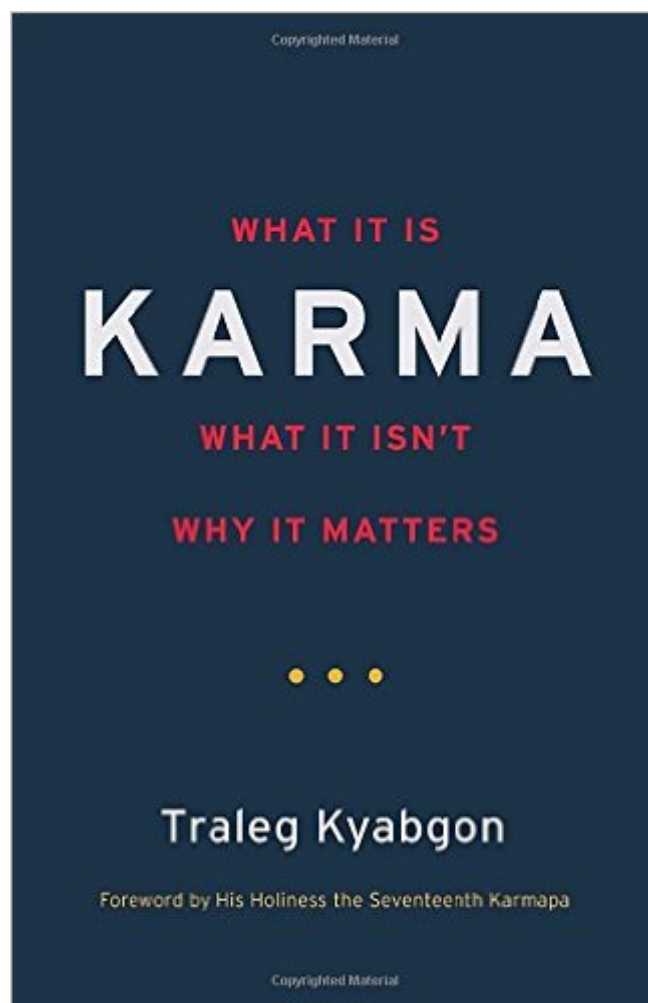


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Karma: What It Is, What It Isn't, Why It Matters



Synopsis

A jargon-free explanation of two central teachings of the Buddha: karma and rebirth. The Buddha's teaching on karma (literally, "action") is nothing other than his compassionate explanation of the way things are: our thoughts and actions determine our future, and therefore we ourselves are largely responsible for the way our lives unfold. Yet this supremely useful teaching is often ignored due to the misconceptions about it that abound in popular culture, especially oversimplifications that make it seem like something not to be taken seriously. Karma is not simple, as Traleg Kyabgon shows, and it's to be taken very seriously indeed. He cuts through the persistent illusions we cling to about karma to show what it really is—the mechanics of why we suffer and how we can make the suffering end. He explains how a realistic understanding of karma is indispensable to Buddhist practice, how it provides a foundation for a moral life, and how understanding it can have a transformative effect on the way we relate to our thoughts and feelings and to those around us.

Book Information

Paperback: 160 pages

Publisher: Shambhala (June 30, 2015)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1590308883

ISBN-13: 978-1590308882

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.5 x 8.4 inches

Shipping Weight: 9.1 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (31 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #67,338 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #6 in [Books > Religion & Spirituality > Other Eastern Religions & Sacred Texts > Karma](#) #14 in [Books > History > World > Religious > Buddhism](#) #16 in [Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Philosophy > Eastern > Buddhism > History](#)

Customer Reviews

This book covers an enormous amount of ground in relatively few pages, and as with all of Traleg Rinpoche's writing there's a level of clarity and precision, not to mention depth, that seem to put him in a league of his own among contemporary Tibetan Buddhist masters. The strengths of the book, in my estimation, are his concise coverage of karma and rebirth teachings in the Indo-Tibetan Buddhist traditions. He's particularly strong on explaining the Madyamaka and Yogacara

contributions. He also gives a concise summary of the Tibetan tradition's bardo teachings, but doesn't address the rather interesting fact those teachings aren't found either in the early suttas or in any other Buddhist tradition. Rare among Tibetan teachers he really did make an effort to learn about karma as the historical Buddha taught it in the Pali sutras, but he relied on older material and was not up-to-date on contemporary scholarship from such authors as Richard Gombrich or Analayo, with the former in particular having shed an enormous amount of light on the subtlety of the Buddha's teaching on these topics. I recommend "Good Karma, Bad Karma, What Exactly is Karma?" by S. Dhammika (available online and one sometimes finds print copies) as the single best concise book on this topic but consider Traleg Rinpoche's book to be a close second to it in terms of clarity and value. He was an amazing master and is much missed.

This is a clear, refreshing and in fact surprising look at what karma really is for Buddhists, clearing the haze of confusion introduced by pop culture as well as the often confusion with the very different understanding of karma in Hinduism. It looks at the origins of karma theory. This short but comprehensive book that is extremely readable, for people new to the subject or old-time practitioners.

I have run a Karma Kagyu meditation center since the mid-1980s (The Heart Center KTC - Karma Thegsum Chöling) and have, fortunately, been able to meet and spend time with many of the Kagyu teachers. This book on Karma by Ven. Traleg Kyabgon Rinpoche is brilliant, a much needed antidote to our lack of authentic knowledge regarding karma. An odd suggestion I suppose, but I found this book (for me) was best read by starting at the last chapter, and reading each chapter successively in reverse order. Why? Because I find the frontage of the book a little formal and Traleg Rinpoche IMO gets more direct and practical as he goes on. By the time I read from the back up to the front I am ready to understand it more formally. Just my two cents. This book goes into depth not only on karma, but on death and the difference between reincarnation and rebirth. In general, Traleg Rinpoche speaks to just what most of us wonder about, what happens at death and exactly what attains rebirth. In essence, Traleg Rinpoche has embedded many kernels for deep thought in this text, each one capable of being expanded into an illumination. These years I practice more than I read, but this book is not only worth reading, I consider perhaps the most direct transmission I have read (aside from ancient pith instructions) for many years. I cannot recommend it enough!

This book offers a clear explanation of Karma primarily from the Buddhist perspective. I appreciated

the comparison and distinctions made between the Buddhist and Hindu view of Karma as well as other aspects on various Buddhist ideology-particular a concise discussion on emptiness. Its a quick read, clear and easy to follow. Highly recommend it.

I really enjoyed this little gem. Rinpoche's explanations are clear and precise. He packs a wallop in a very short text. I was amazed at his brilliant explanation of the Yogacara philosophy in 6 pages! Other complicated and extensive subjects were equally handled in very succinct and informative manner. Of course one can do more exploration and extensive studying, but for a wider audience it was perfect. I also recommend reading his brilliant text on Mahamudra: Mind at Ease.

This is the clearest examination of Karma I have seen in print. In modern western culture, and acceptance of karma is very common but most people have scant understanding of the full picture of the theory of Karma. The author goes into the history of karma and examines the entire topic in great detail. An excellent read.

This short book offers the clearest explanation I have seen of this difficult and often misunderstood term. Careful to distinguish Buddhist usage of the word from very different notions of karma in Hinduism and in Western pop culture, the book is well grounded in a thorough understanding of western as well as eastern thought and belief. We are fortunate to have this book.

This book creates an amazing bridge from Western culture and philosophy to an understanding of the Eastern practices and origins of Buddhism, as well as giving an in-depth insight into the intricate and all-encompassing notion of karma that is somewhat oversimplified and degraded in the popular culture.

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