

Nagarjuna and the Eight Worldly Concerns

Nagarjuna's dharma poem *Letter to a Friend* is a concise but comprehensive telling of the most central teachings of Mahayana and one of the most frequently quoted texts in Tibetan Buddhism. Nagarjuna lived during the second and third centuries CE, and is one of several figures commonly referred to as the "Second Buddha." He was the most central figure in the Madhyamaka school, which heavily influenced all branches of Tibetan Buddhism. The subject matter of the verse quoted below is the *8 Worldly Concerns*, sometimes also translated (accurately but confusingly) as the *8 Worldly Dharmas*¹.

Nagarjuna,
Letter to a Friend, verse 29

འཇིག་རྟེན་མཁྱེན་པ་རྗེད་དང་མ་རྗེད་དང་།
བདེ་དང་མི་བདེ་སྐྱེན་དང་མི་སྐྱེན་དང་།
བསྐྱོད་སྤྲུང་ཅེས་བགྱེ་འཇིག་རྟེན་ཚོས་བརྒྱད་པོ།
བདག་གི་ཡིད་ལུལ་མིན་པར་མགོ་སྟོམ་མཛོད།

You who know the world, take gain and loss,
Or bliss and pain, or kind words and abuse,
Or praise and blame – these eight mundane
concerns –
Make them the same, and don't disturb your
mind.

Translation by Padmakara Translation Group

The Eight Worldly Concerns

འཇིག་རྟེན་ཚོས་བརྒྱད་

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| 1. gain རྗེད་པ་ | 2. loss མ་རྗེད་པ་ |
| 3. pleasure བདེ་བ་ | 4. pain ལུག་བསྐྱེད་ |
| 5. fame སྐྱེན་གྲགས་ | 6. disgrace མ་གྲགས་པ་ |
| 7. praise བསྐྱོད་པ་ | 8. blame སྤྲུང་པ་ |

A rhyming mnemonic (that unfortunately requires re-ordering of some of the pairs) is: loss and gain, pleasure and pain, disgrace and fame, praise and blame.

¹ The Tibetan term *chö* (ཚོས་) is a translation of the Sanskrit term *dharma* and has an extremely broad range of meaning, including but not limited to: Dharma, concern, phenomena, mental objects, (spiritual) teachings, experiences, tradition, attribute, quality, way, ultimate & underlying reality, order, law, topic, etc.