

# The Wheel of Life Explained

The lord of death holds the wheel of life, showing that everyone within this cycle has to go through death and rebirth continually. The whole thing is a mirror, showing that it is the result of our minds, it is not given as a reward or punishment by someone.

Buddha stands outside the cycle of suffering showing he is completely free from problems. He points to the moon, symbolising that he shows everyone else the path to this happiness.

In the very centre are our negative and unpeaceful minds: anger - the snake, attachment - the pigeon and ignorance - the pig. They are at the centre to show they are the core and the root of all our problems. The snake and the pigeon are coming out of the mouth of the pig to show that all negativities and problems originally come from ignorance.

The second circle shows the beings in between lives, in the intermediate state. They take the form of their next rebirth. The three on the right are headed towards the lower realms, so it is dark and they are falling. The three on the left are headed towards the higher realms, so it is light and they are facing upwards.

The main section is the third circle that is divided into six parts. This shows all the rebirths that we can take within the cycle of suffering.  
**Gods**, top, a lovely experience but distracted and no meaning.  
**Demi-gods**, top right, full of jealousy towards the gods, often fighting.  
**Humans**, top left, experiencing birth, aging, sickness and death. These three are the higher realms because there is less suffering.

**Animals**, bottom right, can't train to improve their minds, often poor conditions and great fear.  
**Hungry ghosts**, bottom left, unbearable hunger, thirst and tiredness.  
**Hell beings**, bottom, the worst, excruciating pain. These three are the lower realms because there is so much suffering.



The verse is Buddha's teaching about this cycle and how we can change our experience and make it pure, mainly through reducing our selfishness and increasing our love for others.

The outer circle refers to the 12 dependent related links and is quite complex. Basically it shows in more detail how our suffering is created by our own negative minds.