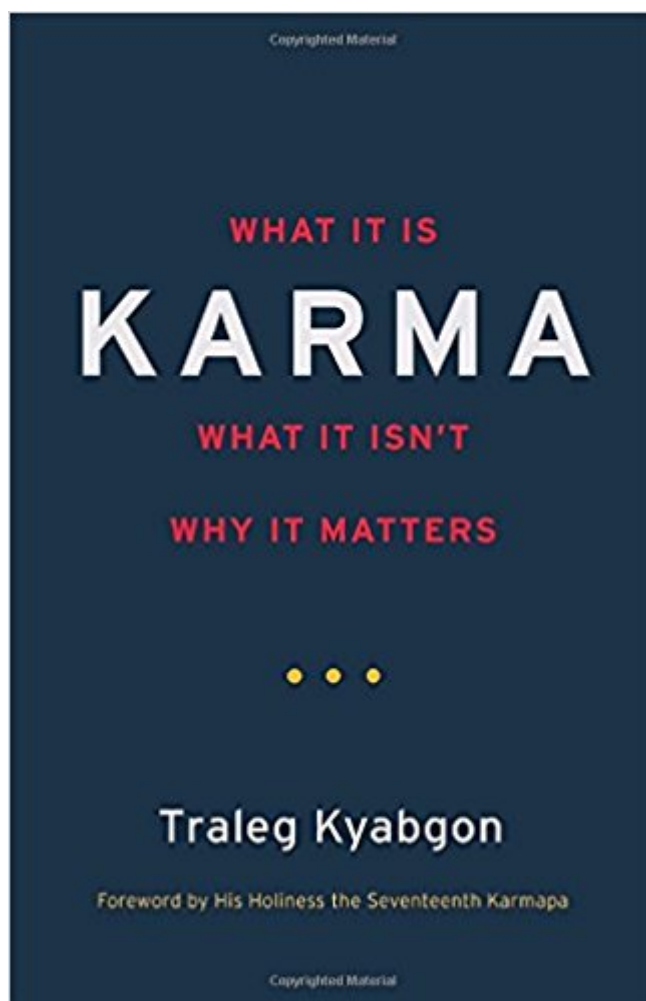


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Karma: What It Is, What It Isn't, Why It Matters



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.

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Customer Reviews

"Karma is often a misunderstood topic in Buddhism. This clear explanation from such an eminent teacher as the late Traleg Kyabgon Rinpoche, who possessed great knowledge of both dharma and the Western mind-set, will bring profound benefit to us all." —Dzigar Kongtröl Rinpoche, author of *It's Up to You*

TRALEG KYABGON (1955-2012) was born in eastern Tibet and educated by many great masters of all four major lineages of Tibetan Buddhism. He is the founder of the Kagyu E-Vam Buddhist Institute, which is headquartered in Melbourne, Australia, with a major practice center in New York City. He taught extensively at universities and Buddhist centers in the US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Southeast Asia beginning in 1980, and is the author of numerous books that present Buddhist teachings to Western readers, including *The Essence of Buddhism* and *Mind at Ease*.

I have run a Karma Kagyu meditation center since the mid-1980s (The Heart Center KTC ཨ་ཁ་ཀུ་ཡུ་ཀར་མེ་གསུམ་ཅན་གྱི་ལྷོ་ཁྱེད་) 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*.

I loved this book. This is easily one of my favorite Buddhist books and I will re-read it in the future. I've been studying Buddhism for half my life, but I still had questions on the concept of karma. This book helped clear those questions right up. The author is great at wording Buddhist ideas in a way that westerners can understand. Karma (along with nirvana, emptiness, and rebirth) is very misunderstood idea in western culture (and others). Most western Buddhists I've met don't even understand what it is or how it works in their lives. I highly recommend this book to anyone wanting to clear up this misconception!

The best book on karma I have ever read, written by a Tibetan monk for a secular or generically spiritual American audience (i.e., not full of Buddhist terms and concepts). The Buddhist view of karma is not as fatalistic as the Hindu view, I was pleasantly surprised to learn. I was also surprised to learn that not everything IS karmic; that is, there is also luck and just being in the wrong place at the wrong time. In these latter two cases, karma enters the picture with what you choose to DO in such a situation. Good clear writing and very empowering.

This is a great book in that it messages to explain the complications of an often misunderstood Buddhist doctrine, but Kyabgon goes further and explains the pre-Buddhist developments of the concept and contrasts Buddhist ideas of karma with its development in Hinduism and, in the second half of the book, contrasts and compares with Christian doctrines as well. Kyabgon makes more references and explains in the concept in a rational way, but does "modernize" the traditional concept in a way that changes it. Kyabgon also shows the various developments and shifts in the meaning of idea of Karma in its development in classical Indian and Tibetan Buddhism without invalidating other Buddhist understandings or denying significant developments and differences. An excellent book.

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 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.

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