

My First Taste of the Benefits of Re-awakening Prosperity

Following the People's Revolution, primary schools, sum cooperatives, the sum administration, and Party and Youth League cells were established for the first time. One day, when my teacher Choisdoo was working as leader of the cooperative in the sum center, he turned to me and said: "Come and live next door to me, and while you are working as a fire-stoker for the cooperative, I could teach you the Mongolian script."

He spent a few months at the center during the winter and spring during which I became his fire-stoker and cook and continued to learn the Mongolian script, which I had been taught previously by my father and eldest brother. In addition to being taught to read, I was paid wages for two or three months work: a sack of flour and two bricks of tea which I brought home for my family.

While I was with my teacher Choisdoo, I was recruited into the Young Pioneers organization which was located next to the primary school in the sum center. Wearing a red necktie, I went back home to my ger. My parents were quite happy at what I had brought but they disliked the tie I was wearing and muttered many things about it. In fact, there was a good reason behind this. The lamas and wealthy people looked askance at people who had been recruited into the Party, the Youth League, and the Pioneer movement, and aside from using them as workers, disliked them. The rich households mocked me for joining the pioneers, saying: "What will become of this little runt? Will he cry? Times are getting hard now."

When word of this reached my parents' ears, my father urged me to leave the Pioneers. I explained my reasons for joining and said: "I will be recruited into the Youth League as well as the Pioneers!" A local chüü lovon lama turned to my parents and said "Send the child to me." Accordingly, on my arrival at the lovon lama's, he burned some incense and said "You have been recruited by that so-called Pioneer organization and have taken to wrapping a blood-red thing around your neck. You have been possessed by demons and you must leave it." Then he blessed my head and read something aloud. I left in silence and never went to see that lama again.

Around that time, a rich man named Lkhagva fell out with his servants who left him and went home. One day he turned to me and said "Come to our place and help us." I went to his household and spent every day tending a thousand sheep. Later on I was to look after about 600 horses at night. The family members of that rich man Lkhagva were all aggressive individuals. They treated their servants in a bad-tempered manner.

One day while I was tending the sheep I fell asleep on the grass as I had not slept the previous night while watching over the horses. During this time, two sheep were eaten by a wolf, which resulted in the honorable Lkhagva scolding me in a menacing fashion: "Bad, begging dog, go to that Pioneer place where you can sit and sing your songs. Clear off!" I told him: "It is difficult to herd livestock both day and night, and so I

am going home.” However, as they themselves had lost all their servants, they persuaded me to stay.

Around that time there was a strange, crazy nun nicknamed Joivor who wandered all over the place, riding the tethered horses owned by the households, galloping around at night and shouting. I was a bit wary of her and found her somewhat unpleasant. Sometimes I was most afraid and ran away from her. I was somewhat relieved when the nun left our area.

One night when I was keeping watch over the horses, I dismounted, lay on my coat and keeping a hold on my horse, fell asleep. The horse was startled by something, and when it galloped forwards, it broke loose from my hand and went off. Instinctively, I shouted “Hey, boy!” and holding my pole-lasso in my hand and with my coat draped over my shoulders, I followed the horse, which was again startled and continued to run a considerable distance. I carried on following the horse, and as I approached it I heard an incomprehensible cry in a woman’s voice quite a long way from the horse.

I remembered that mad woman and in fear I quietly walked up to the horse which was calmly grazing. Since my loose horse was now peacefully grazing next to the herd of horses, I took hold of it, mounted up and went around the horse herd a few times until dawn broke. Then, as the sun rose, I approached the encampment of the household where I saw a horse dragging an old felt horse-cloth. It must have been that mad nun, who having stolen a tethered horse from a household, had fallen off it and was shouting.

I continually felt like leaving that area with its harsh atmosphere, the heavy work load and the mad nun whom I feared and disliked. I wanted to find some decent work.

One day, while I was tending the sheep owned by this household, a man appeared in the distance, on a horse, coming towards me. It was my teacher Choisdoo. He came to tell me that an order had arrived at the banner center saying that a group of people was to be sent to the temporary agricultural school at Zayayn Khüree (now the town of Tsetserleg) and after discussion with the sum administration, it was decided to include me among them. He showed me the document underlined in red. It stated “Bazaryn Shirendev of the first district of Chandman’ sum is to be sent to the aimag Central School of Agriculture at Tsetserleg Mandal,” and it was signed by the leader of the sum.

I was extremely happy to hear this, but two things worried me. Firstly, how could I tell the household which was employing me that I was leaving them. Secondly, how could I leave my parents, and brothers and sisters whose lives would become more difficult. I told all this to my teacher Choisdoo. He replied, “You care about this household but this household does not care about you. I will go ahead of you and show them this document, and on behalf of the sum administration I will demand that you be sent there. Carry on driving the sheep towards the household. If you are concerned about the livelihood of your family, in two months’ time your elder brother will finally be discharged from the army and will be back. There is no need to worry.”

(My brother Damchaabadgar was recruited into the Youth League in 1933. He had already learned the Mongolian script on his own, and since he was used to reading newspapers and journals, in 1926 he was drafted into the People’s Revolutionary Army and studied at the Ulaanbaatar School for Junior Officers. Following a decision by the Central Committee of the Youth League he worked for six months in Dashbalbar sum of Dornod aimag, appropriating the capital of the feudal nobility. He returned to the school and came back home in 1929. In 1929 he was involved in appropriating the capital and

property of the lay feudalists. From 1930 on he was gathering property owned by the clerical feudalists at a time when there was considerable opposition and concealment of livestock and property. However, this work was successfully carried out with the help of poor and middle-ranking people. Half of the collected capital was given to the state and some was turned into aid for the poor. The process of gathering this capital was an important stimulus for the political energy of the ordinary masses.)

My teacher then said: "I will go to see your family tomorrow to introduce the idea to them. Go home tomorrow night." Accordingly, I drove the sheep back towards the honorable Lkhagva's ger. Meanwhile, my teacher had arrived there and was drinking tea. He looked at me and said: "Tomorrow all of you will return this child to his home unhindered." The honorable Lkhagva replied that he would.

Then, after the teacher had departed, Lkhagva and his wife became very pleasant, prepared some delicious food and drink for me, and said sympathetically, "You will find it difficult to leave your parents and baby brothers to go away to a far-off place. Who will look after your parents and brothers and sisters? Think hard about it." "My eldest brother will soon be returning from the army" I replied. Lkhagva said: "You don't know if he is returning or not." I replied "Whatever happens, I am going." That night they sent their eldest son to watch over the horses and they told me to rest, as I was tired.

When I rose in the morning after a good night's sleep, the wife of the honorable Lkhagva gave me some cream and khusam [milk-pan residue] and said to me: "Well my son, off you go to the sheep." "No." I replied and as I put on my summer deel, I draped my sheepskin gown over my shoulder and started to leave when she said: "Sit down, my son. Anyone going on a long journey should eat some milk foods." In between giving me the food and drink, she tried hard to persuade me to stay there at their ger. The more she talked, the more I wanted to leave. She gave me a gift of two or three pieces of cheese. Then I walked back home, a distance of half an örtöö in total.

On my return, my mother cried and tried to stop me from going. My father supported me. As I was destined not to become a lama, I should be allowed to go and study. I kept pleading that soon my elder brother would arrive and that from an early age I explained to my mother that it was right to go and see things and learn about them.

Since my mother had begged me to stay for two nights at the ger, I spent the next two days there. My mother re-soled my boots and sewed decorations on my sheepskin deel. I shared the cheese which the honorable Lkhagva had given me with my brothers and sisters. I played for a while and prepared some firewood for my parents.

Then, in accordance with my teacher's orders, they had someone send me by horse to the center of the sum. When I went out of the ger my father and mother kissed me. They wished me well saying, "Have a good journey, study well, and become a good person." As soon as I had gone, my mother made a libation of milk behind me and she stood there crying. My father was standing in silence. At that time, I too felt uncomfortable inside, as I was going a long distance away from my parents, brothers, and sisters.

With a facade of determination, I said goodbye and calmly departed from my parents. My journey first took me to the sum center next to Nükht Khüree (monastery), where I spent the night at the ger of my teacher Choisdoo. The next morning I set off for Tariat Khüree, the banner center. When I left that morning, my teacher's wife and children saw me off hospitably with some food and tea. My teacher gave me fifty möngö saying, "Now that you are on your way, study well. Really, it would be good if you were to study in Ulaanbaatar or in Soviet Russia."

I kept on riding all day, and after traveling a distance of two örtöö lengths, I left the territory of my sum and stopped for the night. Then, late the next day, I reached Tariat Khüree, the banner center.

Tariat Khüree was located on the southern slopes of a tall forested mountain between the three tributaries of the Tariat river where a monastery consisting of three parts had been established. These were the west monastery, the central tsogchin temple, and the east monastery. The three monasteries each had Maidar and Tsam (ceremonies), and medical colleges called Mamba and monastic (Datsan) schools of astrology and of philosophy called tsanid. Later on I described this banner and the monastery in detail in the novel *Terkhiin Tsagaan Nuur*. There was an ovoo on top of a mountain called Dashdorj to the northwest of the monastery. Every year the lamas of each monastery used to make offerings at it. The tsanid meetings were generally held in this monastery in addition to the tsam of the Maidar which was held every year. There was a large settlement of Chinese traders called Ereen Mod far to the south of Tariat Khüree. The school of the central khoshuu administration was located quite a distance from that place.

I spent the night in the ger of the örtöö, and in the morning I set off for the aimag center. After several days on the road, we crossed the Tsagaan Davaa and arrived at the Tsetserleg Mandal aimag center, the monastery of Zayayn Gegeenii Khüree, or Zayayn Baayuu. This appeared to be a much larger and more beautiful town than Mörön or Tariat Khüree and the natural beauty of the area was especially pleasant. Behind the monastery, facing south on the summit of the peaked Bulgan mountain were several large painted images of buddhas. In the middle of the top row was Zunkhav (Tsongkapa), founder of the Lamaist religion. There was also a painting of a Tibetan lama, and just below that portrait running right to left were portraits of the disciple of Zunkhav Buddha, Jaltsavyn Khaidavji, and others. Below these two were the Tsagaan Dar Ekh [Goddess Tara] on the right hand side, and on the left was an unidentified and unclear figure of a buddha. Quite a way below these buddhas was another figure, said to be the portrait of a Tibetan of former times called Shigmuni.

I heard a strange legend concerning the engraving of these scriptures on the rock. A group of high-ranking lamas led by Lamyn Gegeen and Zayayn Gegeen was being taken on a journey to Baruun Zuu (Lhasa) in Tibet to do some good deeds, to make some offerings and attain the highest scholarly degrees at the choir datsan called Gomon near Lhasa. They exhausted their fund for expenses and as for the livestock they had brought with them, on their journey home they entered an uninhabited desert and lost their animals to bandits, who left them with only one horse between them.

They continued to go without food for several days. Although they had discussed whether they should kill their only horse, they eventually said, "We are gelen lamas, you know. We will have committed a sin if we kill this horse." However, the Lamyn Gegeen and the Zayayn Gegeen both said, "If a few of us should die from hunger, that would be a worse sin than killing the horse, which otherwise is unable to do us a good deed." So they killed the horse, ate its meat, and kept going. They crossed the Mongolian border and obtained provisions and transport. In memory of the good deed performed by that horse, an initiative was begun to erect a large image of the Maidar Buddha in the present-day Züün Khüree (monastery) of Ulaanbaatar. The Zayayn Gegeen who killed and ate the horse also, according to legend, did a good deed at his own monastery by carving images of the Bogd Zunkhav and his disciples on the rock face of Bulgan mountain behind the modern town of Tsetserleg.

Normally, there were around 1000 lamas in this monastery, the number rising to 2000 during religious services. The temples and temple halls were Mongolian and Tibetan in appearance, each being four-sided two- or three-storey buildings. The largest temple was the tsogchin temple called Said Vangiin temple or Tsetsen Vangiin temple on the slopes of the Bulgan mountain. Next came the lavrin, gungereg, datsan, and several other temples. The monastery was called Deed Khüree (upper monastery) because there was a ravine running eastwards from it at the mouth of which was the Dood Khüree (lower monastery) where later on a food (animal products) processing plant was established. Both of these monasteries were controlled by a single administration. Genuine "Baayuu monastery" bricks were taken from the southeastern foot of the mountain which stretched away from the monastery.

There were Chinese shops and many business companies there. As there were nearly 300 Russians in this area, there were two Russian canteens, several meat shops, a barber, two or three artists, and one Russian primary school. In addition, during the period of the people's government, Party and Youth league offices, the buildings of the Official Banner Administration on Bulgan mountain, primary and middle schools, hospitals, and Mongolian cooperatives and transport enterprises were established.

People said that the Zayayn Gegeen had been arrested the previous year for counter-revolutionary activities and had been taken to Ulaanbaatar. The Zayayn Gegeen was one of the most important of the several khutagts of Khalkha, and he was known as the "Khutagt of Many Reincarnations."

According to the religious story, his reincarnation had appeared in India on five occasions, in Tibet on three, and the next reincarnation was the first in Mongolia, with the birth occurring in the ger of one of the noblemen of Sain Noën Khan, or so the legend went. It was said that for the first time a seal was bestowed on that reincarnation by the Dalai Lama and the Vanchin Erdene. During the reign-period of the emperor Enkh Amgalan, the second reincarnation appeared in a son of Sain Noën Khan. The first Khalkha Bogd, Öndör Gegeen, met with him and granted him a title. The eighth reincarnation in Mongolia was said to have been Javzantseren, the last Erdene Zaya Bandid Khutagt.