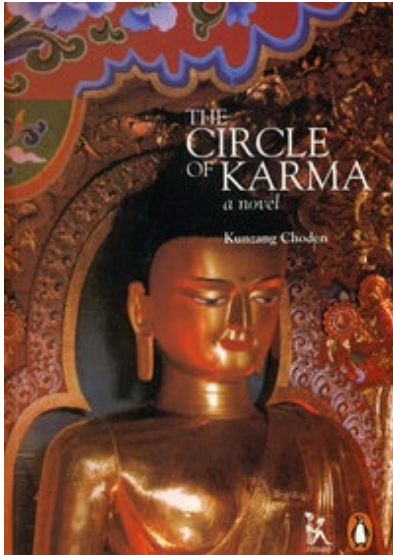




The WOAHA Book Club reviews

The Circle of Karma by Kunzang Choden



Written in 2005, *The Circle of Karma* is a story about inner and outer journeys. Told from the perspective of Tsomo, an illiterate rural woman from Bhutan in the 1950s, the novel explores how the restrictive expectations imposed on girls and women shape the character's need to escape her village environment and choose her own path in life. This is not easy, for Tsomo is poor and powerless. She discovers toil, despair and betrayal, but also friendship, loyalty, and spiritual endeavour. As readers, we are drawn into her world - we taste butter tea, walk up gruelling mountain paths, live in small and simple huts, and feel the aura of a spiritual leader and the joy of peacefulness. The end of the book invites us to reflect on the circle of karma, and on the acceptance that can come from looking back on a long life lived.

The book challenged our cultural assumptions, made us ask lots of questions about Buddhism and worldviews, and delighted us as always through the discovery of new horizons. It also gave us an opportunity to hear first-hand from a colleague from Bhutan on how the country has changed since the period depicted in the novel!

Our next book (season 5) will be selected from Latin American/Hispanic literature. If you would like to join the friendly WOAHA Book Club, please contact Sonia Fèvre s.fevre@woah.org.

We wish to thank Sonia Fèvre for submitting this article to *In-house Times*.

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