



Dharamsala Days, Dharamsala Nights: The Unexpected World of the Refugees from Tibet

Pauline MacDonald

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Meticulously researched, Dharamsala Days Dharamsala Nights transports readers to a place of suffering, laughter, sex, and violence, where almost nothing is what it appears to be. Before heading to Dharamsala in 2003 to undertake volunteer work with Tibetan refugees, Pauline MacDonald thought that she understood the situation: in 1959, approximately 80,000 had fled Tibet with the Dalai Lama, and since the 1980's, a new wave of refugees, the newcomers, had risked their lives to join them in what she expected to be a unified community. But upon arriving in Dharamsala, she was shocked to discover that newcomers were shunned by most of the established Tibetan community. Denied legal status by the Indian government, most adult newcomers were quietly sent back to Tibet to face prison and torture. While thousands of tourists converged on the tiny town each year to practice Buddhism, study yoga, or spend their holidays partying, young newcomer men who refused to return to Tibet received no aid and faced severe shortages of jobs and women, and thus many turned to foreign visitors for food, shelter, visas, sex, and, sometimes, enduring love. No human rights activists, journalists, or academics that Pauline encountered were interested in investigating the situation. She returned to Dharamsala time and again, her faith in humanity shattered, spending countless nights drinking with newcomer intellectuals and party boys, meanwhile quietly gathering documentation that might one day be useful. As the years passed, the newcomers' situation improved only marginally, and Pauline realized that no one else was going to take up their cause. In 2011, she began this, her first book. In a final disturbing twist, in 2012, as self-immolations in Tibet became commonplace, many of the newcomers who could remain legally in India gave up on the society that fought so hard for human rights in Tibet yet rejected those who escaped and quietly joined the exodus back to Tibet. Dharamsala Days, Dharamsala Nights chronicles Pauline's life in the newcomer world and her quest to uncover the truth behind an unreported human rights disaster.

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