

Book Reviews

When Things Fall Apart: Heart Advice for Difficult Times by Ven. Pema Choedron.

Shambala Publications, Boston 1997.
ISBN 1-57062-160-8

Price: \$39.95 hardback

Things falling apart is a kind of testing and also a kind of healing. We think that the point is to pass the test or overcome, but the truth is that things don't really get solved. They come together and they fall apart. Then they come together and they fall apart again. "The healing comes from letting there be room for all of this to happen: room for grief, for relief, for misery, for joy"

Ven. Pema Choedron is the abbess/director of Gampo Abbey, a Buddhist monastery in Nova Scotia, Canada. She is also a student of the late Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, a reincarnated lineage holder in the Kagyue and Nyingma schools of Tibetan Buddhism, and one of the Tibetan teachers who brought Buddhism to the West in the 'spiritual supermarket' days of the early 1970s.

Her latest book *When Things Fall Apart* follows the publication of two earlier books, *The Wisdom of No Escape* and *Start Where You Are*. (If nothing else, the titles get you thinking!) All three emphasise the importance of developing fearlessness, curiosit humour and loving kindness in our spiritual practice. Her advice is to never give up on ourselves and others - in fact, to begin the practice of gentleness right here and now, no matter how bad we may feel about ourselves or our situation. In the introduction to *When Things Fall Apart*, Pema Choedron reflects:

I began to see that, no matter what subject I had chosen, what country I was in, or what year it was, I had taught endlessly about the same things: the great need for *matrî* (loving kindness toward oneself), and developing from that the awakening of a fearlessly compassionate attitude toward our own pain and that of others.

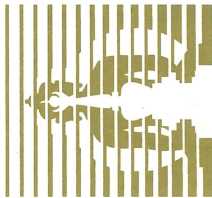
As the author points out, compassionate living is about

loosening our grip on our deep-seated hope to 'get it all together', which only makes us more desperate and fearful about our lives. Chaos, she quotes from Trungpa Rinpoche, should be regarded as extremely good news. "You could even put 'Abandon hope' on your refrigerator door," she writes, "instead of more conventional aspirations like 'Every day in every way I'm getting better and better'." I find Pema Choedron's writing to be so clear and light-hearted that reading even a few pages can settle my mind. There are plenty of stories- some funny, some sobering - from her life as a young mother (she is now a grandmother), wife, student and then teacher of Buddhism. All of them illustrate how pertinent the Buddha's teachings are, two and a half thousand years on - in fact, more important than ever for counter-acting everyday 'automatic' emotions like anger that lead to alienation and, ultimately, to war between nations, as Pema Choedron points out.

Whether it's ourselves, our lovers, our bosses, children, local Scrooge, or the political situation, it's more daring and real not to shut anyone out of our hearts and not to make the other into an enemy. If we begin to live like this, we'll find that we actually can't make things completely right or completely wrong anymore, because things are a lot more slippery and playful than that "[So] how are we ever going to change anything?"

It starts with being willing to have a compassionate relationship with the parts of ourselves that we feel are not worthy of existing on the planet. If we are willing through meditation to be mindful not only of what feels comfortable, but also of what pain feels like, if we even aspire to stay awake and open to what we're feeling, to recognize and acknowledge it as best we can in each moment, then something begins to change. As we learn to have compassion for ourselves, the circle of compassion for others — what and whom we can work with, and how — becomes wider.

Mary-Lou
Consadine



Amy and Gully in Rainbowland
Amy and Gully in Rainbowland is a story by W. W. Rowe.

The story is about two American children, called Amy and Gully.

They were playing in their grandmother's attic until they were suddenly standing on a grassy hillside! They were sent there to find the magic "Wishing Stone". But to get to it, they must learn how to look beyond appearances, to be kind to other beings and to believe in themselves. The story is exciting. Mainly because it has magic in it, and they must get past a wicked witch!

I enjoyed reading this book very much because it is well written and it teaches people that we must be kind to everyone. I would recommend the book to anyone, but I think 8-11 years would be the best age group.

Gina Guiliano



TI GARAGE SALE COMING UP IN NOVEMBER!

TI's last garage sale was a huge success, thanks to the help of many people donating goods and helping out on the day. Another fabulous, stupendous TI garage sale full of bargains is being planned for November. More garage sales = more money for TI!
So don't throw away stuff just yet. But please only start putting goods in the scullery in October.

Also please consider volunteering to help out on the day. Contact Sheena in the office on 9596 8900 if you would like to volunteer or have any other queries. More news next month.

Tara Institute

3 Mavis Avenue, East Brighton Victoria 3187
Phone 9596 8900, Fax 9596 4856

Tara Institute is a branch of the FPMT — the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition— a network of Buddhist Centres in Australia and worldwide.



Following the Mahayana teachings of the Buddha — in the tradition of Lama Tsong Khapa — we work to relieve all beings from suffering in all its forms.

Tara Institute is fully audited, non-profit and run by volunteers. We rely entirely on the support of Members, friends, benefactors and bequests. Donations and fees are requested in order to keep the Centre running.

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One-Day Meditation Course



Freeing the Mind: 25 Meditations on Impermanence and Death
Sunday 27, 9am to 5pm

Plans for the upgrading and development of Tara House will be based on the needs of the Centre as identified by the plans for the various activities. Some of the specific issues to be considered will include:

- Electrical rewiring
- External and internal painting
- Improvement of residential facilities
- Improvement of toilet and bathroom facilities
- Creation of residential area for western Sangha

Improvements to the dining room
Improvements to the Gampa access
Preservation of the Heritage features
The advice of an architect has been sought to determine what structural and other limitations will need to be considered.

Once draft plans have been formulated the EC plan to circulate them widely and to give all members of the TI community an opportunity to review and make input to the final document. It is intended that a fully developed and endorsed 2020 Vision statement and strategic plan will be finalised by the end of the year.

We are now looking for advice on layout options, so if you can help us to find architectural and design guidance, please contact Dick Jeffrey through the TI Office

A Vision for TI's Future

The TI Executive Committee has recently embarked on a project to develop and document the goals and plans for Tara Institute over the next 20 years. The 2020 Vision Project will follow on from the work done a couple of years ago by the Review Committee and other preliminary work done by the EC in 1997.

The intention is to fully identify goals and objectives and to prepare strategic plans for their achievement, including a plan for the development of the Mavis Avenue site and buildings.

In addition to clarifying TI's primary objectives, the EC will develop goals and plans for:

- The spiritual program
- Preparation of western teachers
- TI membership
- The residential community
- The Sangha community, both Tibetan and Western
- Healing, palliative and aged care services
- TI business ventures, including the bookshop
- Media and publications activities

Warm welcome to the venerable Kelsang, our new TI sangha member

After months of paperwork and waiting, phone calls and waiting, faxes and waiting, (thankyou, Gabe and Ven Carolyn!) we were at last delighted to collect the Venerable Kelsang from Tullamarine on Saturday 8th August.



Ven Kelsang is here to act as Geshe Doga's attendant and he walked straight into a week of action... including a moving funeral service at the Braebrooke Vietnamese Temple where thousands of people came to pray for the pilgrims killed in and accident on their way to take precepts in Sydney.

Geshe Doga was very reverently welcomed by the host sangha as were a visiting Sri Lankan monk and Vens Carolyn, Max and Kelsang from TI. Centre Directors, Peter and Gabe and Damien Busby were also made very welcome at the ceremony. Please pray for the victims and their families' quick release from suffering.

The next day, Geshe Doga was rushed to hospital suffering from an incapacitating attack of sciatica. Geshe requested no visitors but we pray for his quick recovery.

If undelivered, please return to —
3 Mavis Avenue, East Brighton 3187
Phone (03) 9596 8900 Fax (03) 9596 4856

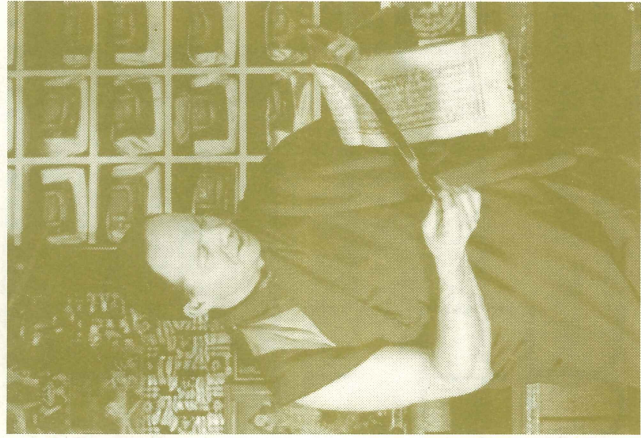


TARA'S
MONTH

Geshe Michael Roach, teaches

Lojong: Making Opportunities out of the Problems of Life

Monday 14th September in
Melba Hall, University of
Melbourne — at 8pm



Registration:

Geshe Michael Roach is not paid for his teachings but to cover the costs of his tour, airfares, venue hire, promotion etc, a donation of \$10 per person is requested.

Seating is limited so you will need to be early to make sure of a place.

To save time on the night, you can book in advance before Friday 4th September or you may prefer to queue and pay at the door.

BOOKINGS: call Sheena in the TI Office

In September, Victorians will have a unique opportunity to hear public teachings on Tibetan Buddhism from esteemed American monk, Geshe Michael Roach.

Michael Roach has been a Buddhist monk since 1983 and the second westerner ever to achieve the qualification of *Geshe*, which is the Tibetan equivalent of a western doctorate or professorship. He has studied under Geshe Losang Tarchin in the United States and completed the 18-year long Geshe course at Sera Me monastery in South India.

One of the remarkable things about Geshe Michael is that he continues to integrate his life of Buddhist study and teaching with a successful business career in the New York diamond industry where he continues to work for half of each year.

As an honours graduate of Princeton University Michael Roach received the Presidential Scholar medallion from the President of the United States before going on to be one of the founders of Andin

International, an American diamond and jewelry firm which is one of the largest manufacturers in New York City. He helped build the firm from zero to its current annual sales in excess of US\$100 million per year.

Geshe Michael's fascination with diamonds is linked directly to his interest in Buddhist philosophy. The diamond, he says, is the symbol in the natural world that is closest to emptiness, the fundamental Buddhist concept about the nature of reality.

In 1989, partly with money he earned in business, Geshe Michael and some friends started the Asian Classics Input Project. The project employs about twenty monks in South India to type all the Tibetan scriptural classics onto CD-ROM. The goal is to put the entire Tibetan canon on-line and eventually to release all these texts in English translation. The transliteration itself is expected, optimistically, to take at least 40 years. Since it took seven hundred years to translate the Buddhist canon from Sanskrit into Tibetan, Geshe Michael expects that it may take a century or two to

complete the English version!

In addition to teaching a five-year intensive course in Buddhist philosophy in New York, Geshe Michael regularly conducts seminars for the business community entitled "Enlightened Business". These seminars present techniques taken from the ancient teachings of Tibetan Buddhism that help modern businessmen become more effective and successful in the marketplace. The seminars include titles such as "Two- Minute Office Meditations for Learning Business Focus" and "Doing the Right Thing: Increasing Business Profits through Honesty and Ethics".

Payments for Geshe Michael's seminars are usually made in the form of donations to the Enlightened Business Fund, which provides free vocational training and related seminars to help refugees and other needy individuals throughout the world learn skills that will help them learn to support themselves.

It has been said of Geshe Michael's teaching that "anyone who has the chance to receive teachings from this eminently qualified, eloquent and inspiring spiritual friend should do so without hesitation." Geshe Michael's way of presenting the Dharma is not merely unique, but very moving, informative and entertaining as well.

While in Australia Geshe Michael will teach in Melbourne, Brisbane, Sydney and Bendigo.

At Atisha Centre he is doing a course called "The Diamond Cutter Sutra" This will start Wednesday September 16th and go to Sunday 20th.

To assist people who cannot attend the full course, it is possible to attend the evening talks on Wednesday, Thursday or Friday, or just the weekend only, preferably arriving Friday evening.

To book contact Ron on 5443 4483 (AH) To secure accommodation at the centre — book early, as especially for the weekend.

(continued from August Newsletter)

R E F U G E

The third object of refuge is the Sangha.

Sangha consists of those who are endowed with wisdom. They are like the nurses and friends who help us to recuperate from an illness. Sangha is not only those who wear red or yellow robes, but also those friends who influence us beneficially.

These spiritual friends energize and inspire us, and are therefore to be clearly distinguished from ordinary friends who hold us back. For example, everyone at this present meditation course comes from a different background and has a different outlook.

But we have opened our hearts to each other and shared some profound experiences. We may in fact feel more warmly towards friends we have made here than towards older friends at home. Why is this? Because we sense a spirit of unity: together we have responded to the beauty of dharma wisdom.

True spiritual friends support one another in their practice and promote each other's growth in knowledge and awareness. We need support, because we are so easily influenced by our environment and by the people around us.

Let us suppose that I am a heavy drinker, but have decided to take myself in hand and give the habit up. Then a friend says "What a hot day! Let's have a drink somewhere". So I go with him that day, and again the next day, and soon I find myself back in the same old rut.

Moreover, in ordinary friendship we often confuse attachment with affection. For instance, my friend might show his apparent affection for me by suggesting that we go on a drinking bout together. If I decline, he might think me unfriendly and feel rejected, so I give in. This is how friends can bring us down. He didn't

use threats or force but by displaying the kind of affection that consists only of clinging and attachment, he led me into a situation I would rather have avoided. It is therefore essential that we develop the wisdom-eye that distinguishes true love from mere attachment, and that can see the difference between what benefits us and what harms us. We should rely entirely on this wisdom, rather than on our ever-fluctuating emotional responses.

I can clearly see the importance of spiritual friendship when I visit my students around the world.

When they are among friends in the supportive environment of a meditation course, they are happy and enthusiastic. But after they leave and try to practise on their own, their energy slowly subsides, and by the time I see them again they are back in the doldrums. This shows our need for strengthening influences that keep our energy flowing in the right channels. Whatever persons provides this influence - be they eastern or western, white or black, male or female - are of the true sangha.

It should be clear by now that the impulse to take refuge arises from seeing the necessity of developing our minds and cultivating our wisdom. Being buddhist is an inner experience, and not one that can necessarily be measured by our outward behaviour.

I often meet people who hold no particular religious or philosophical views but who, in a quiet and simple way, take refuge in wisdom. They are sensitive to their own and to other's needs and try to give their lives meaning by developing themselves and helping others. In my opinion, such people are buddhists, although they may never have heard of Shakyamuni Buddha or his dharma.

Taking refuge is not difficult, but it would be a mistake to think that we can passively sit back and let Buddha, Dharma and Sangha do the

work for us. Buddha said "You are responsible for your own confusion, and you are responsible for your own liberation". What saves us from confusion is our wisdom. If we take refuge while fully understanding the meaning of the three objects of refuge, our wisdom will grow of itself and fill us with energetic determination to follow the path to liberation.

Once we have formally taken refuge, we assume a certain responsibility for our behaviour. We should watch our mind and examine the inner processes of action and reaction. "What is my mind doing now? What impulse is arising? When I act like this, what is the result?" For example, we should observe how others react when we utter empty, unnecessary words or when we talk without understanding what we are saying. Words are very powerful. Bodily communication also has a strong effect on others, our posture, our movements and our facial expression make a deep impression on other peoples' minds. Since most of our problems involve other people, it is important to be aware of our behaviour and to avoid harming anyone.

This process of action and reaction is called karma. Karma may seem like a technical, philosophical term, but it is nothing other than our own experience. It tells us what results to expect from our actions, and thus plays a vital role in spiritual practice.

We want to meditate and develop wisdom, but if we make no attempt to control our behavior and our distraught, scattered mind, we shall not get very far.

For this reason we say, "Watch your karma". We must act with discriminating wisdom in order to create the best internal conditions for achieving our aims.

(by Lama Thubten Yeshe from *WISDOM ENERGY 2* Published by Wisdom Culture)

....to be continued

P R O G R A M

One-Day Meditation Course Freeing the Mind:

Meditations on Impermanence and Death Sunday 27, 9am to 5pm

"From the first instant of life, impermanence is with us.

From the moment of conception decay begins.

*In the second moment of life a change has already occurred
and the first moment has disappeared. That is impermanence and death."*

(Lama Yeshe, quoted from Wisdom Energy 2, 1979)

With this precious human life, each of us has great potential for spiritual growth – the development of love and compassion, clarity and wisdom, and the chance to free ourselves and others from suffering. However, this opportunity will not stay with us forever! Life is short, and death could happen at any time, without warning. Meditating on death and impermanence is an effective antidote to the deeply entrenched idea most of us have that death is too far away to even think about.



These meditations force us to decide what values, attitudes and actions are worthwhile. When we gain a deeply felt insight into the transient nature of our body, our life and other phenomena, we will spend our time wisely, avoiding negative actions and attitudes, thus freeing the mind to cultivate positive values and actions, which are the true cause of happiness.

These short courses provide an opportunity for us to calm the mind and re-acquaint it with positive and more realistic ways of thinking. The course comprises a discourse from the Ven. Geshe Doga, guided meditations, and discussions.

RSE FEE: \$35 (\$25 for Members), which includes a 2-course vegetarian lunch and refreshments. BOOKINGS ARE ESSENTIAL. Please phone the TI Office on 9596 8900.

TI'S BONZA BOOK SALE!

Saturday 12 September at 8am

Come along and get some great bargains at the dirt-cheap TI Bonza Book Sale.

We need:

- i) **books for sale**
- ii) **volunteers to help sell books on the day for about an hour**
- iii) **publicity - tell everyone what great bargains they'll get!**

Please leave books in the scullery at TI, and to volunteer, leave a message with Sheena at the office on 9596 8900 or talk to Chris McGlone at TI. Thanks!

M O N D A Y S

7, 14, 21 and 28 September –
8pm

INTRODUCTION TO BUDDHIST MEDITATION

with *Damien Busby*

Damien Busby, long-time Member, student and resident of TI, will lead this month's introductory series. If you have always wanted to learn something about meditation but have not known how and where to start, then this is the night for you!



Damien will explain a number of meditation techniques over the course of the month, which can be used to understand and diminish negative states of mind on the one hand and enhance positive states of mind on the other.

With practice our minds will become more open and relaxed and we can develop compassion for ourselves and others.

**A facilities fee of \$5 per class is requested to help cover administration expenses (Members free).
Just turn up at 7.50pm or phone the TI Office on 9596 8900.**

Auspicious days in September

Auspicious days are calculated according to the lunar calendar. On these days the benefits of action are greatly multiplied, so they are especially good for spiritual practice.

Tuesday 1	Tibetan 10	Tsog	(Guru Puja)
Sunday 6	Tibetan 15	Full Moon	(Precepts)
Tuesday 15	Tibetan 25	Tsog	(Guru Puja)
Sunday 20	Tibetan 30	New Moon	(Precepts)
Tuesday 29	Tibetan 8	Tara Day	(Tara Puja, precepts)

T U E S D A Y S

1, 8, 15, 22 and 29 at 8pm

STUDY GROUP

Study Group provides a stable and supportive environment in which to study Buddhism in greater depth. The Ven. Geshe Doga continues to teach from the Lam Rim, a Buddhist text that contains the complete teachings of the Buddha. The current topic is *bodhicitta* - the altruistic mind of enlightenment. Evenings run in six-week blocks and students are asked to attend all six sessions.



If you have any queries about joining Study Group, please contact Ven. Carolyn Lawler on 9596 7410.

WATER BOWL OFFERINGS

Tuesday 1st at 8am

"Anyone who is having difficulties in their job or business and thinks that they don't have time to do offerings at home could sponsor offerings at TI."

Lama Zopa Rinpoche

Lama Zopa Rinpoche has stressed the benefits of making water bowl offerings to overcome hindrances, illness or family problems.

Please contact Ven. Carolyn Lawler on 9596 7410 if you would like to sponsor light offerings and water-bowl offerings to overcome your own or others' difficulties.

W E D N E S D A Y S

2, 9, 16, 23 and 30 at 8pm

EVENINGS WITH GESHE DOGA



Wednesday nights provide a great introduction to the wonderful teaching style of the Ven Geshe Doga, TI's resident Tibetan Lama. Using the text, *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons*, as a basis for discussion, Geshe-la integrates the wisdom of the Buddha's teachings with practical advice on how to diminish the painful aspects of our lives and develop positive states of mind that lead to greater happiness and peace. These evenings are suitable for new and more advanced students alike.

If you would like to find out more about Wednesday teachings, please call Ven. Carolyn Lawler on 9596 7410.

S U N D A Y S

6 and 20 at 10am

DHARMA CLUB for children

John Carroll runs this wonderful program for children every second Sunday. The children are introduced to simple meditation techniques, stories of the Buddha, some rituals such as making light and incense offerings, and Buddhist art.

For more information please contact the Centre Office on 9596 8900.

HEALING SUPPORT GROUP

Thursday 17 at 7.30pm

The Healing Support Group is for those with life-threatening and serious illness (and their carers) seeking an effective way to meet the challenges that such crises can bring.

Led by Bob Sharples and Ven. Carolyn Lawler, the aim of the program is to create a warm, healing environment that enables participants to discover the source of healing within their own minds, using the wisdom and the meditation techniques of a living spiritual tradition. Under the guidance of Lama Zopa Rinpoche, Bob has been leading the Healing Meditation Courses and Healing Support Group for several years. Ven. Carolyn has been practising meditation for more than ten years.

For more information on TI's Healing Program please contact Ven. Carolyn Lawler on 9596 7410.

SEPTEMBER

WEEK 1

TUESDAY 1

8am - Water Bowl Offering⁵

6pm - Guru Puja

8pm - Study Group

WEDNESDAY 2

8pm - Evening With Geshe Doga

SUNDAY 6

10am - Kids' Dharma Club

WEEK 2

MONDAY 7

8pm - Intro to Buddhist Meditation

TUESDAY 8

8pm - Study Group

WEDNESDAY 9

8pm - Evening with Geshe Doga

THURSDAY 10

8pm - Healing Volunteers

WEEK 3

MONDAY 14

8pm - Intro to Buddhist Meditation

TUESDAY 15

6pm - Guru Puja

8pm - Study Group

WEDNESDAY 16

8pm - Evening with Geshe Doga

THURSDAY 17

7.30pm - Healing Support Group

SUNDAY 20

10am - Kids' Dharma Club

WEEK 4

MONDAY 21

8pm - Intro to Buddhist Meditation

TUESDAY 22

8pm - Study Group

WEDNESDAY 23

8pm - Evening with Geshe Doga

SUNDAY 28

9am to 5pm



One-Day Course:

Freeing the Mind

WEEK 5

MONDAY 28

8pm - Intro to Buddhist Meditation

TUESDAY 29

6pm - Tara Puja

8pm - Study Group

WEDNESDAY 30

8pm - Evening with Geshe Doga