

## A Successful Life

The Buddhists have a genius for condensing profound wisdom into simple lists. Their list of the Eight Worldly Concerns summarizes what motivates us to willingly harm others for self-benefit and then ignore the suffering we cause. We want the success of having more than others, receiving the praise and attention of others, and having pleasure. We don't want blame, disregard, loss, or pain.

The Eight Worldly Concerns identifies the marks of success within a self-centered, competitive culture. The competition game requires the self-centered players to have the willingness to harm others for self-benefit and then ignore the suffering they cause. Earth and life serve as the gameboard. The amoral game only ends with the utter destruction of life on Earth.

No individual player ever wins the game. No player ever has enough. No matter how advanced they progress in achieving success, someone else surpasses them or they get forced off the board by death or some other disabling condition.

As players cannot win, they constantly compare themselves with others to have some ideas of their ranking in the game: how much power and wealth they have, how many others serve and benefit them in various ways, how much others seek out their wisdom for knowing how to successfully play the game, how they display how much they enjoy their wealth and power.

Modern Western culture has made it super easy for players to know their ranking. Media regularly updates success rankings for wealth, power, and fame. We also get feature stories of wise men who sit on their mountain of riches and pontificate on the secrets of their success. Infotainment spotlights images of the smiling rich and powerful at play.

Players suffer from comparing their lives with the more successful. They feel resentment, envy, anger, isolation, powerlessness, unrecognized, used, disparaged. Yet, when they compare their lives with bigger losers, they feel superior, which renews their sense that they truly deserve to win, that they can prove themselves. And so, the game continues. Despite their suffering, players refuse to change their ways, for if they should change their self-centeredness, they would have to leave the game.

These marks of success have so much power over us because the culture has conditioned us to them. They mask the actual markers of life. While the game has the purpose of accumulating wealth and power over others, life has the purpose of surviving. Life focuses on what it needs to survive, not on focusing on how to have power over others. Life interdepends on the wellbeing of others for survival. Life enjoys harmonious and mutually beneficial interactions rather than finding pleasures in ways that cultivate inequality.

The sacred path of furthering life on Earth follows the ways of life, a joyful path.<sup>1</sup> We have joy from having a loving awareness of the sacred and focusing our attention on serving the needs of the Earth and life. We have gratitude for all the kindnesses and other ways the Earth and life have furthered us within our lives. We have joy in harmoniously interacting with others in our place, the sacred place where the sacred planted us. We know we have much to unlearn from living in Western culture, which

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<sup>1</sup> **Ways and values of the sacred path to further life on Earth (work in progress):** awakening and maturing our loving sacred being, living humbly, joyful surrender to sacred wisdom to know what to do, compassionate action, harmonious interactions, equitable sharing and caring for the Earth, responding to change in ways that further life on Earth, and preserving our inner balance with the sacred, life, and Earth. By living these ways, we deepen our loving awareness of the sacred and reverence for the sacredness of life and Earth.

has obscured our abilities to fully express our sacred being. However, our faults become the opportunities to change our ways and flow within the sacred.

We follow the sacred path to know what to do to further life on Earth and then do it. In the process, we become interbeings. The impossible becomes possible.

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