

BOOK REVIEW

The Law of Society May Not Be Fair, but The Law of Karma Is Always Fair

Author: Benjawan Poomsan. San Francisco,

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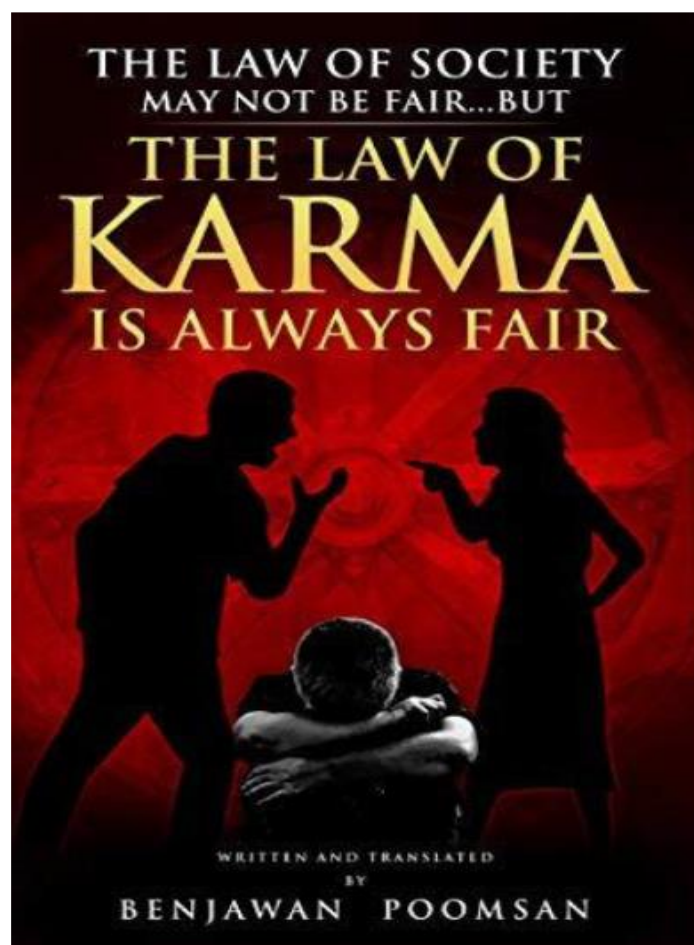
ผู้วิจารณ์หนังสือ: ณฤพลวัฒน์ หัสตินทร ณ อยุรยา (Narupollawat Hastindra Na Ayudhaya)

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The law of society may not be fair, but the law of karma is always fair by Benjawan Poomsan, a professional English-Thai-Lao interpreter in the United States of America provides the broader perfectives of trilingual knowledge: English, Thai, and Lao language and a wide range of explanations and demonstrations of the complex court cases and adjudication in US legal contexts including US court system that resulted in the intense needs of being accompanied by a registered bilingual or trilingual interpreter in a variety of the lawsuits in which either a plaintiff or defendant might have insufficient knowledge of a foreign language and need interpreting assistance during prosecution. This book consists of eleven chapters, and the author combines her interpreting experiences and fruitful knowledge to be written aiming to fictionally educate and entertain people as readers with legal knowledge and the law of karma subject to the Buddhist Principles in a rapidly changing society.

Chapter 1 , Beyond Our Radar Screen, comes up with narrations of the lives of both author and her close friend related to their expectation and satisfaction in their lives and work. In addition, it discusses the supernatural and mysterious things according to Buddhism they believed that those did exist in different worlds leading to further understanding of the effects of what people did in the past usually caused the bad karma in people's current lives which helped reader have the better and deeper understanding of the law of karma of the main characters in upcoming chapters.

Chapter 2, Sleeping with the Enemies, shared the author's experience of "domestic violence case" in San Francisco Superior Court providing the interpretation service in Thai-English interpretation of lawsuits for Thai lady who got married to an American man. This shared legal knowledge, and imperfect marriage life, and cultural differences related to Thai-American family support which were considered extremely crucial for spouses from different family structures to learn how to get across if an unavoidable problem occurred.

Chapter 3 , the Scapegoat, indicated the lawsuit related to the Thai restaurant owners: two Thai sisters committed the financial crimes which caused them into the Federal Court due to tax evasion and wage issues. One of them ended up in the federal prison as the so-called scapegoat. Besides the issue of the US law violation, the author shares the case of business conflict between two siblings from their extended family who migrated to the US for a better life, but their blood relationship seemed insignificant if compared to success in love, money, and business. The younger sister was left behind and sentenced in jail whereas the older one was happy without anything bad happened in her life. It had been questioned when it would be her time for a bad karma.

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Chapter 4, *I really love you, but...*, reflected on the Thai female's luxurious lifestyle struggling to be the best on social networking and Thai community which caused her into the failure of the marriage life with an American millionaire. This interesting chapter conveyed the sad story of the divorced case in the US court which attracted excessive attention and public and media, and those who were interested in were allowed to attend the court proceeding. Besides, this indicated the bench trial in which the final decision was made without a jury, but only the judge. This could be found in 48 states of the US court system, but not in the state of Georgia and Texas.

Chapter 5, *Payback Time*, describes people who were suffered by their payback time due to what they had done in the past. The author came up with the case of defamation lawsuits between two best friends and business partners that seemed to be difficult to win the case and to prove how one was defamed because the First Amendment of the US provided the freedom of speech for people. This interesting chapter also narrates the background of the main characters with their past actions influencing their current lives which ended up with both the legal sentences and their payback time for their bad karma.

Chapter 6, *Wrong Speech*, indicates that various examples of lying or “the wrong speech” which was opposite to “the right speech” of the people. It described how each type of lying could critically cause people in the gigantic troubles, in danger, or even in jail. According to the author's experiences as an interpreter, she had to swear before conducting her interpretation duty, but she encountered an uncomfortable feeling when her customers lied under oath to win their particular cases for saving themselves from jail. With interesting law cases in the US court, she explained that the different types of wrong speeches in detail, such as DUI trial, prostitution allegations, and marriage fraud, and ended chapter with good teaching for real happiness of life.

Chapter 7, *Shackles*, narrates the story of a Thai man who won the Diversity Visa Lottery and moved to the US which allowed him to bring his family members that included the child whose age was under 21 with him. Since moving to the US, their lives seemed brighter and happier, but something beyond expectation occurred. The most suffering incident of the family happened when their 16-years-old son committed the alleged crime that caused him to be brought to the adult court instead of the Juvenile Justice Center. This indicated the legal cases of the US court system that “the serious case, such as murder, rape, arson, and robbery committed by someone under 16 must be heard in the adult court” (Poomsan, 2019: 209). This interesting case was brought as the shackling example of Buddhist belief subject to one's law of Karma and the wheel of Karma.

Chapter 8, What goes around comes around, reflects the wheel of Karma each main character mentioned in this book encountered according to Buddhism. The author explained her interpretation experiences of various legal cases for people and what she had seen from people's lives affected by what they did in the past in terms of both good and bad karma. Many interesting characters as her clients using her interpretation services were unbelievably and amazingly related to one another in different causes and effects. As seen from each story, some people seemed to live and perform best, but they were continuously in huge troubles and difficulties for their whole life. On the contrary, some people seemed to be very bad, but they always received good things in return. This could imply that the law of karma really exists; however, one thing that people would never discover if the past life could really carry any good or bad karma and influence their present life

Chapter 9, The Other Dimensions, describes some benefits of the medication practices in various aspects through the author's belief and imaginative narration. According to Buddhism, it is believed that conducting meditation with appropriate techniques helps people improve their immunity system, mental strength, and reduction of anxiety. In addition, the author shared her meditation practices with imaginative stories explaining how things occurred and affected people influenced by their previous lives, as well as the reasons why people were born to be human beings experiencing various difficulties and different good-or-bad karmas in this present life as were clearly illustrated through the examples of her acquaintances and customers using her translation and interpretation services who experienced bad luck in their present lives which were the result of bad karma they did in the previous life.

Chapter 10, Parallel Worlds, depicts the imaginative and supernatural stories of the author and other main characters comparing to the current observable world in this book. Parallel Worlds refer to other unknown and imaginative worlds or dreams. However, it could be considered nonsense for some people or readers, but this chapter illustrated some points of human beings and people's lives in the aspects of who we were, what we did, and what happened to our lives which resulted from the previous lives. For example, someone usually had domestic violence and got hurt mentally and physically, and some people had done all good things in almost entire life but were never happy in life. These reflect teaching principles of Buddhism in terms of unavoidable karmas of individuals or the wake-up call of one's own karmas that some people still need to find the answer.

Chapter 11, End of Suffering, describes the Buddhist people's way of life in the monastery according to Buddhist principles. Also, this chapter depicted the suffering and the problems of the people they were facing in terms of Buddhism, such as Four Noble Truths, Five Aggregates, Five Precepts, and

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Nirvana Condition which were stated as the better way and recommended practices to end up all suffering in life. Some of the practical teachings were taken to remind people to be aware of an individual's karmas and group karmas. However, this seems imaginative to some readers who did not understand well in this religion and belief, but for those, who were interested to learn new things, such as various belief and culture, the life story of people and teaching principles mentioned could be good things to be applied in the rest of the life.

From reviewing this book, it is considered a must-read and real-page-turner fiction book as one of the very meaningful resources for advanced undergraduate law and EFL/ESL students upwards and those who may be interested in studying English for law because this book consists of lots of legal terms from the authentic lawsuits in the US described by the experienced interpreter, English as a foreign or second language since it consists of bilingual translation techniques for better understanding, and Buddhism terminology and guidance for enhancing awareness of readers with the law of karma or its cause and its effect. However, to achieve this, a deep understanding of the background of one's own language and culture, and others' in several aspects: socio-political factors of people in both the US and Thailand, gender roles, legal knowledge, belief, and religion can help readers to be more understanding because it is crucial in leading to a deeper understanding of all aspects as the author expected