

The Five Aspects of Right Livelihood

Notes by Ratnaprabha

NB: these are also relevant if people are not working, and if parenting.

1. Non-harming

Avoiding livelihoods that, for example, involve weapons, exploitation, drugs, or whatever hurts people; and helping others avoid them, too. [*"A lay follower should not engage in five types of business.... business in weapons,... living beings,... meat,... intoxicants,... poison."* *Anguttara Nikaya, V. 177*]

Suggestion: Adopt a weekly precept.

QUESTION: where are the 'dodgy' areas in your work? Re self, colleagues, employers....

2. Appropriate happiness

See the Pali source, below. There, it is re and wealth and its use. For Kornfield, he connects it with work, which is more useful for most -- a helpful application.

a) Having. Gloss as **"joy in what you've got"**. (Enjoying the career and work that you already have, and the benefits you get from them, including financial.)

Note that this is vitiated if one is in debt (c).

The Pali is joy in the existing -- possessions ethically gained by one's own hard work.

QUESTION: what fun, satisfaction and rewards are you getting in your work as it is?

b) Producing. Gloss as **"joy in what you do with it"**. (This is enjoying the products of your work -- creativity and as well as material productivity.)

The Pali is more like "consuming"! Enjoying making use of one's wealth for one's own benefit and for beneficial deeds for others.

QUESTION: what enjoyment do you derive from what you are producing/creating, including potential enjoyment?

c) Freedom from Debt. Gloss as: **"joy in non-dependency"**.

Pali can also mean independence; note the danger of an obsession with this.

QUESTION can you enjoy having, to the extent that you do, your own initiative?

d) Freedom from Blame or Fault. Gloss as **"joy in a free heart"**.

Sutta says it is 16 times as valuable as the first three.

QUESTION: what pleasure and satisfaction can you derived from your existing ethics? (Don't beat yourself over the head -- this counters the first aspect of Right livelihood.)

3. Growth and Awareness

'Waking up' in your livelihood. Practising mindfulness, and facing reality in your work.

Suggestions: mindfulness triggers, pauses, using difficulties to derive insights. Include engagement under this heading, with 2a.

The progression is: Wrong livelihood → making an ethical living → having a vocation, and/or working in a Buddhist team with Buddhist values.

Suggestions: Mindfulness triggers, pauses, engagement, insights from difficulties...

QUESTION: how do you, or could you, usual work as practice? Does your work suit your personality-type? Do you have the aptitude for it?

4. Simplicity

Keeping your work straightforward, aligned with other aspects of your life, using it to support a simple life, not consumerist.

Suggestion: drop one complicating element from your work.

QUESTION: how can your work make your life more simple, or in accord with a simple life?

5. Service

Seeing your livelihood in terms of offering benefit to others, acting in a loving and selfless way.

Suggestion: decide on one thing to do or say for a colleague.

QUESTION: how is your work of service to others, now, or potentially.

The five aspects from a Zen or other Mahayana tradition (? the 4 Happinesses are from the Pali, see below) are presented by Jack Kornfield (his Householder series of talks, on the Web as <http://www.cheraglibrary.org/buddhist/kornfield/jkliveli.htm>). The comments in brackets are from him and Ratnaprabha.

Other possible aspects of Right Livelihood

I would add -

6: the whole people area: communication, friendship, KM, co-operation, empathy, Sangha.

Others suggested also -

7. Vision & insight.

8. The Dharma.

9. Ritual & devotion.

Pali source:

The four kinds of appropriate happiness:

"Herein, householder, these four kinds of happiness are appropriate for ["May be achieved by...", "depending on time and occasion" (Nanamoli and Bodhi)] one who leads the household life and enjoys the pleasures of the senses. They are the happiness of ownership, the happiness of enjoyment, the happiness of freedom from debt, and the happiness of blamelessness.

1. "What is the happiness of ownership (*atthisukha*)? ["Possession" (Nanamoli and Bodhi). Atthi literally means existence, thus "**delight in [something] existing**" (the new Pali Text Society dictionary implies this) Woodward glosses "there is". Nanamoli's glossary: atthi means "to be there, there is, exists", atthika meaning "seeking"] A son of good family ["**family man**" (Nanamoli and Bodhi)] possesses wealth that has been obtained by his own diligent labour, acquired through the strength of his own arms and the sweat of his own brow, rightly acquired, rightly ["lawfully" (Woodward)] gained. He experiences pleasure, he experiences happiness, ["happiness... joy" (Nanamoli and Bodhi) "bliss... satisfaction" (Woodward)] thinking, 'I possess this wealth that has been obtained by my own diligent labour, acquired through the strength of my own arms and the sweat of my own brow, rightly acquired, rightly gained.' This is the happiness of ownership.
2. "And what is the happiness of enjoyment (*bhogasukha*)? [Nanamoli says bhoga means riches. There are two kinds (A, I, 192). The etymology is from "eating" [something like relish? Consumption?] Thus both enjoyment, and wealth/possession.] Herein, a son of good family consumes, puts to use, and derives benefit from [Nanamoli and Bodhi, have "enjoys his wealth and **does meritorious deeds**" -- the same (= Woodward) at the end of the paragraph.] the wealth that has been obtained by his own diligent labour, acquired through the strength of his own arms and the sweat of his own brow, rightly acquired, rightly gained. He experiences pleasure, he experiences happiness, thinking, 'Through this wealth that has been obtained by my own diligent labour, acquired through the strength of my own arms and the sweat of my own brow, rightly acquired, rightly gained, I have derived benefit and **performed good works**.' This is called the happiness of enjoyment. [The commentary says that 1. arises at the thought "there is wealth", 2. is the happiness arisen in one who enjoys wealth. (Footnote in Nanamoli and Bodhi.)]
3. "And what is the happiness of freedom from debt (*ananasukha*) [can also mean "free from sin", and "independent" (new PTS dictionary). Thus independent of one's parents, the state, etc....?] Herein, a son of good family owes no debt, be it great or small, to anyone at all. He experiences pleasure and happiness, reflecting. 'I owe no debts, be they great or small, to anyone at all.' This is called the happiness of freedom from debt.
4. "And what is the happiness of blamelessness (*anavajjasukha*)? Herein, a noble disciple is possessed of blameless bodily actions, blameless speech, and blameless thoughts. He experiences pleasure and happiness, thinking, 'I am possessed of blameless bodily actions, blameless speech, and blameless thoughts.' This is called the happiness of blamelessness. "When he realizes the happiness of being free from debt, he is in a position to appreciate the happiness of owning possessions. As he uses his possessions, he experiences the happiness of enjoyment. Clearly seeing this, the wise man, comparing the first three kinds of happiness with the last, sees that they are not worth a sixteenth part of the happiness that arises from blameless behaviour."

[In Nanamoli and Bodhi this is in verse, and rather different.]

[A.II.69, from a Ven. Payutto Web Page. Nyanaponika and Thera's anthology have it as A IV, 62, on pp99-100. Woodward as the gradual sayings, II, 77.]

[The previous Sutta has advice on the correct use of wealth.]

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