

THE WHEEL OF BECOMING

The Wheel of Becoming is a representation of Buddhist beliefs about life, death, and rebirth. The energy produced by one's past actions (*karma*) is the force that traps beings within this cyclic existence. Practitioners can determine their place within the concentric circles of the wheel, which delineate the various realms of being.



Along the top of the painting, the Buddha (1) points to the Dharmachakra (Wheel of Teachings) (2), signaling that the way to exit the wheel and thus escape suffering is through following the Buddhist teachings and ending the cycle of rebirth, known as *samsara*. Existence beyond the wheel is considered ultimate reality (*nirvana*), while life within the wheel is considered deceptive reality.

OVER ►



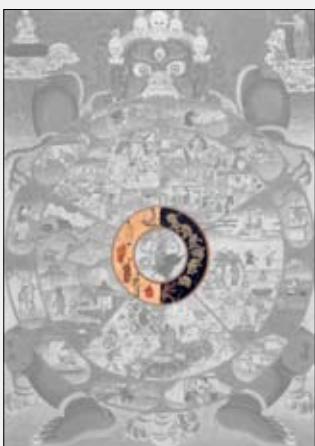
THE LORD OF DEATH

The Lord of Death holds the Wheel of Becoming in his mouth and claws, reminding viewers that all life is conditioned by death. There is no escape from death until one reaches the supreme understanding of spiritual enlightenment.



THE THREE SPIRITUAL POISONS

At the center of the wheel are The Three Spiritual Poisons, represented by three animals constantly chasing each other. The pig represents spiritual ignorance, the bird desire, and the snake anger.



DARK PATH AND THE LIGHT PATH

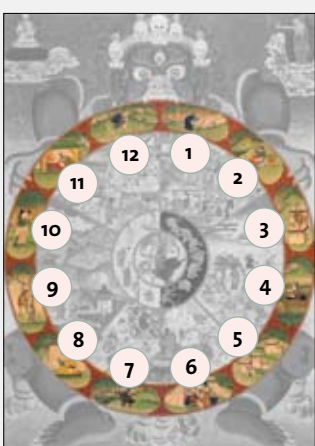
The Dark Path of negative karma, represented by slumped, gray figures, leads downward into lower realms, while the Light Path, represented by lay people, a monk, and an ascetic, leads upward into the higher realms.



REALMS OF KARMIC EXISTENCE

Each realm is categorized by an accompanying distortion of reality and features a buddha offering refuge.

1 HELL REALM (VIOLENCE)	2 GHOSTS (GREED)	3 ANIMALS (IGNORANCE)
4 GODS (PRIDE)	5 DEMIGODS (JEALOUSY)	6 HUMANS (SELFISHNESS)



TWELVE LINKS OF DEPENDENT ORIGINATION

These interdependent actions are carried out instinctively by humans and lead to the creation of karma.

1 SPIRITUAL IGNORANCE	2 MENTAL FORMATIONS	3 BASE CONSCIOUSNESS
4 PHYSICAL BODY	5 SIX SENSES	6 CONTACT
7 SENSATIONS	8 TAKING	9 CRAVING
10 BECOMING (PREGNANCY)	11 BIRTH	12 OLD AGE AND DEATH