

STEPHEN HISHEY'S TESTIMONY, (KINDLY FORWARD TO NANCY GUILLES)

SENT TO FAX NO : 206/672 3028
OF MR. GEORGE OTIS

TESTIMONY OF A TIBETAN:

In Tibetan language my name means the "Omniscient Buddha". I was born in a small Indian border of India and Tibet which in the 50's and 60's, served as a major trading centre for businessmen travelling between these two countries. Horses, Donkeys and ponies carried most of the traded items over the high passes.

My father had been a staunch Buddhist monk in northern Tibet, a place called Kumbum. That was a religious Centre for the Tibetans then and still is today. After leaving his monastic life, he married and started a small business. We were three brothers and one sister together with our parents. My father strictly adhered to the religious beliefs and traditions of Buddhism and so brought up all of us children under Buddhist teachings. Traditionally, there was a practice in Tibet to part away with one son from every family to become a monk. My father had chosen me to become a very religiously pious person if not a monk. As a young boy of 8 years, I still remember getting up early in the morning at 4 and memorizing Tibetan Buddhist scriptures taught verbally for 2-3 hours. Everyday I offered holy water to the house shrine gods, did obeisance 3 times and remained as far away from them as possible throughout the rest of the day, since the very sight of a Tibetan idol scared me, with their big eyes, angry faces, dagger in their hands and their attacking postures. A sense of great fear dominated my life. More out of compulsion than joy did perform all the religious ceremonies. As a young boy between 8-12, all these did not mean anything to me but it made a world of difference to my father who had vowed to teach me nothing less than Tibetan Buddhism.

I can remember sitting crossed legged with my father and together reciting many parts of the Tibetan scriptures which was all memorised. Our Tibetan neighbours looked up to our family because of my father's religious commitment and goal. Basically, the monks serve as the 'middlemen' between the general public and the deities. Their whole religious rites and ceremonies are geared towards appeasing these deities to free humanity from any harm and suffering. In many ways the people, in general, do not have a direct approach to the gods. Neither do they have a personal relationship with any of their deities. In short, I felt like I was groping in the darkness looking for some alled 'god' or 'truth'. And I didn't find it, I felt frustrated and tried to compensate my inner hunger to know God through mere performance of religious rites and ceremonies.

Over the years, as I was finishing higher secondary exams in School, my interest in knowing about the Bible grew purely out of a comparative study point of view. The Lord, however, graciously provided me with opportunities of meeting Christian friends and listening to Christian preaching from the Bible. What made a deep impression in my mind about these group of people were their

enthusiasm in their faith and the joy they reflected of being followers of Christ. As I studied the Word of God, the Holy Spirit showed that the spirit of fear I had all these years can be lifted and I could receive the spirit of joy instead. It was most thrilling to know that in Christ I could enjoy a personal relationship with Him and therefore, need not walk in darkness anymore but in His light. Also, that death is nothing to be afraid of but an occasion for every true believer to testify the resurrected power of Christ. Every Buddhist fears death and death means total darkness to them. The whole explanation of reincarnation to another life hereafter is simply providing a psychological comfort and a great sense of fulfilment.

After I graduated from a University with a Bachelors of Arts, the Lord spoke to me from John 15:16, "You have not chosen me but I have chosen you that you should go and bring forth fruits and that your fruits should last." On the 1st of August 1973, I gave my life to the Lord and promised to Him that I would live for Him and serve Him. This also the day I was baptised and I chose the name STEPHEN to be added to my buddhist name which, in the Tibetan culture, is a testimony that I am follower of Christ.

My own circle of friends and relatives had great difficulty accepting me with my new faith and name. My aunt spat on my face for carrying a Bible. My friends ridiculed me for my tolerant attitude. But I thank the Lord because He also walked through those hard time, many times more severe, and also prayed for those who persecuted Him. I prayed for the Will of God to be fulfilled in my life and He once again spoke to me from the very same verse in John 15:16: "You have not chosen me but I have chosen you that you should go and bring forth fruits and that your fruits should last." In 1974 a scholarship was arranged for my studies at the Canadian Theological Seminary. I graduated with a Masters degree in Christian Education. Since then, I've had 4 years of experience working with children's ministries and 10 years as Pastor of Church amongst a Tibetan people group in Northern most of India.

*He had to leave the town where he was persecuted
His life was in danger.*



