

caused him to question why it was that as a human being, as a Tibetan, and as a monk, he was not allowed to enjoy the same conditions that people of Chinese ethnicity were allowed to enjoy in Tibet.

Woeser pointed out that if the Chinese people want to travel or to move to Tibet, they are easily granted permission and do indeed travel as they please. But in contrast, Tibetans are restricted, and have no rights to freely move or travel from place to place, simply because of their Tibetan identity. Tibetan monks, especially, face major difficulties in gaining travel permits. In his case it was even worse. Since the Chinese understood he was considered a *rinpoche*, travel permits were extremely difficult to obtain. He related how, in Tibetan culture, *rinpoches* are highly respected, but under Chinese rule, it is exactly the opposite, and they take extra measures to make life much harder and humiliating. He applied for a pass to travel to Lhasa in 1982, but the permit was eventually issued six years later – in 1988.

Woeser Rinpoche, after being constantly denied permission by official authorities to travel to Lhasa, went ahead anyway in 1985 by hiding in places along the way. He said, “When the Chinese want to travel or stay for a long term in Lhasa, they are automatically issued a pass. This was one of the things that really opened my eyes to the reality of the unbalanced social situation. Why didn't I get the pass? The Chinese get it immediately.” Woeser Rinpoche continued, “I hope this explains about how there is no freedom of movement for Tibetans in Tibet. This [freedom of movement] is one liberty I was denied – a liberty given to the Chinese but not to the Tibetans.”

“If one traveled in monk's robes, even to visit a library in Lhasa, one would face many obstacles.” On April 18, 1989, he was with another monk on their way to downtown Lhasa. Chinese guards immediately apprehended both of them and brought them back to Sera monastery for not having a pass. In another instance, on June 10, 1990, Woeser Rinpoche went to bring a care package of *tsampa* (baked flour), butter, and meat, to some friends who were in prison. But the Chinese soldiers did not allow him to see his friends and give the food to them.

Wood is exported to China from Lhasa, but the monks are not allowed to purchase firewood in Lhasa, he said. To cook or to keep warm, the monks had to use cow dung for fuel. Woeser Rinpoche went on, “However, if you are employed by the Chinese government, you are allowed a heater in your room, and most officials seem to all have electric heaters. In the monastery, we are allowed only electric lights – nothing to keep warm – but we monks learned to deal with it!”

Woeser Rinpoche said he was brought up in a family of ten. The Chinese gave them two sacks of wheat, each weighing about 120 kg. This was officially considered one year's quantity for family consumption. They had to be very cautious and consume it slowly since they had to preserve it for such a long term for so many individuals. “Planning for the next day was always a big concern. The Chinese officials would say, ‘Eat the porridge lightly and if there is any left you must return it to the Chinese government.’ This quantity was not enough for my family for one year. People were not allowed to access other sources for food. If they did secretly obtain additional provisions, they would get punished.”

“One always had to worry about tomorrow,” said Woeser Rinpoche. “Tomorrow, the Chinese will give some order to do something or prevent us from doing something. In my family, all the members had long