



## Wheel of Life

### Date

early 20th century

### Medium

Pigments on cloth

### Description

This diagram summarizes the Buddha's enlightening vision under the bodhi tree. It explains the cyclical process of life, death, and rebirth (samsara). The Lord of Death, Yama, grips a wheel driven by three animals representing the mental poisons—attachment (rooster), anger (snake), and ignorance (pig)—at its hub. In the next circle from the center, people move upward to higher states of consciousness (light) and downward to afflicted states (dark). Their actions, polluted by the poisons, propel them in a continuous cycle of rebirth in the six realms of existence, depicted in the large segments around the two inner circles. These are the realms of gods and demi-gods (top left), humans (top right), animals (lower left), hungry ghosts (lower right), and hells

(bottom). The wheel's outer rim is the symbolic chain of causality that binds this closed circle with no clear way out. When the Buddha comprehended its structure and dynamics of this cycle, he was also able to discern a pathway out of it that others can learn and follow. This is why the Buddha appears both outside the wheel, at the upper right, and within it, pointing the way out by teaching the Dharma.

### Dimensions

65 5/8 × 40 3/4 × 1 1/2 in.