



Cave in the Snow

By Vicki Mackenzie

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This is the incredible story of Tenzin Palmo, a remarkable woman who spent 12 years alone in a cave 13,000 feet up in the Himalayas.

At the age of 20, Diane Perry, looking to fill a void in her life, entered a monastery in India--the only woman amongst hundreds of monks---and began her battle against the prejudice that had excluded women from enlightenment for thousands of years.

Thirteen years later, Diane Perry a.k.a. Tenzin Palmo secluded herself in a remote cave 13,000 feet up in the Himalayas, where she stayed for twelve years. In her mountain retreat, she face unimaginable cold, wild animals, floods, snow and rockfalls, grew her own food and slept in a traditional wooden meditation box, three feet square. She never lay down.

Tenzin emerged from the cave with a determination to build a convent in northern India to revive the Togdenma lineage, a long-forgotten female spiritual elite. She has traveled around the world to find support for her cause, meeting with spiritual leaders from the Pope to Desmond Tutu. She agreed to tell her story only to Vicky Mackenzie and a portion of the royalties from this book will help towards the completion of her convent.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

It sounds like a legend out of medieval Tibet: the ascetic who leaves home to join the Buddhist order, then spends 12 years in a cave, 15 hours a day in a meditation box. This is no legend, but you could call Tenzin Palmo legendary in her single-minded pursuit of higher realizations. From the East End of London to halfway up the Himalayas, she is now back in society, attempting to pull medieval Tibetan Buddhism into the modern era--women's rights and all. As biographer Vicki Mackenzie says by way of background, a group of elite women practitioners called "Togdemnas" still existed just decades ago. Tenzin Palmo, having studied with her male counterparts, is now canvassing the planet, welcoming women into full participation in Tibetan Buddhism and building support for an academy of Togdemnas that she plans to establish in the Himalayas. Mackenzie helps raise awareness for women's roles in Tibetan Buddhism by going into some detail about obstacles still faced by women as well as heroines who have overcome those obstacles, such as Yeshe Tsogyel (Sky Dancer) and Machig Lapdron, a mother who started her own lineage. If Mackenzie has it her way, it won't be long before Tenzin Palmo joins that list of heroines. --*Brian Bruya*

From Library Journal

Very possibly, the central figures of these two books—one German, the other British—met during their Buddhist training and charitable work. They undergo similar transformations, abandoning established middle-class lives to adhere to strict Buddhist rules of self-denial, meditation, and hardship. Khema, however, escaped Nazi Germany and had a remarkably peripatetic life that entailed two marriages and much travel. Her telling of her search for Buddhism and life as a nun dwells on the facts of her travels and good works rather than inner thoughts. Despite professions of humility and selflessness, she appears arrogant and proud. But perhaps this impression comes from the process of dictation and a translation from German that is full of clichés and inappropriate expressions. On the other hand, in *Cave in the Snow*, Mackenzie, a journalist with a special interest in Buddhism, recounts with passion and beauty the story of Tenzin Palmo (nee Diane Perry), which involved 12 years of living in an Indian cave, snowbound for eight months of each year. She delves into Palmo's motivations, feelings, thoughts, and teachings, presenting the facts of her life while preserving the anguish, desire, conviction, and conflict that accompanied her conversion to Buddhism. The result is thoroughly engrossing. —Kitty Chen Dean, Nassau Coll., Garden City, NY
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From [Booklist](#)

Journalist Mackenzie decided to approach the renowned Western Buddhist nun Tenzin Palmo about a book after learning she had "made a vow to attain Enlightenment in the female form no matter how many lifetimes it takes." Realizing that her story could advance the struggle for women's spiritual liberation, the cause to which she is actively devoted, and for which she has sacrificed her preferred life as a contemplative, Tenzin Palmo agreed. Obviously enthralled, Mackenzie chronicles Tenzin Palmo's arduous and remarkable spiritual journey as simply as possible, allowing the drama and mystery of her subject's unique experiences to stand radiantly on their own. Although born in London during Hitler's London blitz, Tenzin Palmo, then Diane Perry, was inexplicably drawn to all things Eastern. She made her way to India as soon as she could, discovered her Tibetan Buddhist guru, and was acknowledged as a *tulku*, a recognized incarnation. Needless to say, a young attractive Englishwoman was a most unusual form for an advanced Tibetan Buddhist practitioner to take, especially since women are considered inferior beings incapable of the rigors necessary for attaining enlightenment. Tenzin Palmo set out to defy this ancient prejudice and succeeded, spending 12 years meditating by herself in a tiny cave 13,200 feet up in the Himalayas. Once she rejoined society, it became clear to her that the purpose of her life was to work to bring balance to Buddhism, and perhaps, by

example, to other religions, by ensuring that women receive the same teachings and respect as men. *Donna Seaman*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Rose Cordeiro:

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