

# Reading Suggestions

- Damien Keown, *Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction*
- Donald Mitchell, *Introducing the Buddhist Experience*
- M Carrithers, *The Buddha: A Very Short Introduction*
  - Sarah Shaw, *Introduction to Buddhist Meditation*
    - Thich Nhat Hanh, *Being Peace*
- Thich Nhat Hanh and Elaine Pagels, *Living Buddha, Living Christ*
- D. T Suzuki and Carl Jung, *An Introduction to Zen Buddhism*
  - Robert Pirsig, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*
- Paul Knitter, *Without Buddha, I Could Not Be a Christian*

# Buddha? – Buddhism?



## Theravada Buddhism

- Non-devotional
- Self-actuated
- Buddha's Life and Teachings as Guides (found only in Pali Canon) but not Buddha as Such (Disappeared into Nirvana)

## Mahayana Buddhism

- Devotional – Prayers and Chanting
- Dependence on Others – the Central Role of Bodhisattvas and Celestial Buddha
  - Second Wheel of Dharma

# Buddhism

The Human Condition is One of Fundamentally Dis-Ease – The Human Self is Composed of 5 Components (Body, Senses, Character, Dispositions, Consciousness) – Any or All of Which Cause Suffering – Like Parts of a Car – Driven by the Fuel of Craving/Thirsting (for pleasure, existence) – The ultimate Goal is To End Craving is to End Suffering is to Reach Nirvana – Note There is No Soul – No Atman – No Authority – No Ritual

**“Do Not Accept what you hear by report, do not accept tradition [attack on Brahmin], do not accept a statement because it is found in our books, nor because it is the saying of your teacher. Be Lamps unto yourselves. Work out your own Salvation with Diligence.”**

# A 'Religion' without a Creator God, a Personal, Activist God

## ➤ Defining by Way of “Dimensions”

### ➤ Experiential or Emotional Dimension

- Important – Spiritual exercises (meditation) for the Sake of Altered State of Consciousness
- An Interior Experiential Experience Sought That Is Much Like Mysticism – Not Like Prayer to Communicate with God but Cultivate Wisdom and **Compassion – A Critical Aspect of the Buddha Narrative**

### ➤ Narrative/Mythic Dimension

- The Mythic Dimension Tends to Focus on the Life of the Buddha and Brings to Life a Host of Gods and Spirits – e.g., Buddha does battle with Mara – the Evil One
- In Terms of Sacred Texts – Like Christianity, the Founder Did Not Write Anything – Thus Dependent on Oral Transmission and in Time Conversion to Textualization - Much More Fluid than Hinduism – Theravada Buddhists Recognize the Pali Canon as the Most Authoritative collection of Buddha's Sermons and Monastic Rule – No Life of Buddha until almost 500 years after his death in 486 BCE (no images until 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE) – No Written Collection of Teachings for almost 600 years

### ➤ Doctrinal and Philosophical Dimension

- Much of Doctrinal Formulation Begins from the 4 Noble Truths (formulated by Buddha)
- Custody and Interpretation of Texts Belong to the Sangha – Monks

### ➤ The Ethical Dimension

- Very Important – The Central Principle of Non-Harming –Vegetarian/Pacifism
- Compassion – The Positive Expression of No-Harm – Alleviate Suffering

## Buddhism is:

- A rational philosophy that has stripped away religious superstition
  - An experiential quest for enlightenment – assisted by meditation, prayer and chanting (Mahayana), etc.
- A profound moral guide with an emphasis on ‘do no harm’ and compassion

Suffering – Dukkha

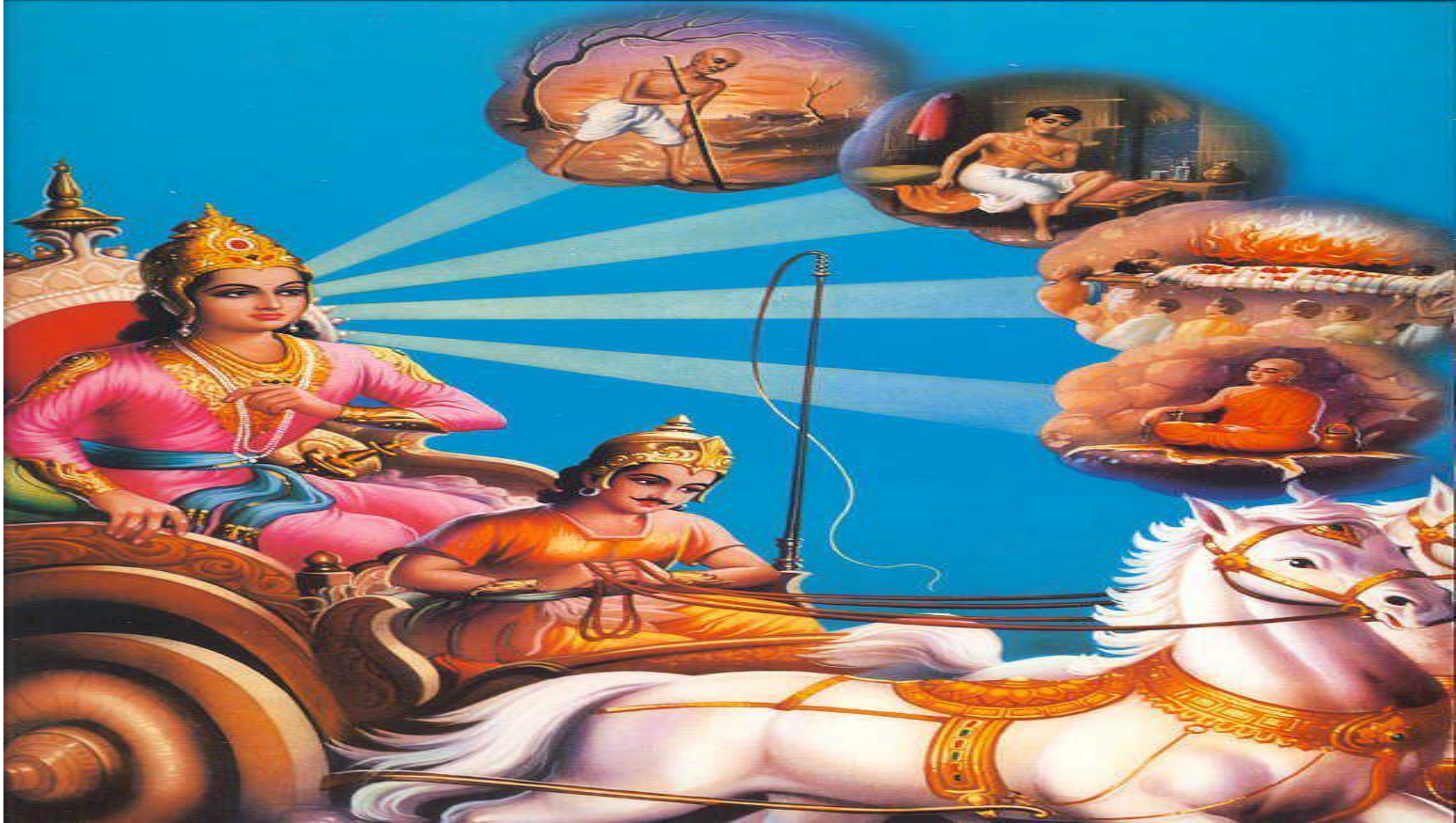
Buddha Becomes aware

# Siddhattha Gotama/Sakyamuni/Bhagavat - Buddha – The Life and Texts

- Texts – Pali Canon – Theravada Buddhism
  - 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE – Sri Lanka
  - 3 Divisions or “baskets”
    - Discourses or Sermons of Buddha
    - Monastic Rule – rules for the *sangha*
    - Scholastic Treatises - Elaborations on Buddhist Doctrine
- Aside the mythic, fragments of bio reveal
  - Married at 16 and one son
  - Left Home at 29 to seek knowledge
  - Enlightenment Attained at 35
  - Next 45 years spent Giving Religious Instruction – Died at age 80
- The Mythic Life Based on Oral Traditions Collected to create Various Versions of the Life – The Earliest approximately 500 Years after his death (486/410 BCE?)
  - Context – The Growing Dissatisfaction with Veda Based Sacrifice – Growth of the Ascetic Tradition – the Wandering Guru
  - Birth Narrative – Mythic Elements to Emphasize the Importance of the Event – Mother’s (Maya) Conception via White Elephant Entering her side, Earth Shook, Attended by Heavenly Hosts, Immediately Stood Up and Declared the Last Time He Would be Born
  - Life Narrative – From a Situation of Wealth – Closed to Outside – To Exposure to the Tragic Dimension of Life at Age 29 – He Encountered an Old Man, A Sick Man, A Man Who Had Died Who was to Be Cremated, and finally a religious mendicant (the 4 signs) = Led to Realization of the **Transient Nature of Human Life** – No Shelter from Disease, Death and the Need to Go Searching for a Resolution (Most of Us build our own ‘palace walls’ to block out Suffering – but every now and then it breaks through)







- Sought Wisdom – Explanation from the Homeless Mendicants (Samana Movement)
  - The ‘Journey’ Through Ascetic Practices – Long Periods of Meditation (Trance State) and Mortification – breath Control – gave him a headache, abstaining from eating left him emaciated and too ill to meditate...Did not Resolve the Fundamental Problem – The Lesson Learned that the Indulgent Life (‘Palace Life’) and Life of Severe Renunciation are both to Be Avoided – seek a Middle Way – Continued a Path of Meditation that Eventually took him to His Moment of Awakening/Enlightenment
  - Beneath the Bodhi Tree – Tempted by Mara With Desire, With Death...He Touched the Earth and it Shuddered Sending Mara away and Moved Through the 3 Phases Culminating with Nirvana
    - Thereafter Acquired Power to Look Back Over Previous Lives, To See Into the Lives of All Living Things- Their Karma and its consequence, Destroyed Craving and Ignorance – Thus Achieving Nirvana

# Out of Compassion, Lead a Life of Bringing Knowledge (Via His Teachings = Dharma) to Overcome Ignorance and Set Forth on the Path to Nirvana

- The First Sermon – The 4 Noble Truths and the Wheel of Life – Of those who Listened, 5 Achieved a Profound Initial Level of Understanding and Became Disciples/Monks

Death at the Age of 80 – Discouraged the Establishment of Successor – Thus No Central Authority – Guidance for the Monastic Life But No Doctrine or Creed – Entered via Meditative Trance the Final Nirvana

# Both a Serene And A Revolutionary Human Being

- Rejection of the Ways in Which Hinduism Had Evolved
  - Rejected Authority – Break the Grip on Sanctity Held by the Brahmins – No Secrets – No Passive Relying on Any Other Human being – “Be Lamps Unto Yourselves”
  - Rejected Ritual – Belief in the Efficacy of Rites and Ceremonies is One of Great Errors of Human Life – They are Foolish/Irrelevant and Only Feed the Ego
  - Rejected Speculation – “Whether the world is eternal or not, whether the soul is one thing and the body another, whether a Buddha exists after death or not...Would not be explained...I have not spoken on these because they do not lead to the absence of passion, or to tranquility – to Nirvana. And what have I explained. Suffering – its cause and destruction”
  - Rejected Tradition – Be Free of the Past’s Burdens – Break with Archaism – E.g., Rejected Sanskrit and spoke in Vernacular
  - Rejected the Supernatural – Working Miracles, Soothsaying...there are no shortcuts to the hard, practical path of self-advance – No God to Intervene or Rescue the self
  - Rejected the Fatalism of Caste – “Work out your salvation with diligence.” - Does admit Reincarnation and struggles to Connect that Claim with No-Soul Teachings

Dukkha...Tanha...The Path

# The Four Noble Truths

- ❖ The Truth of Suffering
- ❖ The Truth of Arising –  
Desire/Craving
- ❖ The Truth of Cessation
- ❖ The Truth of the Way

## The 4 Truths

- The Truth of Suffering – *Dukkha* - Only When One Admits to Having a Serious Disease, Can a Cure Be Found
  - Physical and Psychological – Absent a Core/Essential Self, Humans are Composed on Component Parts and Each Can Cause the Others to Get Caught in the Web of Rebirth – of Craving/Thirst/Desire – The Physical Is Inevitable with Rebirth – Illness, Aging, Death – The Others Seek the Impermanent – The Addiction to Life and Its Pleasures – We Can Have A Good Time, But There Always Is Unrest – a Wanting – a Quiet Desperation – “Earth’s Sweetest Joy is Disguised Pain” - Buddha Was Not Content To Leave it as an Abstraction thus Denoted 6 Moments when Life’s Pain is Glaringly Apparent:
    - The Trauma of Birth
    - The Persistence of Bodily Sickness
    - The Sickness of Aging – fear of Dependence, of being Unloved, of Seeing one’s Life as Failure
    - The Fear of Death
    - Being Tied to What One Dislikes
    - To Be Separated From What One Loves



# The Truth of Arising – The Cause of Suffering – *Tanha* – Desire

Not Generalized Desire – Because The Desire to Do Good, to Achieve Nirvana is Affirmed – Desire that is excessive or wrongly directed

- Core Component of Buddha's Dharma:
  - Impermanence (anicca)
  - No soul (anatta)
  - Interconnectedness – cause and effect
- There is no such thing as a solitary unchanging soul or for that matter self. The self is interdependent and ever-changing. "luminous web" – "butterfly effect" – "...whatever we do affects everything and everyone else, if even in the tiniest way. Why, when a housefly flaps his wings, a breeze goes round the world."
  - Coddling our self-Identity we are cut off – Like a Tumor it Swells and Cuts off Circulation and Causes More Pain
- In fact, everything is changing, is in flux. We do not live on a rock by a shore but in an ever-flowing stream.
  - We suffer when we cling to changing things as if they are unchanging and to the self as if it were independent.
- We cling to the concept of God (or Brahman) as if it can liberate us. Individuals have to liberate themselves – "Work out your own salvation with diligence."

- The Truth of Cessation – Overcoming *Tanha* = *Nirvana*
- The Truth of the Path – How To Achieve the Cure – Not From Without (e.g., Grace) – But By Training
  - People Routinely Train for Sports or Professions – But Do Not Train for Life Itself - There Are Two Ways of Living – One a Random, Unreflective Way – Pushed/Pulled in Every Direction – “Wandering About” – The Second an Intentional Life – The Way – The Path – With Steep Grades, Dangerous Curves and Rest Areas

## The Eightfold Path

## Morality

- Right Speech
- Right Action
- Right Livelihood



## Meditation

- Right Mindfulness
- Right Effort
- Right Concentration



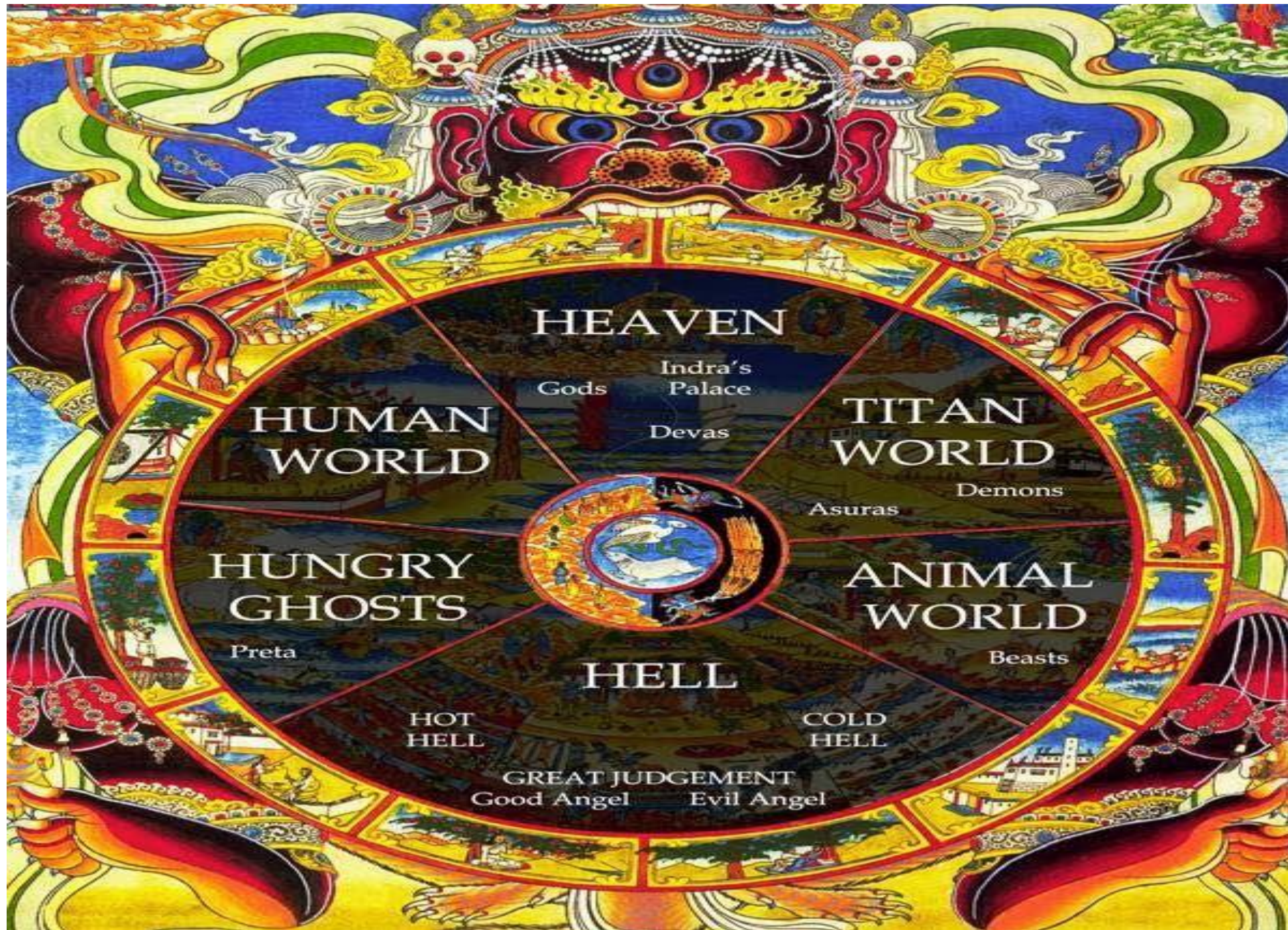
## Wisdom

- Right Views
- Right Intentions

- Right View = **WISDOM**
  - A blueprint that One Can Trust – So the Noble Truths – Until Reason is Satisfied, It is Difficult to Take the Path
- Right Resolve/Intent = **WISDOM**
  - Does One Really Seek Enlightenment – Persistence is Indispensable
- Right Speech = **MORALITY**
  - Our Words Reveal Our Character – Does One Not Speak the Truth? – Why? – Does one use Unkind Words? Why? Right Speech will avoid Deceit and Be Charitable
- Right Conduct = **MORALITY**
  - As Above, the first Step is to Understand One's Behavior Objectively – How Often Was Self-seeking the motive rather than generosity? – Toward Selflessness and Charity
  - 5 Precepts – Do Not Kill – Do Not Steal – Do Not Lie – Do not Be Sexually Excessive – Do Not Drink Intoxicants
- Right Livelihood = **MORALITY**
  - For the Layman, Engaging in Occupations that Promote Life instead of Destroying It – E.g., Avoid Prostitution, Butcher, Brewer, Arms Maker... "Earning a Living is Life's Means, Not Life's End."
- Right Effort = **MEDITATION**
  - Reaching the End Requires Tremendous Effort – Virtues Developed, Passions Curbed – "Those who Follow the Way might well follow the example of an ox that marches through the deep mire carrying a heavy load. He is tired, but his steady gaze, look forward, will never relax until he comes out of the mire..."
- Right Mindfulness = **MEDITATION**
  - If We Could Really understand Life, Understand ourselves, we would find neither a problem. This requires a steady awareness of Every Action which requires periods of undistracted introspection. The Gradual disappearance of a separate self – consciousness – rather we are what we think, what we do
- Right Meditation/Concentration = **MEDITATION**
  - Through Yoga-type meditative practice, one is regenerated – changed into a different kind of creature who experiences the world differently – Shedding Delusion, Craving, Hostility

# Karma and The Realms of Existence

- The Realms Similar to Heaven/Hell - Although Hell is more like Purgatory – One Can Be Released After Evil Karma Runs its Course – Bad Karma Never Has the Last Word – There is always the Possibility of Providing an Opportunity for Good Karma – The Good that We do or can do will outlive or offset the evil we have done – But It may take some time(in purgatory?)/lives
  - Rebirth: As Animal – Not Desirable – Why So?
    - Governed by Brute Instinct and Lack the Intelligence to Recognize/correct the problem
  - As Ghost – Undesirable
    - Unhappy Spirits with Strong Attachments - Governed By Insatiable Desire
  - As Titan
    - Lust For Power – At Mercy of Violent Impulses
  - As Human – Desirable – Why so?
    - Human Existence Offers Constant Reminders of the Vagaries of Life (e.g., Sickness) As Well As an Opportunity to Understand/seek a Solution – With Reason and Free Will Can Grasp Dharma and Implement Teachings
  - As gods – The Multistory Abode of the gods
    - With the exception of the “Pure Abodes” – upper 5 heavens where the non-returners abide - gods are also beings that are subject to karma and rebirth – although at each stage the lifespan increases and thus rebirth is postponed – as much as millions of years



HEAVEN

Gods  
Indra's Palace  
Devas

TITAN WORLD

Asuras  
Demons

HUMAN WORLD

HUNGRY GHOSTS

Preta

ANIMAL WORLD

Beasts

HELL

HOT HELL

COLD HELL

GREAT JUDGEMENT  
Good Angel      Evil Angel



- Karma – the ‘Elevator’ that moves one around in the Realms of Existence
  - Not Rewards and Punishments Given out by God but Consequence of Individual Moral Choices and Actions Based on those Choices – Individuals Have **Free Will** and ‘Create’ Themselves by Way of **Moral Actions**
    - Moral Actions have **Transitive and Intransitive Effects** – Means?
      - Impact on the Object of the Choice/Act
      - Impact on the Agent of the Choice/Act
    - Choices/Acts Give Shape To Character and Character Determines Self  
 “Sow an Act, reap a Habit; Sow a Habit, Reap a Character; Sow a Character, Reap a Destiny”
    - It is Not Fate but Karmic choice that Determines the self’s Character and Disposition (*Sankaras*) that in Turn Determines Destiny (the Fruit of the Choices)
      - Macbeth’s Ruthless Ambition...
  - Rebirth is then Karmically determined and Can Have Ongoing Consequences (“Stored Up Karma”) – Karma Is Not Predestined in Absolute Terms – One Can Make New Choices and Thus Redirect Rebirth
  - Good – Bad Actions – How Determined?
    - Intentions And Actions – Bad Intentions = greed, hatred, delusion/Good intentions – non-attachment (the opposite of - a good deed is done to receive praise), benevolence, understanding – Good Intentions must End in Right Actions = No Harm to Self or Others
  - Merit?
    - The Accumulation of Good Karma – But Should Not Be Pursued as an End in Itself – But a Happy By-Product of the Moral Choice – The Support of the Monks