

Appendix I

Chart Of *Samsara* The Realm Of Birth And Death Divided into the Three Realms of Existence

Key: Kalpa= 16 million years Small Kalpa= 1000 Kalpas Middle Kalpa= 20 Small Kalpa Great Kalpa= 4 Middle Kalpas Yojana= 28 Miles	Asankhyeya Mahakalpa = 1.28 billion years X 10 to the 63rd power or 1.28 billion X vigintillion years	Our Buddha, Shakyamuni, in order to perfect his “blessings and wisdom”, cultivated for many, many lifetimes in a period of time covering 3 Asankhyeya Mahakalpas. He then further practiced for 100 Great Kalpas to perfect the 32 Hallmarks and 80 Subsidiary Features of a Buddha.
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Formless Realm

Name of Sphere of Existence	Average Lifespan	Average Height	Comments
Heaven of Neither Thought Nor Non-Thought	80,000 Great Kalpas (102.4 quadrillion years)		Gods in the Formless Heavens have no bodies. They only have consciousness.
Heaven of Nothing whatsoever	60,000 Great Kalpas		
Heaven of Boundless Consciousness	40,000 Great Kalpas		
Heaven of Boundless Space	20,000 Great Kalpas		

Form Realm

5 Heavens of No-Return:

Ultimate Form Heaven	16,000 Great Kalpas (20.48 quadrillion years)	16,000 Yojanas (448,000 miles)
Good Manifestation Heaven	8,000 Great Kalpas	8,000 Yojanas
Good View Heaven	4,000 Great Kalpas	4,000 Yojanas
No Heat Heaven	2,000 Great Kalpas	2,000 Yojanas
No Affliction Heaven	1,000 Great Kalpas	1,000 Yojanas

The Five Heavens of No-Return are also known as the Pure Abodes or Pure Dwellings. Gods in the Heavens of No-Return are Sages who have certified to the Third Stage of an Arhat. The gods of all the other Heavens cannot even see these Heavens, because they are beyond their scope.

Fourth Dhyana Heavens:

No Thought Heaven	500 Great Kalpas (640 trillion years)	500 Yojanas (14,000 miles)
Vast Fruit Heaven	500 Great Kalpas	500 Yojanas
Love of Blessings Heaven	250 Great Kalpas	250 Yojanas
Birth of Blessings Heaven	125 Great Kalpas	125 Yojanas

These Heavens correspond to the state of Dhyana meditation called *Ground of Purity from Renouncing Thought*. In this state subtle thoughts cease.

Third Dhyana Heavens:

Pervasive Purity Heaven	64 Great Kalpas (81.92 trillion years)	64 Yojanas (1,792 miles)
Limitless Purity Heaven	32 Great Kalpas	32 Yojanas

These Heavens correspond to the state of Dhyana meditation called

the *Ground of Wondrous Bliss from Leaving Joy*. In this state

Lesser purity Heaven	16 Great Kalpas	16 Yojanas	coarse thoughts cease.
Second Dhyana Heavens:			
Light-Sound Heaven	8 Great Kalpas (10.24 trillion years)	8 Yojanas (224 miles)	These Heavens correspond to the state of Dhyana meditation called the <i>Ground of Joy from the Producing Samadhi</i> . In this state outer breath ceases. Beings in the Light-Sound Heaven use light to speak, the way a TV uses light to create pictures.
Limitless Light Heaven	4 Great Kalpas	4 Yojanas	
Lesser Light Heaven	2 Great Kalpas	2 Yojanas	
First Dhyana Heavens:			
Great Brahma Heaven	3 Middle Kalpas (960 billion years)	1 1/2 Yojanas (42 miles)	These Heavens correspond to the <i>Ground of Joy Arising from Separation</i> . In this state the pulse stops.
Ministers of Brahma Heaven	2 Middle Kalpas	1 Yojana	
Multitudes of Brahma Heaven	1 Middle Kalpa	1/2 Yojana	

All the gods in the Form Realm Heavens are without the senses of smell and taste, and they do not eat food, sleep, or have sexual desire. However, the desires for these things are still latent and once their heavenly life comes to an end, they can still return to any lower realm of existence in accordance with their karma. These desires are also latent in the gods in the Formless Heavens. The Third and Fourth Stage Arhats and the Bodhisattvas, because of prajna wisdom, have ended these desires at their origin, so they will never arise again.

In the "comments" above, in the right-hand column, it describes specific things that happen to a human being who enters the levels of Dhyana meditation which correspond to the Dhyana Heavens. In addition to the above, when one enters the First Dhyana meditation state one can sit for seven days without getting up from one's seat. At that time one can also go without eating, drinking or sleeping. In the Second Dhyana one can sit for 49 days. In the Third Dhyana one can sit for three years. And in the Fourth Dhyana one can sit for nine years. The happiness experienced in Dhyana meditation far surpasses the happiness connected with the five senses.

Sensual Desire Realm

Six Desire Heavens:

Self-Mastery Over Others' Transformations Heaven	16,000 Heaven years (9.2 billion years)	4,500 feet 1 day = 1600 human years	They usurp others' happiness. Many demons and their retinues dwell here, like Mara, the king of demons.
Bliss From Transformations Heaven	8,000 Heaven years (2.3 billion years)	3,500 feet 1 day = 800 human years	Can transform their own happiness. Food and clothing appear as they think about them.
Contentment (Tushita) Heaven	4,000 Heaven years (576 million years)	3,000 feet 1 day = 400 human years	Heaven of "Joyful Contentment". Gods totally free from all worries--very content.
Well-Divided Time (Suyama) Heaven	2,000 Heaven years (144 million years)	2,250 feet 1 day = 200 human years	The Gods are always joyful, singing songs from morning till night: "Merrily indeed, I'm so happy!"
Heaven of the Thirty-three (Trayastrimsha)	1,000 Heaven years (36 million years)	1,500 feet 1 day = 100 human years	Ruled by Lord Shakra, King of Gods, also known as Indra, and the God of the Christian Bible.
Heaven of the Four Kings	500 Heaven years (9 million years)	750 feet 1 day = 50 human years	Ruled by Four God kings--one in each direction. Newborns are as big as a 5 year old human.

The gods in the Desire Heavens still have desires connected with the five senses, including the desires for food, sleep and sex, with marriages as in the human realm. Yet the happiness they experience is much greater than that of the human realm. The human realm compared to even the lowest Desire Heaven is like a toilet pit. The gods in the first two Desire Heavens fulfill their sexual desire in the same way as those in the human realm. In the Suyama Heaven they fulfill it by holding hands. In the Tushita Heaven they fulfill it by smiling at each other. In the Bliss From Transformations Heaven it is fulfilled by mutual gazing. And in the Heaven of Self-Mastery Over Others' Transformations it is fulfilled by merely glancing. All the heavens beginning with the Suyama Heaven and above do not have a sun or moon. In those heavens, the bodies of these gods emit their own light.

Asuras

Although asuras are an individual realm by themselves, they also can appear in both of the other Good Paths of gods and men as well as in the Three Evil Destinies of the hells, the ghosts and animals. In general, regardless of what path they are in, they like to pick fights and have bad tempers. They enjoy bossing others around and like to be supervisors, but they can't stand being supervised by others. Among people, asuras can be good or bad. The good asuras include military officials and troops, and bad asuras are thieves, thugs, murderers and the like.

Asuras are unruly beings that love to fight. Their name means "ugly". It also means "ungodly" because, although some Asuras enjoy heavenly blessings, nonetheless, they lack authority in the heavens.

There are four categories of Asuras in the Three Realms of Existence. Asuras in the path of ghosts use their strength to protect the Dharma and can with spiritual penetrations travel through space. They are born from eggs and belong to the destiny of ghosts.

Those who have fallen from virtue and been expelled from the heavens dwell in places near the sun and moon. They are Asuras born from wombs and belong to the destiny of humans.

There are also Asura kings who support the world with a penetrating power and fearlessness. They vie for position with the Brahma Lord, the God Shakra, and the Four Heavenly Kings. These Asuras come into being by transformation and belong to the destiny of gods.

Ananda, there is another, base category of Asuras. Their minds dwell on the sea; they live submerged in underwater caves. During the day they roam the skies; at night they return to their watery realm. These Asuras come into being because of moisture and belong to the destiny of animals¹.

Human Beings

All Buddhas become Buddhas in the human realm. The human realm presents the best state of existence for spiritual cultivation because it has a balance of good and bad. In the heavens life is too blissful to arouse concern over the problems of birth and death. In the three evil destinies (hells, animals, ghosts), intense suffering precludes any other awareness. One merely longs to escape the immediate agony, and is unable to consider the deeper significance of suffering as a universal condition of all states of conditioned existence.

The Buddha once held up a clump of dirt in his hand and asked his disciples which was greater, the dirt in his hand, or the dirt of the whole earth. The disciples answered that of course the dirt of the earth was far greater than the dirt in the Buddha's hand. The Buddha said that those beings who secure a human form are like the dirt in his hand; whereas those who had human form but have lost it (regressing into the three evil destinies) are as many as the dirt covering the entire earth. Thus we see that human life is extremely precious and fragile.

The Three Evil Destinies

If you wish, you can enter the realms of existence mentioned above to try them out--put on a play--but you shouldn't play around with the three remaining realms. If you try these out you may not be able to escape. It is said that after one life in a human body, 10,000 kalpas may pass before that form can be obtained again. Playing around with the Three Evil Destinies can be very dangerous.

Animals

*Eager animals feed on greed,
Never sated by a lot.
Because they make what's black white,
They don't distinguish wrong from right.*

There are billions of animals, an infinite variety--flying, crawling, swimming, and walking--on land, in the water and in the sky. Beings become animals as a result of one thing: greed. For them, no matter what it is, the more the better. Animals lack the ability to reason. They become muddled and ignorance envelops them so that they become totally oblivious to anything rational--even to the point that they are greedy to eat excrement.

Ghosts

*The ghostly crew delights in hate,
Deluded by effects, confused about cause.
Their ignorance and upside-downness
Grows greater each day, deeper each month.*

Almost everyone has heard of ghosts, but not everyone believes in them. Ghosts are masses of *yin* energy which have shadow and no form, or form and no shadow. There are as many different kinds of ghosts as there are grains of sand in the Ganges River. Some ghosts are affluent and reign as kings over the ghost realm; some ghosts are poverty stricken and devoid of authority—it is often the poor ghosts who bother people. If you want to investigate ghosts in detail, work hard at your spiritual cultivation, open the Five Eyes and Six Spiritual Penetrations,ⁱⁱ and then explore for yourself.

Hells

*The hells' anxiety and suffering
Is devoid of doors yet one bores right in.
Giving rise to delusion deeds are done.
The retribution is born in due accord.ⁱⁱⁱ*

Anyone who would like to take a vacation in the hells can do so any time at all. I can guarantee that. But the hells are a miserable place. Lamentation plants the seeds for hells; happiness plants the seeds for heavens. Unlike jails, the hells, although man-made by people who commit offenses, haven't any doors. However, if you are due to go to the hells, when you arrive it is just as if a door opened, because you find yourself worming and boring in where there was no entrance.

ⁱ *Shurangama Sutra*, Volume. 7, BTTS.

ⁱⁱ See Chapter 5 under “Sangha of the Sages” for an explanation of the Five Eyes and the Six Spiritual Penetrations.

ⁱⁱⁱ *The Ten Dharma Realms Are Not Beyond A Single Thought*, BTTS. The verses and the explanations of the Three Evil Destinies are excerpted from the Venerable Tripitaka Master Hsuan Hua's commentary on the *Ten Dharma Realms*.