Adhikari were also present to accompany me. Such a rapturous welcome moved me, my eyes turned misty. These were the tears of joy. Some even shouted slogans: "Long Live South Asian Mandela!" I was elated and deeply moved to see such tremendous moral support and solidarity, yet, amid all this, I also felt hopelessly alone, because of the torture inflicted on me – the reality those around me were blissfully unaware of.

In Bagdogra, a large crowd of refugees and journalists from Nepal and India was waiting for me. They had bouquet in their hands. A few moments later, in the afternoon, Kaushila, Mohan Tamang and I boarded the flight to Kolkata. After my unsuccessful attempt in shooing off the torture though my travels in the hills, I turned my attention to the air. I was wondering if the techniques of torturing me would be disrupted in the

air. I secretly wished that the torture would cease during the flight. But to my dismay, it continued. My location, on the ground or in the air, did not make any difference to the penetration of waves.

I was disappointed at my failure to get rid of the waves. But I hadn't given up. I hoped that Kolkata-based Torture Victim Centre--recommended by Amnesty International--would be able to cure me. The next day, we were joined by my nephew Narendra Sharma and his wife Tulasha, Mohan Tamang and Khem Kafle. As per the schedule, all of us proceeded to the Center. I explained to the doctors the details of the torture and my illness. The Bengali doctor listened to me carefully. However, when I completed my statement, he flatly refuted my statement. He accused me of speaking unjustly against the king and refused to treat me. I was stunned by the doctor's behavior. He even denied the existence of the mind-control device. Moreover, the regime had made it mandatory for me to inform a liaison officer in Kolkata. The medical representative was present during my check-up.

What came to me as a shock was the fact that the Center, established in a democratic country like India, and specialized in treating the victims of torture was so insensitive towards the victims like me. It was like the flash back of my encounter with the Indian doctor in Thimphu.

This completely shattered me. My family and friends who had accompanied me to the Centre were upset. Once all my attempts to get rid of the torture went futile, I decided to drown into the river. By doing so, I had hoped to see if it could relieve myself from the effect of the waves. Leaving my family members on the bank, to keep an eye, I waded to the river, Hoogly of Kolkata and swam for hours. It was difficult for me to express explicitly the effect of the torture particularly when I had to deal with many people who were curious to know about my jail life. These were the same people who would not believe in my experience of torture through mind-control. In addition, the doctor's behavior was so weird and unethical that I resorted to self-treatment by submerging myself into the river. But this, too, was all in vain.

One the one hand, the torture continued and expectation from the refugee communities as well as my well-wishers abounded, one the other. My life continued to be miserable. I was also in a state of delirium. In a situation like this, Kaushila was the only one who could fathom the state of my mind. Sometimes, when other options run out, people take refuge in divinity. Kaushila insisted me to go to Puttaparthi at Sai Baba's Ashram to find mental solace. She said, "Thousands of devotees visit his Ashram in the hope of getting cured with the help of his blessings." She asked: "Why don't we try once?" I nodded in agreement, though I knew pretty well that my problem would not be solved there.

We took a train from Kolkata and en route I met my eldest son Kamal at Vijayawada railway station in Andhra Pradesh. He was studying at Andhra Loyela College in Vijayawada. It was midnight and he appeared with his friends. Had Kaushila not been with me, I would not have recognized him because Kamal was only ten years old when I was separated from him. Now he was a handsome young man with mustache. It was just a brief meeting and we had to unwillingly say goodbye. In the pre-dawn hours, we arrived in Puttaparthi. After spending a few blisteringly hot and uncomfortable days and realizing that we could not find any cure here, we returned to Bhutan.

On our way back, we stayed in Siliguri for two days. Refugee leaders were waiting for me. Late RB Basnet, the founding President of Bhutan National Democratic Party, was one of them. I still remember the discussions

we had. He wished me a good health and opined that unless and until all the political parties and human rights organizations fighting for democracy in Bhutan unite and work together, the refugee issue cannot be resolved. In that meeting, he also offered me to lead the movement. As I was under the mind control device, I was in no position to accept the offer. At the same time, it was impossible to work independently since the controller would keep an eye on my every move. The fellow refugees kept on pestering me to take the leadership. But I had to decline their offer. They were unable to fathom the suffering I was going through.

From the day we reunited, Kaushila has constantly provided moral support and courage. She was able to bring a new lease into my life. This would not have been possible if she had not stood by my side when all the odds were heavily against me.

Worried about my condition, Kaushila went back to Nepal to explore my medical treatment and resources. In Kathmandu, she met Pramod Kaphley (GRINSO, Nepal), who agreed whole heartedly to take care of the financial aspects of my treatment in New Delhi. With such promise, she returned to Phuntsholing. We left for Delhi by train. It took us two days to reach the Indian capital. There we met Pramod Kaphley, Anand Swaroop Verma and Dr. Arun Kumar Singh (both of them from Indo-Bhutan Solidarity). They arranged a consultation meeting with Prof. Dr. Anup Saraya of All India Institute of Medical Science (AIMS). Saraya was very helpful but unfortunately, my problem could not be solved. Thus, my hopes of getting treated at AIMS were dashed. In my last-ditch effort, through an Indian friend, I sought an advice from the doctors of Military Hospital in New Delhi. My friend told me: "Your illness is associated with your country's political problem. Hence, medicine would be of little help. Once the political crisis ends, your illness will also be cured."

Disheartened, I returned to Phuntsholing. I made this border town my base and often traveled to Thimphu. By nature, I can not tolerate injustice. As soon as I was back, I started collecting information from the adversely affected Lhotsampas and documenting it in the shape of a book. I was especially gathering data on the confiscation of properties. Since I was born and brought up in Bhutan, I am aware of the medieval tradition and culture of the ruling elites. So far, only a few have been exposed to the outside world. Many who indulge in looting, banditry, deceiving and molesting common women mostly go scot-free. The ruling elites, who depend on corruption in order to lead an opulent life style, have even sold the country's interests. They are passive and cold towards the norms of civilized society and people continue to suffer as a result of their arbitrary rule. The regime continues to victimize its people on the fake charges of 'terrorism'. Hundreds of lives have been claimed by the barbaric actions of the despotic regime. Bhutan utterly lacks systematic investigation of the casualties

I kept collecting the information. When I was satisfied with my data, I wanted to file a case in the High Court. I had also consulted a few Jabmis. After filing the case, I wanted to stage an indefinite dharna outside the High Court. While I was busy preparing for this, the RBG raided my room and confiscated all the documents. Because of the easy access to my mind, the controller knew my plan. After this, my well-wishers and friends were secretly threatened by the regime. As a result, they stopped visiting me. During my stay in Thimphu, there was only one person with whom I could share my problems: Eric Hogland of SNV (The Netherlands), who dared to visit me occasionally. I can hardly forget the kind help and co-operation he extended to me.

But, the hostile regime prevented me from fulfilling my mission. The Home Minister Thinley Gyamtsho called me to his office and threatened me with serious repercussions if I did not leave the country immediately. The regime did not even spare Kaushila who was the only person helping me. While in a hotel run by a royal family member in Phuntsholing, our movements were kept under close surveillance, leaving us with no privacy. We were harassed both mentally and physically. Kaushila suffered from depression, started suffering from psychological problems and constant headaches. Slowly, our relations became strained. I began to sense that mind-control was applied to sever our relations. We were both desperate to find an answer that constantly evaded us. The regime confiscated our movable and immovable property when I was in jail. Hence, we were forced to live at people's mercy. Never in my life had I lived on charity before. So, it was adding more to my pain. It was a bitter pill for me to swallow.

## **Return to Exile**

The pain of fleeing my homeland for the second time hurts me terribly even today. I thought for a moment that the declaration of my innocence might bring a change in Bhutan's deplorable politics and governance. I also thought that the problems of the innocent inmates and the discrimination against Lhotsampas would finally be addressed. Sadly, I was totally wrong. Therefore, I was once again forced into exile. I first entered Siliguri, a small town in West Bengal where I lived for a few months. But, the hostile environment forced me to consider leaving the city. My well-wishers advised me to shift elsewhere. Sheltering in the border area was unsafe for me as the businessmen and the locals turned unwelcoming after they were put on high alert against my movement. Finally, acknowledging this situation, I decided to move to Delhi.

While in New Delhi, I had the opportunity to share my prison experiences with Indian scholars, politicians, journalists and senior citizens. However, apart from the issues of political affairs, the technical part of my suffering was of less interest to them. Moreover, I was hoping that the situation would be conducive for raising the refugee issue. It turned out that the influential leaders in India had good ties with the Bhutanese monarch. So, they seemed to side with the king on the refugee issue. Several Indian journalists had interviewed me. But they were not published because they were instructed by South Block.

With the passage of time, the situation in New Delhi too appeared to be unfriendly, considering the activities of various Bhutanese intelligence agents and their Indian accomplices. I knew since long that the Bhutanese regime does not tolerate any Bhutanese nationals mingling with Indian politicians and diplomats. Hence, I realized that my presence in New Delhi would make the Bhutanese regime wary. In the view of this, Tom Adhikari; a Bhutanese advocate, an Indian lawyer and I approached the UNHCR office in Delhi seeking security. The UNHCR expressed its inability to provide me security or assistance since the government of India had not officially granted refugee status to the Bhutanese refugees. On the one hand, UNHCR mandate would not allow the agency to interfere in the internal policies and affairs of the host country and India-Bhutan friendship had remained restricted to the ruling elites (and continues to be so) on the other. The Bhutanese people have paid a heavy price for this lop-sided relationship.

Sensing the hostile environment in the Indian capital, my sympathizers advised me to leave the country within twenty four hours. They also hinted at the possibility of my arrest. It was made clear to me that the king of Bhutan enjoyed complete confidence of the Indian establishment. On the other hand, they did not allow me to carry out any political activity. I was in dilemma: whether to proceed to Nepal where I was once abducted

or remain in Delhi where the Indian government had already detained another Bhutanese leader Dasho Rong Thong Kuenley Dorji. Under these circumstances, I was forced to move to Nepal. I cannot express in words how dejected I felt on leaving India.

I had gone to New Delhi with a mission. My aim was to spread awareness about the problems created by the regime. I wanted to highlight the contribution of the Lhotsampas who not only guarded the Indo-Bhutan border but also helped India in its hour of need. I also wanted to tell the Indian government that its aid did not reach to the people because it was misappropriated by the middlemen and commission agents. But due to the people who were paid by the regime to lobby on its behalf, I was not able to articulate my views. Eventually, it was difficult for me to stay in New Delhi for long. I also thought that I should have stayed in India and New Delhi should have listened to me. Finally, with a heavy heart, I entered Nepal. My friend Tom Adhikari accompanied me. Inside the Gorakhpur-bound train on my way to Nepal, the tragic events of my past visit to that country flashed through my mind.

It took me two days to reach Kathmandu. I approached the government of Nepal and the UNHCR for asylum. But to my utter surprise, the UN agency informed me that since I didn't enter Nepal via Kakarbhitta (entry point for Bhutanese refugees in Nepal, recognized by the UNHCR), I could not be granted asylum. On the other hand, the then government of Nepal had raised questions about my visa. The UNHCR often presents itself as a custodian of the refugees. Naturally, with the aura and mandate of a world body like UN, refugees expect it to be succor in the hours of need. But, betraying my expectations, the UNHCR threw cold water in my face. I also realized that contrary to the universal principles and the ethos it espouses, it is likely that people lacking integrity and professionalism can find their way into the high echelons of the UN agencies.

Though I was ignored by both the UNHCR and the then government of Nepal, thanks to the Nepalese media, general public, human rights groups and the political leaders, I was able to get a foothold in the land my ancestors. I would like to mention them here: Nepali Congress President and former Prime Minister, late Girija Prasad Koirala, former Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal, Nepali Congress leaders Sher Bahadur Deuba, Ram Chandra Paudel, Sushil Koirala, UML leaders Jhala Nath Khanal, K.P. Sharma Oli, Sahana Pradhan, Bam Dev Gautam, Bhim Rawal and Nepal Majdur Kishan Party Chairman Narayan Man Bijukchhe. After listening to my story, they wondered how I was able to escape from the clutches of the monarch who was hell-bent on my extermination.

Nepal was passing through a tumultuous time. The Royal Palace massacre was still fresh in the people's hearts and minds. They said something like this never happened in living memory. On the other hand, the Maoists were waging a guerrilla war and were aiming at establishing republic in Nepal.

Once I settled down in Nepal and was assured of my safety, then only I turned my attention to my family. An October evening in 2003 turned out the most memorable moment for me and my family. I was joined by my three sons and Kaushila. The reunion took place after 12 years. It was an extremely emotional occasion; a cocktail of laughter and sob reverberated through our apartment in Kupandol, Lalitpur. We celebrated the reunion until late night. My happiness knew no bound. At the same time, Bhutan, with the mission to physically eliminate me, continued to threaten me through its thugs and agents. The regime wanted to defame me in the eyes of my supporters and sympathizers in Nepal, India, Europe, US and elsewhere.

In Kathmandu, Kaushila introduced me to Dr. Bhogendra Sharma (CVICT, Centre for Victims of Torture, Nepal). Dr. Sharma and Dr. Bholu Rizal had supported her when she was undergoing a major operation. Had they not extended their helping hands, she would not be with me today, and my three sons would have been in worse situation in our absence. So, in any case I wanted to see Dr. Sharma personally and thank him for saving my wife's life. I remembered that Dr. Sharma had called me in Thimphu immediately after my release. Therefore, I had great expectations from him.

I had a long discussion with Dr. Sharma regarding my problems. He introduced me to Dr. Gupta Bahadur Shrestha of Helping Hands. I was thinking all along that Dr. Sharma was a medical doctor but he wasn't. Dr. Shrestha consulted Dr. Nirakar Man Shrestha, a senior psychiatrist. Both the doctors tried their best to understand my problems and sufferings. I was under their medication, counseling and care for twelve months. But, my health did not improve. Apparently, Nepal lacks in the advanced system to deal with the cases of mind-control. Dr. Sharma himself admitted that he had never heard of mind control. However, I am profoundly indebted for the help extended by Dr. Jitendra Man Shrestha of Bir Hospital and Dr Gupta Bahadur Shrestha.



## Bhutanese Agent in Switzerland

A year had passed since I arrived in Nepal. Advocacy works, talking to media and meeting fellow refugees occupied most of my time. During this period, I wrote two books: *Ethnic Cleansing and Political Repression in Bhutan* and *Nirvanan*. In September 2004, my colleague Ratan Gazmere received an invitation from Geneva, Switzerland to participate in a meeting of the Human Rights Commission. The invitation was for three of us -- he, his wife Gauri and me. I had not been granted formal asylum in Nepal. My well-wishers, human rights organizations and the media exerted pressure on the government of Nepal to provide me both asylum and necessary documents for international travel.

With the invitation letter in hand, I approached the Prime Minister, Sher Bahadur Deuba to provide me the required travel documents. He had helped my family during my incarceration and had shown personal concern for my well-being. Once again, realizing the importance of my participation in the meeting, he strongly recommended to the foreign ministry to treat me as a special case. Once the necessary travel documents were issued, I was able to travel to Switzerland. We boarded the flight and landed in Geneva early morning.

Irene Huber, a Swiss national, had arrived at the airport to receive us. It turned out that Ratan had informed her in advance about our arrival. He had already briefed me about her involvement in the refugee camps where she had worked as a social worker. She had booked a hotel for us. We were surprised to find that she had brought cooking utensils from her home.



She turned out to be very smart. She was positive about our issue and was very sympathetic towards us. Hence, I decided to share the important information given to me by an Indian well-wisher who had advised me not to visit Switzerland. He informed me that Bhutan had appointed agents to trace my movements and keep an eye on me. As I was mentally prepared to visit Switzerland, there was no reason to change it at the last minute. But I had to take extra precautions. I told her about the reliability of the source and my uncomfortable feeling due to that warning. After the revelation, Irene showed her serious concern for my safety. Following a thorough discussion, I was shifted to a single room at the top floor of the hotel.

The warning turned out to be true next day when a German man turned up asking Ratan about my whereabouts. He had introduced himself as my well-wisher and showed his concern for our cause. He also said that he had opened an office for me with all the necessary logistics plus a donation of five thousand US dollars. Irene was closely following my conversation with this stranger. She glanced at me momentarily and told the man that I was unwell and unable to travel. But the man kept insisting that he had come to take me to his place. Finally, Irene told the man that she would first visit his place and I would visit him the next day. To get rid of the so-called well-wisher, Irene and Gauri went to his office. In the meantime, Ratan and I analyzed his motive behind such hospitality.

They returned after a while. According to them, the so-called office was decorated with pictures and maps on the wall and in the corner was a computer with my photo displayed on the screen. They were astonished at this sight. On further inquiry, the man informed Irene that he had not met me, but had heard of me from his Bhutanese friends. At that moment, they recalled the warning given to me in Kathmandu. Cautiously, they questioned his relationship with the refugees whether he had visited the refugee camps in Nepal or ever traveled to Bhutan. He disclosed that he had neither been to the refugee camps nor to Bhutan. Apparently, he had only been to the Bhutanese Embassy in New Delhi. At that time, Dago Tshering was the Bhutanese ambassador to India.

On hearing the story, I was convinced that this impostor was a part of the scheme about which I had been warned in Kathmandu. We discussed about it and decided that he could not be trusted.

As anticipated, the next day he reappeared to take me to his place. Irene refused his persistent requests by saying that I was not feeling well and was taking rest. He began arguing with Irene and questioned her move to stop him from taking me as his guest. Irene could not tolerate the aggressive statements and yelled at him that I was her guest staying at her place from the day of arrival. She told him, "It is for the guest himself to decide whether he likes to go to your place or not. In case he decides to visit your office, the whole team will accompany him." The impostor left.

Soon after the man left, the hotel owner visited us and enquired about the man's visit. He informed us that he was a taxi driver with several unlawful records in the local police. He also showed us the place where he lived, a notorious area which was not far from the hotel.

Irene informed Peter Prove, Assistant to Secretary General of Lutheran World Federation (LWF) about this incident over the phone. He cautioned her not to allow me to visit such suspicious places. He was of the opinion that Bhutanese intelligence agents might try to implicate me in some derogatory cases by taking me to

such places and indulge in character assassination. That the regime could go to this extent was unbelievable. However, I was not much surprised because I was accustomed to its intrigues.

In the conference hall, Brigid Mayes from Ireland also joined us. She had worked as a teacher in Thimphu and Punakha in Bhutan. But, she had left after she witnessed the worsening situation in the country. Brigid shared her long experience in Bhutan. Once the conference was over, Ratan and his wife returned to Nepal. I sadly said goodbye to Irene, Brigid and the Gazmeres. The Swiss lady left an indelible mark on me.

After bidding farewell to them, I visited a few other European countries in order to advocate for our struggle. My first destination was the Netherlands. In the cold morning, I landed at the Amsterdam International Airport where half a dozen fellow refugees including Ram Karki, a Bhutanese who was granted an asylum there, received me. During my stay, I first decided to pay a visit to the Dutch Foreign Ministry. Accompanied by Ram, I briefed the officials on human rights violations in Bhutan. Then, I traveled to Belgium by train and had the opportunity to visit the European Parliament where I requested the officials to continue the support for the education refugee camps. Next, I visited Germany where I met refugee leaders Durga Giri and Govinda Adhikari and their families. I was delighted to be reunited with them, albeit in the foreign shore. From Germany, I returned to the Netherlands. Finally, I also had the opportunity to discuss my medical condition with Dr. Laxmi Dhakal and treatment with an American, Dr. Ann Ferrara. I explained to her about the degree of torture I had undergone, and its consequences. The doctor's advice acted as a psychological relief. She advised me to either go to America or stay in the Netherlands. She also assured that she would sponsor my treatment.

Indeed, I wanted to stay in the Netherlands for treatment. But there were other problems. At first, I had not seen any of my relatives and close friends for the last twelve years and was desperate to meet them. I had also not stepped into the refugee camps. After my re-entry, the government of Nepal had not allowed me to visit the camps. Secondly, I did not have official documents and permission required for a longer stay. Finally, I did not have a single penny even for my basic day-to-day requirements. Though the doctors were willing to meet my medical cost, other expenses were to be borne by myself. So, it was not possible for me to stay there for treatment.

Dashain, the great Hindu festival, was fast approaching. On the occasion, I offered Dashain Tika to Nandalal Gautam, a journalist who had left Bhutan, and subsequently sought asylum in the Netherlands along with his family. From there, I took my flight to Nepal.

From my experience in Europe, it becomes clear that the regime somehow wanted to teach me a lesson. In order to do that, it could go to any extent, including the ploy of the driver in Switzerland. If this is the situation in far flung areas of Europe, South Asia is too close a territory for the regime to flex his muscles. Security concern is thus the primary reason for preventing me from participating in conferences and seminars in this region.

## **Malicious Propaganda in the US**

After my return to Nepal from Europe, I was informed that I had been honored with the award of Ambassador for Peace by South Korea-based Interreligious and International Federation for World Peace (IIFWP). This honor is bestowed on persons whose lives exemplify the ideal of living for the sake of others. I

accepted the award, as an inspiration and moral strength, in the name of the peace loving people of Bhutan and vowed myself to continue my mission to liberate them from the 'Gross National Suffering' under the dynastic rule in the country.

I was awarded in Kathmandu. But in December, 2004, IIFWP invited me to deliver a speech in Washington, DC on the occasion of the organization's world conference. Upon my arrival in the airport in Washington, DC, my ex-inmate Vishwa Nath Chhetri and his wife greeted me. I also met Nepal's former Prime Minister Marich Man Singh, and former Foreign Secretary Murari Raj Sharma, who were participating in the conference.

When the proceedings started, the organizers informed me that due to time constraint, it would not be possible for me to address the conference. I was shocked to hear this. Murari Raj Sharma requested the organizers to assign me the time allotted to him so that I could address the august gathering. But even his address was cancelled. When Marich Man Singh learned of this, he made a written request to the organizers to allot his time to me, in view of the significance of refugee issue. The organizers informed him that he, too, would not be able to deliver his speech. Adding insult to injury, I was told to simply sit and watch the conference.

Later, I found out that several copies of a magazine with articles praising the Bhutanese king and describing his utopian 'Gross National Happiness' concept were being distributed at the conference. On the one hand, I was not able to talk about the plights of the refugees with participants and intellectuals at the international gathering and international organizations, which take pride in working for world peace, were falling to the prey of autocratic regime's propaganda.

As the conference progressed, a local newspaper in the US published an article about me, stating that a Bhutanese anti-national was currently in the United States of America, advocating human rights. Such misinformation was not only an affront to my ideas and identity, but also made me apprehensive about my security. If I had not met my friends from Bhutan, I would not have been able to continue my stay in the US. Dil Prasad Basnet, Dr. Chhabi Lal Timsina, Dr. Purna Chhetri, R. P. Subba, Dik Chhetri, Mangala Sharma, Debi Lama, Biren Dhakal, Devdatta Poudel, and youth leaders: Ganesh Subedi and Rajan Giri and others extended their helping hands. I am also grateful to the Nepali community members who warmly welcomed me into their house. Apart from the menfolk mentioned above, I am also thankful to their wives and children who poured love and affection to me. Likewise, I can never forget the cordiality and help of Girish Pokharel (Chairperson Nepal-America Journalist Association), Prem Sangraula (President of America Nepal Society), Saroj Khanal (General Secretary, America-Nepal Society) and Ashok Gurung (Faculty and Director of Professional Practice, The New School) during my stay in the US. A reputed social worker and well educated person hailed from my country, Hem Lal Timsina, who is settled in Canada also visited me in Washington, DC. I also met Kulchandra Gautam, the Assistant Secretary General of UN.

Meanwhile, I along with fellow Bhutanese staged protested for two hours in front of the United Nations building. I also met Kulchandra Gautam, the Assistant Secretary General of UN. We were delighted when many people who gathered there expressed their solidarity. I personally wrote to the then Secretary General Kofi Annan against the brutality of the Bhutanese regime and appealed him for the refugees' repatriation with

dignity and honor. I still have a strong memory of that cold day when streets in New York and around were covered with snow.

One evening, I was attending a function when I fortunately came in contact with Dr. Tara Niraula, a very helpful and dynamic personality who explored the possibility of my treatment in the US. Dr. Niraula immediately contacted Rishi Goyal and Rajiv Goyal who arranged for me a meeting with Dr. Sophia Banu, a Tibetan lady doctor who had lived in Darjeeling and worked for Bhutanese refugees in Nepal. It turned out that she was familiar with my personal history as well as the Bhutanese movement. Although I could not meet her in person, she generously recommended me for free medical treatment at the Bellevue Hospital Centre in New York.

At the hospital, I met Dr. Allen S. Keller and Dr. Mark Schor, who were extremely generous and tried their best to treat me. They informed me that long-term treatment was needed for such illness and that in many cases; it could only be suppressed but not completely cured. Moreover, medication was required for the rest of my life. This treatment turned out to be very effective as well. Within a short period, I felt relieved from irritation and insomnia, but the voices that I heard continued to interfere in my daily life. I also met Uwe Jacobs (Director of Survival International, San Francisco) and Joel Marcus (a psychiatrist from Berkeley, California). Both expressed their solidarity for our cause.

After carefully listening to my story, the doctors advised me to stay in the US. They generously offered their help for my stay in order to continue my treatment. Despite their assurance, it was not possible for me to stay in US, a country that played vital role in my release. But it also dawned on me that US was neither my homeland nor my workplace. I was there as a visitor. I had two aims in my US visit: to draw the attention of world communities on the plights of the refugees and to explore the possibilities of treatment in the country's state-of-the-art medical institutions.

However, I also realized that it would take long time and huge amount to cure me. The moment I landed in US, the regime deployed its agent who kept round-the-clock vigil over me. The mind-control device was continuous and it even cut across territorial boundaries notwithstanding the distance between Bhutan and the US. The torture intensified and I increasingly became restless. Even though I was physically in US, my mind was under the control of the Bhutanese regime. Thus, I felt insecure even in the land of the superpower.



## When It Might Have Started

Just a year into my tenure as a National Assembly member from Lamidara constituency, political turmoil started to engulf an already volatile region. While Gorkhaland movement rose in Darjeeling, the tiny Himalayan kingdom of Sikkim was merged into India in 1975. And, the majority Nepali-speaking Sikkimese was largely blamed for the merger.

Closer to home, the regime began to keep a round-the-clock vigil over several Lhotsampas including me. I came to know that my incidental meeting in Sarbhang with Jashwant Singh, an officer at the Indian Embassy, was blown out of proportion. He had inquired me about some development activities in the South. But for the regime, the event was enough to put me under scanner. My movement was curtailed and I had to seek prior permission from the king even to visit the Indian Embassy in Thimphu.

However, with the passing of time, the intensity of the mind-control magnified and I began to feel its impact only when I was abducted from Nepal and confined to imprisonment. After my release, I was driven by pensive determination to find more truths on this issue. Experts have tested mind-control empirically and have shown that victims can be hypnotically programmed for years without knowing. In recent years, I have read a few books and articles that have described remote torture, manipulation of dreams, mind-reading, and other mind-control weapons used globally by regimes against opposition leaders and prisoners.

A few reports that I have read randomly, have even shown that the mind-control weapons could be as powerful as atom bomb. Given the kind of treatment meted out to me and the peculiar symptoms invading and controlling my psyche, I strongly believe that mind-control measures have been applied on me. In retrospect, I can clearly recollect four instances where I might have been subjected to mind-control. Prior to

my imprisonment, the regime might have made me a target of mind-control device. I remember one incident when I was invited as a special guest at a military function at the military headquarters in Tencholing in 1976. Generally, civil servants are not invited as guests in military programs. So, there should have been hidden motives behind it. I was made to stay there for three days. Shortly after I left Tencholing, I experienced abnormal heart beats, including significantly increased palpitations and burning sensation.

Secondly, in 1988, during my stay in the guest house at Pagli Cement Factory where I was undertaking auditing as part of the nationwide general audit, Nim Dorji, the Managing Director of the factory, shifted me to the Royal Guest House which is reserved only for the royal family. Actually, he was a friend of Namgyal Wangchuck, former Minister for Trade and Industry and the Pagli Cement Factory was under his jurisdiction. I was investigating the corruption in the cement factory and obviously Wangchuck was worried about the enquiry conducted by the audit team. The Indian engineers and accountants who worked at the audit team had to flee due to his threat.

During my stay at the Royal Guest House, my heart beats became irregular to such an alarming rate that I thought I was going to have a heart attack. During the period, I got highly irritated and disturbed. I suddenly had an aversion towards doing anything, including my routine audit work. I could not even assign the work to my accountant, who was waiting for my instructions. When the situation became unbearable, I told my driver to head straight to Lamidara to meet my father. It was here that I had an appointment with Dr Borogain, an Assamese doctor who referred me to Siliguri and Kolkata for treatment. To my utter annoyance, the doctor in India could not detect any problem.

Thirdly, after the submitting the written petition to the king, Home Minister Dago Tshering had called me at his residence for a cross-examination. The mind-control device might have been applied on me during that time. Three days later, I was arrested and sent to Dradulmakhang Detention Centre. Perhaps, the mind-control technique was applied on me here. It was intended to create a fear-psychosis, compelling me to leave Bhutan.

Lastly, I have a feeling that the mind-control technique was used on me after my abduction. I sensed that Colonel V. Namgyel (RBG), the king's aide de camp, sitting by my side in the plane, was equipped with it. Normally, a police constable used to escort a prisoner. But in my case, the task was assigned to the colonel.

Analysis of these four incidents reveals that the first time I was released from detention after three days, the regime aimed to monitor my movements, contacts and networks through the mind-control device. It was looking for an opportunity to provoke me into wrong doing or to declare me a lunatic. Nevertheless, by nature, I am a brave and fearless person with guts to fight for right causes. But somehow, I was frightened to such an extent that I left my country and this was enough for the regime to declare me anti-national and alienate me from the people.

The question naturally comes to mind – why am I still uncertain about when it all began? In all probability, it is due to the intensity of waves being sent to my mind. Earlier, the waves were relatively weak (the second type mind-control) as the primary aim of controlling my mind was merely to monitor my activities and hence I was not aware. But, after I was extradited from Nepal, the aim of controlling my mind was to extract as

much information from me as possible and in the process, inflict severe torture. Yet another objective was to teach me a lesson and kill me inside the jail.

## **A Gift from the King**

In the late 80s, when I was serving at Royal Advisory Council and National Bureau of Investigation, I was assigned very important and sensitive cases of corruption at the high level. The nature of my work provided me opportunities to come in close contact with many intellectuals, chartered accountants, army and police officers from India and Bhutan. My work was very interesting but at the same time risky, too. In 1987, these investigations were at the peak and the true faces of the members of the royal family were getting exposed, one by one. At this juncture, the king planned a royal tour to South Bhutan and I accompanied him. The cavalcade left for Chirang. The king stayed at the Royal Guest House in Damphu while I along with Lhotsampa officials resided in the Damphu Hotel.

One day, the king called me at the guest house and expressed his wish to go to my native village Lamidara, which was 19 kilometer away. The king expressed his desire to talk to the villagers directly regarding the development activities. He also inquired about the kind of infrastructure needed in my native place. I submitted my opinion. Towards the end of our meeting, the king unexpectedly presented me a huge box. I had no idea if this present was meant for school or hospital in Lamidara or for my personal use. I was wondering when the king himself cleared at once that it was for my personal use. I thought it contained a big TV for watching movies on DVD, even though watching TV was banned in those days. The box was so big that it did not fit in my car to carry it with me. As there was no electricity at Lamidara, obviously I had to take it to Thimphu. The royal troupe was accompanied by many army and police vans. I requested one of the army officers to carry the box. In this manner, the huge box--a gift from the king--was dispatched to my official residence, where I returned after a week.

Once at home, I opened the box and was pleasantly surprised to find a marvelous Japanese three-in-one electronic device – radio, tape-recorder and alarm clock. The machine had a complicated functioning. Never in my life had I seen such a beautiful and huge radio. I had no idea how to use it. I was thinking to take somebody's help. Suddenly, a call came from the Royal Palace. Norbu, one of king's aides, asked me if my three-in-one radio, presented by the king, was working smoothly. I told him that I did not know how to use it. He said if I wanted his help, he would be happy to fix it. When it was confirmed that Norbu would come the next day, I also requested my friend Bhim Subba, an engineer, to come to my home.

The next day, both came to set-up the radio. Three of us discussed about the programs I would like to listen--music, news bulletins and commentary. Finally, they set-up the radio on a completely automatic mode for several stations including BBC, Voice of America, All India Radio, Radio Nepal, among others. Thus, at a fixed time, all I had to do was to switch on the radio and it would start broadcasting. It would also automatically shift to other stations at the end of a program. For example, first Nepali news would start, after which it would shift to another station for music, then the next news bulletin from the BBC, after which news from All India Radio would be broadcast. I was even getting used to wake up by the alarm fixed in the radio. It worked as a very good means of entertainment and whenever I was at home, I switched on the radio. I really got hooked to it but I could not enjoy it for long.

Rajan Pillai, one of my Indian friends, who worked in Bhutan, had seen the radio-set during his visit to my residence. A few days later, I came across him. He wanted to share with me something secret. He asked me not to take it otherwise. He expressed his suspicion in the following words: "Rizal, I have a doubt regarding the radio presented by the king because it looks quite suspicious: everything is automatic in the machine. Since you are involved in investigating corruption at the high places, I feel perhaps your activities are being monitored. As long as you are involved in the investigation, it would be wiser to stop using it. Why don't you take help of some friends to get it checked? See if it contains any alternate power source like battery that enables the radio to operate itself when the power is switched off." He also cautioned: "Rizal, whenever you are on tour, please try to avoid staying in police or army guest house."

His suggestion jolted me deeply. I had never imagined, thought, or heard that this type of monitoring existed. His words germinated a seed of doubt in my mind. After coming home, I promptly followed his advice and switched off the radio-set. I strictly told my wife not to use it thereafter. My three sons were just kids and thus unable to operate it.

A few days after I ceased to listen to the radio, a strange incident took place. Norbu suddenly met me and told me, "It seems you are not listening to the radio presented by the king. Oh dear, please listen to the music and news, it is a very good radio. If you are not using the radio, are you planning to sell it?" I told him that I was too busy to find the time to listen to it. I also asked him, "How could I sell a gift received from the king?" Norbu had never visited my home after setting up the three-in-one radio. I wondered: How did he know I had stopped using the radio? This incident only increased my doubt.

Suddenly, similar incidents in which the mind-control device could have installed came flooding back to my mind. Once I was virtually made to leave my earlier house as the owner insisted me to vacate the premises at the earliest. At the same time, the owner of my new house, to which I shifted, insisted to take up his house as my official residence. The house was too big for my small family – a seven bed-room house and I was encouraged to take it up as my official residence, since its rent was paid by the government. The owner actually slashed the monthly rent substantially to ensure that I would not go elsewhere.

Incidentally, the owner was a former Chairman of Royal Advisory Council (RAC), Jaffa Dorji. He, too, was involved in probing corruption before. He was terminated from service because it was widely suspected that he himself had earned a huge chunk of money misusing his official position. There were two telephone lines in that house and one phone had only one-way receiver for incoming calls, with no dialing facility. It was directly connected to the Royal Palace and I did not even know its number. Whenever I got a call on this phone, it was always from the Royal Palace. Was this telephone equipped with some kind of secret gadget to monitor my conversation inside the house?

Another bit of information hit me suddenly: the offices of the Chief of the Army and office of the RAC were always located side by side. Both the offices were located inside the Dzong and never shifted elsewhere. Even inside the Dzong, when one office was shifted to a new location, the second was invariably shifted next door. Was it merely a coincidence or a carefully planned move to monitor the activities of the public representative?

Interestingly, the story of the radio presented by the king does not end here. In 1988, I was terminated from all the positions and was called at the Home Ministry to sign the declaration not to meet more than three



persons at a time. When I was leaving the Home Ministry, Dago Tshering, the then Deputy Home Minister, ordered an employee to accompany me to my residence. He was there to collect the radio-set.

After this incident, I was intrigued and many thoughts started to cross my mind. So, whenever I met various experts – doctors, scientists, army officers, even intelligence agents, I shared my experiences. Those who had not read science or did not have much knowledge denied the existence of mind-control techniques whereas some accepted it.

## **Interrogation Under Mind-Control**

During the interrogation, I was able to identify two contradictory treatments given to me, through voices in my mind. One came in the form of questions, usually followed by severe torture which included like the humming of bees as if they were painfully stinging over my body. I felt severe headache, diarrhea, vomiting, burning sensation and heartache. My psyche was completely destroyed. On the other hand, a different kind of voice was heard which was soothing and consoling, making me emotional. It made me express my inner thoughts, with tears rolling down my cheeks, or at times it made me laugh hysterically.

Along with these horrible experiences came the sound of sad and sorrowful songs, whining sounds of a cuckoo, the whistling sound of a river, the sound of whipping dogs, and finally the feeling of desperation. This made me suffer so much that I felt like dying. I felt as if I was chased by wild animals such as tiger and bear or the reptiles like snakes. I heard my children's voices: they were screaming for help but I found myself helpless. I find it hard to express the pain and agony in words. On many occasions, I would find myself traveling in an astral world. I saw my lonely body lying in the corner of the room, as though I had died and was now in a spiritual form.

## **Mind-Control on Mass Population**

The results of numerous researches have revealed that mind-control devices can monitor, control and guide the target's various aspects of life and create severe psychological impact on them. Such devices can be used on masses and, if necessary, an individual can also be targeted in the mass. In order to safeguard the interest of the regime, cruel scientific techniques are applied on the citizens to keep them under strict surveillance and control. The devices can dictate an adult to behave in a child-like manner. Once a person is placed under mind-control, his/her every movement can be monitored, irrespective of geographical location. It is corroborated by my failed efforts to get rid of mind-control by flying in the sky and submerging myself into water.

During the reign of terror unleashed by the regime in 1990, the Lhotsampas were arrested arbitrarily, detained in hospitals, schools, guest houses and prisons. They were not allowed to see each other and were kept naked without water or food for many days. They were not only kept in isolation, but were also subjected to a whole range of torture through different techniques, which permanently affected their minds, thought process, behavior, and eventually their personality. The cruel treatment meted out in detention permanently altered their consciousness, to such an extent that upon their release, they became entirely different individuals. This resulted in friction even with their close relationships. They were released only after ensuring that such permanent change had affected them for the rest of their lives, which most of them are unaware.

After their release, they were coerced into filling the so-called 'voluntary migration form' and were forced to leave the country for an unknown destination. Even though they were physically released, their minds were controlled by the regime, which made them both the agents and the source of information.

I observed severe anomalies in the actions and activities of the elderly, rich and influential people as well as government employees, who had high respect for me. As a consequence, they refused to meet me and viewed me with suspicion. Looking in their eyes, I could easily see the hatred against me that had been systematically planted during their prison term. I never anticipated it, and was distressed to find my friends in such a state.

With their destabilized minds, many people have changed their religion and have spent their earnings irrationally. Some have sought citizenship in the country of their asylum; many have either divorced or left their spouses. This has made it easy for the regime to sabotage the movement for freedom, justice and equality. Some of the refugees have purchased land in India and Nepal, without ever considering its fallout.

The techniques of inflicting torture have been so effective that now they would do whatever their masters desire them to do. Many are allured to illegal activities; others are enticed to quarrel with each other. I can cite some examples: RB Magar, a former National Assembly member from Chirang, now in Pathari camp, has lost his speech. Padam Dhakal, who sought asylum in Canada with the hope of treatment, is still suffering from illness. Others are forced to work as mercenaries. Such victims are also involved unintentionally in activities such as religious conversion..

The mind-control technique compels a target to deal with an approaching person with various negative impulses—emotional, aggressive, violent, irritating or interesting in nature. The mind-controller reads the thought-process of the victim. It is scientifically proved that our thoughts remain buried in our minds and these techniques monitor all such thoughts, even future plans of the target. It virtually serves as an effective lie detector and a brain mapping device.

During the visit of Red Cross and Amnesty International in 1998, the jail authority sought help from prisoners having knowledge of English in translating the depositions submitted in Nepali language. As the minds of English-knowing prisoners were controlled, they wrote the content as dictated by the officers.

## **Religious Conversions**

As outlined in the first chapter, there are three main ethnic communities in Bhutan –Ngalongs, Sharchokpas and Lhotsampas. The Ngalongs practice Drukpa Kargyu sect of Mahayana Buddhism, the Sharchokpas follow Nyingmapa sect of Mahayana Buddhism whereas the Lhotsampas follow Hinduism. In post-1990 Bhutan, conversion on a mass scale among the Lhotsampas, from Hinduism to Drukpa Kargyu sect, has been carried out. It is obvious that such mass conversion has been triggered by mind-control techniques. Moreover, the Sharchokpas, too, are under tremendous pressure to convert themselves to Drukpa Kargyu sect. Interestingly, the individual members of the Lhotsampas and the Sharchokpas, who held higher positions (minister, director, secretaries, etc), were especially targeted for religious conversion. Most of them are now followers of Drukpa Kargyu sect.

With this, the king has killed two birds with one stone. Firstly, the king showed to the outside world that all religions enjoy equal status in Bhutan. Secondly, through these renegade Lhotsampas and Sharchokpas, the regime has been able to exert pressure on the common citizens to convert to Drukpa Kargyu sect.

My analysis of mind-control on Bhutanese mass by the regime is corroborated by the various experiments and studies done at global level in this regard. These studies have conclusively proved that mind-control had been successfully done even on prisoners. Thus, any group of persons, in the market, temple, wedding, public function or simply any colony or the whole city, can be monitored through mind-control. The mass gatherings such as in monasteries seem vulnerable to the mind-control as it's easier to target them during prayers when they fall silent. The device can be an FM radio, a television and even a mobile-set.

The regime has used every opportunity to maintain the supremacy of the Ngalongs and has, for this purpose, used all the means that are under its disposal. The eviction of Lhotsampas from Bhutan, denial of religious rights to the Sharchokpas and the Lhotsampas, cultural subjugation of other ethnicities – all strongly point out that King Jigme Singye Wangchuck himself, with a sick fascist mentality, was deeply involved in the evil design of religious conversions in Bhutan.



## Torture Killing Me Softly

The persistent torture inflicted on me has resulted in a plethora of problems in which I find myself helplessly trapped. Due to these problems, I have experienced serious threats to my inter-personal relationship. I often struggle to properly communicate with friends and family.

The worse effect is the problem of acute diabetic condition as a consequence of my long stay in the prison due to irregular timings of food provided, the inferior and non-edible quality of food served, irregular timings of rest, and grave neglect of my physical health as a prisoner. Today, for my survival, I need to administer myself two injections of insulin daily, in addition to a number of tablets prescribed by the doctor. Regular medical check-ups, monitoring the sugar level on a daily basis, strict diet and other restrictions have pushed me to the brink of utter depression.

Before I was sent to prison, I used to be a brave person, having a sharp and long memory. I was also an established orator with a continuous flow of words and sentences. I have lost my grip over these things.

Nowadays, I find great difficulty in addressing public functions. I get jittery, nervous, and scared of delivering extempore speeches. At times, my voice falters, sometimes my memory fails, and yet other times, I say something totally different and unrelated to what I actually wanted to convey. At other times, my mind goes blank, and I have no idea where I am standing and what I am doing. There is no co-ordination between the start of a sentence and its end. As a result, I would go on and on, completely losing track of the subject. This often makes me an object of ridicule in public eyes. So, I started writing my speech on a paper and reading it at the function.

Another problem has cropped up: whenever I start reading the written speech, a rainbow appears in front of my eyes; at other times, my eyes get watery, that not only makes me unable to read but also blurs my vision. It is coupled with louder voices that echo in my ears. I feel ashamed of myself because many times it has prevented me from exposing the misdeeds of the regime in front of the international community.

Whenever I am called for a meeting on one-to-one level or in public, I get much tensed, stressed and sleepy. At times, my body aches, my heartbeat increases and I feel itchy all over the body. My mind often gets confined to petty things having no consequences for anybody, including me and I have to struggle hard to change the track of my mind and restart what I was doing. Worse, I often tend to lose my temper and towards the end of the meeting, I would indeed do something unexpected like giving some rude advice, or underestimate the person or demean him/her. Once the meeting is over, the cumulative impression I leave with the person concerned is that I have no manners, I am ill-tempered, arrogant and perhaps it is our last meeting. I curse myself and feel ashamed of but I am totally helpless as it is beyond my control.

Some times, my nose starts bleeding profusely and I come suddenly under seizure; my whole body starts writhing in pain. At other times, food in front of my eyes suddenly starts appearing like human excreta or I would see it riddled with insects. So, it becomes impossible to swallow it. Many times, I am ordered not to eat food or take any drink, and if I disobey the command, whatever I have pushed down my throat comes out painfully from my nose or mouth. At night, when I am in deep sleep, I suddenly find myself awake severely biting my own tongue, profusely bleeding. Many times, my wife has awakened me when she has found me vomiting while asleep or under seizure.

I hear unusual sounds round-the-clock: in the toilet, in the prayer, during talks, and in every activity. Apart from the waves, the mind controller conducts round-the-clock harassment by directing to do odd things. Whenever I take rest or hold conversations, I am deliberately made to lose temper and as a result, I get angry with the person I am talking to. The restlessness means that I am forever deprived of a peaceful moment.

The agony, anger, hatred and worry keep hurting and haunting me. This technique has curbed my personal joviality and feeling; it has prevented me from thinking as an individual. This has made my life monotonous and dull. I find difficulty in expressing my sadness especially at the circumstances prevailing in the country, particularly the way the country is being ruled. Nevertheless, I still do not hesitate to raise my voice against the tyranny.

## **Mind Control: My Experience**

It was early 1993 and I was spending the lonely moments in Dradulmakhang jail. A representative of International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC) visited the jail for the first time. I took this as an opportune time to disclose about the torture inflicted upon me. I informed Studer, head of the ICRC delegation, that the waves had been penetrating into my mind. He kept mum. Soon after his departure, I was severely tortured. In another ICRC visit, I again informed them about it. This time, the team included a Sri Lanka-based French interpreter. After listening to my experiences, the interpreter, a well-versed man in Nepali language, said: "I am very sad that you are undergoing torture through mind-control. You should consider yourself fortunate that you are still able to communicate with us. If you look at the Tamil guerrillas and Kashmiri militants, you would not believe since they have lost all their senses."

Six months later, another delegation from Australia arrived in the Chemgang jail. Pleasantries over, I raised the issue of mind-control with one representative of the Amnesty International (Australia). He asked me, "Are you also dictated along with this torture? Do they torture when you don't follow their instructions?" When I said yes, he appeared as though he was deeply upset by my condition. And, he walked out.

Similarly, in the first visit of the Amnesty International to Chemgang jail, I reiterated the issue of mind-control. This time the representative was Ingrid Massagé and she was unable to utter a single word. She was shocked and stunned to know that such inhuman practices were being followed in the so-called Buddhist country. Elizabeth Rowsell from the Amnesty International wrote a letter on March 29, 1999, referring the visit of Ingrid and her team, to my wife. The letter undersigned by Elizabeth reads: "The delegates were very concerned to see that your husband showed signs of being disturbed by hearing voices controlling him, giving indication of mental illness. The delegates raised their concerns about your husband's state of health with the authorities and urged that he should be immediately released on humanitarian grounds." (See annexure 3 for reference).

As I kept complaining to every visitor about the continuous torture, the regime was compelled to send one psychiatrist to the jail. The doctor turned out to be of Burmese origin, working voluntarily in the UN. He came to check the conditions of the prisoners, regarding their complaints of similar type of torture. There were other prisoners who had also complained of similar torture, like Indra Bahadur Chhetri, Dambar Rai, Parashuram Sharma and Barmalal Adhikari. Even before my check-up, the jail authorities misinformed the doctor that I had lost my mental balance. Actually, the regime wanted to project me as mentally unfit, testified by a UN doctor.

When my turn came to see the doctor, he started to console me reminding me about my family and supporters. He told me to have patience. I was angry at his attitude and told him: "Your medicines are not going to work because I am getting order through sounds in my mind. If you can stop these sounds to enter into my mind, then tell me. Otherwise, there is no point in giving these tablets and suggestion." Then, he asked me to narrate my experiences. After listening to my story, he acknowledged that he was taken aback to hear that Bhutan had adopted these sub-human methods of torture and he was very sad to learn about it. He further told me that the degree and methods of torture used by the Burmese military regime and those by the Bhutanese seemed similar. Finally, he expressed his sympathy with me and gave me some tablets. He also instructed me to use the tablets whenever I did not sleep. Thereafter, the Burmese doctor never visited the jail.

Not long after my release, I met Dr. S. Chakravarty, an Indian veterinary doctor posted in Thimphu. When I inquired about the mind-control technique, he told me such devices are applied on animals with two purposes – to learn about their behavior and to tame them. He was surprised and dismayed when he heard that same device is used in human beings.

At the time, I was staying in the Karma Hotel. I found out that Captain Dendup, who had served in the army, also lived there. I had been seeking information about the mind-control techniques from the knowledgeable people. Dendup also shared his experience about the techniques of mind-control. According to him, the technology is used to a person so as not to leave any mark on his/her body. It's targeted to those whom the

regime wants to put under surveillance. Apart from prisoners, he said that sometimes minds of soldiers are monitored in order to ascertain if they had any contact with the enemy.

While in Phuntsholing, one fine morning, I met Dasho Hari Koirala, an ex-Major of the Royal Body Guards. We knew each other for last twenty years; both of us belonged to the same community. I wanted to ask him about the torture devices employed there. But before I could say anything, he told me clearly, "Tek Nath, please do not talk anything serious. Both of us had come out of jail and whatever I will say to you will be known to the palace." From his words, I learnt that he too was being monitored through mind-control and was trying to make me aware of it.

In 2002, one senior officer of the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) posted in Siliguri (West Bengal, India) who had visited me in Bagdogra, frankly admitted the use of such techniques. He said, "There are varieties of techniques and devices that are applied on the prisoner through the lights connected to the prison cell."

One of my friends, Major Ghaley also admitted that such techniques are used on the prisoners of war (POWs) in order to elicit vital information about the enemy. He further said that the application of such measures is inhuman and they should not be applied on civilian.

A year after my release, I was referred to Ruby Hospital in Kolkata for treatment. When I met the Director of the Ruby Hospital, an ex-Brigadier of Indian Army, I found another doctor of the hospital sitting next to him. I narrated my entire story: how it started and how I was suffering. I thought it was important for a doctor to know about the root of the problem, otherwise, he might prescribe wrong medicines. Both the doctors listened carefully.

After listening to me, the Director was shocked and wanted to reconfirm. He said, "Are you talking of the sounds that confuse you, cause pain in the body and torture you?" I replied, "Yes, that is what I meant." After a pause, he said, "I am shocked to see you alive. Bhutan, in the first place, should not have applied this on you and once it had, it should not have sent you to Kolkata for treatment. I know that it is the most painful torture. It is used very selectively even on enemies. Why had it been used on a civilian like you?" The second doctor, who was listening silently to my narration as well as the director's response, finally spoke: "Do you want to say that in the jail, somebody always read your thoughts?" I reconfirmed it. Then, the second doctor turned towards the director and referring to some other cases, reminded him: "It is exactly the same case which we had examined earlier." I did not know which case the doctors were referring to but was pretty sure that they were talking about mind-control.

While I was in Siliguri, I met Dr. Gurung who had served in Indian Army for twenty years. He had actually worked for four years in the Quarter Guard Unit where prisoners were kept. It was probably here that the mind-control methods were used on them. It was inflicted not only as a form of torture but also to extract information. He was surprised that I was alive, even after the torture. He also understood the gravity of my case because he was well aware of its ill-effects.

In Nepal, I met two prominent persons in course of writing this book: Dr. Surya Dhungel and Dr. Indrajit Rai. In August 2009, my aide Uttam Dhungel fixed an appointment with Dr. Dhungel, a constitutional expert and the legal advisor of Dr. Ram Baran Yadav, Nepal's first President. I shared my feeling of enthusiasm and frustration. After hearing me, he encouraged me to publish this book. He told me, "This book will be like a bomb, exploding the acts of Bhutanese regime." While confirming the existence of mind-control technique,

he provided the reference of a few books in the topic. Similarly, I came across Dr. Rai, a security expert, who not only shared his experiences with me but also readily agreed to write the foreword. I am heavily indebted to Dr. Rai.

I remember an incident in 2007. I, along with half a dozen refugee leaders, was invited by Mr. James F. Moriarty, American ambassador to Nepal. The American Embassy had sought our views regarding third country resettlement for the refugees. When it was my turn to speak, I was unable to utter a single word and even struggled to comprehend the situation. Someone from the embassy even remarked about my reticence. It was just like the repetition of the situation when I jotted down an unintended and inappropriate statement to the visiting team of the Amnesty International in Chemgang prison in 1997.

For the refugees, it was a turbulent time. Some elements within the refugee community as well as outside wanted to win the heart of Americans even at the cost of defaming us. The diplomats at the American Embassy were misguided by their subordinates who claimed that the refugee leaders were allied with the extremist forces operating inside the camps.

When we were evicted from our country, the regime enforced martial law. Our only 'crime' was that we raised the voice for justice and equality. Ironically, the regime laid a red carpet to the Indian separatist groups (ULFA and Bodo) so as to help in the eviction drive. Isn't a regime that provides safe haven to the terrorist outfits, in itself, a terrorist? The regime that expelled one-third of its population whilst providing refuge for terrorists has indulged in blaming Nepal and the UNHCR for the refugee crisis.

I wanted to articulate these thoughts in the meeting with Mr. Moriarty. United States, the country that claims to be bastion of democracy and freedom should have exerted pressure on Bhutan to repatriate the refugees. If not this, the process of resettlement and repatriation should have marched hand in hand. I was of the opinion that the third-country resettlement is not the durable solution. The solution would be for Bhutan to stop state terrorism and repatriate its citizens with dignity and honor. I wanted to tell the Ambassador that merely abdicating the throne and appointing panegyrists, accomplices and cronies as prime ministers and ministers would not solve the long-standing crisis. I wanted to express these thoughts but was speechless.





## Some Appalling Facts on Mind-Control

**M**ind-control is a broad range of psychological tactics able to subvert an individual's control of his own thinking, behavior, emotions, or decisions. The other names used for mind-control are: mind reading, mind ammunition, mind pathology, mind sensor, mind detect, mind abuse, mind torture, mind shock, mind research, mind monitor. Mind-control, though a praxis of evil, is being practiced as a political device of torture. Torture is not only physical punishment nor is it only reserved for prisoners.

The average citizen simply cannot believe that their mind and body can both be monitored and controlled. This type of conspiracy goes much deeper than you think. Mind-control is very real international crime which ruins the life and values of the victim.

Brain transmitters, also called *electrodes*, *stimulators*, and *endoradiosondes*, can control the brain and transmit data. They can be used to influence people to conform to a political system. They can be applied to remotely monitor and control human beings to serve as agents.

In an interview in the American popular science magazine *Omni*, a couple of years ago, Dr. Robert Becker said that acoustic and pictorial information can be transmitted directly into the brain where speech is heard just as clearly as if it had passed through the aural channels, and that "...such a device has obvious applications in covert operations designed to drive a target crazy with voices or deliver undetectable instructions to a programmed assassin".

Lars Lidberg does not only work for the forensic psychiatric clinic but is also a researcher at the Karolinska Institutet in Sweden. To show what the research projects are about, we will let the researchers speak for

themselves about the use of life science with people subjected to brain experimentation. The following is taken from a medical report entitled "Man's Intervention in Intracerebral Functions" produced in 1967 by the Department of Psychiatry at the Yale University in the USA. "Recent technological developments allow an increasing control of biological functions by electronic instrumentation... Two-way communication with the depth of the brain makes it possible to send and receive information to and from the brain, circumventing physiological sensory receptors and motor effects... We can start, stop and modify a variety of autonomic, somatic, behavioral, and mental manifestations. In this exploration of intra-cerebral physiology in behaving subjects we are reaching not only for the soma, but for the psyche itself... We can experiment with intra-cerebral mechanisms responsible for the onset and maintenance of specific behavioral and mental functions... As no batteries are used, the life of the transmitters is indefinite. Power and information are supplied by radio frequencies."

"Autonomic and somatic functions, individual and social behaviors, emotional and mental reactions may be evoked, maintained, modified, or inhibited, both in animals and in man, by electrical stimulation of specific cerebral structures. Physical control of many brain functions is a demonstrated fact. ... It is even possible to follow intentions, the development of thoughts, and visual experiences," wrote Dr. José Delgado in the book *Physical Control of the Mind* in 1969. At that time Dr. Delgado was a Professor of Physiology at Yale University, where he developed techniques for electronically and chemically influencing the brain. He has published more than two hundred scientific works and is a well-known authority in neurology and behaviorism.

Dr. Robert J. Grimm of the Good Samaritan Hospital in Portland, US, stated in March 1974 at a doctor's symposium in California, that he viewed brain control and influencing the brain with radio waves was of similar importance as to the debate concerning the detonation of the first atomic bomb in Hiroshima. He also asked, "Do scientists have the right to pursue projects potentially destructive of human life, and in this era, destructive of the individual?"

The mind control techniques have also been used on the prisoners, on a mass scale. For instance, Frank J. Atwood, MA in his *Control Unit Prisons* (SHU) says,

"Control units are supermax prisons that have been designed by government and prison authorities to control the thinking of prisoners, to determine what the prisoners will think about, through carefully contrived sensory deprivation tactics and by focusing the attention of prisoners on immediate concerns. These strategies disable prisoners through physiological, physical and spiritual breakdown in order to compel mindless compliance by humiliation, intimidation and demoralization."

Similarly, Marie-France Hirigoyen, Helen Marx & Thomas Moore in their "Stalking the Soul: Emotional Abuse and the Erosion of Identity" elaborate it as follows:

"This ... is the intent of many abusers: to systematically 'destabilize' and confuse their victim (with irrational, threatening behavior that preys on the victim's fears and self-doubts), to isolate and control them and ultimately to destroy their identity."

Dr. Frey also found that a wide range of frequencies, as low as 125 MHz (well below microwave) worked for some combination of pulse power and pulse width. Detailed unclassified studies mapped out those

frequencies and pulse characteristics which are optimum for generation of “microwave hearing”.  
([www.liznichael.com/mindcont.htm](http://www.liznichael.com/mindcont.htm))

Subliminally, a much more powerful technology was at work: a sophisticated electronic system to ‘speak’ directly to the mind of the listener, to alter and entrain his brain waves, to manipulate his brain’s electroencephalograph (EEG) patterns and artificially implant negative emotional states- feelings of fear, anxiety, despair and hopelessness. This subliminal system doesn’t just tell a person to feel, it also makes them feel it; it implants that emotion in their minds.

Voice to skull transmission sometimes are done round the clock and can be one of the severest forms of torture. Voice to skull technology is sometimes referred to as ‘synthetic telepathy.’ Various research articles and medical reports have explicitly outlined the impacts of transmitting ELF waves in human beings and these have been presented in the following table:

S.N.	Hertz	Impact (After 30-60 second lock-on)
1.	Below 6	Emotions extremely upset and body functions disrupted
2.	6-7	ringing in ears, increased blood pulse, fatigue, tightening in the chest
3.	6.6	Causes severe depression in most people
4.	7.83	Makes a person feel good (Schumann Resonance)
5.	8.0	Affects a person’s learning
6.	8.2	An elevated feeling of being ‘very high’
7.	8.6-9.8	Causes tingling sensations/inducing sleep in people
8.	10.0	Puts people into a hypnotic state
9.	10.80	Causes riotous behavior in people
10.	11-11.3	Extreme depression and agitation
11.	13	Mind gets extremely agitated, can’t change its perceptions
12.	17	Psychoactive
13.	70	Extremely harmful biological effects

The experimenters without exception report that once the harassment begins, in virtually all cases it continues for life. It continues in every city, state, and country the target moves to. It continues in prisons and hospitals, even when the target is dying of cancer.

Eleanor White has given a list of most of the common effects. It is not exhaustive, but is intended to show the reader how the perpetrators’ palette stress effects are broken down. Indent levels are used to show categories and sub-categories:

Invasive At-a-Distance Body Effects (including mind): Sleep deprivation and fatigue :

- a. Silent but instantaneous application of ‘electronic caffeine’ signal, forces awakening and keeps awake

- b. Daytime “fatigue attacks”, can force the victim to sleep and/or weaken the muscles to the point of collapse

Violent muscle triggering (flailing of limbs) :

- a. Leg or arm jerks to violently force awake and keep awake
- b. Whole body jerks as if body had been hit by large jolt of electricity
- c. Violent shaking of body; seemingly as if on a vibrating surface but where surface is in reality not vibrating

Precision manipulation of body parts (slow, specific purpose) :

- a. Manipulation of hands, forced to synchronize with closed-eyes but FULLY AWAKE vision of previous day; very powerful and coercive, not a dream
- b. Direct at-a-distance control of breathing and vocal cords; including involuntary speech
- c. Spot blanking of memory, more than normal forgetfulness

Direct application of pain to body parts :

- a. Hot-needles-deep-in-flesh sensation
- b. Electric shocks (no wires whatsoever applied)
- c. Powerful and unquenchable itching, often applied precisely when victim attempts to do something of a delicate or messy nature
- d. “Artificial fever”, sudden, no illness present
- e. Sudden racing heartbeat, relaxed situation

Reading said-silently-to-self thoughts : Engineered skits where your thoughts are spoken to you by strangers on street or events requiring knowledge of what you were thinking

Surveillance and tracking : Through wall radar used to monitor starting and stopping of your urination - water below turned on and off in sync with your urine stream

Melissa Chaytor describes : “Torture is a global problem. It has been widespread for at least 2000 years, (Nightingale, 1996). Historically, torture was more wide spread than ever in the 1900’s, (Peters, 1996, p. 343). Two thirds of the 141 countries monitored by Amnesty International ordered or condoned torture in 1999. A decade ago it was only 55 percent, (Milner, 1999, p. A18). Torture is a worldwide human rights issue.”

Melissa Chaytor further describes : “Torture is deliberate infliction of pain by one person on another, the perpetrator’s purpose can be to “break the will of the victim, and to dehumanize him or her: the intent may be to punish, to obtain information, to extract a confession from the victim or a third party, or to intimidate the victim or others,” (Nightingale, 1998). Some methods of torture include: beating, electric shocks, prolonged hanging by the arms or feet, (Nightingale, 1998), stretching, burning, suffocating with water, pain- causing drugs, and psychological described as a struggle between the wish to forget and the need to remember, “(Hinshelwood, 2000, p. 15). It is a slow and excruciating difficult path towards survival for a torture victim. “Many survive literally, but may spend a lifetime wishing they had been killed.”

(Hinshelwood, 2000, p.14). Some even kill themselves years later. This longing of death is because, torture “fragments, breaks their links externally, with the family, community, country; internally so that that bits of the mind and body seem to have isolated primitive existence’s beyond control,” (Hinshelwood, 2000, p.14).techniques, (Peters, 1996, p. 343).

## **Beyond Boundaries**

It would be worth sharing how mind-control continues to haunt the victim cutting across geographical barriers. My visit to Europe and the US bears testimony to this. According to my own experience, there are two varieties of psychological tortures and I have been a victim of both. In the first case, a constant and unfaltering internal voice keeps echoing in mind. I am aware of the first condition once it is implanted in my mind, as its purpose is to inform me that I am under surveillance and my thoughts are directed as per the command of the controller.

In the second case, information is extracted through constant invasion of mind during surveillance and the concentration flags. In this situation, I do not know what is happening to me. I think the second type of mind-control is more dangerous than the first because in the first type, I hear the sound and ultimately become alert. Whereas, in the second type, I do not hear any sound and cannot become conscious about what is going on with me. As a victim, I do not understand whether my thoughts are my own or I have been guided by some mechanism to think this way. And, I would take decisions, which I would never have taken in a normal state of mind. The extraction of information through the mind-control mechanism becomes apparent only when I start getting ill and face weird physical problems.

In both the cases, first the controller provokes you into committing crime. After committing the crime, the victim becomes fearful. It threatens the victim forcing him/her to act more crimes. This way, the victim is entangled in several unlawful activities and it becomes nearly impossible to come out of that situation. The controller enslaves the victim—a situation is created whereby he/she will do whatever the controller wants. Then, the victim is forced into committing more severe crimes such as murder, drug trafficking, terrorist acts, robbery, rape and abduction. The victim may look like a normal human being, but he/she loses consciousness and even doesn’t know what he/she is doing.

As a long-run torture victim, I have a strong belief that the second type of mind-control mechanism is being used nowadays in the world, especially on opposition leaders, journalists, high profile personalities, diplomats, and targeted state guests, to monitor their mind and influence them to work in favor of the regime. Such device can also be used in the events like signing an agreement between two nations. Also, where bribery and physical torture cannot be used, such device can easily make people agree on the matters that were contentious before. It can be used both in damaging a married life and tying the nuptial knot. It can also provoke someone to convert the religion and divert the feelings.

As the victims of mind-control are unaware of their state, doctors, when consulted, invariably refer them to a psychiatrist. The psychiatrist, in turn, prescribes simple painkillers, sleeping tablets and antidepressants. Ultimately, the helpless victim, without receiving proper treatment, not only loses whatever earnings he/she has, but also the dignity.

## Health Repercussions

Owing to non-stop intrusion in my mind, my political career and family life has been totally disturbed. Moreover, as a result of the persistent torture, I continue to suffer from a host of physical aberrations and many organs in the body are malfunctioning. These can be listed as:

- Unbearable headache
- Temporary loss of memory
- Extreme difficulty in focusing on anything
- Temporary loss of vision, blurred vision or complete darkness for a brief period
- Loss of control over senses and feeling
- Loss of control over speech
- Loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting after meals, etc.
- Severe erosion of ability to read, write and grasp the essence
- Permanent fear as if some invisible force is always threatening me
- Short breath (similar to asthma)
- Pain of broken bones
- Burning sensations and itching all over the body
- Restlessness or loss of sleep
- Distraction from personal interest
- Loss of faith in religion
- Inability to express personal feelings
- Aversion to consult doctors and forgetting regular medicines
- Losing thirst and repulsion for food
- Pain and swelling in the testicles, uncomfortable for movement
- Food smelling the odor of urine and filth
- Vomiting from excessive headaches
- Nightmare of floods and landslides
- Unable to control anger
- Acceleration of heart beats
- Recurring cancerous wound
- Bleeding nose
- Artificial "Bee Stings" (that occur at any time)
- Under the surveillance unabated
- Flashing lights in front of eyes and perpetual reddening of eyes

In a nutshell, the terrible instrument of torture used remotely through different corners is killing me softly.

(Author's note: this chapter was prepared with the contribution from GP Singh and Namita Singh).



## Appeal to the World

Soon after my release, I tried my level best to see the king but to no avail. Neither the police, nor the Royal Body Guard helped me in my endeavor to meet the king. I had a number of questions in my mind concerning the ill treatment meted out to me since I had been victimized by the regime. I kept on pondering: "Is Bhutan using the device of mind-control to the political prisoners and leaders alone? Or, is it being used to change the language, dress and religion of all other minority groups, too? After successful experiment of the device on us; is it being used on foreign journalists and state guests as well?" Since the mind-control device is applied in the infinite distance regardless of space and time and can affect individuals and organizations alike, answers to these questions are beyond the comprehension of a single person like me. Given the gravity of the situation, state agencies, the United Nations and international human rights organizations should rise to the occasion to ban such inhuman and unjust practices going on clandestinely.

It needs no further explanation that my release was made possible only after procuring my signature under duress on my commitment to Tsa-Wa-Sum, with the involvement of both police and court. So, my hands were tied and I was pitted in circumstances forcing me to take a painful decision to leave my homeland. A month before leaving, I wanted to make sure that I raised these issues while I was inside the country so that the regime would not be able to accuse me that I did so in exile. On August 28, 2001, I wrote an appeal to the king. In it, I covered the political, social, economic and religious crisis and the issues of mind-control so that everything would be on the record.

In 2002, I sent letters to several heads of the states, describing in detail my forced eviction, torture through mind-control and the overall political crisis in Bhutan. These letters were sent to President, Prime Minister and

Foreign Minister of India as well as three chief ministers of West Bengal, Assam and Sikkim. In the same year, I also wrote letters with similar content to the UN Secretary General, Geneva-based human rights commissions, the US President, Prime Ministers of the UK and Japan, all the head of the states of SAARC, its secretariat, and other dignitaries of the world. In March 2010, on the eve of 16th SAARC summit in Bhutan, I sent a memorandum to Sheikh Hasina, SAARC Chairperson and Bangladeshi Prime Minister and to the eight heads of states of SAARC countries and observer countries. I also enclosed the first edition of this book in a bid to inform them of the torture and silent suffering of the people in this region.

On November 3, 2007, I was called at the residence of the US Ambassador to Nepal to meet Ms. Ellen S. Sauerbrey, Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration, the Government of US. I had felt that it would be appropriate to present an authentic document to the US government about the torture inflicted on me, and how the Bhutanese regime has used mind-control to suppress opposition. It was very pertinent as Sauerbrey was heading off to Bhutan after her Nepal visit. The US and Bhutan were holding talks on the third country resettlement program under which the US was going to resettle sixty thousand refugees. I wanted to make it clear that the Bhutanese regime is applying mind-control technique on its dissidents and there could be several refugee victims who would be heading to the US. I wanted to make Sauerbrey aware of this fact. I was accompanied by Dasho Thinley Penjore, Raju Thapa and my son Kamal Rizal. At the time, I also thanked the US government for its sustained efforts in ensuring my release from the Bhutanese jail as well as for the efforts towards resolving the refugee crisis. With that note, I had submitted hand-outs on mind-control. I received an acknowledgement from the delegate upon their return from to Bhutan.

I would like to appeal to the international community to ban all the inhuman torture device including mind-control. The use of such technique is a direct blow to the human rights and democratic movement. I request the civilized world to demand an immediate stop to use such cruel and inhuman method of torture.

Irrespective of their hardships in building new life, dreams, future aims, experiences and aspirations, the southern Bhutanese, who had stayed as refugees in Nepal for 20 years, are currently being resettled by the most developed countries under the third country resettlement. The resettlement comes at an increasingly challenging time. To be more precise, Bhutan's stubbornness, Nepal's helplessness and India's weird silence and the refugees' uncertain future forced them to accept the offer and leave for yet another unknown destination.

Above all, the issue of our stable and movable properties remains unsolved. Similarly, the culture of impunity abounds as the killers of innocent citizens go unpunished. The issue has become worse like an open wound. The erstwhile king had pretended that he had introduced 'democracy' in Bhutan. But it's a bitter fact that we neither can contest in election nor cast our vote. Ironical enough in the name of making the state democratic, the king has entrusted state mechanism to those corrupted, anti-democratic and regressive elites as a reward of evicting those people whom democracy should have been ensured. This has scratched the scar which has remained unhealed. Moreover, the regime has succeeded in forcing the refugees to go for third country settlement, against the true democratic ethos. Hence, it's a pseudo-democracy, introduced simply to hoodwink the world and to secure the aid under its laughable dictum of 'Gross National Happiness'.





## Afterword

Needless to say, Bhutan, a country which is not only the member of the SAARC but also of world bodies like United Nations, is seemingly tranquil in the veneer of Shangri-La, yet, the lust for democracy is simmering there. India, being its closest and the singlemost important neighbor, is well aware of all the activities including the pro-democracy movement inside Bhutan. Prior to 1960s, Bhutan was considered 'a country of Yeti' where very few people dared to venture. It were the very Lhotsampas who cleared the malaria-infested jungles in the south and cultivated it, contributing to the nation's economic development to the nation. Since 1960, India, helped it in several ways—the most important of them the five-year plan that ushered the country into modern era. In addition, country's first census was conducted in 1964 with the active support from India.

While the contribution to transform a medieval country into the modern, developing and vibrant one is in itself praiseworthy, India must shoulder the responsibility for the 'ethnic cleansing'. In the late 1980s and early 90s, the Lhotsampas were rendered stateless by a novice king whose hereditary rule began only in 1907. At that time, India which had its full presence in Bhutan with IMTRAT, its diplomatic mission, police training team and road construction team, among others, became complicit in the heinous act of 'ethnic cleansing'. The UN also had its offices inside the country.

The regime systematically devised a plan to evict over one hundred thousand of its population. Dago Tshering, the then Deputy Home Minister, met with the then Indian Ambassador to Bhutan and asked for an approval to evict, in his words, 'illegal immigrants'. He is reported to have misinformed the Indian Ambassador saying that people affiliated with Gorkhaland movement and foreigners had settled in the South.

Then, India not only approved the design, but also helped the regime achieve its goal by detaining the refugees who were spilled over in its boundary and forcefully dumping them to Nepal.

In fact, many Western authors, except a few, have penned books on contemporary Bhutan invariably indulging in extravagant exoticization and extolling the monarch. While doing so, they tend to forget that there were the Lhotsampas, who were being driven out of their homeland in a government-sponsored program. This can also be understood in terms of blatant racial discrimination and is a major black-spot on the contemporary civilization in general and South Asia in particular. Beneath the surface of Bhutan's benign Buddhist image, the world community--with the increasing numbers of refugees resettling in the Western countries--is beginning to realize that there is another narrative of suffering and plight. Thus, contrary to what the rulers would like to project, they will also have to grapple with this new image of the refugees. The king has conveniently abdicated the throne in favor of his son, leaving in limbo the two decades-old refugee crisis. The crucial question now is: who will deal with this issue – former king or the present king? Now both can conveniently pass the buck to each other.

The fourth king has succeeded in befooling the international community with the tall claim that the dawn of democracy has ushered in the country. The fact is that the newly elected people's representatives in the pseudo-democracy are the same faithful yet subservient acolytes of the king, who were responsible for unleashing the reign of terror in the South. Barring an exception or two, most of the National Assembly members are either former government employees or ministers. The only two political parties officially recognized are in fact the puppets of the king because both are controlled by the members of the royal family. The big businesses, supplies and contracts are solely controlled and owned by the royal family.

In the wake of abject failure of the international community, including the UN, in repatriating the refugees, they have accepted third country resettlement as a last option. At this juncture, the international community, especially the countries hosting the refugees, must obtain the written commitment from the Bhutanese regime that the right to repatriation of the refugees is not compromised.

Regarding the atrocities being perpetrated on citizens in the country, I wish to emphasize that the poor countrymen from all the communities including the three – Lhotsampas, Sharchokpas and Ngalongs--are equally oppressed and victimized by the regime.

Bhutan today is still under a totalitarian regime. The international community must pay attention to the plight of people inside the country and must not accept the pseudo constitutional monarchy or believe in the pompous slogan: 'Gross National Happiness.' The fear, intimidation, persecution and denial of basic rights to the citizen bear testimony to this. The international community must pressurize the regime to establish an office of the UNHCR, Human Rights Commission and Red Cross, in order to monitor the status of human rights on a regular basis. Simultaneously, international aid to Bhutan must be linked with the situation of human rights in the country.

The regime has always used international platforms like UN, SAARC, among others, for the purpose of propaganda and spreading its bogus achievements to deceive the international community. Therefore, the global agencies must independently verify the royal whooper of the regime, whether it is 'Gross National Happiness' or the 'Gross National Suffering'.

For the establishment of genuine democracy in Bhutan, the following issues must be addressed. The amended laws related to citizenship and land rights that had been promulgated after 1980 must be scrapped. The state must ensure compensation to the victims of suppression. The lands that had been confiscated from Lhotsampas and Sharchokpas must be returned to their rightful owners. The whereabouts of those who have been disappeared since the 1952 movement must be made public. Those culprits who played role in the disappearance of the citizens must be tried in the independent court. The political prisoners who have been falsely accused of criminal cases must be released unconditionally. The state must undertake an impartial census and the constituencies must be divided as per the population density.

The present constitution which was promulgated jointly by the former king and the bureaucrats must be dissolved and people must be empowered to write their own constitution with the guarantee of basic rights. Such a constitution must be based on the principle of power devolution. The constitution must guarantee the human rights, freedom of press, right to stage peaceful protests. The citizens must be entitled the right to form political parties and cast their votes. Then only Bhutan can be entitled to its claim of introducing democracy. Or else, the current Bhutanese democracy is the same old chestnut that from Mugabe to Kim Il Jong love to repeat.

Indeed, the so-called democracy is set up only to hoodwink the international community. The regime is using the democracy as a façade to suppress its citizens. People have been deprived of opportunity for not speaking Dzongkha language. This underdeveloped language is made mandatory for participation in election even in local level. Is it possible in a country where nearly two dozen languages are spoken? The regime does not care about popular support because it's not accountable to the people. Rather, the so-called people's representatives invest in wooing the powerful elites. Indeed, the merit for being elected in public office lies in the candidates' capacity to discriminate the common people.

Neither can the people vote freely nor can they complain about the injustice. If one expresses grievances to a foreigner, he/she is threatened with the punishment using Tsa-Wa-Sum. Thus, an environment of fear and intimidation pervades the country. When the so-called development and growth does not trickle down to Bhutanese citizens, it's futile to propagate. Hence the per capita income that the regime presents to the outside world is not only questionable But also a big prank. Recently, the regime has disclosed that there is 23 percent poverty in the country. Where nation's resources are completely under the royal families and elites, I challenge the regime to prove those statistics under an independent investigation conducted by a credible institution.

Prior to 1990s, all the rules and regulations were accessible to Lhotsampas because they were also in Nepali language. But since then all of them are published in Dzongkha. *Kuensel*, the country's official newspaper, ceased its Nepali language edition. Both these should resume at the earliest.

The democracy in Bhutan is a sham. But, the UN office in Thimpu is turning deaf ear to the events unfolding inside Bhutan. This shows the double standard of the world body. This indifference by an institution in which the Bhutanese place high hopes will eventually hurt those who have been demanding democracy and civil rights. Despite befooling the international community with lofty ideals of happiness and harmony, Bhutan is allowed to go scot-free in the world arena. I would request to the world to rethink about the country's past atrocities before dealing with it.

However, with the third country resettlement gaining momentum and more and more refugees vying for it, this issue is no longer limited to Bhutan and Nepal. As the refugees spread around the globe, the issue is transforming into a global one. Therefore, this crisis cannot be fully solved if it is confined to the bilateral talks of the two countries. Now these talks should be held with the presence of international community as well as the leaders-in-exile who have been resettled in Western countries. This will only pave a way for a clear and long-lasting solution.



## Annexure 1

### GLOSSARY OF BHUTANESE WORDS

Ashi	Princess
Dasho	An honorific title for the ranked officials
Driglam Namzha	Feudal court etiquettes
Dzongkhag	District
Dungpa	Sub Division Officer
Dzongkha	National language
Dzongdag	Chief District Officer
Gho	Bhutanese dress for men
Genja	Agreement
Jabmi	Legal representative but not qualified in legal matters
Kira	Bhutanese dress for women
Lyonpo	Minister
Ngolop	Anti-national
Trimpon	District Magistrate
Tashi-Cho-Dzong	Secretariat building
Tsa-Wa-Sum	King, Country and Government
Zimpon	King's Secretary

## **Annexure 2**

## **Annexure 3**

## **Annexure 4**

### **ABBREVIATIONS**

CVICT	: Centre for Victims of Torture, Nepal
GRINSO	: Group for International Solidarity
HRH	: His Royal Highness
HRWF	: Human Rights Without Frontiers, Nepal
ICRC	: International Committee of Red Cross
IRC	: International Red Cross
IMTART	: Indian Military Training Team
LWF	: Lutheran World Federation
NOC	: No Objection Certificate
NSA	: National Security Act
PFHRB	: People's Forum for Human Rights, Bhutan
PKISA	: Prakash Kaphley International Solidarity Award
RBG	: Royal Body Guards
RAC	: Royal Advisory Council
RBP	: Royal Bhutan Police
RBA	: Royal Bhutan Army
RAW	: Research and Analysis Wing
SNV	: The Netherlands
SAARC	: South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation
UK	: United Kingdom
USA	: United States of America
UN	: United Nations
ULFA	: United Liberation Front of Assam
UNHCR	: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

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Born on March 27 1947 in Lamidara in south Bhutan, as the youngest son of Dina Nath Rizal and Bishnu Maya Rizal, Tek Nath Rizal joined the country's Department of Survey at age 16. In 1964, he joined Bhutan Engineering Service. From 1974 to 1984, he served as a National Assembly member from Lamidara constituency of Chirang district. During this period, he was also a National Labor Recruiting Officer.

The most important designation he held was Royal Advisory Councilor (1984-88). In that capacity, he was member of both the Council of Ministers and Royal Civil Service Commission. He was also a coordinator of nationwide Investigation Bureau which investigated the corruption rampant in the country. But he was unceremoniously dismissed from the post and was forced to leave the country. In November 1989, he was arrested from his shelter in southeastern Nepal and deported to Bhutan. He underwent a horrendous torture for a decade inside Bhutan's prisons and was released on December 17, 1999. Currently based in Kathmandu, Nepal, Rizal, a prisoner of conscience by Amnesty International, is chairman of Bhutan Movement Steering Committee.

