

The Ten Worlds or Realms

1. Identifiers of Samsaric influences and experience
2. Karmic influences
3. A more immediate reference to the larger concept of the 3000 realms in a single thought moment
4. A set of observations for deeper understanding of the vicissitudes and distractions of the Samsaric mind-state

The Ten Worlds (Realms) are a conception of the streams of karmic influences within our amalgam of karma. These influences (residing in our eighth consciousness) are constantly active in our experience of Samsara, as well as adding to this repository with every thought moment of life. This Samsaric experience is the source of all our vicissitudes as taught by Shakyamuni as the source of all stress and anxiety.

As the ten worlds are interpenetrating influences and experiences, these ten realms actually represent One Hundred (100) constantly shifting realms, amalgamating into our internal speech and thought ideas. Each of these realms express as a combination of ten factors affecting our perception, cognition and the formation of our thoughts.

All together the multiplication comes to One Thousand (1000) aspects of influences morphing in each moment. Finally, Buddhism calls into this equation the three realms of consciousness, living beings and the environment or universe. We have now arrived at a theoretical 3000 realms in a single thought moment of life. For more please see, ***3000 Realms in a Single Thought Moment of Life.***

The Ten Realms (worlds) are;

Hell (Jap. Jigoku).

This state of life is characterized by a feeling of hopelessness; sadness, depression, lack of confidence, tiredness, and the sense that nothing will change for the better, that there is nothing anyone can do to change it. This state can manifest as uncontrollable rage, not to be confused with anger, but a desperate and deep self-hatred.

Hunger or Hungry Ghosts (Jap. Gaki).

This is a feeling of insatiable desire. Usually denotes a “craving” for some external stimulus that will result in happiness. Examples of things a person might hunger for are cars, houses, money, drugs, alcohol, sex, etc. The moment you are in the world of hunger, you are, a slave to your desires.

Animality or Animals (Jap. Chikusho).

A person in this world behaves like an animal in that they prey on those whom they perceive to be weaker and cower before those whom they perceive to be more powerful. Work environments are perhaps the most common places where this world occur. A person in this world may pretend to willingly do everything that their boss tells them and to respect their boss's authority while treating their own subordinates in a high-handed or authoritarian manner. Another description of Animality is contained in the common phrase "the law of the jungle."

Anger or Asuras (Jap. Shura).

The world of anger is perhaps the most deceptively named of the Ten Worlds. It is a condition of egotism and self-righteousness, backstabbing and manipulation. Like Animality, it is a condition that is focused on power. Wars start from the collective life condition of a nation centered in the world of anger. Dogmatism about religion, politics, relationships, etc. comes from this life condition. All others are to believe you because of who you are (your status) not because what you are saying is necessarily reasonable or correct.

These four lower worlds, or life conditions, are known as the four evil paths. That is because they tend to lead individuals down to the lowest condition — the world of hell.

Humanity (also called Tranquility, Jap. Nin).

This is another world that is somewhat difficult to describe. This state is often mistaken for enlightenment (research Chan or Zen), even by Buddhists. This is a life condition of stasis, where the perception is that nothing changes. It is a condition where you can use rational judgment. You can carry on conversations and have dialogues without becoming distraught about concerns for your own life or the lives of others. So much effort is put forth to avoid emotionalism or passion that, despite what you would think at first view, this world is actually exhausting in that it is impossible to remain in without just shutting out the realities of your life and the lives of others.

Rapture or Heavenly Beings (Jap. Ten).

The condition of rapture, as the name implies, is one of elation or ecstasy. It can be the result of a positive outcome within the world of hunger for example. A main characteristic of this condition is that it is short lived.

People tend to cycle through these six lower worlds over and over again without any hope of breaking free from them. The environment easily manipulates the person in these worlds, and their happiness relies heavily upon their external success. The important thing to understand about the concept of the Ten Worlds and life condition is that it is relatively easy to obtain external goals, but to change one's central life tendency is quite difficult. Even after obtaining a new car, a person will shortly fall from the world of rapture into their old feeling or life tendency (see, 3000 Realms).

Learning or Voice Hearers (Jap. Shomon).

As the name of this world implies, the world of learning is experienced when you are gaining knowledge about the world around you or your life itself. More specifically though, it is a realm defined in Buddhism as the capacity to truly “**hear**” and ingest the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha or the **Dharma**. It is said that a seeking mind is the key to wisdom, and you’ve probably heard teachers say that without effort on the part of their students, learning will not take place. Put another way, your external environment cannot make you learn.

Realization or Cause-Awakened Ones (Jap. Engaku).

The world of realization takes learning one step further. It requires even more effort. By internalizing the knowledge and adding something of your creativity to it, you can take your learning a step further and actually “teach” your mind and gain insight into the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha.

Bodhisattva (Jap. Bodhisattva).

The world of Bodhisattva is a naturally occurring condition of life, although in Buddhist teaching it is a mind-state of propagation for the facilitating of others to discover the Dharma. It is the life condition where you actually care about another person’s life as you do your own. Because it is so hard to love, to care, be compassionate, it is a life condition that also yields a great cause/effect within your life. The only way to consistently experience the world of Bodhisattva is by raising your life experience to the next and highest world — the world of Buddhahood.

Buddhahood or Buddha (Jap. Butsu).

This world, or life condition, is the most difficult to explain. It is the condition of life that exhibits infinite wisdom, strong life force and vitality, and tremendous good fortune. Buddha wisdom here does not refer to knowledge. It is in fact the actual experience of the Engine of Life and its momentum unifying our life with the life of the cosmos and everything in it.

The goal in Buddhism is to make enlightenment one’s central life tendency. Within each of the Ten Worlds is the potential for each of the other ten. This is referred to as the mutual possession or interpenetration of the Ten Worlds. What this means in practical terms is that the potential for Buddhahood exists within each of the other worlds. You don’t have to scratch and claw your way up through each and every one of the worlds to reach the highest or tenth world of Buddhahood. As you become aware of your life’s tendency to cycle among the lower six worlds, you can develop a seeking mind to escape from them. Your efforts even to read this book about Buddhism are the cause for you to break free from the six lower worlds’ grasp. The accomplishment of enlightenment, or in other words, making the world of Buddhahood your life’s central tendency requires Buddhist practice. As stated before, the moment you chant NaMuMyoHoRenGeKyo, your life is in the world of Buddhahood.