



**Complete Buddhist Path of Enlightenment  
(Wheel of Life)**



In Summary:

The Wheel of Life is made up of:

- i) Centre – 3 root delusions [Pig, pigeon & snake]
- ii) Circle of half white and half black [indicating after death there are 2 paths]
- iii) Next circle divided into 6 compartments [6 realms of existence]
- iv) Outer rim with 12 divisions [dependent origination].
- v) Yama [Lord of Death], Buddha pointing at Moon and Verses by Buddha

MOON symbolize Liberation



Buddha points at Moon



YAMA (Lord of Death Turns Wheel)



3 Root Delusions:  
Greed (Pig); Hatred (Snake); Lust (Cock)

12 Links of Dependent Origination



DEVA Realm



HUMANS

ASHURA Realm



ANIMALS Realm



HUNGRY GHOSTS

HELL Realm



Make effort to destroy the cycle of suffering  
Enter the path of liberation  
Abandon all delusions  
And learn to cherish others

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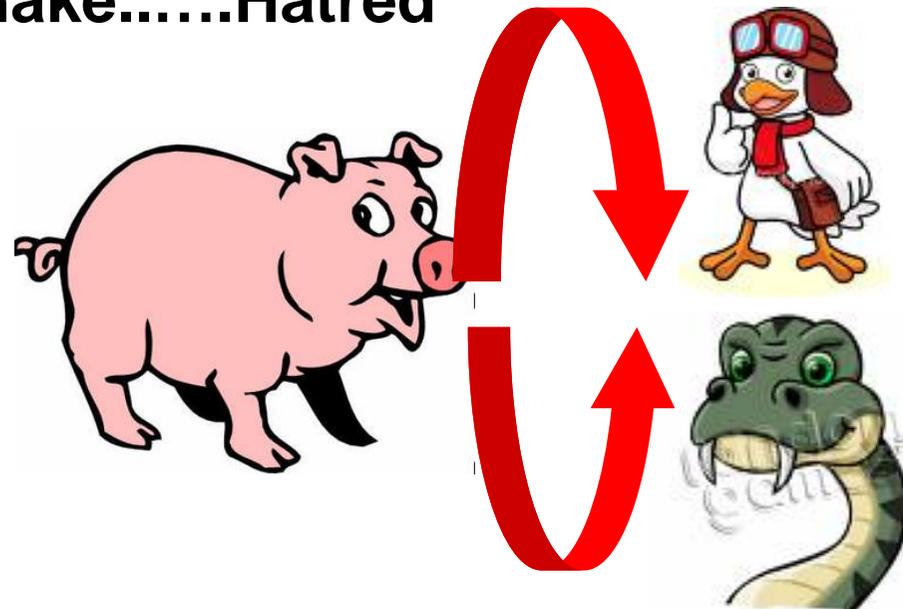
At the centre of the diagram are 3 animals: a pig, a pigeon and a Snake.

Pig.....Ignorance

Pigeon.....Desirous attachment

Snake.....Hatred

The pigeon and snake coming out of the pig's mouth indicate that desirous attachment and hatred develop from ignorance...





- Innermost circle is surrounded by another circle that is half white and half black, indicating after death there are 2 path:



*White: virtuous path that leads to higher rebirths*

*Black: Non virtuous path that leads to lower realms.*

On the white side of the circle, 3 bardo beings (*human, demi-god and god*) are upright and ascending to the top of wheel.

On the black side of the circle, 3 bardo beings (*animal, hungry spirit and hell being*) drawn upside down and falling.



The previous half white and half black circle is surrounded by another circle divided into **6** **compartments representing the 6 realms** of:-

- 1) *Gods*
- 2) *Demi-gods*
- 3) *Humans*
- 4) *Animals*
- 5) *Hungry spirits*
- 6) *Hell beings*





## *Heavenly realm*

The Six Realms are, beginning at the top, the heavenly realm where divine beings *devas*, enjoy a very long life of godlike blissful existence: nothing goes wrong; everything goes their way. It is said that their bodies and their clothes shine



## *Asuras Realm*

Moving clockwise, the next is the realm of the fighting demons, the *asuras*, who, despite being semi-divine, are in a constant state of envy, declaring war on heaven and the *devas*. This is because the tree that they share with the heavenly realm has its trunk and roots in the fighting demon realm, but the majority of the fruiting branches in the heavenly realm. Therefore the divine beings simply help themselves to the majority of the heavenly fruit, while the fighting demons can only look after the trunk and roots.



## ***Animal Realm***

Next is the animal realm. In the West we either view animals sentimentally or see them as dangerous beasts. In the East the life of an animal is thought to be pitiful because they have to accept whatever is meted out to them, having no redress for their suffering. In the wild, very few animals live out their natural lifespan. They kill to eat and will be preyed upon by others. If a lion breaks a tooth and it becomes septic there is no dentist to go to. As the pain increases they can no longer eat and therefore may starve to death. If they are lucky another predator will kill them off; if not, they will suffer a miserable death. The animal state is a pitiful state of suffering.



## ***Hungry Ghost Realm***

Next come the hungry ghosts, *pretas*, who are recognizable by their pipette-like necks and huge distended bellies. Their efforts at feeding themselves are continually thwarted by their thin necks. They exist in a state of constant hunger and craving.



## ***Hell Realm***

At the base section of the wheel are the miserable realms or hells. There are 16 hells in Buddhism, eight hot and eight cold. Here there is unspeakable suffering sometimes for very long periods of time.



## ***Human Realm***

The human realm completes the circle. Traditionally it is said that it is only from the human realm that liberation from the Wheel of Life is possible. In this realm are depicted all the important themes of human life - birth, the religious life, old age, sickness and death.

**Outer rim with 12 divisions. Inside each section is a drawing representing one of the 12 links:**



<b>Link</b>	<b>Represents By</b>
<b>Ignorance</b>	<b>An old, blind woman</b>
<b>Compositional actions</b>	<b>Potter making pots, some good and some bad</b>
<b>Consciousness</b>	<b>Monkey scampering restlessly up and down a tree, indicating how our conscious moves restlessly up and down the tree of samsara</b>





<b>Link</b>	<b>Represents By</b>
<b>Name and Form</b>	<b>Man rowing a boat, indicating we need a boat-like aggregates to take rebirth in ocean-like samsara</b>
<b>Six sources (sense organs)</b>	<b>An empty house with 5 windows</b>
<b>Contact</b>	<b>Man and woman embracing</b>
<b>Feeling</b>	<b>Man shot in the eye with an arrow</b>
<b>Craving</b>	<b>Man drinking beer</b>



<b>Link</b>	<b>Represents By</b>
<b>Grasping</b>	<b>Monkey grabbing fruit</b>
<b>Existence</b>	<b>Pregnant woman about to give birth</b>
<b>Birth</b>	<b>Baby being born</b>
<b>Ageing and death</b>	<b>Man carrying a corpse on his back</b>



- ❖ Entire Wheel of Life is drawn within clutches of Yama, Lord of Death
- ❖ Remind us of impermanence and not a single being in this Wheel of Life is outside control of death.
- ❖ Yama holds the Wheel in his mouth and embraces it with his claws, indicating all beings repeatedly go through the jaws of death.
- ❖ He holds a mirror called “mirror of action” all virtuous or non virtuous are clearly reflected.

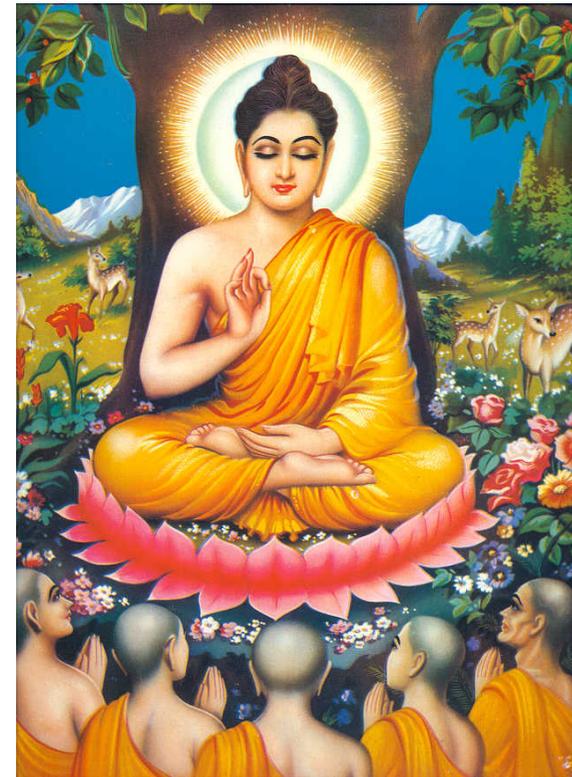


**Outside the Wheel of Life,  
Buddha stands pointing to a  
moon.**

**Buddha – outside Wheel of Life**

*i.e., liberated by abandoning samsaric paths  
and attained true paths.*

**Moon – Represents true cessations.**



At the bottom of the diagram is the verse  
written by Buddha:



Make effort to destroy it  
Enter into Buddhadharma  
Eliminate the Lord of Death  
As an elephant destroys a grass  
hut  
(another saying)

Make effort to destroy the cycle of  
suffering  
Enter the path of liberation  
Avoid all delusion  
And learn to cherish others



**Go to Kadhampa Web  
page (Contact us) and  
email us if you need  
further clarification or  
explanation**