

BOOK REVIEW

SORROW MOUNTAIN

THE JOURNEY OF A TIBETAN WARRIOR NUN

By Daide Donnelley

A COMPILATION OF A SERIES OF PROGRAMS

ON

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TIBETAN SERVICE

BY

WARREN W. SMITH

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THE JOURNEY OF A TIBETAN WARRIOR NUN

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This book, written in English, is Ani Pachen's story as told to the American author Daide Donnelley. The book is about Ani Pachen Dolma's life in Gonjo, Kham, her leadership of resistance against the Chinese, her imprisonment for 21 years, and her final escape to India. Gonjo is just west of the Yangtze River (Tib. *Dri Chu*) and thus just inside what later became the Tibet Autonomous Region.

The book begins in 1950 when Pachen Dolma was seventeen years old. She was the only child, and therefore the successor, of one of the chieftains of Gonjo, Pomda Gonor, of the town of Lemdha. Her father made a marriage arrangement for Pachen Dolma so that she would not be alone in her responsibilities as chieftain and so that she might produce children who would continue her father's lineage. However, Pachen Dolma was not so sure that she wanted to be married. Not knowing what to do, she ran away to her father's sister, Ani Rigzen, a nun at the nearby Khaley Gompa, who had always advised and consoled her.

Ani Rigzen suggested that the only way that she could avoid marriage would be to go to Gyalsay Rinpoche's gompa (monastery) at Tromkhog and take the vows of a nun. Pachen Dolma convinced her father's servant, Tashi, to accompany her to the gompa, but only after threatening to jump off the roof of their four-story house. Pachen and Tashi left at night by the light of a full moon. They traveled for three days. On the morning of the fourth day, however, Pachen was awakened by a group of her father's men who had been sent to find her. She was told that if she would return her father promised that she would not be married against her will.

To break the marriage contract Pachen's father had to give presents of a horse, a rifle, a *chuba* (Tibetan robe), and a saddle to the family of the boy to whom she had been promised. Pachen was saved from an unwanted marriage, but shortly thereafter news arrived that Chamdo had fallen to the Chinese. The Chinese did not immediately come to Gonjo, however, and Pachen's life remained unchanged. Nevertheless, stories soon began to reach her family of abuses of Tibetans at the hands of the Chinese. One story she remembers was of Tibetan children being forcibly taken from their families for education in China. By 1953 she began to hear stories from Amdo of Tibetans being divided by the Chinese into five classes. The uppermost of these classes were denounced as exploiters and they were subjected to public humiliations, beatings, and tortures. Many people from the upper classes or those who resisted the Chinese were arrested and sent away to labor camps.

Eventually the Chinese came to Gonjo and one day they came to Pachen's house to see her father. They had come to buy grain and to tell her father and the other Tibetans that they were there to liberate them from foreign imperialists, none of whom any of the Tibetans had ever seen or even heard about. Her father did not trust the Chinese, saying that their promises were like honey on a knife. After this visit Pachen's father began to teach her how to fire a rifle. He told Pachen that the Chinese had tricked the Tibetans into signing away their independence on

the promise that they would not change Tibet's government. However, all over Tibet they created their own political organizations. In nearby Chamdo they created the so-called Chamdo Liberation Committee, supposedly composed of Tibetans but actually controlled by the Chinese. Her father was appointed to represent their district of Gonjo but he had no actual role because the Chinese decided everything. The reason for the creation of a separate administrative district under Chinese control for the Chamdo region and all of western Kham was to remove that part of Tibet from the authority of the Tibetan Government in Lhasa.

After Losar (Tibetan New Year) in 1954 Pachen and her mother went to the gumpa of Gyalsay Rinpoche for religious retreat. Pachen had been there once before, when she was eight years old, and she had been much impressed with the religious life. Since then she had considered taking vows as a nun and had refused to be married because she wanted to devote her life to religious practice. This time, when she returned, she was twenty-one years old.

At Gyalsay Rinpoche's gumpa Pachen and her mother took lessons on impermanence, anger, pride, and compassion. Pachen also did one hundred thousand prostrations, one hundred thousand offerings to the deities, and one hundred thousand mantras. Pachen felt that she could stay at the gumpa forever, but, after six months, a letter came from her father. He summoned her to return home in order to learn the duties of a chieftain. Pachen's mother was to stay at the gumpa, but her father said that Pachen was young and could return to the gumpa at a later time. In the meantime she could continue her religious studies at their local gumpa with Khaley Rinpoche.

When Pachen returned to Lemdha she was told by her father that His Holiness the Dalai Lama had been invited to visit China. Her father said that the Chinese had promised to respect Tibetan religion and culture. However, their promises had proven worthless. He had heard that the Lhasa Tibetans opposed His Holiness' visit to China. He was also opposed. They soon received word that His Holiness would pass through Chamdo on his way to China. Pachen's father was summoned to meet him and Pachen convinced her father to take her with him so that she might see His Holiness.

They departed the next morning along with seven other chieftains of Gonjo and their servants. On the way they received word that His Holiness and his party were travelling along the road being built by the Chinese. The unfinished road was muddy and treacherous. Fearing for the safety of His Holiness, the Tibetans had asked that the party deviate to the traditional Tibetan route. However, the Chinese had refused, wanting to show off their new road as an example of the progress that they intended to bring to Tibet. Tibetans, however, were offended that the Chinese cared more for their road than for His Holiness' safety and that they would not listen to the Tibetans' wishes. This, like the trip to China itself, was considered inauspicious.

As Pachen and her father's party approached Chamdo they were joined by many people coming from all directions to see His Holiness. In Chamdo, Pachen noticed an unfamiliar type of building, ugly, with no trace of the typical Tibetan style of decorations. Her father told her that these were the buildings the Chinese had built and that if he had his way he would tear them all down. Pachen heard a loud voice speaking in an unfamiliar language that seemed to come from tall poles. These, she was told, were loudspeakers, and they constantly extolled the glories of the

Motherland and encouraged Tibetans to work for the Motherland. Pachen wondered who was this great Mother and was she, too, coming to Chamdo to greet His Holiness. Only then did she learn that the Great Motherland was China and that the Chinese considered Tibet a part of their Motherland. She also saw huge posters of a man she was told was Chairman Mao. She wondered if Chairman Mao was a great Lama from China.

When His Holiness arrived he was escorted by Chinese soldiers and officials who prevented him greeting the assembled Tibetans. Then he was ushered into a car and driven off. Pachen's father said that the Chinese had insulted the Tibetan people by preventing their meeting with His Holiness. Pachen also felt disappointed. Instead of seeing His Holiness she felt that she had seen something of the dark spirit of the Chinese and what their presence portended for Tibet.

Back in Gonjo, Pachen and her family heard stories of what the Chinese were doing in Tibet. They heard about the public humiliation of a revered lama from a nearby gumpa. The lama had been abused by Chinese soldiers in what was to become an all too familiar practice intended to demonstrate to Tibetans the powerlessness of their lamas.

Pachen's father assembled the chieftains of Gonjo to decide what to do when the Chinese should begin their so-called reforms in Gonjo. Pomda Gonor described the fraudulent nature of the Chamdo Liberation Committee, which had supposedly been established so that Tibetans might exercise their right to self-government, but which was actually controlled by the Chinese. Pomda Gonor said that he himself was a member of the Chamdo Liberation Committee but that he had never been consulted on any matters that affected Gonjo. Instead, the Chinese had elevated beggars and thieves to positions of symbolic authority and used them to enforce Chinese rule over Tibetans.

Pomda Gonor and the other Gonjo leaders agreed that they must make plans to resist Chinese attempts to impose their reforms in Gonjo. In each area plans were made to resist. In the meantime, to the east of the Yangtze River, in Derge, Kanze, Nyarong, Ba, and Lithang, which the Chinese had designated as not part of "Tibet" at all, they were confiscating property from Tibetans and implementing what they called "democratic reforms." In early 1956 the Chinese bombed Lithang Gumpa from the air because Tibetans in revolt had sought refuge there. Several hundred Tibetans who had gathered in the gumpa were killed. After this, all of Kham rose up in revolt against the Chinese. By their "democratic reforms" the Chinese had hoped to turn the Tibetan lower classes against the upper classes. Instead, what they had done was to unite all Tibetans against the Chinese.

In the beginning the Tibetan resistance forces were often successful in their attacks against the Chinese. However, the Chinese were better equipped and they had unlimited numbers of reinforcements that they soon brought into eastern Tibet. The Tibetan resistance was then put on the defensive, and many who had already risen in revolt had no option but to try to escape with their families to central Tibet. However, many were killed along the way. In the meantime, the health of Pomda Gonor, Pachen's father, had deteriorated. Soon Pomda Gonor died, and Pachen inherited his responsibilities as chieftain of Gonjo.

Pachen was overwhelmed with her new responsibilities as chieftain of Gonjo. She had always preferred to ignore worldly affairs in favor of the spiritual path. However, she was dedicated to the memory of her father. In addition, as one of her spiritual advisers told her, what was at stake in resisting the Chinese was the survival not only of Tibet but of Tibetan Buddhism. Inspired with this realization, she began to organize the families of Gonjo for resistance against the Chinese.

The Chinese were closing in on Gonjo in a giant encirclement campaign. In eastern Kham, Tibetans were being organized into communes, Tibetan leaders continued to be purged and monks and lamas were denounced and publicly humiliated. In Gonjo they heard of the formation of the *Chushi Gangdruk* ("Four Rivers, Six Ranges" Tibetan resistance organization) in Lhoka. They also heard that the Tibetan Government was being coerced by the Chinese to condemn anyone who joined or assisted the resistance. By the beginning of 1959 the Chinese were bombing Tibetan resistance groups in both eastern and western Kham from the air. Pachen was forced to leave her home and lead the Gonjo resistance forces against the Chinese. She received a letter written by a Chinese official demanding that she return to her home and abandon resistance, for which she would be rewarded with an official position. However, she remembered the advice of her father to never trust the words of the Chinese. The letter made her more determined to resist.

The Chinese continued their attacks in southern Gonjo. Unlike the Tibetans, the Chinese had unlimited ammunition and supplies. Many Tibetans were killed. Pachen, who had remained at the camp in the north, wanted to join the battles in the south so that she could fight for Tibet. However, she was dissuaded by her men and her relatives. Soon, however, the Chinese began to approach the camp in the north. Pachen began to arrange for not only the resistance fighters but family members as well to begin moving toward Lhasa. There, in central Tibet, they hoped to join up with the *Chushi Gangdruk*. At her home she gathered her family and prepared to flee. They took what little they could with them but all their family possessions, including statues, *thangkas* (scroll paintings), jewelry, and gold they had to bury under the house.

When Pachen and her family left their home they joined thousands of others from Gonjo, Derge, Markham, and Linkha Shipa. There were women, old people and children, horses, yak, mules, and dogs. They carried as many belongings as they could as they moved off to the west toward Lhasa, but their numbers and possessions hindered their progress and made it hard for them to avoid the Chinese military. After several hours travelling they realized that their large numbers made them easy to spot by Chinese airplanes. They therefore decided to break up into smaller groups.

Pachen's group from Gonjo planned to meet those from Derge and Linkha Shipa in the nomadic region of Dagyab. Pachen sent one group of men to scout ahead for Chinese and another group to protect from the rear. Pachen's group saw an airplane in the distance, the first time that she had ever seen an airplane, but it didn't spot them. Late in the day they encountered three Chinese soldiers who opened fire without inquiring about the nature of the Tibetan group, even though it included old people, women, and children. Since there were only three Chinese, Pachen and her group were able to drive them off without suffering any casualties themselves.

However, some of the pack animals had run away and they were unable to recover them, along with their loads of food and personal possessions.

Early in the morning of the second day they were attacked by a large group of Chinese soldiers, again without any warning. The Tibetan camp was thrown into confusion, with people trying to flee in all directions. Many Tibetans were hit by the Chinese soldiers' bullets. Pachen managed to reach safety with her mother, grandmother, and aunt. However, they had had to abandon all their possessions. Once the Chinese had left, Pachen returned to the campsite to retrieve whatever possessions she could. There she saw many Tibetans killed and wounded. Pachen was able to recover most of their food and possessions.

The Chinese attacks had persuaded some of the fleeing Tibetans to return to their homes rather than risking being killed by further attacks. However, Pachen and her group continued toward Shotalthosum, where they thought they could find protection since it was within the territory still under the authority of the Tibetan Government. However, what Pachen and her group did not know was that the revolt in Lhasa had already taken place, the Dalai Lama had fled to India, and the Tibetan Government had been dissolved.

As they traveled toward Shotalthosum, Pachen and her group came upon the scene of an earlier massacre of Tibetans by the Chinese. A campsite that had been attacked days earlier was still strewn with bodies that were now being picked over by vultures. Haunted by what they had seen, the group traveled into the night in the hope of reaching territory where they would be safe. Within a few days they reached Shotalthosum where they found several thousand other refugees.

Here they learned that the sounds they had heard at night that they thought were Chinese airplanes were in fact American airplanes dropping weapons and supplies to the Tibetan resistance. Within the next few days several more supply flights were heard and the Tibetans in Shotalthosum were encouraged that the Americans had come to their assistance. Pachen remembers that the airdrops took place eight or nine times over the next several months. Soon the Tibetans in Shotalthosum were well supplied with weapons. Along with the weapons came several Tibetans who had been trained by the Americans. These Tibetans distributed weapons and tried to organize the others for resistance.

Pachen stayed in Shotalthosum, near the village of Pelbar, for the next four months. All of this time more Tibetans continued to arrive after fleeing their homes in the east. While there the assembled Tibetans heard that the Chushi Gangdruk, after putting up sustained resistance to the Chinese, had been forced to flee to India. Pachen and the others were despondent after hearing this and wondered if they too would have to flee to India. Several days later the Chinese attacked the Tibetans from all sides. Once again Pachen and her family were forced to flee. Many Tibetans were killed and the Chinese captured the area of Pelbar that had been one of the last areas free of their control. For the next 25 days Pachen and her family headed toward India. They knew that India was far away and that if they were caught they would be killed. However, they thought, that after what they had seen and experienced, death was preferable to life under the Chinese. After several days they came upon a group of 300 who were also trying to escape to India and they joined with this group.

One morning Pachen awoke to the sound of gunfire. The attacking Chinese soldiers soon captured most of Pachen's group. She was surrounded by Chinese soldiers and had no option but to surrender. Pachen, her mother, and grandmother were taken along with about 100 others, mostly women and children, to a nearby village where all of their possessions were taken away from them and they were confined in a small house. Here Pachen met her first Chinese, an officer who spoke an unintelligible language that was translated by a Tibetan interpreter. She and the other Tibetans were informed that they had committed a great crime for killing Chinese soldiers who had come to Tibet only to help the Tibetans. They were told that they would have to give up all their property but otherwise they would not be punished if they gave up their resistance. However, none of them believed the Chinese promises so they refused to agree. They were therefore not released and, after some days, their interrogation began.

After some days, Pachen was called into a room where there was a Chinese officer and two soldiers and a Tibetan interpreter. She was accused of being a commander of resistance forces and therefore an enemy of the Chinese Motherland. She was also accused of the crimes of her father that included organizing resistance forces and killing a Tibetan collaborator. She was promised that her life would be spared if she would admit all her crimes. However, she denied that her father had killed the Tibetan collaborator. The Chinese wanted to know who had been with her in fighting against the Chinese and, particularly, who were the Tibetans who had been trained by the Americans and parachuted into Tibet. Pachen knew some of the American-trained Tibetans but she refused to say anything about them. For this she was beaten by the Chinese soldiers with sticks. Still, she denied that she knew anything about the American-trained Tibetans or the American airdrops. She was then subjected to the torture known as airplane in which she was raised from the ground by her arms tied behind her back. Pachen was then hit in the face by a wooden board and lost consciousness.

For the next seven days Pachen was interrogated and tortured. After a month the Chinese released all the women, children, and old people, with the exception of Pachen and others accused of crimes against the Chinese. Pachen was the only woman out of several hundred who remained. They were tied hand and foot and made to walk three days to Lhodzong where they met many other Tibetans who had been arrested. From Lhodzong the collected group was made to walk to Nyulchu. At Nyulchu they were loaded onto trucks bound for Chamdo. When they reached Chamdo they were detained at Chamdo Gompa.

At Chamdo Gompa there were more than two thousand Tibetan prisoners, sometimes more. All had to stay and sleep in the main Lhakang. Again, Pachen was the only woman. For the next ten months Pachen and the other prisoners had to stay at Chamdo Gompa, without even the opportunity to bathe. Food was scarce and many prisoners began to deteriorate. Pachen tried to save some of her food each day to give to the older prisoners, some of whom were becoming weak. After some time some of the older men became so weak that they could not stand up unassisted.

After some time the interrogations continued. Pachen was told that the time had come to confess her crimes of opposing the Chinese. She was told that if she cooperated in confessing her crimes she would be pardoned without punishment. However, she was threatened with death if she refused to cooperate. The prisoners were divided into sections of ten to twenty and told to confess

their crimes. These confessions were compared for consistency and then the interrogations continued.

After ten months Pachen was transferred to another part of the gompa, called Deyong Nang. Here she was put into a small room with several women and children. She recognized Tamdin Choekyi, wife of Chime Gonpo, minister of Derge and friend of her father. Tamdin Choekyi was imprisoned with her children. Pachen recognized several other women and their children. Several days later Pachen and Tamdin Choekyi were called out together for interrogation. They were brought before a Chinese officer who accused both of them of failure to confess their crimes. As he spoke a Chinese soldier threw a pair of leg irons before the women and the officer warned that if they didn't confess they would have to wear the leg irons.

Pachen was asked who was with her in Shotalthosum but she replied that only her relatives were with her. Tamdin Choekyi was asked where her husband was. In fact, he was still fighting the Chinese, but Tamdin Choekyi said that he was away on business. These answers angered the Chinese officer, who ordered that the leg irons be placed on Pachen and Tamdin Choekyi until they agreed to confess.

After this interrogation Pachen and Tamdin Choekyi were subjected to continual *thamzing* (struggle sessions) in their cell. Chinese guards forced their cellmates to surround them, taunt and hit them, and call on them to confess. Their cellmates, of course, did this only with reluctance and hit them only with the sleeves of their chubas. The Chinese were intent upon finding out the names of all who had joined in revolt, who had supported them and where they had hidden their wealth. Often Pachen and Tamdin Choekyi were beaten by the Chinese guards when they refused to answer. However, Pachen thought that it was useless to confess, since the Chinese had already taken their wealth, ruined their lives, and beaten and killed many Tibetan people. When the Chinese guards left, their cellmates tried to comfort them.

Pachen was at Deyong Nang from 1961 to 1963. During that time China suffered from famine due to the failure of the Great Leap Forward. Pachen heard that grain was taken from Tibet and sent to Chinese provinces suffering from famine. Millions were said to have died of starvation in China and tens of thousands in Tibet. Tibetans in prisons also suffered greatly. At Chamdo Gompa there were still some five hundred prisoners, five or six of whom, Pachen said, died every day. Their bodies were dumped in a ravine behind the monastery. There were so many bodies that the vultures and dogs were not able to eat them all. The ravine eventually filled with bodies and the Chinese had to dump the dead into the river.

At Deyong Nang Pachen met a formerly handsome man named Purba from her hometown. He was now so beaten up that he was unrecognizable. Pachen tried to get some meat for Purba, thinking him to be near death. She was able to get a small piece of meat to Purba but several days later he died. Pachen also met her childhood friend Dekyong. She and her family had been captured by the Chinese close to the Indian border. Pachen was able to see her friend briefly in the following days, but one day Dekyong and her mother were separated, supposedly to be sent to a different prison. However, Pachen later learned that they were taken from place to place and subjected to *thamzing* and beaten. Months later, they died of starvation.

One day Pachen and Tamdin Choekyi were also told that they were to be moved to a different prison, Tamdin Choekyi to be separated from her children. They were taken to Silthog Thang, on the other side of the river from Chamdo Gompa, between the Zachu and Ngomchu. As they approached they saw that the prison was just tents enclosed behind a high wire fence. Behind the fence Pachen could see Tibetans who were so emaciated that they appeared as little more than skeletons. It was winter when they were moved, and the tents at Silthog Thang were much colder than the monastery buildings in which they had previously been imprisoned.

Silthog Thang was a work camp. Here Pachen finally had her leg irons removed so that she could work. She was put to work washing the clothes of the Chinese soldiers and, occasionally, of the Tibetan prisoners. In one section of Silthog Thang were prisoners who were accused of having failed to reform themselves. Failure to reform meant that they hoped for the return of the Dalai Lama, the freedom of Tibet, and the departure of the Chinese. Other prisoners who expressed faith in communism and loyalty to China were rewarded with toothbrushes, towel, and Chairman Mao's little red book of quotations. Those who convinced the Chinese that they had truly reformed might obtain reductions in their prison sentences.

In order to set an example for others, the most resistant prisoners were sometimes publicly executed. One day all the prisoners were called into the prison's courtyard. A young lama named Gyalwa Yungdrung, whose face was already black from beating, was called before the other prisoners. Pachen had met Gyalwa Yungdrung in the mountains during the resistance fighting and had been impressed by his eloquence and passion for defending Tibet against the Chinese. A Chinese officer accused Gyalwa Yungdrung of being a traitor to China and an imperialist spy and sentenced him to death. Gyalwa Yungdrung managed to shout, "Long live the Dalai Lama," and "Free Tibet" before the officer stuffed a cloth into his mouth. The officer then summoned two Chinese soldiers who shot Gyalwa Yungdrung in the head. The Chinese officer told the assembled prisoners that they could expect a similar fate if they refused to reform.

Sometime after the execution of Gyalwa Yungdrung, Pachen's friend Tamdin Choekyi was released from prison. The Chinese had finally captured her husband, and it was he that they wanted, not her. Pachen, however, was accused of having herself been a leader of the resistance and, in addition, she was held responsible for the resistance activities of her father.

In the winter the prisoners were subjected to indoctrination and thamzing. A Chinese officer told the assembled Tibetans that the purpose of the winter reeducation was to allow the prisoners to see the reality of their situation and to accept the necessity of reform. They were told that their faith in Buddhism and the Dalai Lama was useless. Neither the Buddhist deities nor the Dalai Lama had been able to save them from their current situation. The Dalai Lama had fled to India and would not return. The Chinese officer told them that they would be given a chance to begin to reform by confessing to their own crimes or exposing the crimes of others. They were told to confess if they retained faith in religion or the Dalai Lama or if they continued religious practices in secret. They were also to confess to any violation of the prison rules or any talk against the Chinese motherland. They were to inform upon any of their fellow prisoners who had such unreformed thoughts. The prisoners were returned to their cells where they had to confess

to their own crimes and accuse others. They were told that if they did not accuse others it would be considered evidence of their own failure to reform.

The prisoners were made to read *Tibet Daily*, the Lhasa daily newspaper that was composed exclusively of translations of articles from Chinese, especially about the imperialist activities of the Americans, particularly in supporting the Dalai Lama in exile. Pachen tried to confess to only small violations of the prison rules and she refused to accuse others. She was accused of failure to reform and of being critical of those Tibetans who were working for the Chinese. One day she denounced the reeducation as nothing but indoctrination. For this her prison sentence was increased by three years. She was also sentenced to spend the next nine months in a small, dark isolation cell.

The isolation cell was completely dark. Pachen found that her cell was just large enough to do prostrations. She vowed to prostrate 100,000 times in this cell. Her only human contact was with the guard who brought her food, with whom she never spoke, and a Chinese officer who occasionally came to ask her if she were ready to confess her crimes. He promised to let her out of the cell if she would confess and to keep her there forever if she did not. However, Pachen never responded. The Chinese officer would call her a reactionary who had an opportunity to reform and to liberate herself from her old and evil ways but who refused to do so. Halfway through the nine-month confinement she began to worry that she would not have time enough to finish the 100,000 prostrations. So she pushed herself to do more prostrations daily and prayed that she would not be removed from the cell before the nine months were up.

When Pachen was not doing prostrations or praying she suffered from depression and anger. She visualized her parents to give her strength. She visualized Mao as the target of her anger because she could think of no one more sinful. Mao had caused thousands of Tibetans to die or to flee Tibet and he had caused thousands of monasteries to be destroyed and thousands of lamas to lose their lives. Thousands of Tibetans had been starved and beaten and oppressed or, like herself, were confined to prisons for the supposed crime of patriotism to their country and refusal to accept the legitimacy of China's conquest of Tibet.

Nine months after being confined in the isolation cell she was released. Soon after that she was transferred to a labor camp in Kongpo. Pachen had asked to be transferred to Kongpo along with other prisoners because she had heard that her mother was there. In Kongpo she was able to meet her mother for the first time in four years. Her mother told her that her grandmother and aunt had been poisoned at the instigation of the Chinese because they were of a noble family. Pachen's mother had been reduced to a status little better than a beggar. She was forced to work in the fields or as a servant for other people. After a year in Kongpo, Pachen was sent back to Chamdo. She was never to see her mother again.

From Chamdo, Pachen was sent to Drapchi prison in Lhasa. Drapchi was the number one prison in the TAR. Here she was subjected to a rigorous regime of prison rules. Those confined at Drapchi were not allowed to assist other prisoners; they were told to reform their thoughts, obey the prison authorities, follow the rules and accept that Tibet was an integral part of China. Pachen had always dreamed of going to Lhasa, but not under these circumstances. Nevertheless,

she was thrilled when one day she caught a glimpse of the golden roofs of the Potala in the distance.

Pachen and the other prisoners had to discard their old Tibetan chubas for Chinese prison uniforms. Unlike her chuba, the thin Chinese clothes provided no protection from the cold and wind. Pachen was ashamed to abandon her Tibetan chuba for Chinese clothes. She felt that she was betraying her culture and she believed that this was the purpose of making the Tibetan prisoners wear Chinese clothes. She felt that the Chinese aim was to destroy Tibet and Tibetans' faith in the Dalai Lama. Their aim was to eradicate Tibetan customs, spiritual practices, and even traditional Tibetan clothing.

Pachen was put to work making bricks. Due to overwork and a poor diet she soon began to weaken. Finally, she collapsed and had to be taken to the prison infirmary. Pachen stayed three months in the infirmary before she regained enough strength to be put back to work. Pachen and the other prisoners were subjected to indoctrination sessions in which they were told that Mao was their father, that he was the greatest leader in the world, and that he wanted all the prisoners to confess any doubts about the CCP or the conditions of their imprisonment. However, they knew that this invitation to criticize was a trap to make them reveal that they had not truly reformed.

This was at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution (1966). The prisoners were told that they must remove their backward thoughts. They were supposed to abandon the "four olds," which were defined as old thoughts, old customs, old culture, and old habits. They were forbidden to speak in Tibetan. They were required to collect everything among their personal articles that was typically Tibetan, pile them in the yard, and burn them. At the same time, in Lhasa, Tibetans had to burn not only their personal articles but also religious texts and articles from their household shrines and from the nearby monasteries.

During this time the prisoners were also subjected to tamzing sessions, and searches were made for anything that would reveal their failure to reform their thoughts. They were constantly challenged with questions such as: Have you recognized your crime? Have you reformed? Have you given up empty hope? They were also required to read and memorize quotations from Chairman Mao's little red book.

One day in prison Pachen met Kundeling Kunsang, who was famous for her leadership of the women's march against the Chinese of March 1959. Kundeling Kunsang encouraged Pachen to never give up hope and to never abandon her strength of mind. One day all of the prisoners were assembled in the yard and some twenty prisoners were led out, each with a wooden board around their neck. Some of the prisoners had their sentences extended; others were sentenced to death. One of those condemned to death was Kundeling Kunsang. Her crime was read out as "Counterrevolutionary, Enemy of the Motherland, and Reactionary Leader." She was put into a truck with other prisoners intended for immediate execution. After the condemned prisoners were taken away, prisoners who were more cooperative were rewarded with toothpaste, towels, and copies of Mao's little red book.

Sometime after this Pachen had a dream in which she saw a statue of Mao that had cracks in it and looked like it was about to crumble. She interpreted this dream as meaning that Mao would die soon. She told this story to a fellow prisoner, who informed the prison authorities. For this Pachen was again criticized and abused. During this time, in the late 1960s and early 1970 when the Chinese feared that World War Three would begin, most likely on the border with India, Pachen and the other prisoners were forced to give up their blood, sometimes as much as three pints, making them weak for a long time afterward.

In 1976 Mao died. Shortly thereafter Pachen was transferred to Nyingtri in Kongpo. The regime at the work camp in Nyingtri was less harsh than what Pachen had experienced in other prisons and labor camps. After the death of Mao, conditions improved somewhat for all Tibetans. In 1979 a delegation from the Tibetan Government in exile in India was allowed to visit and Tibetans, Pachen included, were much encouraged. Soon after this Pachen was allowed a two-month leave to visit her home.

Pachen visited Chamdo and Silthog Thang where she had been imprisoned. Silthog Thang was still a prison and she could see that there were Tibetan prisoners inside. She also visited the ravine behind Chamdo Gumpa where so many bodies of prisoners had been thrown. There were still bones visible there. As she returned to Gonjo she saw weak and emaciated people in rags working under the supervision of Chinese soldiers.

When she reached Lemda she was welcomed with reverence because of the memory of her father and her family's resistance to the Chinese. They asked her to tell them the story of her resistance and capture and they told their own stories of suffering under the Chinese. Pachen noticed that the houses were all bare of their previous furnishings and none had a picture of the Dalai Lama, previously present in all Tibetan homes. All monasteries, temples, and religious monuments were gone. Pachen visited the homes of many of the people of Lemda, finding that despite years of Chinese propaganda about the evils of the Tibetan upper class the memory of her family was still revered. Similarly, Tibetans retained their faith in the Dalai Lama, although they were not allowed to express it openly.

After two months Pachen returned to Nyingtri, where she found that conditions had significantly relaxed. There was a rumor that a Chinese leader (Hu Yaobang) had visited Tibet and had been shocked at the conditions he saw there. Sometime later, in January 1981, Pachen was finally released from her imprisonment, after 21 years. Pachen was supposed to return to her former home in Gonjo, but she managed to get permission to go to Lhasa. Her plan was to try to go to India to see His Holiness the Dalai Lama. However, she was advised by friends in Lhasa that it was too dangerous for her to try to escape at that time. Instead she did a one-year pilgrimage to various shrines in central Tibet, staying for 8 months in the caves above Samye Gumpa.

In September 1987, Pachen was still in Lhasa. News had spread about the Dalai Lama's Five-Point Peace Plan proposal before the United States Congress. The Chinese response had been to organize a public sentencing of Tibetan dissidents. Pachen joined the demonstrations that followed. She was present at the burning of the police station near the Jokhang and tried to help the monks inside the burning police station escape. Soon after, the police went from house to

house in Lhasa searching for those who had been photographed participating in the demonstration. Pachen was forced to move from house to house to escape arrest. At the same time she and others organized themselves to make posters to put up on walls at night and to write letters to the Tibetan Government in Exile and the United Nations that they gave to foreigners willing to carry them out of Tibet.

During *Monlam* (Great Prayer Festival) in March another big demonstration took place. Many monks, who were protesting being forced to hold the Monlam against their will, were shot at and wounded or killed by the Chinese police. After this demonstration Pachen was informed that the Chinese police were looking for her. She was advised to try to escape to India. Pachen was reluctant to leave; she felt that she was able to help the Tibetan cause in Tibet and would be unable to do so in exile. On the other hand, if she escaped she would be able to see the Dalai Lama.

Pachen planned to escape by way of *Kang Rinpoche* (the Tibetan holy mountain, also known as *Kailash* to Indians) in Ngari (in far western Tibet) and managed to get a ride in a motor vehicle going there. As she was leaving she tried to remember His Holiness' advice to not hate the Chinese for what they had done in Tibet. However, having experienced what she had she found this difficult to do. From Kang Rinpoche Pachen and her companions walked over the pass into Nepal. Although she experienced many difficulties on the way, in the end she was free. From Nepal she traveled to India and Dharamsala. There she met with the Dalai Lama. At first she was so overcome with sorrow and emotion that she could not speak, but finally she poured out her story to His Holiness.

Ani Pachen settled in Dharamsala, working for the cause of Tibet and telling her story to anyone who would listen. When asked by one foreign woman how she survived in prison, Pachen replied that only the thought of seeing his Holiness the Dalai Lama had kept her alive. The woman was Daide Donnelly and the result of her conversations with Ani Pachen was this book, *Sorrow Mountain*.