The Law And Meaning Of Karma In Buddhism

Buddhism began about 563 BC, which is about 500 years before Christianity even began. It was founded by Indian Spiritual teacher Siddhartha Gautama also known as Buddha, meaning the “Enlighted One”. He wrote a religious doctrine that focuses on being spiritual with one self as opposed to worshipping a supreme being. Buddhism is no doubt one of the great religions of the world. But to call it as a religion by itself would do injustice. It is more a school that teach moral thoughts and principles as well as a worship religion that preaches the idea of spiritual development leading to kindness and wisdom. For Buddha, everybody should want to follow this in his or her path through life. There are several basic values to be studied and practiced in Buddhism. These teachings revolved from past experiences Buddha has experienced in his life that was used and still using to teach to others.

Buddhism differ from other religion through their “after life” beliefs. Some religion, their ultimate goal is to be with the Creator the Father Almighty. Yet, when you did not follow their beliefs and you did not make your stay here on Earth worthwhile the punishment you will receive in your after life is you will go to hell and suffer. However, in Buddhism the ultimate goal is to reach Nirvana it is not a place rather it is a state of mind. With this, all of the negative traits will be removed. To have a nirvana, you should be enlightened. In this state of mind, greed, ignorance and hatred does not exist. Although, if you were not to reach Nirvana, you will enter samsara; the cycle of birth and rebirth. It is all because of your karma, to reap what you have sow.

In early Buddhism there is no concrete belief of rebirth and karma. Instead showing of being incompetent, the early Buddhist notion of karma focused on what the mind thinks and do every moment. With these actions and ideas, it now lead that rebirth is congruent with the doctrines of impermanence and no-self through philosophical inquiry in the Buddhist traditions. Through the years, the basic idea was that our intentional actions were based on our emotions or our seeds in mind that in time will ripen into future.

Karma is a Sanskrit word that means “action” or “doing”. O’ Brien stated that in Buddhism, karma has a more specific meaning, which is volitional or willful action. Things we choose to do or say or think set karma into motion. The law of karma is therefore a law of cause and effect as defined in Buddhism. Additionally, karma is not a superstitious belief, it is an automatic law of justice. Karma is the fundamental of Buddhism doctrine. The law of karma is a special example of the law of cause and effect, whereby all our actions, speech and mind are causes and all our experiences are their effects. The Buddha has defined three types of karma that a human being can do: (i) The karma of words, (ii) The karma of sarir and (iii) The karma done by mind. Among the three karmas, the karma of mind or the intention is the most important of all mental events because it gives direction to the mind, determining whether we engage with virtuous, non-virtuous, or neutral objects. Geshe Rabten, a modern Tibetan author, thus states that the law of karma as a matter even more forcefully: “Just as a seed cannot grow into a plant of a different type, so our actions can only produce actions of their own type. Buddhism teaches that besides karma there are other forces that shape our lives. The law of karma helps us to improve the quality of our life with that understanding. Naturally, we will avoid those actions that lead to suffering for both ourselves and others, and we will now experience greater happiness and create the causes for a more pure form of happiness in the future. In Buddhism, karma is

fundamentally related to suffering and by implication, to the idea of nirvana or the cessation of suffering through individual liberation.

However, other Indian religious tradition such as Hinduism and Jainism have their own theories of karma. Further, Hinduism is in fact the well- known in the West. The Buddhism theory of karma has different notable key points from the other Indian counterparts. “An unvirtuous action can only give rise to suffering, and a positive action can only give rise to happiness.” This order can never be mixed up.

In Buddhism the law of karma is the moral law of causation - doing good actions will give you good results and vice versa. The characteristic of a deed, which will have an effect in its consequences. But in Hinduism, the karmic quality of a deed will be determine through performing what is correct through a person’s duty more especially in his caste duties that he counts. While in Jainism it is based on their seven truths or their fundamental principles. They believed that karmic principles are drawn to the soul generated by the activities of mind, speech and body. The theory of karma and moral justice should not be confused with each other. The concept of it was originated from a divine being, a God. Who is the lawmaker and decides what is wrong and right. The term 'justice' is ambiguous and dangerous, and it is done to humanity in its name more harm than good. While the theory of karma is the cause and effect of action and reaction. It is not external force nor a system of punishment or reward but it is an automatic justice. Buddhists believe that our fates is in our hands. However, not all of us know this, which lead to suffering. Buddhists encourage us to be conscious of our behavior.

For the early Buddhists, when there was still no caste distinctions they evaluate karmic quality through an act in terms of their moral and ethical criteria. Specifically, it is the mental factors which helps the conscience to determine its consequences. All bad karma arise from the roots of destructive traits; these are greed, hatred and misconception. While generosity, loving-kindness and wisdom will emerge good karma.

According to Sayadaw, the result of our own past actions and our own present doings. We ourselves are responsible for our own happiness and misery. We create our own Heaven. We create our own Hell. We are the architects of our own fate. As stated in one of the fundamental teachings of Buddha, the Four Noble Truths- life is suffering. We should know that suffering is part of our life. Buddha taught the truth of suffering because everything that takes place in this world is a form of suffering. That suffering is part of our life, everyone will and feel the suffer that life will give to us. Through suffering, we should be motivated to do something for us to never feel the pain of suffering again. That we should weigh our actions well, to double think the decisions that we will do. An intention is an action of the mind. It can be expressed through physical or verbal actions. In addition, I read an article that said action or karma, has two kinds: the action intention and the planned action. The deliberate behavior is the thinking or desire to commit to a physical or verbal act. The planned behavior is our intention's physical or verbal speech. In fact, karma refers to intentional action, but in general use it includes the intended action and the resulting seeds left in the mind. Buddhists are trying to cultivate and avoid bad good karma. Buddhism's goal, however, is to completely escape the cycle of rebirth, not simply to acquire good karma and thus be born into a more pleasant state. These states are impermanent, though preferable to human life: even gods eventually die.

Our measure as a human is not being judged by the past or the mistakes we have done. For that hand can change at any moment. We have our own free will, we can set or manage on how

we will move in this life. If you are suffering today, do not be miserable for suffering is not forever. Just like what the Four Noble Truth trying to teach us, that there's a way to cease suffering. Just do actions that will help you reduce the karmic residue.

Furthermore, Jones called the meanings of karma as universal and psychological. When talking about law of karma, Buddhists only have one meaning of that often times and that is the psychological meaning. In this, doing intentional actions of body, speech and mind have mental consequences. Like, when you do actions that were good, good deeds will come back to you. As when you do bad action, you will encounter negative happenings. Learning these, it will help you to practice good ethics and will lead to more happier and integrated self. While when talking about the universal meaning of karma. It moves between two different realms. According to Jones, this universal karma is a system of cosmic justice whereby moral acts never fade into oblivion, but record their moral quality in the fabric of reality until the very universe rewards and punishes good and evildoers. To sum it up, both has different implications in life. Universal law of karma, is a matter of religious belief while psychological law is something that we can observe through time.

However, the theory of karma is not a bondage. Tenzing stated that it should not be a dead weight lying on the shoulders of man, hindering his work and implying complete pre-determination as what he should be. Rather, it should help an individual to know what is wrong and what is right and have a free choice. This doctrine also explains to us our freedom and responsibilities.

In this world, most people cannot comprehend that nothing happens to him that he does not deserve. They believed that their karma will be visible to their present life but it is not. In fact it the incident that they faced may result as action of their past, some are free acts, other may be on the environment. The theory of karma requires individuals to have free will. By means of this, Buddhists saw that karma has multiple loops, the past and the present actions being the help to shaped your current situation at the same time the present actions will help to figure the current and the future. The nature of this freedom is symbolized in an image used by the early Buddhists: flowing water. Sometimes the flow from the past is so strong that little can be done except to stand fast, but there are also times when the flow is gentle enough to be diverted in almost any direction.

Being aware on karma helps us to live in harmony with the people and circumstances that we encounter in our every day life. We will learn to accept our experiences, both good and bad by understanding the previous doings of our body, speech and mind. Also, acknowledging our attitude helps us to live a meaningful way of life and will strengthen the determination to maintain the views and intentions in our daily life. moreover, it will help us to purify our actions and minds by enriching our actions and our mind. In this religion, ignorance to suffering is the big hindrance for not reaching the liberation. You should do good actions that will surely reward and help you.

Human life is so exquisite, that having spiritual growth was a spectacular chance for one's self. Buddhists suggest that you should not blow that given opportunity, life is too short and it may be cut anytime. Always remember that good deeds are rewarded in the next life. While doing evil deed will make you suffer in the next life. Based on your moral law it will help you the visualize of what will your next life would be. From an article that I read, in your after life, karma may affect your social status, wealth, intelligence, beauty as well as your longevity. Moreover, good

moral actions lead to wholesome rebirths while bad moral actions lead to unwholesome rebirths.

After reading, learning and understanding these teachings of Buddha were a big help to achieve our ultimate goal. Buddha will help you to know more of yourself at the same time helping you to reach the liberation through doing good action. If all of us follow and do his teachings, I think we would make our world a better place. There is no doubt that this will benefit all of us. It is like hitting not even two birds rather three birds with one stone.