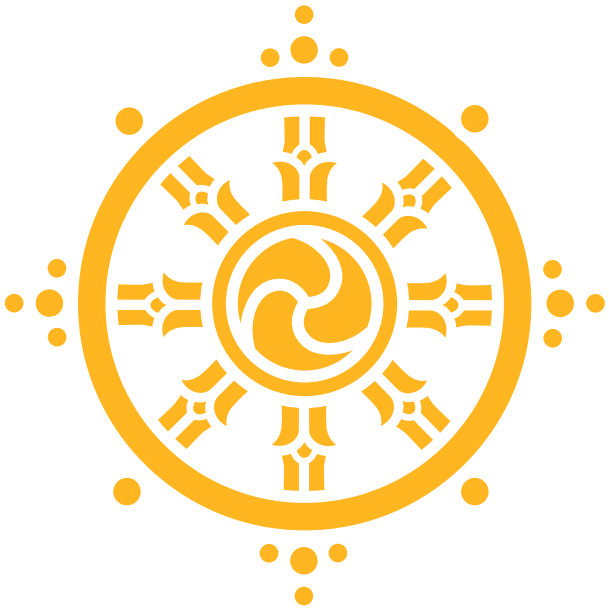
THE WHEEL OF LIFE



As long as one has not realized the mind, one is always reborn. The type of rebirth depends on which disturbing feeling was predominant in one's life.

Two important concepts in Buddhism are samsara and nirvana. Samsara refers to the non-liberated state - a state in which we suffer again and again; nirvana refers to the liberated state - free from all suffering (everything that causes suffering is "extinguished").
One might think that these are different places or worlds, but in fact only the experience of different states of mind is different. Place and time can be absolutely the same.

Not to be enlightened means to separate between an I, a you and the resulting deed. We are in this state of duality since beginningless time. The cause of this kind of perception is the fundamental ignorance of the mind: The mind functions like an eye that can see outward but not itself.
Out of **ignorance** arises the separation between I and you, outside and inside, here and there. As a result, one wants to have certain things that one experiences as separate from oneself - **attachment** arises - and one does not want to have other things - **aversion** arises, in extreme cases hatred. To attachment (as an extreme form of avarice) belongs desire (as an extreme form of greed), to aversion **jealousy,** and from ignorance arises **pride**. These five disturbing emotions cause us to say and do certain things.
The consequences of our actions come back to us later due to the law of cause and effect (karma), and the habits lead us to continually act motivated by the disturbing feelings. Thus, one is in samsara, the cycle of conditional existence, and cannot get out of conceptual feeling and thinking.

Depending on the type of the prevailing disturbing feeling, we will be, we are reborn after death in one of the six realms of existence:

1. Pride leads to rebirth in the realm of the gods. They are doing well. They live very long and have only one problem: impermanence. At some point their pleasant state comes to an end, namely when their good karma is used up.
2. Jealousy leads to the realm of the demigods. These are also relatively well off, but they are always jealous of what the gods have, and they try to take their richness away from them.
3. Desire and attachment lead to rebirth as a human being. Human beings have mixed karma. They experience the sufferings of birth, sickness, old age and death, but also have surplus and compassion depending on their karma.
4. Stupidity and ignorance lead to rebirth as an animal. Animals eat other animals or are eaten by them.
5. Avarice and greed lead to the realm of hungry ghosts. These beings suffer unspeakably. They experience themselves with a huge belly and a tiny and thin neck, so that they always get too little to eat and drink.
6. Aversion, anger and hatred eventually lead to rebirth in paranoia worlds or in the realm of hell beings. These beings suffer even more. They experience extreme heat and cold and other corresponding sufferings.

The six realms can also be found in our human world, the god realm in the mansions of rich people or the paranoia realm in psychiatric hospitals.
However, the realms are not to be understood only metaphorically, but manifest themselves after death depending on the prevailing impressions in the mind. None of the six worlds has a higher reality - they are all projections of beings experiencing similar karma. Our human and animal worlds are also a kind of common dream, just as real or unreal as the

paranoia worlds or the god realms for the respective beings dwelling in them.

The human realm of existence is best suited for following the Buddhist path and becoming enlightened. This is because the gods and demigods are doing too well to want to change anything, and the animals, hungry ghosts and hell beings are doing too badly to learn anything and develop. So in Samsara we are in the cycle of existences, as Buddha said. The wheel turns once upwards, then downwards again.

Sometimes we get better, sometimes worse. We are "trapped" in samsara. One experiences these states as real, although according to Buddhist teachings they are not real, but more like dreams. Our problem is that we think everything is truly existent and therefore hold on to it or reject it. The Buddhist path shows how to realize the true nature of mind and become free from samsara.