

Dedicated Practitioners Program
Reading and Homework for July 2003
Right Livelihood, Money and Consumerism

The Buddha's simple definition of Right Livelihood is this: "Here a noble disciple, having abandoned wrong livelihood, earns his living by right livelihood - this is called right livelihood." (MN 141.28) Bhikkhu Bodhi elaborates the teachings on Right Livelihood in his article on "The Noble Eightfold Path", where he writes:

For a lay disciple the Buddha teaches that wealth should be gained in accordance with certain standards. One should acquire it only by legal means, not illegally; one should acquire it peacefully, without coercion or violence; one should acquire it honestly, not by trickery or deceit; and one should acquire it in ways which do not entail harm and suffering for others (AN 4:62; AN 5:41; AN 8:54). The Buddha mentions five specific kinds of livelihood which bring harm to others and are therefore to be avoided: dealing in weapons, in living beings (including raising animals for slaughter as well as slave trade and prostitution), in meat production and butchery, in poisons, and in intoxicants (AN 5:177). He further names several dishonest means of gaining wealth which fall under wrong livelihood: practicing deceit, treachery, soothsaying, trickery, and usury (MN 117).

But Right Livelihood is not just about our choice of occupation, which can involve unpaid work like parenting. It is also about how we choose to live our lives. Through these choices we impact the planet, we impact our communities when we help others through volunteer work, we influence our family and friends by our example.

Readings

Buddhist Economics by P.A. Payutto, Chapter 2 (<http://www.urbandharma.org/udharma2/becono2.html>), and Chapter 3 ending with the section on Contentment (<http://www.urbandharma.org/udharma2/becono3.html>). *True Work* by Michael Toms and Justine Willis Toms, pp 30 – 40. *Real Power* by James A. Autry and Stephen Mitchell, pp 124 – 128. *The Diamond Cutter* by Geshe Michael Roach, pp 82 – 91. These readings will be available on the DPP website.

1. What is your current occupation, or how do you spend the majority of your time? See if you can list at least three reasons for this choice of occupation.
2. In what ways is this work fulfilling? Are there ways in which it is not fulfilling?
3. What would your ideal work/life situation look like? What are the major differences between your ideal work situation and your current one? What would have to happen for you to be able manifest your ideal work situation?
4. Have you ever felt that you failed in a job or a work situation? How did you respond to this situation?
5. Have you ever been very successful in a job or work situation? How did this effect your sense of self?
6. How much of a role does money play in your choice of work? Are there ways in which you would like to change your relationship to work and money?
7. Have you ever been faced with an ethical dilemma in your work? How did you resolve it?
8. Think about a recent or planned significant, non-essential purchase. What were your considerations in making/planning to make this purchase? How did buying/planning to buy make you feel? What would it feel like not to make this purchase?

9. Geshe Michael Roach says that the way to solve problems at work is to act out of wholesome intentions and let karma take care of the result. Have you ever experienced something happening in this way at work?

Practices

Daily Life Practices at Work:

1. See if you can bring in moments of mindfulness throughout work day.
2. If you work with your hands, practice making them the focus for attention as they move.
3. On the phone or in meetings: stay connected to body, especially chest or arms and legs.
4. Standing meditation while waiting at photocopier, in the bank, etc.
5. Walking meditation while walking down the hall, to lunch, etc.
6. Metta practice while driving, shopping, in meetings.

Sitting Practice

Week	Suggestions
1	Notice whenever thoughts arise connected with your primary occupation. What is the common feeling tone associated with these thoughts? What are the emotions that come up as you review your workplace?
2	If there is a difficult situation in your workplace – interpersonal, ethical – spend the last part of your sitting reflecting on the situation. Notice all of the responses you might have to the situation. Out of a meditative space, is there the possibility of a different response or a solution?
3	Notice when thoughts arise connected to buying things. What are the feelings associated with these thoughts? What is the response in the body? What happens when you imagine buying, then imagine not buying, that item?
4	Imagine yourself in your place of work - sitting at desk, being at home, walking through office or shop or hospital or school - see yourself doing some typical task - writing, on the phone, cooking, interacting with colleagues or clients. See all the people who share that environment with you - some you like a lot, some you have some problems with, some you really don't know at all. Begin to send metta to yourself; remember the person you're closest to, send metta to that person; pervade the place of work with the spirit of metta.

Please schedule a time to connect with your dharma buddy for a discussion of this month's reflections and practices, and for an interview with your mentor if you are receiving monthly interviews.