

Right Livelihood.

Dharma roadside dialogue series

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We are going to explore the concept of right livelihood. As you probably know, the themes come from you, so if you have any suggestions for future months, please write them in the chat or send me an email at tsony@bodhipath.org and I will see what I can do with this.

So, today's suggestion was to talk about right livelihood and living a wholesome life. In a way, it's kind of following what we have seen in the past months. **We started with what is the basis. The possibility of enlightenment comes from a fundamental cause, that is the Buddha nature.** It's a good starting point. We are all endowed with the Buddha nature, we partake from the Buddha nature, we can decide to set our course in this direction. Clarifying the natural state of our mind, if we want to use the mahamudra terminology. And clarifying means to remove what are fleeting adventitious impurities, that though they don't harm the Buddha nature, they prevent the mind from knowing itself. So that was the first thing.

The second thing we discussed was to focus on one's practice, but also to remain true to oneself. And that's really connected to the condition through which we can actualize enlightenment, or through which we can clarify the natural state in the course of our human life. As a human being, we have a wonderful workshop that we can use to practice and clarify the natural state. Then we have to define the practice. And practice here means what leads us to liberate ourselves from suffering, dukkha, and explore, discover, experience sukha, which is the bliss and ease of the natural state. So you remember these two key terms sukha and dukkha, and dukkha should be understood as dis-ease or suffering in a sense that our mind is stuck. Stuck in ignorance and all the mental afflictions that come from that. And this is not the natural state of the mind. It feels like that's what is, but it's not, we've just been in this since beginningless time, so it seems almost like this is the natural state, but it is not. It is a state of confusion and delusion that prevents our mind from knowing itself, and therefore enjoying the full freedom, bliss, comfort, and ease of the natural state. That which is translated by sukha. Dukkha, stuck, sukha, flowing, free, open, liberated. So to focus on our practice is really to keep doing this. Keep doing this in a very motivated and determined way, and also in a very natural way that takes into account our actual situation; the current state of affairs, I could say, that we have to deal with. So that we are not living in a fantasy, but we are actually connected with our reality; who we are, and what we can do with that. So, in that sense, to remain true to one's self.

Now today we are going to talk about right livelihood, which is following quite naturally the last two discussions about the Buddha nature and the practice, and remaining true to ourselves, by finding what is the lifestyle which is the most supportive to move from dukkha to experience sukha. If we come back to the original teachings of the Buddha, we can see that everything he had to say, in

a way, was quite precisely described in the Four Truths of the Noble Ones. And the first one is: we're stuck. The second one is: how did we come to be stuck? How did it happen? The third noble truth is: if we're stuck and we fell into this trap, that means we can come out. It's possible we can retro-engineer our suffering and delusion so that we come back to the natural state. And so that leads us quite naturally to the fourth reflection, which is: the path leading to this recovery, or discovery of the natural state.

In the traditional exposition of this path, it is done through the description of what is called the eight-fold noble path. Eight fold, the eight stages, that lead us from where we are to where we aspire to be. But these eight-folds are often described as the three trainings, that means that the eight-folds are redistributed within three trainings. The first one is the training of sila; the training of discipline, or ethics, in which we would find right livelihood. And this training of ethics leads us to the capacity to cultivate a familiarity with mind, in other terms, to meditate. And then the meditation, through calm-abiding and vipashyana, progressively will lead us to the third training, which is the training of discernment leading to wisdom, or as it is known as prajna is Sanskrit. It is taught that we could say the first seven folds of the eight-fold noble path are all present and taught to help us cultivate and reach the final stage, which is wisdom. Because the goal of all the Buddha's teaching is to alleviate the suffering and liberate from the suffering our self and all sentient beings. The source of suffering is ignorance, not knowing the natural state. So that's what will be the liberated factor, but we cannot do this right away if we haven't prepared our mind, we cannot just go from zero to a hundred just by a nice wish that we have. There is a certain construction that is necessary; gathering provisions, freeing ourselves from old habits, and so on and so forth.

So, I will concentrate on the first training, which is discipline, in which we will find right livelihood. But I just wanted to show the eight-fold noble path, so that you get a glimpse of the larger picture. The larger picture being: on the way from dukkha to sukha, what do we need to do, and in terms of training, what are the appropriate steps. So when we talk about discipline, morality or ethics, there's three points, three exercises we have to work with.

So now let's go through the term "right," that we use for right speech, right action, and right livelihood. So, the term we use here, or we translate, is in Pali "samma," and in Sanskrit, "samyak." And according to different Sanskrit dictionaries, I'm going to use mostly the Sanskrit word, the word samyak means: all, wholly, in the sense of complete, in one or the same direction, in the same way at the same time, together, also means duly, by honorable means, thoroughly, but also distinctly, clearly, correctly, properly, fittingly, in the right way or manner, well, but also, which is important, with. Together with. So the general sense of the term samyak in this context refers to something that is wholesome, that is appropriate, that is fitting, that we do together, there is a harmony in it, and we are sort of pulling the cart in the same direction all together. So all of that would be what we simply translate as "right." So it's really right from the beginning, from the inception of the word samyak, it gives a sense of community. It gives a sense of we, rather than I. A sense of community based on a certain intention, and here we are talking about the sangha, the buddhist community of intention,

buddhist intentional community, let's put it like this, which is to progress from dukkha to the natural state of mind, which is sukha. And in different modalities, to help all other sentient beings to have access to this possibility, and eventually to the fruit of the path.

So anything, in terms of speech and action, that sort of fits in this perspective is right. And whatever is not really fitting in this perspective is not wholesome, is not appropriate. And so you see that the moral compass here is not limited to what a society declares, because, you know, slavery was legal. Discrimination by gender, color, ethnicity, sexual orientation, were sort of like mainstream and socially accepted; was okay. In this perspective, with this specific compass, it is not. So at times your commitment to cultivate right livelihood might be at odds with what the mainstream and what society accepts as valid, or even glorifies. So at times it may be a little bit difficult to swim against the stream. But I just want you to remember that all the fishes that swim against the stream are alive. Those who float downstream belly up are dead. Okay? So just keep that picture in mind;~} We are against the stream sometimes, sometimes we are just, we are living in the golden age we could say, and this is the golden rule for the society. Wonderful, it must be really great to live in such a society. But it's not always the case. So that's the definition of the word samyak. And by the way, when you think or want to express the concept of full and complete enlightenment, you use the same word samyak. Samyaksambodhi, which means the full and complete awakening, which is sort of not the awakening of an arhat, somebody who has reached a personal level of liberation, which is a great thing, but it's not a complete samyaksambuddha, sambodhi, the full and complete awakening. When we talk about the awakening of a Buddha, it is samyak; full, complete, every aspect has been covered, every aspect has been liberated. Just for your information, it's the same samyak, even if it's slightly different in its use in this case.

The first one is right speech.

Right speech, which is not to lie, not to sow discord or disunity, not to use coarse language, and not to waste time in idle chat. So that's the proper use of our speech, and again, the proper use of our speech if we are aiming toward sukha away from dukkha.

The second point is right action.

Right action means here basically living in agreement with what would be the precepts that we might take. What we call pratimoksha precepts, the vows of individual liberation. And these five vows have to do with mostly behavior of body and speech. The vow not to take life, or preserve life. The vow to be honest, the precept of being frank, the precept of not disappearing in artificial paradise when the task is a little bit heavy, that is using drugs, using alcohol, or other forms of addiction, that comes from the a desire to dodge the confrontation with reality that becomes unbearable, so we sort of seek shelter in these additive substances or behaviors. Also, since we are in the world of desire, there is a commitment to properly address our sexual life. As a lay person that means to have a sexuality that is not harming anybody, in the sense that you don't use your position or your power to

impose on others your sexual desires or requirements. You also preserve the harmony of established relationships that are trying their best, and you know it's hard, they're trying their best to work together and grow and overcome difficulties and so on, and you don't come in that, and say, "Oh, there is a little flaw in their joint venture, I might get something out of it." That's not really the thing to do on this path towards liberation, because we are creating turbulence and suffering that are not really conducive to enlightenment. You're creating dukkha when you're pretending to work for sukha, so there is a contradiction. So, it might come in the right livelihood in that we need to talk about what is a predatory sexuality, so don't be limited by what I say, especially if you need or want to talk about this in the upcoming question and answers, there is space for that.

Thirdly, right livelihood.

Right profession. Why I make a difference between right livelihood and right profession, livelihood shouldn't be limited to work. It should be larger than that.

So, let's talk now about what the classic texts tell us about right livelihood. In those classic texts Buddha teaches that wealth must be acquired according to certain standards; there must be some standards for the acquisition of wealth. 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 to not cause harm and suffering to others. So that's the standard. The Buddha mentioned five ways of earning a living that harms others, and are therefore to be avoided. The arms trade, human trafficking, which includes slavery and prostitution, but also, sentient beings at large, not just living beings in the sense of human beings, the breeding of animals intended for slaughter, is part of these professions that are not part of right livelihood. This opens a big thing, because, "I don't kill this beast but I eat it." So where am I in this? And then, not only the slaughter, but the production of butcher's meat, the meat packers after the slaughterhouse. Poison and intoxicants, that includes alcohol and drugs. And the Buddha also names other dishonest ways of making money that fall under an improper lifestyle, practicing deception, betrayal, fortune telling, conning and usury. Obviously, any occupation that requires the violation of right speech and right attitude is a bad livelihood, because on the right speech you build up the right life, and on both you build up the right livelihood. Right speech brings right action, and both bring right livelihood. If you don't follow right speech and right action, you can't have right livelihood. It's kind of obvious, but maybe it's good to mention it again.

But other professions such as selling weapons or intoxicants may not violate these factors while being improper, because of their consequences for others. "I'm not lying. You know, this is a perfectly functioning assault rifle. I'm very honest, and what you buy has a good quality for a fair price." so you're not lying, but you're actually enabling people to hurt other people. It's kind of something very, very present in the American culture. We had the latest mass shooting in Colorado, to bring that back to mind, but unfortunately it's just one in like the last two weeks or so, we had

what, three, four, five? So that's why it's something we really have to think about, and also think about what we can do to stop that.

So a right attitude in action means also that a worker should perform his/her task diligently and conscientiously. There's kind of a pride and honor in doing one's job properly. The right attitude towards people means that respect and consideration must be shown to all people, regardless of their social status. And fairness to things, means that business and commerce transactions should be presented honestly without misleading advertising, cheating on quality or quantity, or dishonest maneuvering. So that's the general framework. These were guidelines given by the Buddha, who wasn't some sort of disembodied meditator, but somebody who was very, very present to his time, and the needs of people in his time. He gave a lot of advice that could be regarded as social guidelines, or to some extent almost political guidelines in some of his sutras. And it's very interesting, because he's not talking as a politician, he's talking as an enlightened person who is trying to give some guidelines to people in society who are struggling with the context of the society and who are very honestly, despite these constraints, very honestly aspiring to reach enlightenment. So now that all of this came to the west, 2500 years later, things have changed a little bit. We sort of equate right livelihood with the job we are doing, how we make our money or our profession.

But it's broader than that; we'll see that as we go along. Now, when we think about a job, largely speaking, we are aspiring to find a job that is personally fulfilling, a job that makes a difference in the world, a job that maybe serves others, and of course, that pays the bills. But also we are aspiring to find a job that leaves time for self-exploration and development. So these are the concerns in our time regarding jobs and professions. And then of course this comes on top of the basic requirements that the Buddha gave in his time.

When we were, many, many eons ago, hunters and foragers, the work was very light in a way. It's estimated by anthropologists that they had to work about 24 hours a week. And so they had a lot of time for the community, which was vital then, the tribe. They had time for the family, time to educate their children, because if they didn't teach them hunting and foraging, they would not survive. And they had time also for creating the tools that were necessary, but with time, and not being under the pressure of production and time, make them beautiful. As beautiful as they are efficient. When you look at the way that they cut their flintstones, made arrowheads, and like the Inuits, the way they made their hooks and so on, each one is a piece of art. And everybody had to know how to do what it took to survive. And if you couldn't cover all the jobs, then you knew that the community would do the tasks that you cannot do, because you do the tasks that you can do. So there was sort of a community of intention, which was about surviving together and helping each other to go through some difficult times.

Then came the evolution, where they became farmers. There is an anthropologist who refers to this not as the evolution, but as the fall; the first mistake. Because then we became prisoners and dependent on the weather, and the crops, we became afraid of thieves, and some had a lot and

became barons, and the other became serfs. And as we were afraid of the weather, and so on, religion came. Then not only did you have the barons, but now you had the clerics. And so you couldn't roam free wherever you wanted, and worked 24 hours a week, and get what you need to live with your posse, with your tribe. And so supposedly agriculture was an evolution;~) Then after that we came to the third fall, which is industrialization. Now we are here in a time when we depend on money. We cannot make the things we need to use every day. Look around your house, and look at all the things that you need on a daily basis and ask yourself, "Can I make this? Can I start a fire?" So we are dependent. Much more dependent than probably the hunter gatherers were. And then, of course, there was a redistribution of wealth, so that some capitalized all the wealth and the products and the tools of production, and others were just proletarians, in the sense of just workers. Actually the word proletarian is really interesting, it comes from the word proles, which means the only good thing you can do is make more children so they can work for us. That's basically it. And if you want anything in this world you need money. And if you don't have money, too bad for you. But this creates a tremendous pressure, and sort of enslaves you. In the time of agriculture there were serfs, and now there are people who are serfs of their own incapacity to be independent in making their livelihood, therefore they are dependent on the society and they cannot be free. So they are forced to adopt behaviors and make choices that are against, maybe, their deep aspirations.

So that's what right livelihood is all about. It's a reflection about adopting again the structure of the Four Noble Truths. "How come I'm so stuck? Where does it come from? Can it finish or change? And how do I do that?" So it's the structure of the Four Noble Truths that you apply to right livelihood. They respond one to the other. So that's the general tone of what I want to address. It's not all about work. The question we should ask ourselves is, is it profit driven or benefit driven? When we are talking about our actions, we're talking about our speech, our words, our thoughts, is it profit driven or is it benefit driven? Profit driven is, you try to capture all the goodis for your sole interest. Benefit driven, you see beyond this basic predatorial business, and you see the true benefit for myself, to begin with, is in fairness, a sense of respect and treating everyone with equality. And that will be, of course, indispensable if we aspire to be of benefit for everybody. So this implies environment, social justice, and fair economy as a necessary basis for wisdom. This is not me saying that, or Karl Marx or Engels, this is the Buddha.

In the tradition of the Theravada there are three collections of the Buddha's teachings, the sutras, which are called the Short Exposition discourse, the Middle Length discourse, and the Long discourse. In the Middle Length discourse the Buddha says, "Poverty is the cause of immorality and crimes, such as theft, falsehood, violence, hatred, cruelty, and so forth." The natural reaction of a society is punishment. And the Buddha says, "Punishment to suppress crime can never be successful. In order to eradicate crime, the economic conditions 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." 2500 years ago. Hahaha, we've made a lot of progress;~ }

“When people are thus provided with opportunities for earning a sufficient income, they will be content and have no fear or anxiety, and consequently the country will be peaceful and free from crime.” Minus the few sociopaths and psychopaths that need mental care. So, basically what the Buddha said 2500 years ago, is that there is no social justice if there is no wealth equality. This out of fear and out of anxiety creates all the crimes that we all suffer from. So, for the Buddha it was very clear, that if we talk about right livelihood, we have involve all of this perspective, and as far as we are concerned in our time, I think it is true for social justice and for the economy still, but even more, now we have to add environment, which was not an issue 2500 years ago.

Environment.

We have to really consider as part of the right livelihood the way we consume, what our footprint is on the environment. And what we do to offset our presence, so that we, I don't know if we can ever be a zero human being, in the sense of passive, like houses, but at least try to have the lightest footprint as possible. And so in order to do this, just like the foragers in the past, our ancestors, who couldn't do it alone because they were facing nature, they were facing wild animals, they were facing a lot of unknown and dangerous situations, so they needed the community. So we need to recreate the community, because this has been lost. The medieval sense of community, villages, even basic agriculture with all the limitations that they had, you still had a sort of community fabric that would help everybody one way or the other. And then you had all the religious days off, way more than during the industrialization era, where you had leisure to consider higher perspectives and higher thoughts than just work.

In German the word is *Muße*, which I really like. It's poorly translated in English as leisure, but it's really a sense of freedom, a space that's not oriented toward any task or any obligation, and usually it's associated with *Kult*, that means worship, and that's the Sunday. *Kult und muße*, it's a time where you think about, in this case, God, the divine, but something beyond the pettiness of our daily life. Something bigger. All of this has been eradicated with industrialization. As I moved from France to the USA, the thing that shocked me the most was the shops that were open 24/7. Like Walmart. Every day, 24 hours a day. So, when do these people have time for *Muße*, for this leisure, this enlightening leisure? Their life is total work. And as the German philosopher Josef Pieper said, “A life of total work leads to bankruptcy and slavery.” He wrote that in 1948 in a very interesting pamphlet *Kult und muße*. And that's where we are. Full work. You cannot go out to see your friends, you might die, but you can pack in the subway to go to work. And you have no choice, because it's the law. This is leading to the bankruptcy of the system, because once we have exploited all of the resources of this earth, then the system will fall apart. And then maybe we will move to the fourth evolution of humanity, which will be a post-industrialization ecological society, but this transition will be really painful for a lot of people.

So all of this is part of right livelihood. Why do I say that? I say that because right livelihood is impossible without a community of support. You know that, when you feel alone in your apartment,

you're in lockdown, maybe in different countries in the world you cannot even leave your apartment, or only briefly, you feel that you are totally disconnected from the rest of your usual community. You don't see them, you cannot exchange, you cannot get nourishment, like both material and spiritual, you cannot share and give support for those who need it. How many people are dying alone in an old folks home, and then their family cannot even come and be there for the funeral? This sense of community has been really under attack since, let's say, very obviously a year and a half. So we need to, in terms of right livelihood, recreate a sense of community. I read an article about this and the author was talking about interstitial community. You know, and interstice, the little space between two big blocks, interstitial community. This little micro tribe, if you want to use the terminology of the hunter/gatherer. In the Buddhist perspective that would be our sangha. And for others that would be a non-profit association that shares a certain project, aspires to the common good and wants to help. A circle of friends or the larger humanity. So we need to spend some time to recreate, or to explore the possibility of these interstitial communities, or intentional communities. Because they will be the support and the nourishment for our right livelihood. And the right livelihood will be the basis for a serene mind that can look at itself and find wisdom.

What is the key of this intentional community? The trust. So it cannot be profit driven. Because when it's profit driven, you try to get more. And then you betray, and people don't trust you. It has to be benefit driven. Benefit in the sense that it benefits everybody, myself included. Based on trust. I tend to think that it doesn't really require any hierarchy, because it's a fellowship. Of course, even in this fellowship at times there are leaders, but they are functional leaders, not essential leaders that are leaders all the time. Nobody should take a load of leadership more than a year, three years; like in the old days we said, incorporated. A company was created, incorporated, to fulfill a certain task. Once the task is fulfilled, we de-corporate. We don't need to keep it. So it's kind of more of an organic community, than a hierarchical organization or corporation. And being based on natural leadership when needed, and the leaders can change when needed, then there is trust and everyone can feel that they are equally important and equally participating. And so, everyone has their place, whether they have money or not, because in this case money doesn't matter. You know, if you have three billion in your bank account and you come into the tribe of hunter gatherers with your credit card and say "Hey, I'm the boss," they will laugh at you. They will take your credit card and make some kind of nice jewelry, or a scraper to prepare the hides; nobody cares about your money in this context. So in our communities, intentional communities, there must be this natural leadership, and everybody has an equal, not the same, but equal position. And everybody is useful.

At the time of the Buddha, there was a question regarding at which age one could join the sangha. And the Buddha said, "Seven. By seven, a child is autonomous." This means, you know, potty trained;~) "And if a child can scare the crows that disturb the monks and nuns who are meditating, this child is useful in the community, and therefore can be part of the community." So there is no small or big. Jean La Fontaine, the French fabulist, wrote *The Lion and the Mouse*. In this story the lion is so big, and so on, and he is disregarding the mouse, and then one day he got trapped in a net by a hunter, and the mouse comes and chews the net and liberates the lion. Everyone is important.

Everyone. So that is the kind of community we need to create. And they are interstitial communities because they are little pockets in the bigger thing. If we try to work with the bigger thing, very quickly we are disheartened. You know, you voted for this one, and said, “Do the job.” And they don’t, so next time you vote for the other one...”Do the job.” And they don’t. And then vote for the other one. And in the meantime in the years they are in power they destroy all the good things the other one has done. So you might say, “Why should I keep voting? It’s useless.” It is useless if you are not part of the community. You cannot delegate this like if you’re a hunter-gatherer and say, “By the way, you go and hunt for food for me and bring it to me tonight.” Surely they will not, because you are a dead weight in this community, you’re not bringing anything. So however you participate and whatever you bring in, you are a living element of this community and feel important, you’re sort of becoming closer to your Buddha nature by this. You don’t feel like an outsider, a misfit. There is no misfit in intentional communities.

Another point that is very important in the building of these intentional communities is as permaculture would say, always give back to the earth more than you receive from her. Restore the earth, not as it was when you began to use it, but even better, enhanced! So always, that’s the general idea, always give more than you receive. Give back more than you received. This doesn’t work with the profit driven mind. It only works with a benefit driven mind. Because what is good for me is good for the community, what is good for the community will be, indirectly, good for me too. So, these are maybe a few directions for the question and answers session that we have after this. I really wanted to bring this reflection on a global, a more broader sense than just, “Am I doing the right job?” It’s more than that, as a human being, where am I? A job is just one aspect, it shouldn’t be sort of like the tree that hides the forest. And besides this, the work as we know now, is something that is for most of the people, imposed. It’s not something that we like, it’s oftentimes something we do just to pay the bills and we are sort of hoping there could be another life, or there could be something more than just that, and we don’t see a way out or how we could do otherwise. That’s why we need these intentional communities, so that we can imagine our future differently, and begin to take new routes, new directions, to invent the future, as a collective, as a community, rather than as an isolated and independent attempt, that doesn’t have much weight.

So our age is the industrial time, money is the golden veal that everybody worships, some small fraction owns 90%, and the rest work for them in order to get enough to get by. Do we want this forever? There is no time, it doesn’t make sense, there is no time for self introspection and discovery of the nature of our mind, and we die very bitter, like we have wasted our time, we have wasted our life. And it’s really a bad way to go out. We should go out with a sense that we had a good life, we did our best. For sure it could have been better, but I tried to be an honest person, I tried to give more than I received, I tried to know myself better, I tried to be more tolerant of other people, when they are going through their dark night and their difficulties. And as Milerepa said, “In my tradition my practice is to die without shame or regret. That could be a good way to summarize “right livelihood.”

When you come at the moment of death you have no shame and no regret. I know it's kind of heavy duty but it can also be really pleasant, I think, this idea that we can imagine our future, and together with, it doesn't have to be a big movement, a small community, an intentional community, our "tribe." We find love and support and help and create, invent, a future. On the side, in the fringes, between the cracks, you know. And then if progressively there are more and more people like me (it sounds like a John Lennon song, "I'm not the only one"). And at some point you might realize, wow, there are more people that are like me, benefit driven, not profit driven. And we have to learn how to connect, and create a network, a broader fellowship.

In sangha, we have the sangha, and the mahasangha. I don't know if you've ever heard of this term mahasangha. In the 35 Buddhas, it is called the sangha of the 10 directions. The sangha is your immediate fellowship. The men or the women that you live with. In the monastic context it would be the monastic community that you live with. Your brothers and sisters. But they are connected with other sanghas, other small intentional communities. And at times there are gatherings of what they call the mahasangha. For example, when the Buddha passed away, that was the first gathering of the mahasangha. All the different small communities who were inspired by the message that would live here and there and sort of share his teachings in an oral fashion, kind of a small biotope. They would meet with another community and suddenly realize that, we are a lot. And what message are we spreading and passing on, is it the same? And then they would realize that oh, we have lost a little of the meaning here, and then there would be an adjustment by checking and cross-checking with the different communities. That is what happened in the time of the Buddha, and has happened many many times since. I think one of the last mahasangha meetings was during the celebration of the 2500 years of Buddha's parinirvana, in 1956, when the Karmapa came from Tibet, and this was in India, probably in Bodhgaya or somewhere, and all the communities came from somewhere, Sri Lanka and wherever, and met and recited the sutras together and came to know each other. This is the mahasangha, composed of sanghas, of intentional communities. The strength of community like the sangha, in Tibetan terms, "gendun" means: dunpa, to aspire and gaywa, to what is wholesome, complete. In a sense like samyak, what is right, appropriate. Beneficial. So that's the intention of the community, and that's also its lifeblood. What keeps a community is not hierarchy, what keeps a community is common aspiration. Where everybody has a position, some will assume leadership for a time, and then they will pass it on, and some others will assume leadership because it's necessary, purely functioning. And that's what keeps this alive; everyone feels included, and everybody's happy with what they do. Then they have the best job, the golden gig, in the sangha, the best job ever. Whatever that is. Whether it's scaring the crows when you're seven, or making sure there is enough food for all the nuns and all the monks when it's necessary to prepare the daily meal. And that brings a sense of joy because we do our best, and we cannot do beyond that. And so I'm not depressed because I cannot do what I cannot do. Well, by definition, what you cannot do, you cannot do. Why would you be depressed;~} It's just a fact, and it prevents you from doing what you can do. Which is scare the crows. Or get the vegetables to prepare the meal for everybody. Or whatever, whatever your task is.

You know, here in our town, we have a supermarket that hires various people who have some sort of challenges, and they become baggers that puts your shopping in bags. And there is one guy in our town in the local supermarket who's name is Willy, and he's just so happy with his job. The other day we spoke with him, and so while he was packing our purchases, he said, "I've been doing this for 12 years, and this is my dream job." Also he helps taking their groceries to their car, and help them to put them into their car, because there are a lot of older people that cannot lift all the things they purchase. And he counts how many people he helps every day. One time I saw him and he always says, "Have a woonderrfull day!" That's his mantra. And then he told me, "I hit my record today, I helped 60 people!" That's his golden gig, he wouldn't dream of having a Goldman Sachs or whatever job. He's happy packing the bags, serving the customers, making them happy, telling them a story, wishing them a good day. Flirting a little bit with the girls saying, "Oh, I really love your sweater." He's a really sweet and simple minded guy. And he's happy with his job. Of course maybe he has something that we don't have. He's autistic. So he is more qualified than we are for simplicity, to some extent. So joy is there for him, even in the midst of chaos. He's always friendly, he's always smiling, he's always helping. Right livelihood, here we are.

But we don't all have to be baggers. We don't all have to be scarecrows. We can do other things. That's fine too. You can run a big company and make sure that everyone is treated fairly, they have decent work hours, decent wages, and good social welfare in the company. Like where my Dad worked, the company owned apartments at the mountains by the sea, and the employees could rent an holiday house for almost nothing. Basically cover the expense of electricity and water. You could do something like that also, if it comes into your hands, if you are leading such a business, you can do it and be happy with it. Or miserable, and make other people miserable. So that's right livelihood.