

Moment by Moment

Session #7 - Right Livelihood

Discourse on Happiness

I heard these words of the Buddha one time when the Lord was living in the vicinity of Savatthi at the Anathapindika Monastery in the Jeta Grove. Late at night, a deva appeared whose light and beauty made the whole Jeta Grove shine radiantly. After paying respects to the Buddha, the deva asked him a question in the form of a verse:

“Many gods and men are eager to know what are the greatest blessings which bring about a peaceful and happy life. Please, Tathagata, will you teach us?”
(This is the Buddha’s answer:)

“Not to be associated with the foolish ones, to live in the company of wise people, honoring those who are worth honoring – this is the greatest happiness.

“**To live in a good environment, to have planted good seeds,** and to realize that you are on the right path – this is the greatest happiness.

“**To have a chance to learn and grow, to be skillful in your profession or craft,** practicing the precepts and loving speech – this is the greatest happiness.

“To be able to serve and support your parents, to cherish your own family, **to have a vocation that brings you joy** – this is the greatest happiness.

“To live honestly, generous in giving, to offer support to relatives and friends, **living a life of blameless conduct** – this is the greatest happiness.

“To avoid unwholesome actions, not caught by alcoholism or drugs, and **to be diligent in doing good things** – this is the greatest happiness.

“To be humble and polite in manner, to be grateful and content with a simple life, not missing the occasion to learn the Dharma – this is the greatest happiness.

“**To persevere and be open to change,** to have regular contact with monks and nuns, and to fully participate in Dharma discussions – this is the greatest happiness.

“**To live diligently and attentively,** to perceive the Noble Truths, and to realize nirvana – this is the greatest happiness.

“**To live in the world with your heart undisturbed by the world,** with all sorrows ended, dwelling in peace – this is the greatest happiness.

“For he or she who accomplishes this, unvanquished wherever she goes, always he is safe and happy – happiness lives within oneself.”

*Mahamangala Sutta, Sutta Nipata 2.4**

The definition

"And what is right livelihood? There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones, having abandoned dishonest livelihood, keeps his life going with right livelihood: This is called right livelihood."
— [SN 45.8](#)

A balanced livelihood

"Herein, Vyagghapajja, a householder knowing his income and expenses leads a balanced life, neither extravagant nor miserly, knowing that thus his income will stand in excess of his expenses, but not his expenses in excess of his income.

"Just as the goldsmith, or an apprentice of his, knows, on holding up a balance, that by so much it has dipped down, by so much it has tilted up; even so a householder, knowing his income and expenses leads a balanced life, neither extravagant nor miserly, knowing that thus his income will stand in excess of his expenses, but not his expenses in excess of his income."
- [AN 8.54](#)

Wrong livelihood for lay followers

"A lay follower should not engage in five types of business. Which five? Business in weapons, business in human beings, business in meat, business in intoxicants, and business in poison."

— [AN 5.177](#)

Wrong livelihood for contemplatives

... reading marks on the limbs [e.g., palmistry]; reading omens and signs; interpreting celestial events [falling stars, comets]; interpreting dreams; reading marks on the body [e.g., phrenology]...[The list goes on and on]
— [DN 2](#)

Reflections:

- Do I like my work? My colleagues?
 - What can I do, how can I practice to enjoy my work and my colleagues more?
- Am I causing harm in my work?
 - Do I have an intention to harm?
 - Is my co-workers, my place of work causing harm?
 - What can I do to contribute to more kindness in my workplace?
- Does my livelihood go in line with my aspirations in life?
 - With the Five Mindfulness Trainings?
 - With my values?
- Do I have a balanced livelihood, do I earn more than I spend?
 - Am I prepared in case of fire, increase in interest rates, sickness...?