

Right Livelihood, Leading a Wholesome Life



A wholesome life, like a garden, requires constant TLC.

Gratitude and benevolence spring from the understanding of the interdependence of everything. It will give birth to the enlightened mind attitude (Skt.Bodhicitta). Mindfulness and awareness will be our precious tools. The cultivation of virtuous activity and healthy life style will become self-evidence. The weed of ego--cherishing habits will have to be regularly uprooted. What a pleasure to share the bountiful crop with all beings!

Fourth of the Four Noble Truths, the path has eight limbs grouped into three parts. Practitioners of Buddhism follow these eight limbs both sequentially and simultaneously. The three parts (ethics, meditation and wisdom) form the "triple path", another denomination of the Buddhist path (these various denominations are there in particular to help not to see things in a too rigid or structured way, but to give various insights on a practice which must essentially be an "integrated" practice).

The eight limbs in the order presented by the Buddha in the sutras are: righteous sight, right thinking, right speech, right actions, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.

The Buddha taught that the first seven limbs of the Eightfold Path are to be developed as a support for the last (samadhi).

The eight members according to the three groups are as follows:

A "Sila"(morality, discipline, ethics):

- 1 right speech (not to lie, not to sow discord or disunity, not to use coarse language, not to chat idly);
- 2 right action (respecting the Five Precepts);
- 3 right livelihood or right profession.**

B "samādhi" (effort, attention, concentration):

- 4 right effort or perseverance (to overcome what is unfavorable and to undertake what is favorable);
- 5 right attention, full consciousness or right awareness (of things, of oneself - of one's body, of one's emotions, of one's thoughts -, of others, of reality);
- 6 right concentration, establishment of the being in awakening (vipassana).

C "Prajna": (sight, thought) great wisdom:

- 7 correct vision or correct understanding (of reality, of the four noble truths);
- 8 right thought or right discernment (devoid of greed, hatred and ignorance).

The Right Livelihood aims to ensure that one earns a fair living. For a lay disciple, the Buddha teaches that wealth must be acquired according to certain standards. It should only be acquired by legal means; it must be acquired peacefully, without coercion or violence; it must be acquired honestly, not by trickery or deception; and it must be acquired in such a way as not to cause harm and suffering to others. The Buddha mentions five ways of earning a living that harm others and are therefore to be avoided: the arms trade, the trade in living beings (this includes slavery and prostitution but also the breeding of animals intended for

slaughter), the production of butcher's meat, poisons and intoxicants (alcohol, drugs, etc.). He also names other dishonest ways of making money that fall under an improper lifestyle: practicing deception, betrayal, fortune telling, cunning and usury. Obviously, any occupation that requires the violation of right speech and right deed is a bad livelihood, but other professions, such as selling weapons or intoxicants, may not violate these factors while being improper because of their consequences for others.

Right attitude in action also means that a worker should perform his task diligently and conscientiously. The right attitude towards people means that respect and consideration must be shown to all people, regardless of their social status. Fairness to things means that, in business and commerce transactions, things should be presented honestly, without misleading advertising, cheating on quality or quantity, or dishonest maneuvering.

Right livelihood

About the term “right”

Samyak (सम्यक्).

1. All, wholly, in one or the same direction, in the same way, at the same time, together.
2. Duly.
3. By honorable means, completely, wholly, thoroughly, by all means.
4. Distinctly, clearly, correctly, truly, properly, fitly, in the right way or manner, well.
5. With, together with.
6. Properly, fitly

Earning one’s living.

In the West, right livelihood continues to mean work in which you do not kill, steal, lie, engage in sexual practices harmful to yourself or others, or ingest intoxicants. For many, though, it also means that you aspire to:

- Work that is personally fulfilling.
- Work that makes a difference.
- Work that serves others

- Work that pays the bills
- Work that leaves time for self-exploration and development.

It's not all about work.

Profit driven or benefit driven?

Environment, social justice and fair economy as the necessary basis for wisdom:

As Buddhist monk and scholar Walpola Rahula Thero points out in *“Buddhism in the Real World,”* (in *Mindfulness and Meaningful Work: Explorations in Right Livelihood*, p. 24), the Buddha taught, *“...that poverty is the cause of immorality and crimes such as theft, falsehood, violence, hatred, cruelty, and so forth.”* *“Punishment to suppress crime . . . can never be successful.”* *“ . . . In order to eradicate crime, the economic condition of the people should be improved: grain and other facilities for agriculture should be provided for farmers and cultivators; capital should be provided for traders and those who are engaged in business; adequate wages should be paid to those who are employed. When people are thus provided for with opportunities for earning a sufficient income, they will be contented, will have no fear or anxiety, and consequently the country will be peaceful and free from crime.”*

The Importance of Trust

Right livelihood is impossible without a **community of support**. **Trust is key** to building a community of support.

Give Back More Than You Get

The most important step in building support for right livelihood is to **give back more than you get**.