



Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

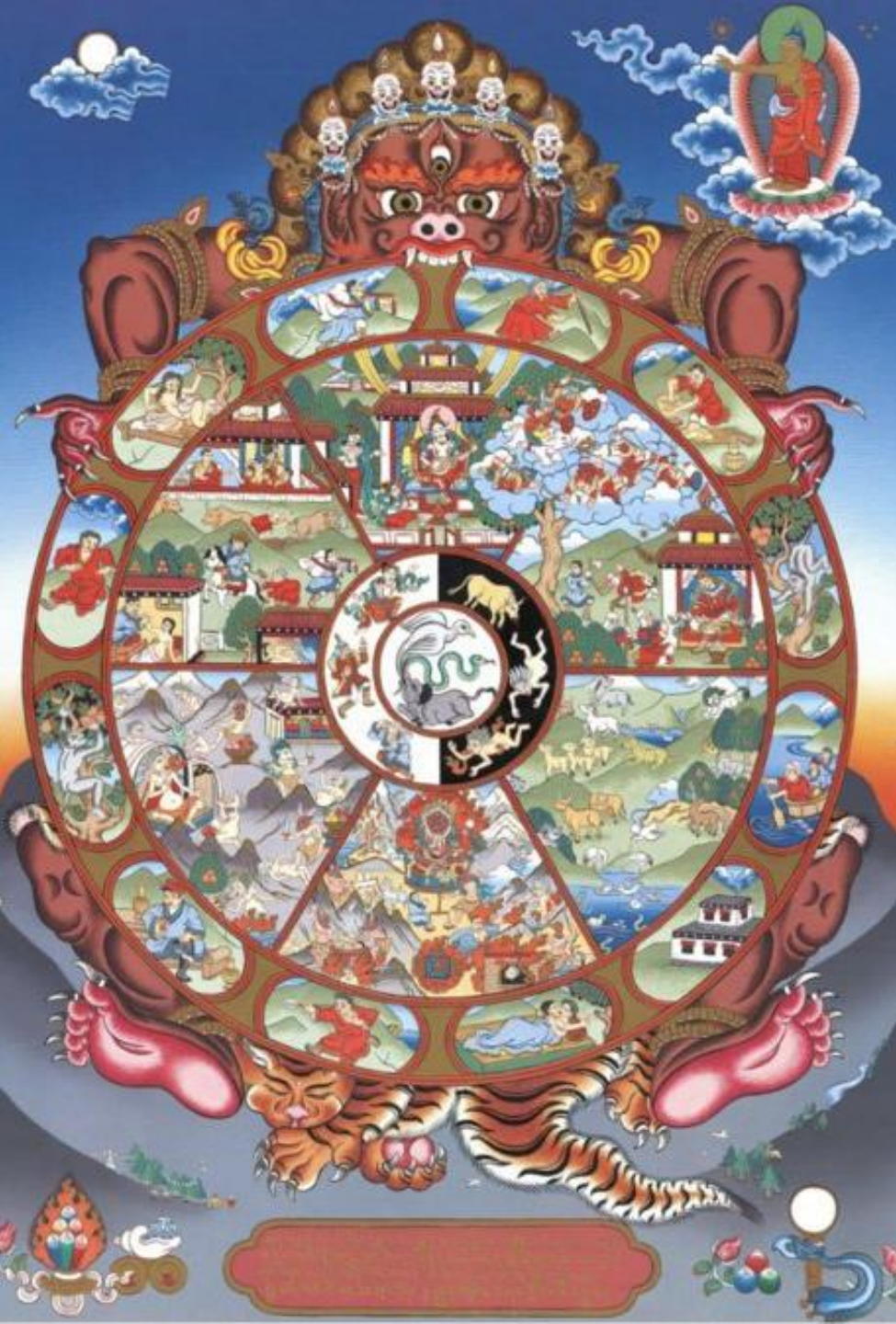
Canolfan Sophia
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Karma in Indo-Tibetan Buddhism

Foundations in Cultural Astronomy and Astrology

FOUNDATIONS HPCA7015

Dr Dawn H. Collins



Karma

- Indian cosmology forms the foundation of the various cosmologies throughout Buddhist cultural regions
- On this model, the universe is comprised of many realms within which beings move from life to life in endless cycles of rebirth
- Existence subject to these endless cycles of rebirth is known as saṃsāra
- The driver of these successions of rebirths is karma (action) – the law of cause and effect



Key Features of Indo-Tibetan Notions of Fate and Destiny

- Karma, or action, leads to seeds of becoming that ripen in this and future lifetimes and direct rebirth
- Good actions/karma creates the causes for the experience of happiness
- Negative actions/karma create the causes for the experience of discomfort/dissatisfaction, dukkha
- It is in the nature of your responses to the ripening of past karma as experienced this life upon which your future lives / enlightenment turn

The Four Noble Truths

- In early Buddhism, as reflected in the texts of the Pali Canon and as practiced in South Asia today, a foundational epistemology is based around the four noble truths and a soteriology in which understanding them is the key to freeing oneself (or ones nonself) from samsaric existence, entering nirvana.

"Bhikkhus, it is through not realizing, through not penetrating the Four Noble Truths that this long course of birth and death has been passed through and undergone by me as well as by you. What are these four? They are **the noble truth of dukkha; the noble truth of the origin of dukkha; the noble truth of the cessation of dukkha; and the noble truth of the way to the cessation of dukkha.** But now, bhikkhus, that these have been realized and penetrated, cut off is the craving for existence, destroyed is that which leads to renewed becoming, and there is no fresh becoming."

— DN 16 (with dukkha left untranslated)

<https://www.accesstinsight.org/ptf/dhamma/sacca/index.html>

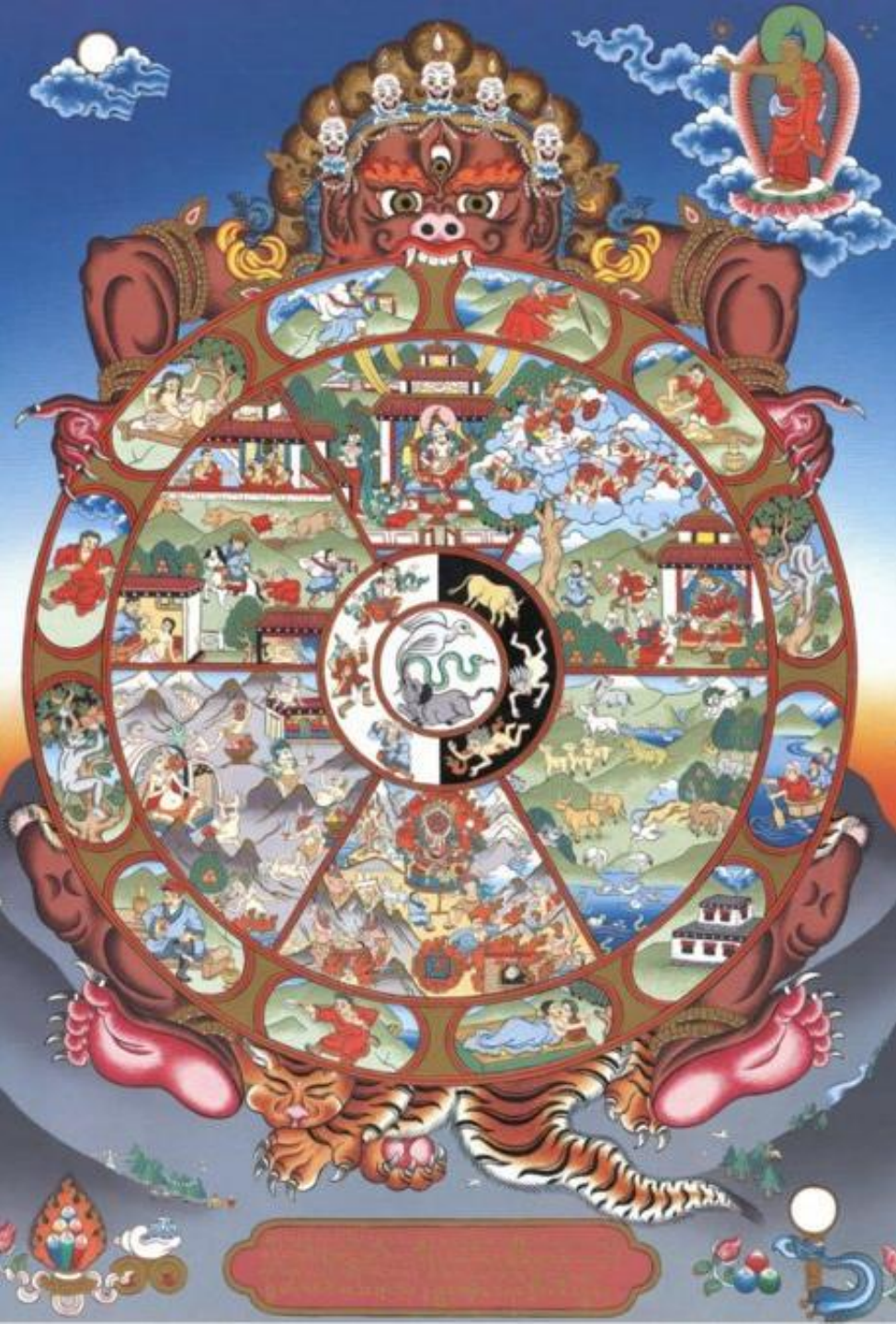


The Way to Nirvana – elimination of the causes of suffering: The Noble Eightfold Path

- Broadly speaking, this consists of the avoidance of creating negative karma (the causes for dukkha and an existence driven by it, saṃsāra) and the accumulation of karmic 'merit' accrued through positive actions, good karma (the causes for the cessation of dukkha and an existence free of it, nirvāṇa)

The Noble Eightfold Path

- Right View
- Right Intention
- Right Speech
- Right Action
- Right Livelihood
- Right Effort
- Right Mindfulness
- Right Concentration



What is 'right' in these contexts?

What constitutes 'good' and 'bad' karma?

The roots of dukkha

- anger / ill-will (snake)
- attachment / greed (rooster)
- Ignorance / delusion (pig)



‘As a Buddhist monk, my concern extends to all members of the human family and, indeed, to all sentient beings who suffer. I believe all suffering is caused by ignorance. People inflict pain on others in the selfish pursuit of their happiness or satisfaction. Yet true happiness comes from a sense of inner peace and contentment, which in turn must be achieved through the cultivation of altruism, of love and compassion and elimination of ignorance, selfishness and greed.’

The 14th Dalai Lama – Gyalwa Rinpoché

<https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/1989/lama/acceptance-speech/>



For Discussion:

Can any of the concepts related to the English 'Fate' below exist for Indo-Tibetan Buddhism?

Moirae (Greek—Given at birth)

Ananka (Greek--Necessity—the logical consequences of what will happen)

Heimarmene (Greek stoic/Platonistic—an all-pervading energetic network of causation, logos of the cosmos, mind of God)

Tyche (Greek--Chance, Fortune, Contingencies influencing ananka)—Fortuna (Roman), Luck (contemporary)

Fate (early medieval—fate, destiny, chance)

Fatalism—something in the future that you cannot change (e.g. death), destiny and providence are fatalistic notions)

Necessity—determined chain of causation

Determinism (16th Century concept)—universal and constant across the laws of nature



For Discussion:

Which of the concepts related to the English 'Freewill' below do you think are most similar to Indo-Tibetan Buddhist notions of karma, and why?

Dualism--The will is linked with the soul and is deemed to be off-world somehow (as on Plato), therefore, it isn't subject to necessity or determinism and you can have freewill

Platonistic dualism—sometimes the will/soul is bound to fate/world/your astrological chart and sometimes it is not. You have the power to transcend fate (based on moral quality you can direct your reincarnation—you can fall to terrible rebirths or rise to join with the stars at death if you can elevate above destiny)

Aristotelian dualism—living your chart as best as possible—perfection can exist in the material realm--the freedom of the soul to transcend the destiny/chart is where free will exists---living your best life

Stoic position (Monism)—Time is closed. All things repeat in cosmic cycles. Fate is the consequence of the working of the divine consciousness, so the will/soul is not split and is part of the natural world. We have no freewill and our freedom is to accept the destiny, the chart that we have. Our moral responsibility is to live it as best as possible to help create a god-oriented world for all through reflection, inner harmony