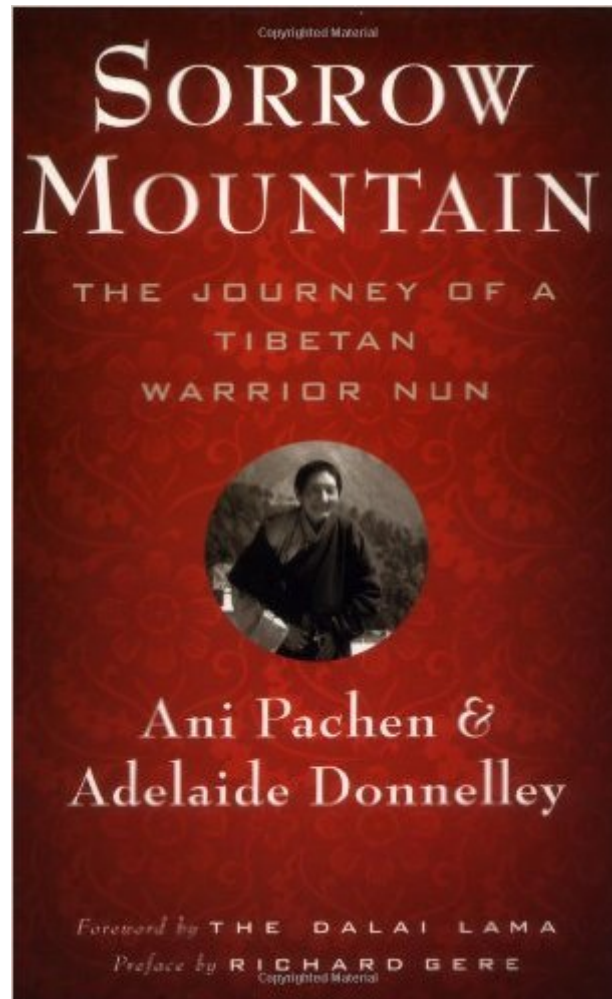


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Sorrow Mountain: The Journey Of A Tibetan Warrior Nun



Synopsis

Since the publication of *Sorrow Mountain* in 2000, I have received letters from people throughout the world who felt inspired by Ani Pachen's example. Her courage in the face of devastation, as well as the Buddhist teachings that helped her endure, brought comfort to people experiencing illness, depression, and loss. I heard from others who said they received solace from the book's essential message: the ability of an individual to face unimaginable tragedy and go on. It was a source of great satisfaction to Pachen to know that her story had touched so many, it was the culmination of her dreams. In February 2002 Ani Pachen died in her sleep. Those of us who knew and loved her are comforted that she lived to see the publication of the book. She took great pride in helping to tell the world what happened in Tibet. "After years of suffering, my prayers have been answered," she often said. "I feel blessed." -Adelaide Donnelley 2002 --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This story is appealing on many levels, not the least of which is its thoughtful, powerful, flowing prose. The writers bring us the dramatic history and culture of the expansive country of Tibet through the personal odyssey of the amazing Ani Pachen. An early surprise is learning about the day-to-day life of a Tibetan town and its culture prior to the Chinese invasion. Quite poignant is the Tibetan perspective of the Chinese Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution. Far from being merely a catalogue of the long string of horrific abuses on the part of her captors, Donnelley

sensitively narrates the details of Ani Pachen's 21-year imprisonment and torture by weaving the narrative with the gems of Ani's faith. While it is emotionally-draining, the reader is provided opportunities to regain strength. You cannot avoid being deeply moved by the power of this woman and her fellow Tibetans -- and moved to help save her culture. Read this book!

Sorrow Mountain is both a novel and a woman's life story. As Adelaide Donnelley explains in an afterword, "It is as much narrative as strict biography." Stories of the "life" of Ani Pachen, including her spiritual power to transcend torture and twenty-one years of imprisonment, and to transform destruction into hope, were the BASIS for this remarkable book. Ani Pachen wanted to be a nun, living peacefully and not killing (many Tibetan people have a religious calling); the circumstances of her birth forced her to become a warrior against the Chinese (again, this echoes the history of those of her generation). Captured, imprisoned, and tortured, she preserved her spiritual beliefs and her integrity (again, read the story of many her generation; the difference is that so many did not survive). Ani Pachen survived, made it to Dharamsala, and finally lives a life of meditation and spiritual focus. Thousands of Tibetans have escaped; many of those now live in northern India with His Holiness. The spiritual example they set: certainty of impermanence, compassion, forgiveness, and detachment--works for everyone on the planet. All of this matters. But there is something more which matters. This book, like the story of its subject, transcends and crosses boundaries: in form, in approach. It is a novel, a spiritual guidebook, a history of Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism. The tone is mythic: "My country was once at the roof of the world, a place where the great spirits lived." The tone is cinematic: "In a darkened corner of my mind, a small patch of green appears. I watch it grow brighter, larger, until a vast green meadow stretches out at my feet. The meadow is dotted with clusters of flowers and is treeless, except for a willow or two." The tone is intensely personal, acutely descriptive: in prison, "The lice were so bad that I could see them crawling all over the heads in front of me. So thick I could sweep them off with my hand and not make a difference in their numbers." The story is woven of dreams, memories, Buddhist teachings, horrors re-lived or imagined, and above all details that give it taste, sound, texture, and breath. As a work of art, it breaks all prior boundaries and should be studied by all writers who ever consider telling life stories--their own or anyone else's. If there is any drawback to the book, it is only that we cannot know what is Ani Pachen's voice and what is Adelaide Donnelley's. A Buddhist would assure us that the illusion of separation is unimportant, temporary, superficial. A Buddhist would tell us that Ani Pachen's story, and Adelaide Donnelley's storytelling genius, have become one voice for all of us. As the editor of another woman's life story, I come to this book to learn. I look back at my work and

see how much trouble I took to leave Mpho Nthunya's voice exactly as it was, to be merely a secretary, taking dictation from her. I tried to keep my white privilege and sensibility out of the way of her African experience and her African ways of seeing. I think that was a good thing to do. But I deeply admire the merging of voices in the Pachen/Donnelley collaboration. It is a miracle to read, to study, to learn from. I am deeply grateful for it.

Ani Pachen & Adelaide Donnelly (2000), *Sorrow Mountain: The Journey of a Tibetan Warrior-Nun*, New York: Kodansha International, pp 293. Foreword by the Dalai Lama and preface by Richard Gere. Some people live lives of such difficulty and suffering that it is hard to imagine how they carry on. Other people live lives in which they inflict so much suffering and difficulty that it is hard to imagine how they carry on. This book is a story of both kinds of lives. It is primarily the story of Ani Pachen: a Tibetan woman born to a privileged life who lost everything when the Chinese invaded, became a resistance leader, was captured, tortured and endured 21 years of horrific imprisonment. When finally released she took part in protest movements before fleeing to India where she became a nun. It is also a larger story of the Tibetan people and their Chinese oppressors. Invaded, oppressed, mistreated and murdered, the Tibetan people have endured for almost half a century their own holocaust in which 1 million of their 6 million people have been killed. This book puts a personal face on their suffering. As such it is a moving monument to the courage and forbearance of a person and a people. A moving foreword by the Dalai Lama and an equally moving preface by Richard Gere add further perspectives to the book. As Richard Gere concludes "May this book help to dispel the darkness of this darkest night of Tibetan history and be of benefit to all beings everywhere. May the hearts of our Chinese brothers and sisters be opened and may they quickly come to their senses."

Need a reality check? Feeling sorry for your life? Then read *Sorrow Mountain* and experience life at its best and worst. It will lift one out of ordinary existence into the realm of compassion and tolerance. One will begin to experience the essence of the Tibetan region and the mystical struggles of one held prisoner by torturous bandits who tried to steal the Heart of Compassion and failed. Turn off the tv "reality" shows and experience the real-ness of Ani Pachen and her *Sorrow Mountain*. I guarantee it will become your *Sorrow Mountain* too.

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