

[**HARDCOVER:** US]

China's other minority, in their own eyes

Rebiya Kadeer's book, 'Dragon Fighter,' gives an insider's view on the plight of the Uighurs

BY **HOWARD FRENCH**
NY TIMES NEWS SERVICE, NEW YORK

It is the awkward fate of China, more than any other country, to be arriving late to any number of parties where most other revelers are either long gone or leaving, having declared the celebrations *declassé*. Such is the case with China's booming smokestack economy and with its ardent new fling with the automobile, with its desire for a deep-water navy built around aircraft carriers, and with its ambition for a space program that will land on the Moon.

China is also just beginning to grapple with the creation of what most in the developed world would recognize as a modern legal system, and it is in much the same position with its cobbling efforts to reinvent the welfare state.

Most anachronistic of all, though, is the country's treatment of its two largest minorities, the Tibetans and Uighurs, both old, non-Han indigenous civilizations that claim meaningful autonomy in China's vast, resource-rich and sparsely populated west. Our Western legacy may give us little to cluck about, but in today's world the rights and interests of native peoples have rightly won greater recognition.

In this memoir, *Dragon Fighter*, part defiant political tell-all, part engrossing personal saga, Rebiya Kadeer paints a vivid picture of her life as a mother of 11 and a business-woman who spent nearly six years in prison on her way to becoming the Uighur people's most prominent dissident.

Even Westerners who pay relatively little attention to China will be at least vaguely familiar with the plight of Tibetans.

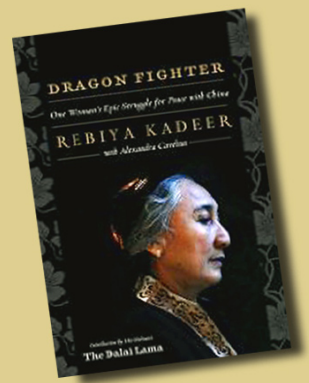
Such is not the case with the Uighur, a central Asian people who are distant relatives of the Turks and native to what China calls the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, or the New Frontier, an area three and half times as large as California, whose indigenous people look all but set to join the ranks of history's great, overrun losers.

One thing the Uighur, spelled Uyghur in this book, have never had is a leader with great recognition outside China, like the Dalai Lama, who has contributed a brief introduction for this memoir.

Kadeer writes: "Politicians and human rights organizations from all over the world were active on behalf of Tibet. The conditions in the Uyghur nation were much the same. But interest from abroad in the two, though literally we were next-door neighbors sharing a common border and both under Chinese occupation, could not have been more dissimilar."

Kadeer writes perceptively

Publication Notes



DRAGON FIGHTER: ONE WOMAN'S EPIC STRUGGLE FOR PEACE WITH CHINA

BY **REBIYA KADEER, WITH ALEXANDRA CAVELIUS**

423 PAGES

KALES PRESS

about the many humiliations imposed by Beijing on the Uighurs, including routine business harassment and forced abortions, massacres and barriers to trade and contact with other central Asian neighbors.

On one level, Kadeer's book is a routine account of recent Chinese history. Much more interesting is its core autobiographical story: the remarkable rise from modest roots to a life as, the author claims, the wealthiest woman in China and a politically prominent member of the National People's Congress.

Here, though, the book is marred by language that betrays limited modesty and perhaps even limited self-knowledge.

Through sheer force of personality Kadeer overcomes a bad marriage to an abusive husband, then seeks out and marries a former political prisoner and poet.

Years later, having built a fortune (and a big reputation) in department stores and real estate, Kadeer begins to attract the wooing calls of the party. Her big moment comes in a speech before the Congress in Beijing, in which she boldly switches the approved text to ask: "Is it our fault that the Chinese have occupied our land? That we live under such horrible conditions?"

If not the first time she had spoken truth to power, it was certainly the beginning of the end. Soon afterward Kadeer was arrested. She was tried, imprisoned for nearly six years and exiled to the US.

This remarkable life is now added to the saga of the Uighur people, a people without leaders.

The first time that Sara Campbell blacked out in the water, she was transported to a lush green field. It was summer, she says, and she was surrounded by gorgeous men whispering to her. "The interesting physiological aspect of a blackout," she says, "is that your senses return one by one. Your hearing comes back first, and your sight last. So, in my meadow, I could hear people whispering to me, and as my sight came back, I was looking up at a blue sky; then suddenly I saw a boat, and water, and people around me, and I had a moment of complete disconnect. I was gone." Seconds later she heard, "You're safe, you can breathe." The gorgeous men were her safety divers.

This isn't the only time Campbell has been unconscious in the water. As one of the world's best, most fearless, free divers, hazard comes with the job. It happened again earlier this month, as she attempted her most ambitious dive yet.

Competing at the Vertical Blue competition in the Bahamas, Campbell set a world record in the women's constant weight discipline, diving down 96m with no oxygen and nothing to propel her except a mermaid-like monofin. The film of that dive is mesmerizing: a tiny figure descending along a dropped rope, her safety divers dangling in the water above her as she moves through the green murk, plummeting into silence. Just watching her is enough to make you frantically draw breath — Campbell was underwater, altogether, for three minutes 36 seconds.

That dive was celebrated with a punch of the air, but the next one, five days later, wasn't so successful. Campbell was determined to push herself to the round figure of 100m, and managed it, but as she reached the surface she lost consciousness. The result was disqualification, and a level of exhaustion she'd never experienced before. "I wasn't even able to string a sentence together. I got cold sores around my mouth and I thought, my body is run down now. It's not wise to put it through that again."

It's not easy to fathom why free divers put their bodies through such stress. Their sport involves doing something counter-intuitive — diving far away from any oxygen source. And the physical changes are significant. As soon as your face is immersed in water, your heart rate slows. Then comes peripheral vasoconstriction, in which blood is drawn from your arms and legs towards your body's core organs. As you descend further, your lungs contract to the size of lemons, and on the ascent "the compression in the lungs is reversing. In the final stages of the dive, from 10m to the surface, the size of your lungs doubles."

Forbes magazine once named it the second most dangerous sport in the world — after sky diving off buildings. Campbell, her 1.5m frame curled up on her boyfriend's couch, denies this, although she admits free divers sometimes rupture their ear drums — "but that's minor. You get a puncture in a piece of skin and it heals." And there's "a thing we call lung



Mighty Mouse the mermaid

Four years ago she was a yoga teacher who had never even heard of free diving. Now Sara Campbell, aka Mighty Mouse, is the world champion in one of the world's most dangerous sports

BY **KIRA COCHRANE**
THE GUARDIAN, LONDON

squeeze", when someone dives too deep for their lungs to sustain the compression. "It might lead to a slight cough with a spot of blood, to handfuls of blood coming out of your lungs. It happened to a girl in the Bahamas, and she was diving again in three or four days."

Although there have been deaths among people practicing "no limits" free diving (which involves being propelled much further underwater on a weighted sled), Campbell emphasizes that no one has ever died in any form of competition.

Four years ago, she had never even tried the sport — she was in her mid-30s, living in London, running her own PR agency, and feeling increasingly sad. She didn't enjoy "the intense pressure to earn enough money each month

to pay the bills," and her sister had just had a baby. "I was incredibly unhappy about that. I think deep down I knew that she was very fulfilled in her life, and that I wasn't."

Campbell went on holiday to Dahab, in Egypt, "and the only way I can describe it is that someone opened a lid in my head and put a note inside, saying: 'This is where you're going to live.'" She had been teaching yoga and meditation for a year alongside her PR business, so she arranged to set up classes at one of the local hotels. "Within two weeks of moving there, I had rented a house with a camel. Bedouin kids shoved six kittens under my door, a puppy got thrown over the wall, and there I was, all of a sudden, living in the middle of this Bedouin village with a camel, six cats and a dog."

She hadn't even heard of free diving, but Dahab is a center for the sport, and soon some of her yoga clients, noticing how long she was able to hold her breath during meditation, suggested she try it. Her talent was immediately obvious. Less than a year after she started, she broke three world records in a single weekend. Then she won gold in the constant weight category at the world championships in Egypt. From nowhere, she was diving head-to-head with the brilliant Natalia Molchanova, an ex-Soviet fin swimmer who is, in Campbell's words, "a consummate athlete." The pair still jostle for dominance of the women's sport.

Campbell has been nicknamed Mighty Mouse due to the strength of her diminutive body, and



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I realized you don't have to go through therapy, or weeks of feeling crappy — I could just jump in the water and feel brilliant.

— Sara Campbell, world champion free diver

although doctors have established that she has a lung capacity 25 percent bigger than most people her size, this doesn't account for her incredible aptitude. Many of the world's best free divers spend hours every day in training, but when I ask Campbell whether she indulges in any of the more bizarre practices, she just laughs. "I don't do technique training, strength training. I don't do lactic-acid tolerance ... For me, the sport is about the love of discovery. The numbers, the records themselves, are incidental."

A group of physicians at a university in Italy have been studying Campbell among a group of free divers, and have established that "people are excelling in these areas as they get older. It's not like tennis or football, where you have teenagers and people in their early 20s being the superstars. It's people in their 30s. What the physicians are interested in is how our more advanced mental development and self-belief — and ability to control stress and set goals — affects us."

Campbell's next goal is to reach the 100m mark — without blacking out. At 37, she has gone from an unhappy life in London to making her living from the sport. "My initial motivation in free diving was just that it made me so happy. I realized you don't have to go through therapy, or weeks of feeling crappy — I could just jump in the water and feel brilliant. Even more so than meditating in a yoga room, there are no distractions. You don't have cars passing, or phones ringing, or people making a noise in the next room, or dogs barking. It's utter silence."

But doesn't the water pressure hurt? No, she laughs. "It's more like being rolled up in a duvet. It's comforting — like a big hug."

[**PAPERBACK:** UK]

Slumdogs and superstars

Shobhaa De applies her exuberant energies to dissecting Indian and Chinese cultures, and putting the world in general to rights. How shocking!

BY **BRADLEY WINTERTON**
CONTRIBUTING REPORTER

A string of salacious novels, a high-flying lifestyle, a glamorous presence and consistently provocative opinions characterize Shobhaa De, India's best-selling English-language author. In this new book — to be published in London next week — she embarks on a round-up of aspects of life in modern India, from sex to money and fashion to politics, coming up with a sequence of racy taunts, unsupported assertions and gushing enthusiasms.

This isn't a book to look to for measured analysis or a systematic thesis. De's style is essentially that of the magazine columnist faced with readers with short attention spans — catchy phrases, a would-be-shocking honesty, exclamation points in abundance, and paragraphs that end with Right now! You bet! Scary! or Crazy or what?

De's cast of mind and her style are, of course, connected. *Superstar India*, you feel, is a book intended to be read in short

bursts between eating a chapatti and reaching for a glass of lassi, and prompting exclamations of Really? I don't believe it! Too shocking! and How dare she? The effect is augmented by Penguin's decision to highlight what it deems to be key sentences in bold type, and scatter the pages with other sentences reprinted large, magazine-style. This has the effect of drawing your attention to the text, while at the same time ensuring you're never tempted to take any of it too seriously.

A section on her first visit to China is typical of De's approach. She arrives in Shanghai ("the glitzy city on steroids that's attracting the world's high-rollers") and finds its airport superior to the one at Mumbai ("Have garbage. Will throw."). She thinks the Chinese have got the tourism business right too — "... the basic infrastructure, good roads, decent hotels, clean and well-organized sites, inexpensive food and no touts or beggars harassing the unwary." But in other ways China has a lot

in common with De's homeland — fake goods openly on display in licensed shops, seriousness in putting the family first, and a willingness to answer personal questions without batting an eyelid. "Just like India! ... I love it!"

"What is the truth in China?" she writes. "Nobody knows. And nobody cares." Should India be afraid of China? You bet! "With the world's biggest standing army and the soaring territorial ambitions they have, there's no way we can sit back and relax." Again, "Chinese chicks will buy the lot — hand creams, face creams, butt creams. Chinese women will all want to be Zhang Zilin (张梓琳)." On the other hand, if China and India were to combine their economic energies, they could dominate the world.

This is a book that you imagine was written by someone with a flowery hat and a tight-fitting sari, sweeping you through airports with her redoubtable energy and unstoppable flow of opinions. Come along, darlings, it's the Chinese next, and I bet you can't

Publication Notes



SUPERSTAR INDIA: FROM INCREDIBLE TO UNSTOPPABLE

BY **SHOBHAA DE**

456 PAGES

PENGUIN

wait to hear what I think of them, now can you?

It's hard to unravel the author's genuine feelings from all this tangle of chatter. She does have a lot to say about women, though any suggestion that she's a feminist is received with horror in Indian academic circles. Indian women are still too used to playing second fiddle, she asserts, and she sees Indian men as terrified by a woman with her own opinions and a disposable income. Marriage for money, on the other hand, she perceives as only natural. Sex is probably more frequently indulged in by the younger generation, she believes, though underneath the boasts and bravado many traditional attitudes prevail.

Money is an even more prominent topic in *Superstar India* than sexual attitudes. De is the mother of six and the financial habits of the young — brash, aggressive, ignorant, and obsessed with brands and labels — come in for some criticism. She sees herself as stranded between her own father's

adherence to austerity, and even sacrifice, and the affluent young's penchant for cool spending, living for the moment, and succumbing to "the urge to splurge."

In this, De is what she is in many other spheres of life — on the one hand still the affluent rebel who mentions the unmentionable almost as a matter of course, but at the same time also the responsible matriarch. When it comes to religion, for instance, she's quite happy with modern, laborsaving shortcuts when preparing for the great festivals such as Diwali, while also hoping that India's traditions, including its spiritual ones, will survive. (Are the young concerned about poverty and interested in snake charmers? She's not too sure).

She can be sardonic. "When all else fails, we pull out Gandhi," she writes, and counts four Paris restaurants named after the Mahatma. Vegetarian and teetotal establishments? "Hell, no — beef pasanda and Burgundies galore on all these menus." And she's been

almost everywhere. She recounts meeting the UK's Prince Charles ("Jug Ears") and telling him the novels she writes are "bodice-rippers," takes a few days off in St Moritz, and eats at "a very posh Steak House in Dubai."

There are many serious points, though — that it suits politicians to keep minorities insecure ("Hate creates vote banks. Tolerance doesn't. It's that simple"), that food shortages are mostly man-made, as the Nobel laureate Amartya Sen demonstrated, and that the single-child Chinese girl marrying the single-child Chinese boy will have to look after two sets of aging parents, her own and her husband's. Poverty, domestic violence, dowry-deaths, the treatment of Muslims, the way Western women on their own in India tend to get groped — none of these are swept under the carpet.

"Am I being a cynical bitch?" she asks at one point. Probably not. This garrulous book tells you a lot about modern India, even though it's best taken in rather small doses.