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Right Livelihood

The nature of wealth & living the spiritual life in the world
An introductory essay by Piya Tan ©2007, 2011

1 Key ideas1.1 TERMINOLOGY

Let us begin by examining, progressively, some key words related to right livelihood (RL). The Buddhist term *sīla* is usually translated as “moral virtue,” which can be taken either in a theoretical or philosophical sense as **ethics**, or in a practical sense, as **moral ethics** or proper conduct, or more specifically, proper conduct of body and speech that “conduces to mental concentration” (*samādhi, samvattanika*).¹

The ethics of **the 5 precepts** (*pañca, sīla*) [2.2] is said to embody natural morality (*paṇṇāsi sīla*) [2.1] because it reflects universal values and true reality, and not merely because Buddhism accepts them as true and good. Rules introduced by the Buddha or rulings by the sangha (the monastic community) are called prescribed morality (*paññatti sīla*) [2.1], which, as such, apply only to monastic members of the Buddhist community.

The individual **training-rules** (*sikkhā, pada*) of the 5 precepts are formulated in negative language, that is, *apophatically*,² addressing acts and conduct that are to be avoided (*vāritta*). Hence, this is called “negative morality” (*vāritta sīla*), or the ethics of omission [2.2]. A number of suttas admonish us in the positive aspects (*cāritta sīla*) of such precepts, that is, how we should conduct ourselves wholesomely, that is, keep to the ethics of commission (*cāritta*), or more simply, doing good [2.2].

Using modern philosophical ideas, such as the “theory of values” or axiology, we can further explain, for example, the content and arrangement of the 5 precepts. They reflect basic universal values in a descending intrinsic manner, that is, what is of the greatest value is put first: *life* is of the first and foremost value to all beings, and so on. [2.3]

1.2 THE NECESSITY OF RIGHT LIVELIHOOD1.2.1 Economics and ecology

Apart from sleep, most of us spend more of our lives at work and wage-earning than in any other waking activity. Inevitably, the work that we do powerfully moulds us. An important message of **the Vāseṭṭha Sutta** (M 98 = Sn 3.9),³ for example, is that we are not born high or low, but *we are the kind of work we do* (Sn 612-619).

Right livelihood (*sammā ājīva*) (RL), then, is essentially how we, as followers of the Buddha’s teaching, whether monastic or lay, or those who claim to be Buddhist, should support ourselves. In short, it is Buddhist economics at its best. Etymologically, *economics* comes from the Greek, *oikos*, “house, household, habitation” + *nomos*, “manager,” and *ecology*, from Greek, *oikos* + *logos*, “word, reason, speech, account.” Hence, essentially (on a personal or family level), economics is the knowledge and application of the proper material management of our homes. More broadly (on a macro or global level), it is a theory and practice of the proper management and use of external resources. [7]

¹ D 16,1.11/2:80, 33.2.2(14)/3:245 = 34,1.7(1)/3:280; M 48,6/1:322, 104,21/2:251; S 55.14.7/5:364, 55.16.4/5:364, 55.26.9/5:382; A 5.32.3/3:36, 5.105.2/3:132, 5.179.7/3:213, 6.10.5/3:286, 6.11.6/3:289, 6.12.5/3:290, 6.15.5/3:313, 6.26.6/3:316, 11.12.6/5:330; Pm 1:43, 44.

² *Vimāṃsaka S* (M 47), SD 35.6 (3.4).

³ See SD 37.1.

As such, in terms of RL, economics and ecology are intimately intertwined: while economics is the management of the “household,” ecology is the management of “the inhabited sphere, or living space,” that is, the world itself. RL is the driving spirit underlying all this. At least, this is the way it should be. Such theoretical approaches are useful when we are faced with damage control over the weaknesses and failures of our current economic systems and situations, and in reminding us of how to rethink the issues so that we have healthy individuals in a healthy community in a healthy world.⁴

More broadly, RL may be described as *living and working as if life and happiness really matter*. RL is based on the key understanding that **life** is the most valuable thing we have and therefore should be respected so. Our most precious possession is, of course, our human life, but we are not alone, as there are also other beings, life-forms and nature that co-exist interdependently in the same space that provides us with food, growth, creativity, procreation and rest. [2.3]

1.2.2 Ecology, natural and social

This wholesome space which we inhabit called the earth is a part of a bigger and infinite universe. The quality of the relationship within our own family, species and world are ultimately dependent on the kind of physical environment we inhabit and how we relate to others and to nature. This is our ecology, our natural and social space.

By “natural” here is meant how we respect and harmonize with nature, and, to an important extent, how we emulate and enjoy nature. Our social space is where we live, play, grow, create, breed and rest. The wholesomeness of such vital spaces depends on how *natural* it is. This interbeing with nature not only provides us with physical health and sustains it, but also inspires us to create and enjoy *beauty*.

On a deeper level, natural space inspires and nurtures mental health. Wholesome nature allows us to *breathe* easily and healthily, which, in turn, induces, enhances and supports a calm and clear mind. For Buddhists and many others, nature is a very helpful component of mental cultivation and meditation. In short, nature is a vital ingredient of our mental well-being so that we are healthy individuals.

A healthy individual is the true measure of a healthy family, society, nation and world. The more healthy individuals there are in a group, the healthier it is. Although it is rare that a group is ever fully filled with healthy individuals, some kind of social code and the wholesome influence of healthy individuals can at least minimize the effects of negative persons, unhealthy situations, and natural disasters. Such a society lives in harmony with nature, mutually benefitting all life. This is a sustainable lifestyle in a healthy environment—this is a broad description of right livelihood.

1.3 SCRIPTURAL DEFINITIONS

1.3.1 The 3 trainings

The (Magga) Vibhaṅga Sutta (S 45.8) gives perhaps the simplest definition of right livelihood, thus:

And what, bhikshus, is right livelihood?

This is where a noble disciple, having abandoned wrong livelihood, keeps his life going with right livelihood. This, bhikshus, is called right livelihood. (S 45.8,8/5:9), SD 14.5

This may be called a “contextual” definition, as it is given in the context of definitions of all the 8 limbs of the eightfold path in the Sutta. In other words, RL is an integral aspect of the noble path to awakening.

⁴ See **Sappurisa Dāna S** (A 5.148) @ SD 22.15 (3.1).

The Buddhist path is also seen as comprising the 3 trainings, that is, in moral virtue (*sīla*), in mental cultivation (*samādhi*) and in wisdom (*paññā*). The “3 trainings” model leads us from our *present* state, through a *cultivated* state, into a *liberated* state (“higher mind”), at first a temporary one, that is, until we attain sainthood.⁵ The 3 trainings constitute the eightfold path (*ariya aṭṭh’āṅgika magga*),⁶ as follows:

<u>path-factors</u>	<u>(aṅga)</u>	<u>training (sikkhā)</u>	<u>(khandha)</u>
(7) right view	<i>sammā diṭṭhi</i>	} III. <u>wisdom aggregate</u> (freedom-based mind)	<i>paññā khandha</i> (straightened views)
(8) right intention	<i>sammā saṅkappa</i>		
(1) right action	<i>sammā kammanta</i>	} I. <u>moral virtue aggregate</u> (the body and speech)	<i>sīla khandha</i> (wholesome conduct)
(2) right speech	<i>sammā vācā</i>		
(3) right livelihood	<i>sammā ājīva</i>		
(4) right effort	<i>sammā vāyāma</i>	} II. <u>concentration aggregate</u> (the mind)	<i>samādhi khandha</i> (mental stillness)
(5) right mindfulness	<i>sammā sati</i>		
(6) right concentration	<i>sammā samādhi</i>		

Table 1.5.1 The eightfold path and the 3 trainings⁷

1.3.2 The importance of right view

Notice that in the noble eightfold path model, *the training in wisdom* comes first, and leading it is right view [Table 1.3.1]. **The Mahā Cattārīsaka Sutta** (M 117) explains the primacy of **right view** as meaning that it must underlie all the path-factors: it makes each and every other factor “right” (*sammā*), that is, it works harmoniously and effectively to keep us on the spiritual path to awakening.

Right view here means the proper understanding of Buddhist training, that the spiritual path centres on concentration (*samādhi*) or mental cultivation (that is, mindfulness and meditation).⁸ All the other factors, like the spokes of a wheel, support mental cultivation whose goal is *right view* of a higher level.⁹ From a worldly (*lokiya*) right view, which provides us with temporary and occasional liberation, we go on to attain supramundane (*lok’uttara*) right view, which permanently frees us from suffering and rebirth.¹⁰

If we look at **Table 1.3.1**, we would see that right livelihood is the fifth limb of the noble eightfold path, forming one of the three components of moral training (*sīla sikkhā*) of the path (the other two being right speech and right action). This does not mean that right speech and right action are separate categories, distinct from RL. All the three are *components* of moral virtue, each of these three factors referring to different aspects of a morally virtuous life. **The Visuddhi, magga**, in this connection, defines RL in terms of right view, as follows:

When his right speech and right action are purified, his abstinence from wrong livelihood—an abstinence that is associated with it (right view)—cuts off fraud, etc—this is called **right livelihood**. It has the characteristic of cleansing (*vodāna*).¹¹ Its function is to bring about the liveli-

⁵ See *Sīla samādhi paññā*, SD 21.6.

⁶ See *Sīla samādhi paññā*, SD 21.6 (2).

⁷ See D 2:312; M 1:61, 3:251; Vbh 235. See also SD 6.10 (1.2); SD 21.6 (3.2.1); SD 47.3 (Table 1.3.1.2).

⁸ M 117, 2/3:71, 3/3:71.

⁹ M 117, 4/3:71, 10/3:72 f, 16/3:73, 22/3:75, 28/3:74, 34-35/3:76 f.

¹⁰ See *Sīla samādhi paññā*, SD 21.6 (3.2.2).

¹¹ The purification of a being or related states (VismMṬ 541).

hood of the right path (*ñāy'ājīva*) [that is, the eightfold path]. It is manifested as the abandoning of wrong livelihood. (Vism 16.80/509)

1.3.3 The other path-factors and right livelihood

1.3.3.1 THE OTHER PATH-FACTORS. Of the path-factors, as we have seen, the most important—the one that underlies all the other factors—is right view. But how are the other path-factors related to right livelihood? **The Mahā Cattārisaka Sutta** (M 117) explains:

28 In this regard, bhikshus, right view comes first. And how, bhikshus, does right view come first?

One understands wrong livelihood as wrong livelihood, and right livelihood as right livelihood—this is one's right view.

29 And what, bhikshus, is **wrong livelihood**?

Deceitful pretensions (to attainments), flattery (for gain), subtle insinuation or hinting (for gain), pressuring (for offerings), and pursuing gain with gain, he abstains from such pretensions and flattery¹²—this, bhikshus, is wrong livelihood.

30 And what, bhikshus, is **right livelihood**?¹³

Bhikshus, there are two kinds of right livelihood, I say.

31 Bhikshus, there is the right livelihood with influxes, partaking of merit, ripening in birth-basis [acquisition of aggregates].

Bhikshus, there is the right livelihood that is noble, without influx, supramundane, a path factor.

31.2 And what, bhikshus, is **the right livelihood with influxes**, partaking of merit, ripening in birth-basis?

Here, bhikshus, the noble disciples, having given up wrong livelihood, keeps to right livelihood—this, bhikshus, is right livelihood **[75]** with influxes, partaking of merit, ripening in birth-basis.

32 And, bhikshus, what is **the right livelihood that is noble**, without influx, supramundane, a path factor?

Loathing wrong livelihood, restraining from it, abstaining from it, refraining from it, avoiding it¹⁴—this, bhikshus, is the right livelihood that is noble, without influx, supramundane, a path factor.

33 One who makes an effort to give up wrong livelihood, to cultivate right livelihood—this is one's right effort.

One who is mindful, gives up wrong livelihood and dwells cultivating right livelihood—this is one's right mindfulness.

Thus these three things run along with right livelihood, turn around it, that is to say: *right view, right effort, right mindfulness*. (M 117,28-33/3:74 f), SD 6.10

¹² As in the Moralities (*sīla*) sections of the first Dīgha suttas, eg at **Brahma, jāla S** (D 1,1.20/1:8) = **Sāmañña, phala S** (D 2,55/1:67). This is only a token mention of wrong livelihood for monastics (MA 4:134). **The Vaṇijja S** lists 5 kinds of wrong livelihood for the laity: dealing in arms, in beings, in meat, in intoxicants and in poisons (A 5.177/-3:208). For a detailed discussion, see Vism 1.61-82/23-30.

¹³ "Right livelihood," *sammā, ājīva*.

¹⁴ This stock phrase occurs in connection with right speech at Dhs 299, Nc 462.

1.3.3.2 RIGHT LIVELIHOOD, MUNDANE AND SUPRAMUNDANE. After a broad definition of livelihood, wrong and right (28-29), the Sutta speaks of **2 kinds of right livelihood**: the worldly and the supramundane (30-31.1). The worldly right livelihood (**lokiya sammā,ājīva*) is the one “with influxes, partaking of merit, ripening in birth-basis” (*s’āsava puñña,bhāgiya upadhi,vepakka*). Here “with influxes”¹⁵ (*s’āsava*) means that although it is RL—motivated by right view, right action and right speech—these factors are still weak or mundane, not yet fully realized, so that we still have these 3 “mental influxes” (defilements arises through sense-perception), namely:

- (1) **sense-desire** (*kām’āsava*), an attraction to sense-pleasures and a dislike for pain and boredom; simply, this is the acquisitive desire to “have,” which arises mostly through conceit (*māna*), measuring oneself against others;
- (2) **desire for eternal existence or becoming** (*bhav’āsava*): basically, this is a great ambition to succeed or outdo others so that we forget the fundamentals of right livelihood; simply, this is the acquisitive desire to “be,” that is, an “I-making” (*aham,kāra*); and
- (3) **ignorance** (*avijjāsava*), that is, not fully understanding the 4 noble truths on their spiritual level, that is, we have not yet awakened to true reality. Ignorance conjure within us a sense of “lack,” not *having* some thing (a collecting tendency) or not *being* something (a measuring mentality), and so spurs us to strive for what we think might fill such a lack.¹⁶

Mundane RL is one that “partakes of merit” (*puñña,bhāgiya*): it is still bound or related to merit or good karma. The good we have done in *the past*¹⁷ gives us a head start in our RL efforts. Our *current* wholesome efforts in cultivating RL, especially when it also benefits others, in turn, generate much good karma for us here and now. The irony here is that all this goodness, in rewarding us with good karmic conditions, keep us stuck here, going on in samsara, “ripening in birth-bases” (*upadhi,vepakka*). In other words, we would still be reborn, albeit mostly in good conditions.

Only **supramundane RL** (**lok’uttara sammā,ājīva*), that is, “the right livelihood that is noble, without influx, supramundane, a path factor” frees us from craving and ignorance. This is the RL that is free from the influxes of sense-desires, desire of existence and ignorance which liberates us from suffering. Clearly such an RL puts Dharma above everything else. Whatever we do, even in seeking to support ourselves, is for the greater glory of the Dharma, that is, for our personal development and the betterment of society and the environment.

Right livelihood involves both our bodies and minds, our heads and hearts, our thinking and feeling. Right action, as such, refers generally to our proper bodily conduct, and wholesome speech. Together, they constitute a proper respect for self and other, and healthy communication with others. The form and content of this communication, *how* and *what* we communicate, are truth and beauty. In RL, we enjoy and share the Dharma both in the letter (its *truth*) and the spirit (its *beauty*). [2.3]

¹⁵ **Āsava** (lit “inflow”) comes from *ā-savati* “flows towards” (ie either “into” or “out” towards the observer). It has been variously translated as taints (“deadly taints,” RD), corruptions, intoxicants, biases, depravity, misery, evil (influence), or simply left untr. The Abhidhamma lists 4 *āsava*: the influxes of (1) sense-desire (*kām’āsava*), (2) (desire for eternal) existence or becoming (*bhav’āsava*), (3) wrong views (*diṭṭh’āsava*), (4) ignorance (*avijjāsava*) (D 16.2.4, Pm 1.442, 561, Dhs §§1096-1100, Vbh §937). These 4 are also known as “floods” (*ogha*) and “yokes” (*yoga*). The list of 3 influxes (omitting the influx of views) is prob older and is found more frequently in the Suttas (D 33.1.10(20)/3:216.; M 1:55, 3:41; A 3.59, 67, 6.63). The destruction of these *āsava* is equivalent to arhathood. See BDict: āsava.

¹⁶ See Piya Tan, “To have or to be,” R166, in *Simple Joys 2: Healing Words*, Singapore, 2010:122 (43).

¹⁷ “Good done in the past” (*pubbe ca kata,puññatā*) (S 34.1.5(1d)/3:276 = A 4.31/2:32 = Khp 5.4/3 = Sn 260b/46); D 16.4.14/2:144 (of Ānanda); M 37.10/1:253 (of Shakra); Vv 50d/7, 171d/22, 632f/49, 850c/74; Pv 271d/33, 405c+406c/48; Dh 16b, 18b, 220a (*kata,puñña*) = Vv 857a/78; Ap 386.4d/1:298; Miln 129.

Right livelihood is, as it were, an extension of right action and right speech, in our efforts to support ourselves or earn a living so that we are able to keep to the truth and beauty of the noble eightfold path. RL properly supports the body so that the mind can fully grow spiritually, with awakening as the goal. This is the essence of Buddhist economics.

1.4 RIGHT LIVELIHOOD, THE PRECEPTS, AND MONASTICISM

1.4.1 Morality of right livelihood

We have noted that **the moral training** (*sīla sikkhā*) section of the eightfold path comprises right speech, right action and right livelihood [1.3.1]. Now, right speech is the avoiding of speech that are false, divisive, harsh or frivolous,¹⁸ and right action consists of abstinence from killing, stealing and incelibacy (or else, sexual misconduct).¹⁹ These seven items, we should note, actually constitute the core of the Nikāya teachings on moral virtue (*sīla*).²⁰

Furthermore, the seven items form the first four of the 5 precepts, that is, the precepts to abstain from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct and falsehood.²¹ In principle, they are formulated in great detail as the 4 “defeat” (*pārājika*) rules, that is, the first four and most important rules of a monastic.²² Any of these rules, even when broken in secret, entails the monastic’s immediate “defeat,” that is, ceasing to be in communion with the monastic community or sangha. One is then effectively no more a monastic, even if one continues to don the robe.

1.4.2 The “animal arts.”

The precepts of right livelihood, however, appear to be less specific, but this generality has an important purpose. It is meant to reflect *specific* wrong practices or unwholesome tendencies as examples of the wrong practices that are *current* (including those in our own times) that are to be avoided by the monastics, and, abstained from, in the spirit, by the lay followers, too. In the first 13 suttas of the Dīgha Nikāya, however, we find this stock passage defining the “great morality” (*mahā sīla*), thus:

Whereas some recluses and brahmins, living off food given in faith, maintain themselves by **wrong livelihood** through the low arts (*tiracchāna, vijjā*) such as ... , [the Buddha or the monastic] abstains from wrong livelihood through such low arts as these.

(D 1,21-27/1:9-11), SD 25.2²³

¹⁸ le *musā, vādā, veramaṇī pisuṇāya vācāya veramaṇī pharusāya vācāya veramaṇī samphappalāpā veramaṇī*: see eg (Magga) Vibhaṅga S (S 45.8,7/5:9), SD 14.5.

¹⁹ le *pāṇātipātā veramaṇī adinn’ādānā veramaṇī abrahma, cariyā veramaṇī*: see eg (Magga) Vibhaṅga S (S 45.-8,6/5:9), SD 14.5. The precept against incelibacy permanently applies to all monastics, and to lay practitioners who have voluntarily taken up the rule (such as on a precept day). Otherwise, all lay Buddhists train themselves with the precept “to abstain from sexual misconduct” (*kāmesu micchācārā veramaṇī*): see **Veḷu, dvāreyya S** (S 55.7,8/5:354), SD 1.5

²⁰ In the first 13 suttas of **Dīgha Nikāya**, found in ch 1 (*sīla-k, khandha vagga*), they form the main part of the “lesser morality” (*cūḷa sīla*) (D 1:1-4 etc; cf M 1:179 f, 267, 345). These 7 items are also often mentioned in other contexts (eg M 1:286 f, 360-362, 489 f, 3:23 f, 209; S 4:313; A 1:297 f, 2:254 f). See Gethin 2001:194 f.

²¹ See eg D 1:146, 3:195, 235; M 3:170 f, 254; A 2:99, 217. Occasionally, these 4 precepts appear without the fifth (*surā, meraya, majja, pamāda-ṭ, thānā veramaṇī sikkhā, padam*), eg M 3:47. These 4 precepts are those of “natural morality,” and are also found in Jainism [2.1].

²² They are the rules against (1) any kind of sexuality (Pār 1 = V 3:23,23-36), (2) taking the not-given (Pār 2 = V 3:46,16-20), (3) intentional killing of a human (Pār 3 = V 3:73,10-16), and (4) falsely claiming to any spiritual or superhuman attainment (Pār 4 = V 4:109,21-27).

²³ See also SD 25.1 (3) (the moralities) & Gethin 2001:195 & n23.

A long list of occupations, practices and beliefs are listed as examples following the phrase, “such as ...,” that is,

30 examples of fortune-reading,	such as reading marks on the limbs;
26 instances of “lucky” persons or objects,	such as lucky and unlucky gems;
7 instances of political forecasting,	such as the army leaders will advance (or not);
24 examples of predicting by natural omens,	such as a lunar eclipse;
13 more examples of weather forecasts,	such as forecasting abundant rain;
20 examples of giving auspicious dates and cures,	such as dates for marriages; and
25 examples of healing and spells,	such as invoking the deities with gifts.

These “animal arts” are not in themselves condemned here, but that they are inappropriate as “livelihoods” for renunciants, “living off food given in faith” (*saddhā,deyyāni bhojanāni bhujjivā*). As **Rupert Gethin** has noted, these examples, as far as they are intelligible to us, involve some kind of service for some other party, by those accomplished in such knowledges or arts or pretences to such mastery:

No doubt behind this lies the historical reality of various ancient Indian “holy men” living in precisely this way, namely, receiving alms in return for offering the service of their special knowledges and arts. But ... this is not the job of the “true” *samaṇa* and *brāhmaṇa*. On the contrary, he enjoys the food given by those of confidence and trust not as payment, but only in so far as it supports the fulfilling of the spiritual life. (Gethin 2001:195)

1.4.3 A renunciant is not for hire

1.4.3.1 The Kasi Bhāra,dvāja Sutta (Sn 1.4)²⁴ is the Buddha’s own testimony to a renunciant’s right livelihood. The Buddha approaches a ploughman, Kasi Bhāra,dvāja, for alms, but the ploughman questions the Buddha as to why he deserves any alms at all: “As for me, recluse, I plough and sow, and having ploughed and sown, I eat” (Sn 13,11), meaning that he works for a living.

1.4.3.2 The Buddha replies that *he, too, ploughs and sows, and having done so, eats thereof*. When Bhāra,dvāja challenges him again to show his plough and other tools of the trade, the Buddha replies:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 Faith is the seed, austerity the rain
moral shame is the pole, the mind the yoke-tie, | wisdom is my yoke and plough,
mindfulness my ploughshare and goad. |
| 2 Guarded in body, guarded in speech,
truth I make my weeding, | restrained is food for my belly,
restraint [meekness] my unyoking. |
| 3 Effort is my beast of burden,
it takes me, without turning back, | that brings me to release from bondage:
where one goes never more to sorrow. |
| 4 Thus is this ploughing done:
When this ploughing is done, | it has the death-free [nirvana] as its fruit.
one is freed from all misery. |

(Sn 77-80), SD 69.6

1.4.3.3 Bhāra,dvāja is impressed and prepares to offer a dish of milk-rice (*pāyāsa*) to the Buddha, but he turns it down, saying:

²⁴ Comy calls it **Pūraḷāsa S**, “the discourse on the sacrificial cake” (SnA 400,7).

- 5 *Gāthā'bhigitaṃ me abhojaneyyariṃ* *sampassataṃ brāhmaṇa n'esa dhammo*
gāthā'bhigitaṃ panudanti buddhā *dhamme satī brāhmaṇa vutti-r-esa*

Whatever is sung over with verses is not proper to be taken by me—

this is not the way, brahmin, of those who truly see.

Buddhas reject what has been sung over with verses:

where there is Dharma, brahmin, this is the livelihood.

(Sn 81 = 480)

- 6 But with other food and drink serve a fully-accomplished great seer
 whose influxes are destroyed, whose misconduct is calmed:
 For, this is the field for those looking for merit. (Sn 82 = 642 = 481)

1.4.3.4 Let us look at a couple of key words here. The word, **vutti**, is simpler, so we will examine it first. It has a broad sense of “conduct, habit, practice, usage, livelihood,” connoting habitual conduct or supporting oneself.²⁵ The Commentary glosses it as “livelihood and living” (*jīvita, vutti*, SnA 152,28).

The Commentary explains the compound *gāthā'bhigīta* as follows: “*Gāthā'bhigīta* means ‘sung over with verses,’²⁶ meaning that it is received after one’s having recited verses.”²⁷ Although *gāthā* can mean Vedic verses [1.5.1], in this context, it clearly refers to the Buddha’s verse teachings given to Bhāra,dvāja, but more broadly, it also refers to any kind of Dharma teaching. Hence, as reflected in the Commentary (SnA 152), it is clear that the verse paraphrases the Buddha as saying, “It is improper for me to obtain food as a reward or in exchange for the teaching I have given.”

1.4.3.5 The phrase, “those who truly see” (*sampassataṃ*) is explained as “seeing the purity of right livelihood” (SnA 151,33). The Commentary defines *esa dhammo* as “this act (of doing)” (*etaṃ cārittaṃ*) of the Buddha (SnA 152,3), but we can take it more broadly to mean the “Buddha’s teaching,” because it also applies to all monastics, and refers to RL as a whole.

1.5 SUPPORT AND FAITH

1.5.1 Why does the Buddha reject certain offerings?

1.5.1.1 Verses 5 and 6 of the **Kasi Bhāra,dvāja Sutta** (Sn 81 f = 480 f) recur in the same context in a similar discourse, the **Sundarika Sutta** (S 7.9), where the person addressed by the Buddha is another Bhāra,dvāja named Sundarika.²⁸ We have three terms—*pūraḷāsa*, *havya*, *sesa*, and *havya*—used for the brahmin’s offering found in these discourses:

²⁵ A 1:100 (*ariya, vutti*, cf *ariya, vāsa*); Sn 81 = Miln 228 (= *jīvita, vutti*, SnA 152); Sn 68, 220, 326, 676; J 6:224, *jīvita, vutti*; Pv 2.9.14 (*jīvita*, PvA 120), 4.1.21 (= *jīvikā*, PvA 229); VvA 23; Miln 224, 253.

²⁶ **Abhigīta** is past part of *abhi* (a preverbal intensifier meaning “towards, against, over”) + *gayati*, from √GĀ, to sing. As an adj, it has both an intrans meaning and a trans one. Intransitively, it is an adj meaning (a) “resounding or filled with song” (of birds, etc, cf *abhighuṭṭha*) (J 5:199,27*, 6:272,13; (b) “conjured (by a potent spell)” (S 1:50,-34*, *abhigīta* = 51,23*). As a noun: (c) “what is obtained by reciting (a verse),” As a past part: (d) “spoken over with verse(s),” (Sn 81 = 480; S 1:167,6* f = 173,7* f, quoted at Miln 228,2*-23*). This last sense applies here.

²⁷ *Gāthā'bhigītan ti gāthāhi abhigītaṃ, gāthāyo bhāsivā laddhan ti vuttahoti* (SnA 151,31-32).

²⁸ S 7.9.11/1:168 (SD 22.3). On brahmins named Bhāra,dvāja, see **Sundarika Bhāra,dvāja S** (Sn 3.4), SD 22.2 (1.1).

- **Sundarika Bhāra,dvāja S** (Sn 3.4)²⁹ *pūraḷāsa* (“sacrificial cake”) Sn 459, 473, passim
- **Sundarika Sutta** (S 7.9) *havya,sesa* (“sacrificial remains”) S 7.9,3/1:167,25³⁰
- **Māgha Sutta** (Sn 3.5) *havya* (“oblation”) Sn 490, 503

The **Kasi Bhāra,dvāja Sutta** (Sn 1.4), however, only states that the brahmin offers the Buddha *pāyāsa*, “milk-rice” (Sn 1.4/p14,10). There is no mention that this meal is from any ritual offering. Hence, it is safe to assume that this is merely ordinary food, probably the brahmin’s own meal, that he offers to the Buddha.

1.5.1.2 While *pāyāsa* is the word for ordinary milk-rice, *pūraḷāsa* (Skt *purodāśa*) refers to a sacrificial cake or oblation made to the brahmin’s sacred fire, that is, the fire sacrifice (*aggi,hutta*).³¹ This is clearly the offering itself (*havya*), while its remains are called *havya,sesa*, which must only be given to another brahmin. The Sutta Nipāta Commentary says that the two words—*pūraḷāsa* and *havya,sesa*—are synonymous (SnA 401,16).

Such technical details might give us the impression that the Buddha rejects such offerings because they are brahminical ritual offerings (like some modern Protestants Christians who would not partake of any ritual offerings of other religions). His reason for rejecting the offerings on account of its *form*, but on account of *how* it is given, that is, the spirit in which it is given (or the lack of it).

1.5.1.3 The Kasi Bhāra,dvāja Sutta (Sn 1.4) records the brahmin as offering the Buddha some milk-rice (*pāyāsa*), which the Buddha rejects because they “had been sung over” by the Buddha himself. The reason for his rejecting them, the Buddha explains, is that it is improper for him (or any monastic) to accept such offerings *as a reward or in exchange for having given teachings*. The Dharma cannot and should not be paid for, but freely given, freely received. Whatever support is given, is done “out of faith” (*saddhā*) and with gladness (*muditā*), so that the giver goes on to practise it, and so perpetuate the Dharma, too.

The Milinda,pañha then raises the question: although the Buddha has said this (that it is improper for him to accept food as a reward or in exchange for teaching), his disciples have eaten food given on account of a talk on giving (*dāna,kathā*) expounded by the Buddha. Nāgasena’s explanation seems to be that in the case of Bhāra,dvāja, *he does not give readily and faithfully*, but in the case of faithful donors, that is, those who invited the Buddha (or the monks) for meals, it is customary that he would first speak on giving to arouse joyful satisfaction (*cittarṇ abhiramāpetvā*), after which he would urge them on to practise moral virtue³² (Miln 228 f).

1.5.1.4 The Sundarika Sutta (S 7.9) and **the Kasi Bhāra,dvāja Sutta** (Sn 1.4) both give us an interesting detail, that is, when the food is thrown into the water, it “seethed and hissed, steamed and smoked” (*cicciṭṭāyati ciṭṭiṭṭāyati sandhūpāyati sampadhūpāyati*) (Sn 15,9+11 = S 1:169,6).³³ This miraculous event

²⁹ Comy calls it **Pūraḷāsa S**, “the discourse on the sacrificial cake” (SnA 400,7).

³⁰ Sn 1.4/p15,1-15 recurs at S 1:168,30-169,12, where “kasi Bhāra,dvāja” is replaced by “Sundarika Bhāra,dvāja” and *pāyāsa* is replaced by *havya,sesa*.

³¹ *Aggi,hutta*, Skt *agni,hotra*, ie, the worship of Agni (Pali *aggi*), the Vedic god of fire (V 1:36 = J 6:220; S 1:167; Dh 392; Tha 341; J 5:205, 207). On the Buddha’s response to fire-worship, see eg **Āditta (Pariyāya) S** (S 35.28/4:19 f = V 1:34 f), SD 1.3.

³² This is of course an allusion to the Buddha’s teaching model of “progressive talk” (*ānupubbī,kathā*): see **Upāli S** (M 56,18/1:380 f), SD 27.1; see also **Gradual way**, SD 56.1.

³³ The onomatopoeia also occurs in **Jigucchitabba S** (A 3.27/1.127), SD 84.18, & **Puggala Jigucchitabba S** (Pug 3.14/36), SD 84.19; see also Miln 258-260.

is similarly mentioned in **the Vinaya**, in connection with remnants of a pot of sugar (*guḷa*) offered to the monks (V 1:225,25).

The Saṃyutta Commentary explains that this miraculous wonder does not occur on account of the food, but by the Buddha's own power. The Buddha determines such a wonder so as to prepare the brahmin's heart for a teaching for sake of his forsaking his wrong view and so that he would taste the drink that is the death-free (nirvana) (SA 1:236).

If we accept this explanation, then we could surmise that it is a skillful means of the Buddha or a literary device by the sutta compilers to highlight the significance of the offering, that is, only the Buddha or his morally virtuous disciples are worthy of such offerings. It is unlikely, certainly in the case of the sugar, that the food offering has turned bad.

1.5.2 Giving out of faith

1.5.2.1 Whatever is offered to the Buddha or the sangha must be given out of faith and wisdom, not as a fee or in exchange for some service. In the suttas, as well as in modern traditional communities, we see that a monk or a chapter of monks are invited for an "offering" (*dāna*). An offering of food is made to the monks, and at the end of the meal, they recite a thanksgiving. Often at the end of such a thanksgiving, the lay devotees would offer gifts of allowables such as robes and toiletries to them. No gifts of cash are ever (or should be) made to monastics, as this is against the rules of early Buddhist Vinaya and the Buddha's teaching.³⁴ [1.5.3]

1.5.2.2 In the **Sundarika Bhāra,dvāja Sutta** (Sn 3.4), the brahmin offers the "sacred remains" (*havya-sesa*) of the "sacrificial cake" (*pūraḷāsa*)³⁵ to the Buddha who similarly rejects them. Here again, we see the brahmin Sundarika Bhāra,dvāja is at first hostile to the Buddha, and actually reviles him, claiming that the sacrificial remains are meant only for other brahmins. After the Buddha responds with his teachings, the brahmin has a positive change of heart and decides to offer the sacrificial remains to the Buddha.

However, since the Buddha had to "debate" for it, as it were, he rejects the offering, as it is more of a prize for winning over the brahmin. In other words, since the brahmin previously has no faith in the Buddha, and is only newly converted, the Buddha thus rejects the "old" offering as an improper gift. If the Buddha were to accept such an offering, he would be acquiescing to using the Dharma to earn a living. The Dharma's only purpose is spiritual liberation; it has one taste: that of freedom.³⁶

1.5.2.3 In fact, under normal circumstances, where an offering is made out of faith, as related in **the Māgha Sutta** (Sn 3.5), the Buddha is recorded as accepting such offerings, that is, even sacrificial offerings (*havya*). Indeed, he actually declares to the brahmin student Māgha that those most deserving of such offerings are not the worldly priests, but those who are *morally virtuous, mentally tamed and spiritually liberated*.³⁷ Any suitable offering properly given in faith is acceptable to the renunciant, that is, not as payment, but only "for the sake of supporting the holy life" (*brahma,carīyānuggahāya*).³⁸ "Where there is Dharma...this is the livelihood" (*dharme sati...vutti-r-esa*, Sn 81 = 480).

³⁴ See **Money and monastics**, SD 4.19 esp (7).

³⁵ Sn 3.4/459d, 467-479.

³⁶ Cv 9.1.4 @ V 2:239 = A 8.19.7/4:199 = U 5.5/53-56; see **Vāsetṭha S** (M 98) @ SD 37.1 (1.3.6).

³⁷ The term *havya* (oblation) also appears in **Māgha S** (Sn 4.5/490c-503c).

³⁸ *Brahma,carīyānuggahāya*: this phrase is found in the formula for the monastic reflection on food (M 2.13-16/-1:10) and the pericope on moderation in food (M 53.9/1:355; M 39.8/1:273). Buddhaghosa distinguishes two kinds of holy life (*brahma,carīya*): the teaching (*sāsana*) as a whole, and the holy life of the path (*magga brahma,carīya*), ie sainthood (Vism 1.92/32).

1.5.3 The Dharma should not be bought or sold

1.5.3.1 From what we have discussed [1.3.4.3], it is clear that the Dharma is not to be bought or sold. Moreover, monastics strictly have nothing to do with money.³⁹ Monastics are reminded to carefully keep to all their rules: “Having taken up the rules of training, he trains himself in them, seeing danger in the slightest faults. He comes to be accomplished in wholesome bodily and verbal deeds, his livelihood is purified, and he is possessed of moral virtue.”⁴⁰

As such, whatever activities a monastic carries out—Dharma teaching, giving talks or lectures, running courses, publishing books, and so on—there is no fee charged or payable for them. Rightfully, the monastic must not in any way even hint that he needs funds, without being invited to do so.⁴¹ However, a “keeper” (*kappiya*) or appointed treasurer of the monastery or centre may announce the need for funds, etc, as appropriate.⁴²

1.5.3.2 In our own times, however, at least two significant challenges have arisen in connection with RL. The first challenge is that the publication of Buddhist books, which has become such a lucrative trade that even non-Buddhists have authored books on or related to Buddhism. Books published by monastics are often rightly copyrighted in the monastic author’s name. This is to preserve the author’s responsibility for his views, his right to edit his work, and any other legal rights an author may have over his works.

Usually the monastic author’s royalties would be channelled to his monastery, or centre, or society that manages his affairs. Otherwise, the royalties must go to the *kappiya* or steward, who would manage the funds for the monastic. The *kappiya* would, of course, be a devotee of good faith, because the rule is that if the *kappiya* is slow in executing the monastic’s request, say for a robe, or when told to buy a travel ticket, fails to do so, or even to abscond with the money, the monastic can do nothing about it (except perhaps inform the appropriate donor of the situation).⁴³ Moreover, in the case of the monastic’s death, all his worldly possessions and rights in the hands of the *kappiya* would then become his alone. Only allowable properties would revert to the sangha who would then properly divide them up or dispose of them.

Secondly, when monastics are running courses, the rule is that no fees are charged. However, participants may donate to a *kappiya*, who would settle all necessary costs and payments, or direct the funds to the proper monastery, centre or group that manages the affairs of the monastics. However, there is no such restriction when a lay teacher gives teachings or runs courses. He may request for fees, as a different set of rules apply to the laity. Even then, such payments are still regarded as offerings (*dāna*), so that those who cannot afford it, for example, are allowed to participate fully and freely all the same.

1.5.4 Full-time lay Dharma workers

This is a term for a wide range of lay Buddhists who work full-time in RL, especially a lay Buddhist minister, or Dharma teacher who also ministers to the public. Although a lay teacher may be given a regular salary—more properly called a stipend—he may also be given donations for his teachings and

³⁹ See **Money and monastics**, SD 4.19.

⁴⁰ A stock sentence is found in all of the first 13 suttas of the Dīgha Nikāya, eg **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2,42/1:63), SD 8.10.

⁴¹ This invitation (*pavāraṇā*)—not to be confused with the formal ending of the rains-retreat—can be voluntarily be made by a lay donor, by specifying the object, duration, location, etc. For details, see Ariyesako, *The Bhikkhus’ Rules: A guide for laypeople*, 1998:69-71 (see index).

⁴² “*Kappiya*,” ie a *kappiya, kāraka*, an attendant who makes things suitable for a monk: see Mv 6.14.6 = V 1:206, Mv 6.17.8 = V 1:212, Mv 6.34.21 = V 1:245. See also Wijayaratna 1990:79 f.

⁴³ See Nis Pāc 10 = V 3:219-223. See **Money and monastics**, SD 4.19 (7.3).

services, since he has sacrificed his time and effort that could have otherwise be gainfully employed elsewhere. Indeed, the number of full-time and part-time lay Dharma teachers and ministers, supported in this manner, are on the rise as the need for Dharma teaching and ministries grows. Being full-time teachers, they need some regular sustainable source of income.

Full-time workers and ministers may be married and have their own families. If such Buddhist workers are in some way supported by their spouse, children, family or savings, they might not need financial support from the community, or they need less of it. The financial status of such workers should, of course, be made clear so that they could be properly supported. In time, some kind of consultative committee or national council may need to be formed to register and regulate the lay ministry. However, some latitude should also be allowed by bona fide lay Buddhist communities based on their own traditions.

1.5.5 Improper fund-raisings

In the 20th century up to the early 21st century, it is common to see foreign monastics, priests and Buddhist groups regularly coming to Singapore (and other countries) to raise funds. These are often done through some kind of religious rituals of blessings for businesses, success in marriage, health and so on. Monks from Thailand often advertise their services for good-luck blessings (sometimes including lustral baths) and Buddhist pendants and amulets. Such activities are clearly an abuse of Buddhism to raise funds.

Such advertisements often come with some gross misinformation about Buddhism that would confuse the public. At its worst, Buddhism would be seen by the informed as a superstition; at its best, it is treated as a business. In short, this is *simony*, selling Buddhism for personal profit.

There is nothing wrong with the faithful making donations to worthy teachers and groups, even foreign ones, for proper projects. However, it is improper if this becomes a sort of regular flow of funds out of the country to some retreat centre in the US, a first-world country, for example. Such retreat centres are so distant that only the more affluent or those willing to sacrifice hard-earned money would be able to visit them.

Such donations are a wasteful outflow of funds when they can be more useful for local Buddhist activities and projects. Furthermore, it is hard to imagine a situation in the reverse: it is unlikely that any Asian Buddhist group soliciting for donations in some western country would be welcomed. It is best and proper that the funds for any Buddhist project should come, or should mostly come from the local community. Otherwise, there is always a chance for financial abuse, as is well known in the case of the Rice Christians.⁴⁴ The basic point is clear enough: monks and nuns should not be going around raising funds directly or indirectly. This is simply wrong livelihood.

1.6 LIVELIHOOD AS MORAL CONDUCT

1.6.1 Livelihood in Abhidhamma perspective

1.6.1.1 A RENUNCIANT'S LIVELIHOOD. According to the Abhidhamma, livelihood (*ājīva*) consists of speech and body.⁴⁵ However, verbal and bodily conduct by themselves, whether wholesome or unwholesome, do not fully constitute livelihood. A person who earns a living by killing (directly or indirectly), for example, both commits wrong action (destroying life) as well as wrong livelihood (earning a living by killing).

⁴⁴http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rice_Christian. That I have to use a non-Buddhist example only compounds the problem: such a problem does exist in Buddhism, but we do not seem to have the moral courage to confront and resolve them.

⁴⁵ See esp DhsA 220 f.

However, for one who kills only occasionally (say, in a crime of passion) or for sport (say, the British royalty), there is only wrong action (which is of course unwholesome in itself).

Such a distinction may be clear in the case of the laity, but these principles, when applied to the renunciants, are not always clear. The conduct (speech and body) of a renunciant is indistinguishable from his livelihood. Indeed, the renunciant's spiritual life itself *is* his livelihood. In other words, true renunciants are never gainfully employed. A renunciant who works for wages is *regularly* breaking the rules against the use of money.⁴⁶ Indeed, he is no more a renunciant, even if he keeps a bald head and wears monastic robes. [5]

Very often, the rationalization or excuse here is that the Vinaya rules are “outdated,” and so need to be “updated” or “modified,” or that “the times have changed.” The point is that such false monastics are simply pursuing a career and earning an immoral living, the diametrical opposite of a life of renunciation. If they break any of the right livelihood rules—such as handling money—they are likely to break other rules, too, such as those of not taking meals at the wrong times, and so on.

As the Buddha declares in **the Maṇi,cūḷaka Sutta** (S 42.10): “For whomever gold and silver [money] are allowable, for him the 5 cords of sense-pleasure are allowable, too.”⁴⁷ The karmic consequences of such a life rooted deeply in the 3 unwholesome roots are clearly dire, that is, any of the 4 subhuman realms. [1.6.3.2]

1.6.1.2 A PSYCHOLOGY OF LIVELIHOOD. The suttas say that it is intention (*cetanā*) that is our actions (karma), whether bodily, verbal or mental: having intended, we act, speak or think.⁴⁸ This means that wrong speech, action and livelihood, and right speech, action and livelihood are the result of our intentions. The Abhidhamma, however, seems to accept this only up to a point.⁴⁹ While the Abhidhamma accepts that this is the case when intention is applied to the courses of action (*kamma, patha*), it is fulfilled as speech and bodily actions, there is something more in the case of right speech, action and livelihood.

The Dhamma,saṅgaṇī, for example, building on the sutta definitions of right speech, action and livelihood in terms of abstaining (*veramaṇī*) and abandoning (*pahāya*), lists three dharmas (mental factors) that are distinct from intention (*cetanā*) (Dhs 63 f). That is to say, at the moment of right speech, action and livelihood, not only the wholesome intention manifests in this way, there is also a mental factor that actively withdraws and abstains from wrong speech, action and livelihood.⁵⁰

As such a technicality is of interest only to the Abhidhamma psychology, we will not detain ourselves here. Let us go on to a more practical aspect of RL.

⁴⁶ Very often, the rationalization or excuse here is that the Vinaya rules are “outdated,” and need to be “updated” or “modified.” The point is that such monastics are simply pursuing a career and earning a living, the diametrical opposite of a life of renunciation. If they break such a rule—and handle money—they are likely to break other rules, too, such as those of not taking meals at the wrong times, and so on. Cf **Maṇi,cūḷaka S** (S 42.10): “For whomever gold and silver [money] are allowable, for him the 5 cords of sense-pleasure are allowable, too.” (S 42.10,8/-4:326), SD 4.21.

⁴⁷ S 42.10,8.4/4:326 (SD 4.21).

⁴⁸ *Cetanāhaṃ bhikkhave kammaṃ vadāmi, cetayitvā kammaṃ karoti kāyena vācāya manasā* (A 6.63,11/3:415). Cf Abhdk 191.

⁴⁹ See esp DhsA 89-91, 218-221.

⁵⁰ Comys say: “The three kinds beginning with right speech (previous to path-attainment, of multiple moments, multiple objects) are *both* abstinence and intentions, too, but at the path moment, they are *only* abstinenes” (*sammā,vācādayo tayo viratiyo pi honti cetanāya pi, magga-k, khaṇe pana viratiyo ‘va*, SA 1:158; AA 2:71; UA 147; ItA 1:132; PmA 1:163; VbhA 115; AAT:Be 1:264). See Gethin, for a fuller discussion and the views of other schools (2001:196 f; 214 f).

1.6.2 Right livelihood precepts

1.6.2.1 THE 6 RIGHT LIVELIHOOD PRECEPTS. Buddhaghosa, summarizing the key offences laid out in the Vinaya, speaks of “the 6 training-rules of livelihood” (**ājīva,sikkhāpada*), that is, in reference to these six:

With livelihood as the cause, with livelihood as the reason, one of bad desires, desirous by nature, *pretends to a superhuman state* that is false and untrue—this offence entails defeat (*pārājika*).

With livelihood as the cause, with livelihood as the reason, he acts as a *go-between*—this offence entails formal meetings of the order (*saṅgh’ādi,sesa*).

With livelihood as the cause, with livelihood as the reason, he says “A bhikkhu who lives in your monastery is *an arhat*”—this offence entails a grave offence (*thullaccaya*).

With livelihood as the cause, with livelihood as the reason, a bhikkhu who is not sick eats exquisite food that he *has intimated for himself*—this offence entails expiation (*pācittiya*).

With livelihood as the cause, with livelihood as the reason, a nun who is not sick eats exquisite food that she *has intimated for herself*—this offence entails confession (*pāṭidesaniya*).

With livelihood as the cause, with livelihood as the reason, one who is not sick eats curry or boiled rice that he *has intimated for himself*—this offence entails wrongdoing (*dukkata*).

(V 5:146; Vism 1.60/22 f)

Buddhaghosa further quotes **the Vibhaṅga**, warning that these offences motivated on account of wrong livelihood, could also feature the following modes of misconduct, for example:

By scheming, that is, grimacing or similar acts, posturing, knitting the brows, by roundabout talk, disposition, posing, the deportment on the part of one bent on gain, honour and fame, of bad desires, desirous by nature.

Through speech, that is, talking, persuading, suggesting, persistence, ingratiating chatter, flattery, bean-soupery (flattery with more falsehood than truths), fondling, on the part of one bent on gain, honour and fame, of bad desires, desirous by nature.

By hinting, that is, making a sign to others, indicating, indirect talk, roundabout talk, on the part of one bent on gain, honour and fame, of bad desires, desirous by nature.

By belittling, that is, abusing of others, disparaging, reproaching, snubbing, ridiculing, denigrating, tale-bearing, backbiting, on the part of one bent on gain, honour and fame, of bad desires, desirous by nature.

By pursuing gain with gain, that is, seeking, questing, searching for material goods by means of material goods, by one bent on gain, honour and fame, of bad desires, desirous by nature.

(Vbh 352-53; Vism 1.61-65/23)

Buddhaghosa then explains these modes of misconduct in detail (Vism 1.66-82/23-30). His commentaries are drawn basically from **the Mahā Niddesa** (Nm 1:224-226). Parts of this commentary are also incorporated into the Sammoha,vinodanī, the Vibhaṅga Commentary (eg VbhA 340, 483).⁵¹ Buddhaghosa’s commentaries are an exercise to emphasize that wrong livelihood includes *any kind of unwholesome conduct to gain a living, to accumulate wealth, to seek comfort and pleasure, and to promote oneself*.

1.6.2.2 THE 8 RIGHT LIVELIHOOD PRECEPTS. Buddhist training, as is well known, is founded on moral virtue [1.3.1]. Training in moral virtue (*sīla sikkhā*) means preparing and disciplining our *body and speech* for

⁵¹ See Vism:Ñ 28 n23, 29 n24.

mental cultivation.⁵² This ethical training or moral practice is founded on the 5 precepts (*pañca, sīla*), that is, *abstaining* from killing, from taking the not-given, from sexual misconduct, from falsehood, and from taking strong drinks and intoxicants, and *cultivating the 5 positive counterparts* (*pañca, dhamma*) [2]. We are now ready to examine the ethical code of RL.

Buddhaghosa, in his **Visuddha, magga**, specifically refers to the “moral virtue with livelihood as the eighth” (*ājīv’atṭhamaka sīla*),⁵³ or less formally, “the 8 right livelihood precepts,” a concept that echoes throughout the Commentaries.⁵⁴ Basing this concept on teachings implicit in the suttas, Buddhaghosa understands these “livelihood precepts” (as we shall call it for short) as comprising the three wholesome bodily actions, the four types of wholesome speech (or right speech), and RL is the eighth,⁵⁵ thus:

(1) abstaining from killing	<i>pāṇātipātā veramaṇī</i>
(2) abstaining from taking the not-given	<i>adinn’ādānā veramaṇī</i>
(3) abstaining from sexual misconduct	<i>kāmesu micch’ācārā veramaṇī</i>
(4) abstaining from false speech	<i>musāvādā veramaṇī</i>
(5) abstaining from malicious speech	<i>pisuṇāya vācāya veramaṇī</i>
(6) abstaining from harsh speech	<i>pharusāya vācāya veramaṇī</i>
(7) abstaining from frivolous talk	<i>samphappalāpā vācāya veramaṇī</i>
(8) abstaining from wrong livelihood	<i>*micchā ājīvā veramaṇī</i> ⁵⁶

Precepts 1-3 are the wholesome *bodily actions*, while 4-8 are the wholesome *verbal actions*, all of which, together with the abstaining from covetousness, ill will and wrong view, constitute the 10 wholesome courses of action (*kusala kamma, patha*), as listed in such discourses as **the Sāleyyaka Sutta** (M 41).⁵⁷ In terms of the eightfold path, the “moral virtue with livelihood as the eighth” comprises the training in moral virtue aggregate (*sīla-k, khandha*), that is, right speech, right action and RL [Table 1.3.1].

Although “right livelihood” effectively embodies right speech and right action, it is listed separately here to emphasize *respect for the Dharma* in terms of supporting ourselves. Only when a renunciant embodies RL is he said to be “one accomplished in the training and common mode of livelihood of monks” (*bhikkhunam sikkhā, sājīva, samāpanna*).⁵⁸ RL, in other words, is the sum of a renunciant’s conduct.

Like spiritual friendship, right livelihood is the totality of the holy life (S 45.2+3).⁵⁹ Before attaining to the path, that is, becoming a saint, the true renunciant or lay practitioner should make every effort to keep to RL, but once they have attained to the path, they do this very naturally. In this sense, RL is the totality of the spiritual life.

1.6.3 The fruits of wrong livelihood

1.6.3.1 The Buddha unequivocally warns monastics, often in graphic language, about those who are “immoral, bad by nature, whose conduct is filthy and doubtful, underhand in deeds, claiming to be a recluse when not one, claiming to live the holy life when one does not, inwardly rotten, impure by

⁵² All the Comy refs mention this point: see the 2 foll nn. On meditation, see **Bhāvanā**, SD 15.1.

⁵³ Vism 1.27/11.

⁵⁴ DA 1:315, 3:733; MA 2:382×2, 384, 387; SA 2:49, 50; AA 2:72; SnA 2:382; PmA 1:164; DhsA 396; VbhA 116, 332, 333.

⁵⁵ VismMhṭ:Be 1:33.

⁵⁶ The initial asterisk here means that the Pali term is an innovation for the sake of convenience for a concept that exist in spirit in the ancient texts.

⁵⁷ M 41.7-14/1:286-288 @ SD 5.7.

⁵⁸ M 1:179, 267, 345.

⁵⁹ S 45.2 /5:2 f @ SD 34.9; S 45.2/5:2 f @ SD 34.10. On spiritual friendship, see SD 34.

nature”—as in **the Aggi-k,khandhûpama Sutta** (A 7.68). Such false monastics, who indulge in sex and sensual pleasures, socialize with the rich and powerful, and wheedle support and gifts from the faithful, would surely suffer “harm and pain for a long time, and with the body’s breaking up, after death, (they) would be reborn a plane of misery, a bad destination, a lower realm.”⁶⁰

The reason for such strong words is that monastics or priests who falsely claim to live the holy life are clearly breaking the fourth of the 5 precepts (that is, the precept against false speech), and all of these precepts embody natural morality [2.1.1]. In other words, breaching any of them means that the perpetrator is motivated by the unwholesome roots of greed, hate and delusion, thus accumulating unwholesome karma. In other words, RL here refers to the *spirit* of the holy life. Those who go against the spirit of the holy life are surely living very unwholesome lives.

1.6.3.2 Unlike the case of conventional morality, there is no one who dispenses the punishments or karmic fruits for those who break the precepts of natural morality. Our negative habits will build up and pull us down into the rut of suffering in due course. Our livelihood conditions us into the kind of karmic state we are caught in. Leading a life of wrong livelihood means that we are *habitually* motivated by unwholesome conduct of body, speech and mind. Our life, deeply rooted in wrong view, is reflected in our thoughts, speech and bodily actions. Living such a lifestyle—guided by such false values and showing such negative attitudes—we are not even enjoying a true human lives, but are sucked down into a sub-human plane and stuck there.

If our livelihood is motivated by a desire for power or by the measuring of others for personal profits, then we are asuras. If we promote activities or products that are addictive or cause discontent, then we are pretas. If our livelihood keeps others rooted in ignorance, delusion or fear, then we are animals. If we earn a living that promotes violence, then we are hell-beings. Only our bodies are human, but our minds are subhuman. When the shelf-life of the human body ends, our minds will assume a karma-generated form that our past habits have conditioned us. The hand that grasps the object takes its shape.⁶¹

2 The ethics of right livelihood

2.1 NATURAL MORALITY AND PRESCRIBED MORALITY

2.1.1 Natural morality

2.1.1.1 The Pali Commentaries often speak of “natural morality” (*pakati,sîla*)⁶² and “conventional morality” (*paññatti,sîla* or *paññatti,sîla*).⁶³ Natural morality is the morality of the 5 precepts [2.2], or more broadly, of the 10 courses of actions (*kamma,patha*).⁶⁴ Occasionally, the first 4 precepts appear without the 5th (abstaining from intoxicants) (eg M 3:47). These 4 precepts are those of “natural moral-

⁶⁰ A 7.68/4:128-135 (SD 52.12).

⁶¹ On the asura mentality, see **The body in Buddhism**, SD 29.61 (4.1.4) It is difficult to remain human; **Myth in Buddhism**, SD 36.1 (1.3.3) Momentary beings.

⁶² Often glossed as “inherent morality” (*sabhāva,sîla*): DA 2:435, 4:180; PmA 1:219; ItA 104; Vism 1:41; cf **Mahā-padāna S** (D 14) & **Acchariya,abbhūta S** (M 123), where the Bodhisattva’s mother, while bearing him, is “morally virtuous by nature” (*pakatiyā sîlavatī*), followed by 5 precepts (D 14,18/2:12 f; M 123,9/3:120).

⁶³ AA 3:410, 733.

⁶⁴ “What is called ‘talk on moral virtue’ should be spoken of in terms of the courses of action or in terms of what is enacted designated” (*sîla,kathā ca nām’esā kamma.patha,vasena vā paññatti,vasena vā kathetabbā hoti*, AA 3:733). On the courses of action (*kamma,patha*), see **Sāleyyaka S** (M 41.7-14/1:286-288), SD 5.7.

ity,” and are also found in other religions of the Buddha’s time, such as in their practice of “restraint” (*yama*) (Yoga Sūtra 2:29) and the *anuvrata* of the Jains.⁶⁵

Some understanding of “**natural morality**” is helpful for a better understanding in what makes right livelihood karmically wholesome. Firstly, natural morality entails the abstaining from conduct that is unwholesome (*akusala*) and blameable (*sāvajja*).⁶⁶ It is *naturally* unwholesome and blamable, that is, it is not proclaimed so by the Buddha or any other awakened being. It is part of the basic moral principles and values [2.3] that are universally, or at least generally, and for good reason accepted so—that certain things such as destroying life is wrong as it is precious to all.

Indeed, natural morality is the very foundation of RL, so that we might say that RL is *the most natural way of life*. It is a way of living and supporting ourselves that respects both nature (that is, our natural environment) and the *nature* of others. An important aspect of Buddhist morality is that it reminds us to respect the fact that we are not alone. There are other humans in our community. Moral conduct and other human qualities not only make such a society possible, but makes it a **good society**, one that promotes the cultivation of the mind and the heart for the happiness and benefit of the many.

Further, there are other living beings inhabiting this world, who depend on this common living space, that is, a healthy ecology. Our immediate living space is intimately connected with the ecology around us, and ultimately with the whole earth, which is part of the cosmos. Hence, our lives are all interconnected in a vital interbeing.

2.1.1.2 It is a universal truth that all living beings value their life. We all certainly love and cherish our lives, and if we observe other humans and other lives, they too desire life and struggle to live. As such, we should not do to others what we do not wish others to do to us. This is known as **the “golden rule,”** as it is a universal truth and value. A fuller definition is given in the Buddha’s teaching as **the “threefold purity”** (*ti,koṭi parisuddha*). Such admonitions on moral virtue are given, for example, in **the Veḷu, dvāreyya Sutta** (S 55.7), where in its section on “moral conduct” (training of body and speech), the Buddha advises that

we should keep the precepts ourselves,
we should encourage others to do the same, and
we should “speak in praise of” (promote) the precepts.⁶⁷ (S 55.7,6-12/5:353-355) & SD 1.5 (3)

The Amba, laṭṭhika Rāhul’ovāda Sutta (M 61) gives another set of “**threefold purity**,” whereby we determine the morality of actions. If an action would harm oneself, or harm others, or harm both, such an action should *not* be done. Here, “both” refers to “society” at large, or in today’s lingo, the environment. In other words, whatever we do, *it should not in any way harm us, others or the environment*.⁶⁸

Moral virtue, as such, is not a private ethic: it is *a social reality*, without which society cannot exist. RL—the work and spirit behind our quest for food (life), satisfaction (happiness), relationships (truthfulness) and independence (freedom)—are deeply rooted in this understanding.

2.1.2 Prescribed morality

2.1.2.1 VINAYA. Right livelihood has a very vital spiritual purpose, that is, for personal development. It is for this purpose that both the precepts of natural morality (that is, the 5 precepts) [2.1.1], and the

⁶⁵ Jaini 1979:170-178. On “natural morality,” also called basic morality or universal morality, see Kellenberger 2001:32-34.

⁶⁶ See **Sāvajja S** (A 3.1.7/1:104). See Harvey, 1999:282-284; Tatz, 1986:295 n374.

⁶⁷ In other words, we should not break a precept, nor encourage others to do so, nor approve of any breach. Cf SnA 376 f; S 5:354 f.

⁶⁸ M 61,9-17/1:415-419 @ SD 3.10.

rules of monastic life are laid out in Buddhism. Early Buddhist monasticism and later systems rooted in it are regulated by **the Vinaya**, which is derived from *vi-*, “away” + *naya*, “leading,” that is, “that which leads one away (from the unwholesome),” and often simply translated as “monastic discipline.”

The Vinaya mostly comprises a code of training-rules (*sikkhā,pada*) for monastics, and various rules that regulate their personal and communal lives, and various monastic formalities. The monastic code, a sort of ecclesiastical penal code, is known as **Pāṭimokkha**, and there are separate codes, one for the monks (*bhikkhu*) known as the Bhikkhu Pāṭimokkha, and one for the nuns, known as the Bhikkhūṇī Pāṭimokkha.

The structure of both these codes are quite similar, each containing:

- (1) the rules,
- (2) the circumstance/s which led the Buddha to introduce the rule (often this was a criticism of behaviour of some monks by the laity), and
- (3) mitigating circumstances which nullify or modify what the rule entails.⁶⁹

The earliest Vinaya is embodied in what are known simply as “the moralities” (*sīla*), which are evidently the earliest record we have of what constitutes monastic discipline. This is, of course, *the moral training*, the first of the 3 trainings [1.3.1], followed by meditation training, and then wisdom training, all of which constitute the “fruits of recluseship” (*sāmañña,phala*),⁷⁰ found in all the first 13 suttas of the Dīgha Nikāya [1.4.2].

Although this prescribed morality does not technically entail karmic consequences, the breaching of any of its rules is always rooted in one or more of the 3 unwholesome roots (greed, hate and delusion). As long as the offender realizes the significance of such an offence and makes efforts to rectify them, the karmic consequences are mitigated, as it were. Otherwise, the offence would become *habitual*, which would then seriously incapacitate the monastic, even to the point of being “defeated” (*pārājika*), so that he falls from the state of a renunciant. The morality of livelihood operates in the same manner. [4.3]

2.1.2.2 PĀṬIMOKKHA. The Pāṭimokkha or monastic code gradually evolved during the life of the Buddha who is said to have introduced 150 or so rules for the monks, as the occasion arose (M 1:445). On the basis of these rules, a standard code of 227 rules (for the monks) was formalized about a century after the Buddha. At least three versions of the monastic code (Skt Prātimokṣa) are still in use, that is:

	Monks	Nuns	Tradition ⁷¹	School
Theravāda code	227 rules	311 rules	Southern Buddhism	Theravādā
Dharmaguptaka code	250 rules	348 rules	Eastern Buddhism	Mahāyāna
Mūla,sarvāstivāda code	258 rules	366 rules	Northern Buddhism	Vajrayāna

⁶⁹ See Grero 1996:51-66; Dhammavahari 2003. For Pali & tr of the 227 rules, see *The Pāṭimokkha*, ed W Pruitt & tr K R Norman, Oxford: Pali Text Soc, 2001. For a traditional study (Thai monasticism), see Vajirañāṇavarorasa, *Vinayamukha: the entrance to the Vinaya*, Bangkok: Mahamakuta Rajavidyalaya, vol 1: 1969, vol 2: 1973.

⁷⁰ See **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2,43-62/1:65-69) & SD 8.10 (3).

⁷¹ These geographical categories are traditional at best, reflecting where they had once predominated. “Eastern Buddhism” is also known as Mahā,yāna (or Chinese Mahāyāna, where Chinese Buddhism served as the model for the Buddhisms of Korea, Japan and Vietnam), while “Northern Buddhism” is also known as Vajra,yāna (mostly Tibet, Mongolia and parts of Siberia). In our times, all these “schools” are found throughout the world, and often within the same community of Buddhists.

It is worth noting the number of rules for each of these three main traditions. Apparently, the later the school, the more rules its Prātimokṣa contains. This is not to say that the Theravāda as it is today is the oldest of the three, but its roots go back to the earliest traditions. All these traditional schools have separately formulated their own monastic codes and disciplines. In some cases, especially the Mahā,saṅghika, their code was radically reformulated to include a money-based priesthood involved with property management and usury! And, whether the monastics seriously kept to such a code is another matter.⁷²

For the early Buddhists and those keeping to this tradition, **the Paṭimokkha** is a canonical code, serving as a sort of monastic constitution, recited fortnightly (on full-moon and new-moon days) in conclave. Before joining the conclave, a monk must acknowledge any lapses from the code by a formal confessing to another monk, usually a senior.

The Pāṭimokkha is then recited from memory by a senior monk before the assembly sitting in close quarters, “within arm’s length” (*hattha,pāsa*). At the end of each set of rules (arranged according to the offences they entail), the reciter formally asks about the sangha’s “purity,” and the assembly’s silence is taken as assent. In spirit, as such, the monastic code is like a set of training-rules for a spiritual athlete who has to remain fit and trim to face any challenge.⁷³

2.1.2.3 PRESCRIBED MORALITY AND KARMIC CONSEQUENCES. In themselves, these prescribed rules, are simply a skillful means for training monastics in the renunciant life as a basis for meditation training. They are not “purification acts” in the brahminical or priestly sense. The more serious breaches entail a sangha conclave, while the less serious ones may be corrected by simply confessing them. Those who breach other minor rules are rehabilitated by means of various formal acts where they basically acknowledge the offence, and aspire towards strengthening themselves in self-discipline. [1.6.2]

The monastic code is a detailed lifestyle and livelihood code based on the spirit of the 5 precepts, the basic moral code for the laity, but the monastic code is much more. It deals mostly with conventional morality, formulated as precepts (*sikkhā,pada*) [2.1.2.1] and the offences (*āpatti*) [1.6.2.1] they entail. The monastic code singularly serves to protect the authenticity of a renunciant monastic. Its rules, as such, are rooted in natural morality [2.1.1], as it trains the mind to overcome the roots of immoral conduct.⁷⁴ The monastic code strictly forbades monastics from indulging in any wrong livelihood, or any kind of conduct that distracts them from the spiritual life and goal. [4]

2.2 THE 5 PRECEPTS: NEGATIVE ETHICS AND POSITIVE ETHICS

2.2.1 Commission and omission

The ethics of right livelihood are of 2 kinds, that is, the moral ethics of omission (*vāritta sīla*) and the moral ethics of commission (*cāritta sīla*).⁷⁵ **The moral ethics of omission** is that of keeping to the precepts, that is, of *not* killing, *not* stealing, *not* committing sexual misconduct, *not* speaking false speech, and *not* taking intoxicants and addictives. Hence, it is said to be “negative” ethics. **The moral ethics of commission** consists of moral values, upon which wholesome action of body, speech and mind are rooted when expressed as RL. Since it is about what ought to be done, it is said to be “positive” ethics.

The best known code of the negative ethics of omission is the 5 precepts, which is frequently stated in the early Buddhist scripture. In the suttas, the code of 5 precepts forms a shorthand for the 10 courses

⁷² American Buddhism of the 1990s was rigged with sexual and financial scandals by Tibetan monks and Japanese Zen priests: see **Bad friendship**, SD 64.17.

⁷³ Cf Huxley, 1995b

⁷⁴ See Grero 1996:vii-xiii; Harvey 2000:92 f; Witanachchi 2007.

⁷⁵ SnA 1:331; ThaA 3:20; CA 309; Vism1.26/12.

of wholesome action (*kusala kamma, patha*), especially **the (Kamma, patha) Cunda Sutta** (A 10.176) and **the Sañcetanika Sutta 1** (A 10.206).⁷⁶ The details of almost all these precepts can further be teased out from a number of discourses dealing with the 8 precepts or uposatha precepts, such as **the (Tad-ah') Uposatha Sutta** (A 3.70), **the Visākhā Sutta 1** (A 8.43), and **the Nav'aṅg'uposatha Sutta** (A 9.18), which list the moral code in both the negative and the positive manner, here listed in terms of the 5 precepts, thus:

- (1) abstaining from harming any living being, having laid aside rod and sword, conscientious, kind, dwell compassionate towards all living beings;
- (2) giving up taking the not-given, we abstain from taking the not-given, accepting only the given, expecting only the given, dwell not by theft but with a mind of purity;
- (3) giving up sexual misconduct, we practise contentment, avoiding relationship with improper partners;⁷⁷
[in the "8 precepts," this is: "giving up incelibacy, living a celibate life; dwelling alone,⁷⁸ abstaining from coupling, the way of the world];⁷⁹
- (4) giving up false speech, we abstain from false speech; speaking the truth, keeping to their word, trustworthy, not breaking their word to the world;
- (5) giving up strong drinks, distilled drinks, fermented drinks and that which causes heedlessness, we abstain from them. (A 3.70, 8.43, 9.18, 10.176, etc)⁸⁰

While the "omission" aspect (the practice of abstaining) is known as the "precepts," the "commission" aspect is known as "virtues" (*dhamma*), all of which are better seen in this table:⁸¹

<u>precept (sīla)</u>	<u>virtue (dhamma)</u>	<u>Pali term</u>
(1) against killing	lovingkindness & compassion	<i>mettā, karuṇā</i>
(2) against stealing	charity; right livelihood	<i>cāga; sammā ājīva</i>
(3) against sexual misconduct	sense-restraint; contentment	<i>indriya, saṁvara; santuṭṭhi</i>
(4) against false speech	truth; wisdom	<i>sacca; paññā</i>
(5) against intoxication	mindfulness and clear comprehension	<i>sati, sampajaññā</i>

The "virtue" aspect is highly significant, as it embodies the fundamentals of early Buddhist moral ethics. For this reason, some modern scholars have categorized such a Buddhist moral ethics as "virtue ethics," which we will now examine.

⁷⁶ **(Kamma, patha) Cunda S** (A 10.17.6/5:266-268), SD 79.12; **Sañcetanika S 1** (A 10.206/5:293-7), SD 3.9.

⁷⁷ Textually, this is defined as "not falling into such a conduct with those protected by their mother, protected by their father, [protected by their parents,] protected by their brother, protected by their sister, protected by relatives, one with a husband, one protected by the law, not even with one adorned with a string of garlands [in betrothal to another]" (A 10.176.3/5:266 = 10.206.8/5:295).

⁷⁸ "Dwelling alone," *anācarī*, vll *ārā, cārī, anācārī*.

⁷⁹ **(Sīla) Bhikkhu S** (A 5.286) gives a unique set of "5 precepts" with this 3rd precepts as "he is one who abstains from incelibacy" (*abrahma, cariyā paṭivarato hoti*) (A 5.286/3:275 f), SD 89.3; also **Niraya, sagga S 1** (A 10.200, 4/5:-284), **Niraya, sagga S 2** (A 10.201, 4/5:286), **Saṁsappanīya S** (A 10.205.5/5:290

⁸⁰ **Tad-ah'uposatha S** (A 3.70, 9-13/1:211 f), SD 418; **Saṅkhittūposatha S** (A 8.41, 3-7/4:249 f), **Vitthatūposatha S** (A 8.42/4:251) = **Visākhā S** (A 8.43, 3/4:255) = **Bojjha** (A 8.45, 3/4:260), **Nav'aṅga'uposatha S** (A 9.18, 2-6/4:388 f). See also **A 4.53/2:58**, **54.60/2:60**, **5.250/3:276**, **8.46.5/4:266**, **48, 4/4:268**.

⁸¹ See also SD 19.11 (Table 6.3); SD 59.6 (Table 2.2.2).

2.2.2 Virtue ethics⁸²

2.2.2.1 In terms of modern western categories, early Buddhist moral philosophy and training are often classified as a form of “virtue ethics.”⁸³ In *virtue ethics*, the moral agent’s character is the driving force for ethical conduct, unlike *deontology* (keeping to rules), or *consequentialism* (the outcome of an act defines whether it is right or wrong), or *utilitarianism* (the greatest good for the greatest number of individuals), or *pragmatic ethics* (right or wrong depends on the social context). In terms of Western theories, virtue ethics is associated with Aristotle, deontology with Kant, and utilitarianism with Jeremy Bentham and James Mill.⁸⁴

2.2.2.2 Amongst the scholars who see Buddhist morality as virtue ethics are British scholars, James Whitehill and Damien Keown. **James Whitehill**, in *Buddhist Ethics in Western Context: The Virtues Approach*, says: “Buddhism’s legitimation in the West can be partially met by demonstrating that Buddhist morality is a virtue-oriented, character-based, community-focused ethics, commensurate with the Western ‘ethics of virtue’ tradition.” (1994:1; also 2000).

2.2.2.3 Damien Keown devotes a great deal of his work to debunking claims that Buddhism is utilitarian in nature.⁸⁵ He then goes on to examine the structure of Buddhist moral ethics as closely resembling Aristotle’s virtue ethics.⁸⁶ Keown however acknowledges an important difference: “For Aristotle the good for man is something to be participated in but never completely attained, whereas for the Buddha the goal of full perfection was achievable over the course of many lifetimes through the cultivation of the Eightfold Path” (1992:230 f). Moreover, Buddhist ethics entails rebirth, which is not found in Aristotle’s ethics.

2.2.2.4 There are few other related theoretical considerations. We have already stated that Buddhist ethics is basically *naturalist* [2.1.1] since it is rooted in *psychological* aspects of the agent, namely, the motivation behind an act.⁸⁷ It may be said to be *objectivist* since the rightness or wrongness of an act is assessed independently of subjective moral perception or preference.⁸⁸ Insofar as Buddhist ethics has a definite goal (*attha*), it is described as *teleological*, rather than deontological.⁸⁹

2.2.2.5 Such characteristics apply to the nature of RL, since it is *the ethics of occupation*. However, these are ideal and theoretical factors towards which we need to work. Traditionally, for example, most Buddhist monastics and priests take the monastic or religious rules *deontologically*, that is, if they conscientiously and diligently observe them. For those of us who aspire to practise RL, it is unlikely that we would begin with such high qualities, but would take them as vital guidelines.

⁸² For a detailed study see SD 18.11.

⁸³ See <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ethics-virtue/>; also http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Virtue_ethics & [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddhist_ethics_\(discipline\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddhist_ethics_(discipline)).

⁸⁴ James Mills was the father of the utilitarian philosopher, John Stuart Mills. For details of these theories, see <http://plato.stanford.edu/> & <http://www.iep.utm.edu/>. On *modern ethics* in general, see: <http://www.rep.routledge.com/article/L132>.

⁸⁵ Keown 1992:165-191 (ch 7).

⁸⁶ Keown 1992:193-227 (ch 8); 2005:12-16, 25-27

⁸⁷ Keown 1992:25-56 (ch 2).

⁸⁸ Jayatilleke 1970; Weeraratne 1976:58-65.

⁸⁹ Ethics as duty, that some acts need to be done or not done as an obligation, regardless of their consequences

2.3 THE VALUES OF RIGHT LIVELIHOOD [5.1.2]

To say something is “**valuable**” means that we have a special and close relationship with it. Value here refers to our regarding something as having the qualities of *truth* and *beauty* of the highest kinds. By truth here is meant the wisdom of what something is and how to use or apply it for the greatest benefit, that is, of ourselves and others. Beauty refers to the good and joy that such benefits entail. The two qualities are inseparable and integral to RL, and are the bases of Buddhist aesthetics.⁹⁰ [1.1]

An important aspect of Buddhist morality as virtue ethics [2.2.2] is that of seeing and living *value* in this life itself, and not taking moral conduct as merely a karmic basis for a better rebirth. These values are inherent in the negatively formulated 5 precepts, from which we are admonished to see their “virtue” or “value” (*dhamma*), and cultivate their related wholesome social emotions (*brahma, vihāra*). The relationship of the precepts to their respective values, expression and social emotion are listed here:

<u>Precept</u>	<u>Value</u>	<u>Expression</u>	<u>Social emotion</u>
(1) against killing	life	being	lovingkindness
(2) against stealing	happiness	having	compassion (charity)
(3) against sexual misconduct	freedom	doing	compassion (contentment)
(4) against false speech	truth	speech	gladness
(5) against intoxication	wisdom	mind	equanimity

Right livelihood, above all, values **life**: for, without life, nothing else exists or makes sense. As such, RL should also value and nurture life. To live means that we need food, clothing, shelter and health supports, and all humans, and all living beings to a proper extent, should have such basic necessities (*pacca-ya*), and not be deprived of them, since they are universal bases for happiness. A living being should also be accepted and respected for what it is, so that the being has personal freedom without hindering or hurting others.

Humans need to communicate, and to do so effectively and wholesomely, such communications should be truthful. The higher purpose of our lives is not merely to have a healthy body, but also a healthy mind. As such, we should avoid whatever that clouds or weakens the mind, especially intoxicants, drugs and activities that are addictive.⁹¹

2.4 RIGHT LIVELIHOOD AND MENTAL CULTIVATION

Right livelihood is one of the factors of the noble eightfold path. It is one of the three factors constituting the “training in moral virtue” (*sīla, sikkhā*), supporting conditions for training in mental cultivation or concentration (*samādhi, sikkhā*) [Table 1.3.1]. Indeed, RL itself is listed just before the concentration group (*samādhi-k, khandha*), partly because it entails some level of mental concentration to work in right livelihood: it makes the livelihood *right*.

What does it mean to say that **RL entails mental cultivation**? Firstly, it means that the work that we do is not something different from us: *we are our work*.⁹² To be exact, our RL work, by definition is wholesome karma expressed through body and speech. For it to be truly potent and empowering, the mind, too, must be wholesome: it must be free from greed, hate and delusion.⁹³

⁹⁰ On Buddhism as truth and beauty, see SD 40.1 (8.1.2); SD 46.5 (2.4.2) as aesthetics; SD 37.8 (2.3) in right livelihood. See also Piya Tan, Reflection, “No views frees,” R255, 2012.

⁹¹ On the 5 values, see **Velu, dvāreyya Sutta** (S 55.7) @ SD 1.5 (2). See also SD 10.16 (5.2.2.2).

⁹² See esp **Vāsetṭha S** (M 98/2:196 = Sn 3.9/596-656), SD 37.1.

⁹³ On these 3 unwholesome roots on a corporate level, see **The Three Roots Inc**, SD 31.12.

Secondly, there is in reality no such thing as “multi-tasking.” The reality is that we can only naturally and really pay attention to only one thing at a time. Our minds, when directing the body, do not work as parallel processes.⁹⁴ The fact is that *we can never multi-task*: if we try to, it would somehow stress us, even to the extent of skewing or harming our mental and physical health. We cannot multi-task, but only *switch* tasks. However, if we switch tasks too often within a short period, it is difficult to keep proper focus on what really needs to be done. This does not mean we should be habitually slow or not work fast. Speed and efficiency come with patience and practice, and we must *enjoy* the process. In short, speed mindfully with clear comprehension.

Thirdly, in an RL environment, we do not merely carry out instructions. On non-RL situations, experiments have shown that, we are likely to mirror others in answering even simple questions about visual comparisons: we will agree with the group even when it is clearly wrong. Brain scans during this experiment showed that the brain area dealing with visual recognition was inactive. In other words, we tend to act according to how we perceive others would see us: *our seeing is often a social act!*⁹⁵

We must see with our own eyes, and sense what we see with our own minds. We might not be awakened enough to see everything as they really are, but we should at least be clearly aware of the present moment of work, that is, is the right and proper thing to do with the right and proper effects or implications. Such awareness and observations are valuable experiences for the whole RL community, when they are shared and scrutinized, followed by appropriate action.

2.5 RIGHT LIVELIHOOD AND PROFESSIONALISM

2.5.1 The 4 divine abodes (*brahma, vihāra*) when applied to RL are called “the social emotions.” They are the qualities we need to cultivate so that we can interact well and beneficially with others, that is, with co-workers and with our clients. The social emotions keep us on track with the right attitude towards ourselves and our work.

Simply, these social emotions remind us that RL is for everyone alike (lovingkindness); for the less fortunate or those in difficulties, we show them compassion; to those who are better than we are, we should cultivate gladness; and to the rest of the world, as it were, we need to show equanimity.

RL is for everyone alike, and yet everyone has his own personality and spiritual needs. We must serve a wide range of people, and treat everyone of them with **lovingkindness**, that is, an unconditional acceptance. On this basis, it is easier for us to connect spiritually with others so that they benefit from the Buddha Dharma. Lovingkindness gives us the heart that unconditionally accepts anyone in their desire to learn the Dharma and benefit from Buddhist training. Lovingkindness is like the water of heavenly rain that falls on all kinds of plants and trees, on everyone alike, cooling and cleansing them, showering them with life-giving water,

2.5.2 Through RL, we are likely to meet the less fortunate or those in difficulties, even those who cannot afford to pay for the training or courses that they badly need. Out of **compassion**, we should have a way of allowing them to benefit from them. Perhaps, some discount could be offered, or even not charging them at all for the courses. Or they sacrifice some of their time doing voluntary work, which further helps

⁹⁴ Mind scientists tell us that some neurons do fire more than once at the same time, but the fact remains that *attention*, by definition means being focussed on one event or process at a time.

⁹⁵ See eg P M Niedenthal & S Kitayama (eds), *The Heart's Eye: Emotional Influences in Perception and Attention*. NY: Academic Press, 1994. See also: [Perception - Perceptual Systems, Historical Background, Innate And Learned - Classical perceptual phenomena, Broad theoretical approaches, Current research/future developments - JRank Articles](http://science.jrank.org/pages/5094/Perception.html#ixzz1sgbq2X00) <http://science.jrank.org/pages/5094/Perception.html#ixzz1sgbq2X00>; also <http://www.web-books.com/eLibrary/NC/B0/B58/011MB58.html>

to keep their dignity, that they are not on some “charity.” Compassion empowers us to be kind even to those who do not deserve. The fire of compassion must shine in our hearts giving light and warmth to everyone alike.

Through RL, as an open engagement in spiritual work, we would often meet people who are better than us in some ways. We might be experts in some field, but occasionally, we could still learn a thing or two from others, and so our expertise is enriched and upgraded into spirituality. **Gladness** is the ability to see goodness in others, and everyone has a place in RL if they are willing to grow spiritually. As more of us rejoice in the goodness of others, this joy becomes the mainstay of the RL team or company becomes a truly spiritual community. Gladness is like the gentle wind that breathes life for all of us, and is the spaciousness that accepts others so that we can grow with them.

2.5.3 Yet, we all have our own limitations. We might have put in our best, but RL work, as an open spiritual enterprise, is never done. There will always be some work that remains incomplete; there will always be those who have not benefitted from the Dharma. We have to look on with **equanimity**, just as the earth looks on uncomplaining at the plants growing, flowering and dying, and plants that are yet to grow. The earth is always ready, waiting patiently.

If we reflect deeper, we can see that the 4 social emotions and the 4 elements of RL are the bases for Buddhist professionalism. Originally “**profession**” means to have deep faith in a religion, that is, a confidence based on understanding the Dharma. With such an eye-opening and heart-warming vision, we better see that there are many other beings suffering for the lack of professing the Dharma. It is only natural as the elements make up our lives and the universe, that we *respond* to the cries and needs of the world. This is the real meaning of responsibility.

3 Wrong livelihood promotes suffering

3.0 THE 3 KINDS OF TORMENTORS

A number of suttas define wrong livelihood as those occupations that “torment others” (*paran tapa*). This **other-tormentor** is the second of the 4 kinds of persons in terms of conduct explained in **the Kandaraka Sutta** (M 51), **the Apaṇṇaka Sutta** (M 60) and **the Ghoṭa,mukha Sutta** (M 94). These 4 kinds of persons are explained in **the Attan Tapa Sutta** (A 4.198) and **the Puggala Paññatti** (Pug 4.21).⁹⁶

These suttas speak of the following kinds of person and the effects of their conduct or practice, that is, the self-tormentor, the other tormentor, the tormentor of self and others, the non-tormentor. The first, the self-tormentor, is the ascetic who practises self-mortification or someone who keeps up a practice or habit that is painful but useless, even harmful [3.1]. The second is the other-tormentor is one who indulges in wrong livelihood or promotes it [3.2]. The third is the one who torments both self and others [3.3].

3.1 WRONG LIVELIHOOD: TORMENTING ONESELF (ATTAN TAPA)

The self-tormentor practises self-mortification, and so hurts his own body and mind.⁹⁷ Traditionally, this is known as *self-mortification*, which was a common practice in the Buddha’s time. Such self-mortifying austerities have the sole purpose of inflicting pain upon the physical body, since it is regarded as

⁹⁶ On the 2nd kind of the 4 kinds of persons in terms of conduct: see **Kandaraka S** (M 51.5-28/1:340-349) & SD 32.9 (4.1) = **Apaṇṇaka S** (M 60.36-56/1:412 f & SD 35.5 (3), with 6 additional self-mortifying observances = **Ghoṭa,mukha S** (M 94.10-30/2:161 f @ SD 77.2). The 4 kinds of persons is also given at **Attan Tapa S** (A 4.198/2:205-211 @ SD 56.7) = **Pug** 4.21/55-61.

⁹⁷ See further **Mahā Saccaka S** (M 36.17-44/1:242-249), SD 1.12 @ SD 49.4 & **Mahā Sīha,nāda S** (12.44/1:77-83), SD 1.13 @ SD 49.1.

intrinsically bad. The Brhad-Āraṇyaka, for example, says, “When all desires in the heart are released, then the mortal becomes immortal and he attains Brahman [Universal Soul]” (BĀU 4.4.7).

Jainism regards every living soul as potentially divine. When the soul sheds its karmic bonds completely, according to Jainism, it attains divine consciousness. It prescribes a path of non-violence to progress the soul to this ultimate goal.⁹⁸ The parents of Mahāvīra, the Jain founder,⁹⁹ were said to have committed religious suicide by self-starvation (*saṃlekhaṇa, sallekhaṇa*).¹⁰⁰

The Buddha, in his past lives and last life as the Bodhisattva,¹⁰¹ has tried all such self-mortifying asceticism, but found them to be ineffective in bringing about direct insight into true reality, much less liberate him from suffering. As such, after his awakening, he unequivocally denounces such harmful and ineffective practices as being “painful, ignoble, not connected with the goal [unprofitable].”¹⁰² The spiritual path does not lie in tormenting the body, but in knowing, training and freeing the mind.

In the spirit of such teachings, it is clear that RL should not torment the RL worker so as to affect his physical health and mental development. The first three of the 5 precepts, pertaining to the body, reminds us to respect life, including our own, to keep it healthily nourished, and to respect it in every way, as it is a tool for bringing the Dharma to others and a vehicle for awakening.

3.2 WRONG LIVELIHOOD: TORMENTING OTHERS

The second kind of person is the other-tormentor, that is, one who indulges in wrong livelihood or promotes it,¹⁰³ that is, earning a living that breaches the 5 precepts, or which harms self, others or the environment. The suttas define the other-tormentor as one who earns a living as “a sheep-butcher, a pig-butcher, a fowler, an animal trapper, a hunter, a fisherman, a thief, an executioner, a prison warden, or one who follows such a bloody occupation.”¹⁰⁴

It is important to note here that it is not *the person* who is rejected, but the unwholesome occupation or preoccupation with harmful activities that needs to be corrected. The early suttas record how even a serial killer,¹⁰⁵ or a drunkard,¹⁰⁶ or even a public executioner¹⁰⁷ could find salvation and awakening in the Buddha Dharma.

In a significant way, the kind of work we are employed in or habitually do, are shaped by our past karma and present conditions. Yet, no matter how we are caught up with our work, if we are determined enough, we can still find the occasion for doing wholesome deed, such as spending time meditating, or doing charitable works. However, as soon as we understand the unwholesome nature or aspects of our

⁹⁸ Robert Kastenbaum, *Macmillan Encyclopedia of Death and Dying*, 2003:491.

⁹⁹ On Nigantha Nāta,putta, see **Upāli S** (M 56) @ SD 27.1 Intro (2.1).

¹⁰⁰ See further **Kandaraka S** (M 51) @ SD 32.9 (4.1).

¹⁰¹ See eg **Mahā Saccaka S** (M 36.17-44/1:242-249), SD 1.12 or 49.4; **Mahā Sīha,nāda S** (M 12.44-63/1:77-83), SD 1.13 or 49.1.

¹⁰² *Yo cāyaṃ atta,kilamathānuyogo dukkho anariyo anatta,samhito* (S 56.11.3/5:420), SD 1.1. See **The body in Buddhism**, SD 29.6a (4.1).

¹⁰³ For an ancient list of wrong livelihoods to be avoided by a monastic, see **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2.43-62/1:63-69), SD 8.10 (3).

¹⁰⁴ M 51,9/1:343 @ SD 32.9 = (M 60,37/1:412 @ SD 35.5 = M 94,11/2:161 @ SD 77.2 = A 4.198,3/2:207 = Pug 4.21/56. See prec n.

¹⁰⁵ See **Aṅguli,māla S** (M 86/2:97-105), SD 5.11. Aṅguli,māla is converted by the Buddha himself.

¹⁰⁶ See **Sarakāni S 1** (S 55.24), where the Buddha explains that “Sarakāni the Sakya kept the training (in moral virtue, concentration and wisdom) at the time of his death” (S 55.24/5:375-377), SD 3.6, & **Sarakāni S 2** (S 55.25), that “Sarakāni the Sakya fulfilled the training at the time of his death” (S 55.25/5:378-380).

¹⁰⁷ See **Tamba,dāṭhika Cora,ghātaka Vatthu** (DhA 8.1 ad Dh 100). The public executioner, Tamba,dāṭhika, through faithfully and attentively listening to Sāriputta’s admonition, is able to establish himself on the spiritual path (DhA 8.1/2:203-209). See also SD 48.1 (7.4.3.2).

occupation, we should take steps to free ourselves from that situation and elevate ourselves to a more wholesome activity.

3.3 WRONG LIVELIHOOD: TORMENTING SELF AND OTHERS

The third kind of person is the tormentor of self and of others is one (especially a brahmin or a kshatriya) who performs elaborate rituals that direly inconvenience the sacrificer and brutally trouble those serving them.¹⁰⁸ These are troublesome, wasteful, useless, even painful and dangerous, rituals. Such rituals have to be meticulously prepared at high costs, involving a lot of people, whether they like it or not.

This kind of person habitually performs troublesome or painful tasks, and makes others do so, too, accumulating bad karma for himself. **The Kandaraka Sutta** (M 51) mentions the case where a person performs a bloody sacrifice that involves the killing of numerous animals, and forces many others to painfully join him in doing so.¹⁰⁹ A similar bloody sacrifice is mentioned in **the (Pasenadi) Yañña Sutta** (S 3.9),¹¹⁰ where Pasenadi, the rajah of Kosala, prepares 500 bulls, 500 bullocks, 500 heifers, 500 goats, and 500 rams for sacrifice. The Buddha teaches him a more wholesome and noble alternative. A third case is mentioned in **the Kūṭa,danta Sutta** (D 5), where it involves 700 of each kind of such animals, trees etc, planned by the brahmin Kūṭa,danta.¹¹¹ The negative and immoral implications of such a sacrifice is clearly stated in **the (Uggata,sarīra) Aggi Sutta** (A 7.44).¹¹² As a livelihood that promotes and condones so much killing and suffering, all this is clearly wrong.

3.4 RIGHT LIVELIHOOD: NEITHER TORMENTING SELF NOR OTHERS

Of the 4 kinds of persons, only the one who *neither* torments *himself* nor torments *others* is true practitioner. Neither tormenting himself nor others, he is here and now hunger-free, quenched and cooled, and abides enjoying bliss, having himself become holy (supreme like Brahmā himself). He is the true saint, the arhat, who is the spiritual ideal of RL.¹¹³

The teachings of **the Apanṇaka Sutta** (M 60) build up to the state of this true practitioner who is *torment-free*. This torment-free spirituality is a powerful statement that spiritual awakening and liberation does not entail inflicting pain on the body,¹¹⁴ nor is the divine state or spiritual attainment and liberation external to the body or a posthumous affair.¹¹⁵ Awakening and liberation can be attained here and now with this body itself. This can be said to be the Buddha's vision statement.¹¹⁶

Right livelihood is possible and viable because of the presence of the Buddha Dharma, and is its embodiment in our daily lives and work. Far from exploiting or harming either self or others, RL is where we work with our best abilities, and in doing so, we go on to discover our latent goodness and abilities. We do all this in such a way that further inspires others to do the same. RL, as such, is a preparation for material and spiritual happiness now, and awakening in due course.

¹⁰⁸ See eg **Kūṭa,danta S** (D 5/1:127-149) & SD 22.8 (3-4).

¹⁰⁹ M 51,10/1:343 f @ SD 32.9.

¹¹⁰ S 3.9/1:75 f & SD 22.11 Intro.

¹¹¹ D 5,1/1:127 @ SD 22.8.

¹¹² A 7.44.4-6/4:42 f (SD 3.16).

¹¹³ M 51,11/1:344 (SD 32.9).

¹¹⁴ On dhyana as "a pleasure *not* to be feared," see **Laṭukikôpama S** (M 66,21/1:454), SD 28.11.

¹¹⁵ See eg **Te,vijja S** (D 13/1:235-252), SD 1.8.

¹¹⁶ M 60,39-42 (SD 35.5).

4 Right livelihood for renunciants

4.0 RIGHT LIVELIHOOD FOR RENUNCIANTS

4.0.1 A renunciant is a monk or a nun who has given up the household life and economic security. A true renunciant's life is right livelihood; right livelihood is a life of true renunciation. "Right" here means "not against the Dharma-Vinaya," and "livelihood" refers to the training and effort towards awakening in this life itself. Insofar as a monastic truly keeps to his express vows to be a renunciant—having nothing to do with worldliness, especially sex, power and money—to focus on his mental training for awakening in this very life, he is keeping to right livelihood.

For the laity, on the other hand, since they have *not* taken up the monastic vows, but still has some attachment to the world, especially in terms of having relationships and families, he can still practice renunciation "in instalments," as it were, that is, from time to time, especially doing personal daily or regular meditation, or going on meditation retreats.¹¹⁷ If the laity is involved with right livelihood, then this practice of inner renunciation becomes more effective, since his lifestyle conduces to the giving up a lesser happiness (the world) for a greater happiness (Dh 290).

4.0.2 In other words, spiritual training and right livelihood are here one and the same process. The **right livelihood** of renunciants are embodied in the 4 kinds of morality, comprising the 4 full purifications by way of moral virtue (*catu,pārisuddhi sīla*), that is:

(1) restraint with regard to the monastic code,	<i>pātimokkha,samvara sīla</i>
(2) sense-restraint,	<i>indriya,samvara,sīla</i>
(3) full purification of livelihood,	<i>ājīva,pārisuddhi sīla</i>
(4) moral virtue with regard to the 4 requisites.	<i>paccaya,sannissita sīla</i>

These **4 purifications**, serving as a summary of monastic training, are formulated by **Buddhaghosa** in his **Visuddhi,magga**.¹¹⁸ They are based on the well known pericope on "the true purpose of recluseship" that often precede the "fruits of recluseship" passages, such as those found in **the Sāmañña,phala Sutta** (D 2) and **the Kandaraka Sutta** (M 51), thus (with the purifications numbered accordingly):

A houselord or a houselord's son, hearing the Dharma, **[63]** gains faith¹¹⁹ in the Tathagata and reflects, thus:

¹¹⁷ On meditation as inner renunciation, see **Bhāvanā**, SD 15.1 (14.7).

¹¹⁸ Vism 1.42-43/15 f.

¹¹⁹ "Faith," **saddhā**. There are 2 kinds of faith (*saddhā*): (1) "rootless faith" (*amūlika,saddhā*), baseless or irrational faith, blind faith. (M 2:170,21); (2) "faith with a good cause" (*ākāravati,saddhā*), faith founded on seeing (M 1:320,8 401,23); also called *avecca-p,pasāda* (S 12.41.11/2:69). "Wise faith" is syn with (2). *Amūlaka* = "not seen, not heard, not suspected" (V 2:243 3:163 & Comy). **Ledi Sayadaw** speaks of 2 kinds: "ordinary faith" (*pakati saddhā*) and "faith through cultivation" (*bhāvanā saddhā*) (*The Manuals of Buddhism*, 1965:339 f). "Ordinary faith" is mainly based on giving and pious acts (which can be either wholesome or unwholesome, depending on the intention). "Faith through cultivation" is founded on mindfulness practice and meditation. **Gethin** also speaks of 2 kinds of faith: the cognitive and the affective (eg ERE: Faith, & Jayatilleke, *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*, 1963: 387): "Faith in its cognitive dimension is seen as concerning belief in propositions or statements of which one does not—or perhaps cannot—have knowledge proper (however that should be defined); cognitive faith is a mode of knowing in a different category from that knowledge. Faith is its affective dimension is a more straightforward positive response to trust or confidence towards something or somebody...the conception of *saddhā* in Buddhist writings appears almost, if not entirely affective, the cognitive element is completely secondary" (Gethin 2001:107; my emphases).

‘The household life is stifling, a dusty path. The life of renunciation is like the open air. It is not easy living in a house to practise the holy life fully, in all its purity, like a polished conch-shell.

What if I were to shave off my hair and beard, put on the saffron robes, and go forth from the household life into homelessness?’

Then, after some time, he abandons all his wealth and relatives, shaves off his hair and beard, puts on the saffron robes, and goes forth from the household life into homelessness.

(1) When he has thus gone forth, he lives restrained by the rules of the monastic code [Pāṭimokkha], possessed of proper conduct and resort.

Having taken up the rules of training, he trains himself in them, seeing danger in the slightest faults.

(2) He comes to be accomplished in wholesome bodily and verbal deeds, his livelihood is purified, and he is possessed of moral virtue.

(3) He guards the sense-doors, is accomplished in mindfulness and clear comprehension, and is content. (D 2,41-42/1:62 f), SD 8.10

(4) He is content with robes to protect his body and with almsfood to maintain his belly, and wherever he goes he sets out only with these¹²⁰ with him.

Here, just as a bird, wherever it goes, flies with its wings as its only burden, so, too, he is content with robes to protect his body¹²¹ and with almsfood to maintain his belly, and wherever he goes, he takes only these with him.

(D 2,66/1:71= M 51,15/1:346 = 38,34/1:268 = 112,14/3:35 = A 4.198,10/2:209 f)

Let us briefly look at the significance of each of these 4 purifications or accomplishments in moral virtue.

4.1 MORAL VIRTUE BY WAY OF RESTRAINT WITH REGARD TO THE MONASTIC CODE (*pāṭimokkha, saṃvara sīla*)

4.1.1 The life of a renunciant is governed and guided by the monastic code (*pāṭimokkha*). A stock passage defines a monastic’s accomplishment in moral virtue (*sīla sampanna*), thus:

And how is a noble disciple **accomplished in moral virtue**?

Here, a noble disciple is morally virtuous:

he dwells restrained by the restraint of the Pāṭimokkha [the monastic code];

he is accomplished in conduct and resort; and

he sees danger in the slightest fault;

he trains himself by undertaking the training-rules.¹²²

In this way, a noble disciple is accomplished moral virtue.¹²³ (Vocatives & refrains omitted)

¹²⁰ “These,” ie the 8 requisites (*aṭṭha parikkhāra*): a small razor (*khuddaka, vāsi*), needle (*sūci*), water-strainer (*parissāvana*), almsbowl (*patta*) with a shoulder-strap, the triple robe (*ti, cīvara*), belt (*kāya, paṭibandha*) (MA 2:213 = DA 1:297; DA 1:206 = J 1:65; DhA 2:61; J 4:342, 5:254). Explained in detail at DA 1:206 f.

¹²¹ As in **Sāmañña, phala S** (D 2,66/1:71), SD 8.10.

¹²² As in **(Ti) Sikkhā S** (A 3.88/1:235), SD 24.10c. See **(Sekha) Uddesa S** (A 3.85/1:231 f), SD 3.3(2) for a fuller def of the 3 higher trainings (*ti adhi, sikkhā*), in terms of the 4 types of saints.

¹²³ *Idha bhikkhu pāṭimokkha, saṃvara, saṃvuto viharati acāra, gocara, sampanno aṇu, mattsu vajjesu bhaya, dasāvī samādāya sikkhati sikkhā, padesu* (D 26.28/3:78 (def as a monk’s “beauty,” *vaṇṇa*), D 33,3.3(1a)/3:266, 34,2.1-(1d)/3:285, 34,2.3(1)/3:290; M 53,7/1:355, 107,3/3:2, 108,14/3:11, 134; A 2.37/1:63 f ×2, 3.73,4/1:220, 3.94.3/-1:244, 3.96.3/1:246, 4.22.3/2:22, 4.37.2/2:39, 5.109.2/3:135, 5.134.3/3:151, 5.232.2/3:262, 7.71.2/4:140, 8.2,5/-3:152, 13/3:154, 8.8,4/3:189, 9.1,4/4:352, 9/4:357, 10.17,2/5:23, 18.2,2/5:25, 10.32,2/5:71, 10.33,2/5:72, 10.50,3-

4.1.2 The first 3 precepts

4.1.2.1 Elsewhere, a renunciant's accomplishment in moral virtue is defined simply as that of keeping to the spirit of the Vinaya as embodied in the first three of the 5 precepts (those relating to *the body*), thus:

And how is a monk accomplished in moral virtue?

(1) Here, having abandoned the destruction of life, a monk abstains from destroying life. He dwells with rod and weapon laid down, conscientious,¹²⁴ merciful, compassionate for the welfare of all living beings.

(2) Having abandoned the taking of what is not given, he abstains from taking what is not given. He takes only what is given, accepts only what is given, lives not by stealth but by means of a pure mind.

(3) Having abandoned in celibacy, he lives a celibate life, living apart, abstaining from the sexual act,¹²⁵ the way of the village.¹²⁶ (Normalized, vocatives and refrains omitted)¹²⁷

4.1.2.2 These three precepts embody the qualities of compassion, charity and mental cultivation, respectively. Our practice of the precepts and working with RL should be motivated by compassion, that is, unconditionally accepting others, especially when people are willing and ready to grow in the Dharma, and giving ourselves and others the space to develop personally and spiritually.

4.1.2.3 Charity, as the positive aspect of the second precept, is our ability and willingness to provide others with the tools and space for personal and spiritual growth. Ideally, RL supports us with our basic living needs so that we can work full time for the Dharma, and with a surplus, we should be able to help others who are in need by teaching them living and spiritual skills.

4.1.2.4 Monastics live *celibate lives* because they have devoted themselves to mental cultivation for the sake of awakening in this life itself. Lay disciples, on the other hand, may enjoy sense-pleasures within the limits and spirit of the precepts. **The Mahā Vaccha, gotta Sutta** (M 73) speaks of lay disciples, ressed in white, enjoying sense-pleasures (*gihī odāta, vasano kāma, bhogī*),¹²⁸ who are streamwinners.¹²⁹

4.1.2.5 This means that sex and marriage need not be hindrances to the spiritual life if we are in control of ourselves in a wholesome manner. Sexuality within the context of marriage or a committed loving relationship between proper partners is not only ethically acceptable, but can be an effective deterrent against unhealthy sex and negative emotions.¹³⁰ RL can be even more effective and joyful when practised by a loving couple or as part of a team or spiritual community [6.4].

/5:89, **10.98**,2/5:198, **11.15**,2/5:338, 13/5:340; **U** 36; **It** 96; **Nm** 1:39, 66, 148, 231, 270, 347, 396, 475, 483; **Nc:Be** 35; **Vbh** 24).

¹²⁴ *Lajjī*, “feel shame, modest,” explain in the Comy on S 1:73 as “one who has moral shame (*hiri*) and moral fear (*ottappa*).” Opp *alajjī*, shameless.

¹²⁵ *Brahma, cariya* is the supreme conduct or holy life, ie celibacy. DA points out that it involves abstaining from other forms of erotic behaviour besides intercourse.

¹²⁶ *Gāma, dhamma*, ie the way of the householder, vulgar (in the sense of being associated with the masses).

¹²⁷ **D** 1.1.8/1:4, **2.43**/1:63, **10.1.9**/1:206.

¹²⁸ **M** 73.10/1:491 @ SD 27.4.

¹²⁹ See **Sexuality** @ SD 31.7 (5.1).

¹³⁰ See Harvey 2000: 71-74.

4.2 MORAL VIRTUE BY WAY OF SENSE-RESTRAINT (*indriya, samvara, sila*)

The precepts are skillful means for preventing us from committing unwholesome actions of body and speech. The bases or “fields” for such negative activity are the sense-doors interacting with sense-objects through unwholesome sense-consciousnesses. Sense-perception, in other words, begins with **impingement** (*paṭigha*), here used as a technical term referring to the impact of a sense-object on a sense-faculty. The union of consciousness with the impinging object is called sense-impingement.¹³¹ Or, more simply, contact (sense-impression or sensory stimulus) is the coming together of sense-organ, sense-object and sense-consciousness, from which arises sense-perception.¹³²

Understandably, our sensing is most vulnerable when a sense-faculty is apprehending a sense-object. This is when the sense-consciousness or attention should be wholesomely rooted, that is, we are *not* motivated by greed, hate or delusion. This is what is meant by sense-restraint, traditionally formulated as follows:

Here, bhikshus, when a monk [a meditator]	sees a <i>form</i> with	<u>the eye</u> ,...
	hears a <i>sound</i> with	<u>the ear</u>
	smells a <i>smell</i> with	<u>the nose</u> ,...
	tastes a <i>taste</i> with	<u>the tongue</u> ,...
	feels a <i>touch</i> with	<u>the body</u> ,...
	cognizes a <i>mind-object</i> with	<u>the mind</u> ,

he grasps neither its sign nor its details.

So long as he dwells unrestrained in that faculty, bad, unwholesome states of covetousness and displeasure¹³⁴ might overwhelm him, to that extent, he therefore keeps himself restrained.

He practises the restraint of it. He guards the restraint of that faculty, he commits himself to the restraint of that faculty.

(D 2,64/1:70; M 27,15/1:180; S 35.120/4:104; A 3.16/1:113; paraphrased)¹³⁵

Since right livelihood entails an interaction with the world—which, in turn, means the constant stimulating of our senses—*restraint of the senses* must be carefully understood and regularly practised for the sake of a wholesome mind. Sense-restraint is not shutting out the world (if that is really possible), but to set aside its negative aspects, to lessen them whenever we can, to cultivate its wholesome qualities, and to sustain such a proactive effort. In short, sense-restraint, in terms of RL, means interacting with the world with lovingkindness, compassion, gladness and equanimity. [2.3-4]

¹³¹ See **Mahā Nidāna S** (D 15) & SD 5.17 (4).

¹³² See **Madhu, piṇḍika S** (M 18.16/1:111), SD 6.14.

¹³³ For a full reading, complete each hiatus (omission denoted by the three dots), with “he grasps neither its sign nor its details” (below) etc.

¹³⁴ “Covetousness and displeasure,” *abhijjhā, domanassam*. MA says that longing and displeasure signify the first two hindrances—sensual desire and ill will—principal hindrances to be overcome for the practice to succeed. They thus represent the contemplation of mind-objects, which begins with the 5 hindrances. Cf M 1:274/39.13; see also **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** (D 22.13) and **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10.36) on how to deal with the hindrances in one’s meditation. The monk effects the abandoning of the hindrances by the contemplations of impermanence, fading away (of lust), cessation (of suffering) and letting go (of defilements), and thus comes to look upon the object with equanimity. See further **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10), SD 13.3.

¹³⁵ For more citations, see **Nimitta & anuvyañjana**, SD 19.14 @ SD 19.14 (1.1). This passage is analysed in detail in Vism 1.53-69/20-22.

4.3 MORAL VIRTUE BY WAY OF PURIFICATION OF LIVELIHOOD (*ājīva, pārisuddhi sīla*)

4.3.1 The earliest Vinaya is embodied in what are known simply as “the moralities” (*sīla*), the earliest record we have of what constitutes monastic discipline, found in the first 13 suttas of the Dīgha Nikāya [2.1.2.1]. The third section of these moralities, called “the great moralities” (*mahā, sīla*), as we have seen, are about the “animal arts.” A monastic must abstain from them [1.4.2].

Many of the early monks were erstwhile skilled in various professions and arts, and if they were to indulge in them like when they were laymen, then their “holy life” is no different that of the laity. However, they were allowed to pool together their knowledge and skills on medicine and health, as is evident from such texts as **the Bhesajja Khandhaka** of the Vinaya.¹³⁶ Such texts were the earliest records we have on Indian medicine, the roots of which are found in Buddhist monasticism.

4.3.2 The early monastics, however, were not professional doctors or healers. Knowledge of medicine and skills in personal hygiene and health were vital for monastics living solitary lives in the wilderness, and later as settled communal monastics. Understandably, the purification of livelihood for monastics would be that of keeping to the monastic code as well as the proper way of engaging with the world.

As a rule, Buddhist monastics have no economic security whatsoever. They are totally dependent on the laity for the food, which is given neither as a reward nor as a fee for teachings, but *out of faith* in the Dharma: the renunciant is not for hire [1.4.3]! Since monastics, as a rule, must have nothing to do with money, it means that they should have nothing to do with commerce, or even with buying and selling.¹³⁷

4.3.3 On the other hand, a lay disciple, if he is unawakened, is *spiritually insecure*, and would greatly benefit from spiritual friendship with a true monastic.¹³⁸ Such a friendship is based on moral virtue, mental cultivation and insight wisdom. While the exemplary monastic practises renunciation full-time, that is, as a lifestyle as well as spiritual practice, the lay disciple practises renunciation by way of his *mindfulness and meditation*.¹³⁹ Indeed, deep meditation, especially the dhyanas, is called “the joy of renunciation” by the Buddha.¹⁴⁰

The purification of livelihood means that our lifestyle and occupation, far from breaking any precepts, are the firm basis and wholesome environment for mental cultivation. The “purification” occurs at the mental level, *freeing* the mind from greed, hate and delusion, and *cultivating* charity, lovingkindness and wisdom. In this sense, the purification of livelihood also applies to the laity’s RL.

4.4 MORAL VIRTUE WITH REGARD TO THE 4 REQUISITES (*paccaya, sannissita sīla*)

4.4.1 Right livelihood is more about basic living *needs*, less about wants. Our basic needs for a proper spiritual life are clothing, food, shelter and health. As practitioners of RL, whether as monastics or laymen, we need to be guided by the right attitude when making use of these basic life-supports (*paccaya*). Their purpose is to support us conductively for the spiritual life.

¹³⁶ Mv 6 = V 1:199-252. See Ency Bsm: Bhesajja & K G Zysk 199838-72. See also **Lakkhaṇa S** (D 30) @ SD 36.9 (5.1).

¹³⁷ See **Money and monastics**, SD 4.19-23.

¹³⁸ See **Spiritual friendship**, SD 34.1 (3.2.3).

¹³⁹ See **Hālidakāni S 1** (S 22.3/3:9-12), SD 10.12. On meditation as *renunciation*, see **Sexuality**, SD 31.7 (1.6.2) & **Bhāvanā**, SD 15.1 (14.7).

¹⁴⁰ M 66,21/1:454 @ SD 28.11.

4.4.2 The Sabb'āsava Sutta (M 2) gives us comprehensive reflections on the use of these supports of life, so that they help us in our spiritual development in *giving up* the conditions for suffering, thus:

And what, bhikshus, are the influxes **to be abandoned by reflective use**?¹⁴¹

(1) Reflection on monastic robe

Wisely reflecting, he uses the robe [clothing]:

only for warding off heat, for the sake of warding off cold,

for the sake of warding off the touch of mosquitoes, flies, the wind, the sun, and creeping creatures;

for the purpose of covering up the privies, out of moral shame.

(2) Reflection on food

Wisely reflecting, he uses almsfood [food]:

not for amusement,¹⁴² not for intoxication, not for fattening, not for beautifying,

but only for keeping this body going and enduring, for ending (hunger) pangs,¹⁴³

for the sake of supporting the holy life,¹⁴⁴ considering,

“Thus I shall get rid of an old feeling, and not let a new feeling arise,

and so that I will be healthy and blameless, and live at ease.”¹⁴⁵

(3) Reflection on lodging

Wisely reflecting, he uses lodging:

only for warding off cold, for warding off heat,

for warding off the touch of mosquitoes, flies, the wind, the sun, and creeping creatures,

only for avoiding weather hazards, for the purpose of enjoying solitude

(4) Reflection on medicine

Wisely reflecting, he uses medicine, support and necessities for the sick

only for warding off feelings of illness that have arisen, only for the sake of non-affliction.

(M 2,13-16/1:10), SD 30.3

4.4.3 This kind of reflection is a personal training, reminding us of the difference between needs and wants: that *needs* support life, that having them allows us to extend our attention to the wellbeing of others who lack these supports or who lack the ability to be happy despite having these supports or even with a surfeit of them. Such an understanding is succinctly phrased by the Dhammapada as follows:

*Ārogya, paramā lābhā
santuṭṭhī paramaṃ dhanam
vissāsa, paramā ñātī
nibbānam paramaṃ sukham*

Health is the highest gain,
contentment is the greatest wealth,
the trustworthy are the best relatives,
nirvana is the highest happiness. (Dh 204)

¹⁴¹ For details, see Vism 1.85-97/30-35.

¹⁴² This stock: M 1:355; A 2:40, 145; Dhs 1346; Pug 21; Vbh 249.

¹⁴³ Vism 1.92/32.

¹⁴⁴ Buddhaghosa distinguishes 2 kinds of holy life (*brahma, cariya*): the teaching (*sāsana*) as a whole, and the holy life of the path (*magga brahma, cariya*), ie sainthood (Vism 1.92/32).

¹⁴⁵ “Live at ease” (*phāsu, vihāra*) refers to bodily ease or comfort, free from pain and distraction, so that we could direct our mind to meditation.

5 Wrong livelihood for laymen

5.1 PRECEPTS, RESPECT AND VALUES

5.1.1 THE 5 KINDS OF RESPECT

As the laity keep the 5 precepts [2.2] as the regular basis for moral training (*nicca,sīla*), it goes without saying that the precepts and their values [2.3] are the foundations of right livelihood. To practise RL, as such, entails **5 kinds of respect**, thus:

to respect <i>life</i> and	act compassionately to all living beings;
to respect <i>the property and needs of others</i> ,	and to act charitably;
to respect <i>the person of others</i> ,	and to cultivate contentment and lovingkindness;
to respect <i>the truth</i> , that is, to keep to our word	and respect the words of others; and
to respect <i>the mind</i> , keeping it calm and clear	because it is the doorway to wisdom.

In this spirit, we see numerous teachings in the suttas and Commentaries, where the Buddha and his disciples list out what are wrong livelihood, their negative consequences, and that they are to be avoided. These 5 kinds of respect are because we value them. They have a greater purpose in our lives, that is, as the means of our personal development and spiritual awakening. Now, we will examine these underlying values.

5.1.2 The 5 VALUES [2.3]

5.1.2.1 THE VALUE OF LIFE. The very first precept, against killing, is rooted in the **value of life**: as a rule, we would avoid violence and fear death; so, we should neither hurt nor kill others, nor cause to kill.¹⁴⁶ The foremost of the universal values is that life is precious. Buddhism is, above all, a life-centred system: this is very clear from the way 5 precepts are arranged, and how the other values fit in.

It naturally and logically follows that if there is life and we want to continue living, we must *love* life (whether we realize this or not). Otherwise, it is meaningless to live, as we have no desire for life, which then makes it purposeless to live.

Since we *live*, we *want* to live, and we *love* life; we must then live moral lives, which enhances our lives and those of others. If we live while others suffer, then, we have not really understood that we *love* our own life. In essence, this is the beginning of Buddhist moral training: we must realize that just as we love our life, so do all other beings.¹⁴⁷

We can say that the Buddha is unique in teaching to highlight this fact, instead of glorifying himself or even placing “Buddhism” above everything else. It is the Dharma that he regards as supreme.¹⁴⁸ When we understand this, we begin to better understand the Buddha’s teaching, which in turn helps us better understand the teaching of life-value, and so on. These are principles we should never change; they should change us for the better and for the sake of the greater good, which is the other aspect of moral virtue.

¹⁴⁶ For the rationale against killing and moral imperative for respecting life, see **Veḷu,dvāreyya S** (S 55.7,6). SD 1.5. Dh 129-130.

¹⁴⁷ We may qualify this statement by adding that those who seem *not* to love their life, or would not mind, or even prefer to die, feel that they have no more love for life—because they feel deprived of one or other or all of the other 4 values of life: happiness, freedom, truth and wisdom.

¹⁴⁸ See **Garava S** (S 6.2), SD 12.3.

5.1.2.2 THE VALUE OF HAPPINESS. The second precept (against stealing) is rooted in the value of **happiness**, that is, the rightful enjoyment of our lives, such as stated in **the Ādiya Sutta** (A 5.41).¹⁴⁹ Enjoying what we *have* is to really own them, to internalize them. What we have is still *not* really ours, but what we enjoy *become* us; we *are* what we enjoy. Hence, we must only wholesomely enjoy whatever we rightly have: we can only celebrate their impermanence, which is sufficient for our spiritual life.

5.1.2.3 THE VALUE OF FREEDOM. The precept against sexual misconduct rests on the value of **freedom**, that is, the right of veto, to have a say about how our body is to be treated or not. This is also a *respect* for both the person and the person's body.¹⁵⁰ Only with love and embrace, can we truly enjoy and celebrate the impermanence of bodily bliss. There is also the fruit of this loving selfless union that we must receive readily with responsibility: we have welcomed a new being or more into our world.

5.1.2.4 THE VALUE OF TRUTH. The fourth precept, against lying, is clearly based on the value of **truth**, without which all these values will not work or be worthwhile. Our natural curiosity and capacity for knowledge bless us with an intellectual evolution, the growth of our mind. Our spiritual evolution begins when we stop measuring what we know and start enjoying its beauty, and discover a deeper and broader truth of the immeasurable beyond. Since then, we have been fascinated with truth and beauty. For, truth comes from the desire and courage to question, and beauty fills us with wonder when we realize no matter how many questions we ask the answer is always to look on further. For, the answer is in the question itself, and to never stop questioning, to keep on seeing and wondering.

5.1.2.5 THE VALUE OF WISDOM. Finally, the fifth precept—against the taking of intoxicants and getting intoxicated, is about keeping the mind calm, clear and ready for the cultivation of **wisdom**, which is valuable as a basis for awakening. Awakening is when we stop questioning—not because we have run out of questions or we now believe; rather, it is when we realize the answer is in the question itself—how we question, asking the right questions is the answer, the answer is in the questions themselves. Then, we have no need of questioning any more. But I've spoken beyond what I understand or can speak of.

5.1.2.6 It is a **moral imperative**, then, that life is valuable in itself and should be properly protected, supported and respected, because it is our only means for attaining truth, wisdom and freedom. If life is sacred, then we should reject any means that would harm life or prevent its wholesome growth. Hence, violence and death are clearly counterproductive to the good life, and should be completely avoided. In simple terms, we can begin to understand how these 5 values are the moral imperatives for wholesome living, letting live and fostering an environment conducive for wholesome living.¹⁵¹

5.2 THE 5 WRONG TRADES

5.2.0 The Vanijjā Sutta (A 5.177) gives a list of **5 wrong trades** to be avoided by both the renunciants and the laity, that is to say:¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ **Ādiya S** (A 5.41) mentions 5 uses of wealth, SD 2.1.

¹⁵⁰ See, eg, how Ānanda counsels a nun who is sexually attracted to him: **(Taṇhā) Bhikkhuṇī S** (A 4.159), SD 10.14.

¹⁵¹ On the 5 values underlying the 5 precepts, see SD 1.5 (2). On the values of right livelihood, see SD 37.8 (2.3).

¹⁵² These 5 wrong trades are discussed in some detail as “professions” in the context of the eightfold path at SD 10.16 (5.2.2). Read this whole section on “Wrong livelihood for laymen” [5] before going on to SD 10.16. Or, you

A lay follower should not engage in 5 types of trades. Which five?

- | | | |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| (1) Trading in weapons | <i>sattha vaṇijjā,</i> | |
| (2) Trading in humans | <i>satta vaṇijjā,</i> | |
| (3) Trading in meat | <i>maṃsa vaṇijjā,</i> | |
| (4) Trading in intoxicants | <i>majja vaṇijjā,</i> and | |
| (5) Trading in poisons | <i>visa vaṇijjā.</i> | (A 5.177/3:208) ¹⁵³ |

These 5 occupations are of a very specific nature, but each of them violates the spirit of the precepts in some way. Let us examine more closely why they are wrong livelihood.

5.2.1 Trading in weapons

5.2.1.1 If life is of the highest value, then, any means of violence towards others or means of causing death should be avoided. It makes good sense that we should avoid **trading in weapons** or arms-dealing of any kind. This refers to trading in all kinds of weapons and instruments for destruction, violence and killing, which are clearly against the first precept, which is *the respect for life*. The worst example of such a trade is that of manufacturing, using and condoning of the weapons of mass destruction.

The negative effects of such weapons are more than just the loss of lives. They also uproot or devastate those hurt by such weapons, so that they live maimed, incapacitated and bitter against the perpetrators, besides mourning their losses. Such pains spread and grow with the generations, and contribute to political instability, social disorder and further conflicts and losses. It is practically impossible to practise mental cultivation in such circumstances, so that we easily fall into the subhuman levels of hellish life here and now.¹⁵⁴

5.2.1.2 The Vaṇijja Sutta is clearly against “trading in weapons” (*sattha, vaṇijjā*). *Sattha* (Skt *śastra*, from *vśas*, to cut) specifically refers to a “knife” or a “sword,” but generically means any kind of “weapon, arms.” The word *sattha* is often used with *daṇḍa*, “rod; punishment,” as in the phrase, “with rod and sword” (*daṇḍena satthena*), it means “violently.” **The Cūḷa Kamma Vibhaṅga S** (M 135) describes the breaking of the 1st precept (against killing) in these words, “Here, young brahmin, a certain woman or man **kills living beings**, cruel, bloody-handed, given to violence and killing, merciless to living beings.”¹⁵⁵

When *sattha* used in correlation with *daṇḍa*, “rod; punishment,” in a negative way, as in the phrase, “with neither rod nor sword” (*adaṇḍena asatthena*) it means “non-violently.” King Pasenadi compliments the Buddha for converting the serial killer, Aṅguli, māla, by saying: “Bhante, we ourself could not tame him with the rod and the sword [by fear and force] (*daṇḍena’pi satthena’pi*), yet the Blessed One has tamed him with neither rod nor sword (*adaṇḍena asatthen’eva*).”¹⁵⁶ This is a case of the Buddha’s non-violence.

5.2.1.3 Today, “arms” are more sophisticated than simple knives and swords, or even bows and arrows, or war elephants or giant catapults of ancient combat and warfare. There are today various

can do “parallel” reading, beginning with the 1st wrong trade [5.2.1], and then read the parallel passages in SD 10.16 (see the sub-headings there).

¹⁵³ See also A 3:208,14. See Ñāṇasobhano 1989.

¹⁵⁴ You may want to continue your reading on “trading in weapons” in SD 10.16 (5.2.2.1-5.2.2.4).

¹⁵⁵ *Idha, māṇava, ekacco itthī vā puriso vā sattānaṃ viheṭṭhaka, jātiko hoti, pāṇinā vā leḍḍunā vā daṇḍena vā satthena vā* (M 135,5/3:204), SD 4.15; its opp, *adaṇḍena asatthena*, is found in §6.

¹⁵⁶ *Yañ hi mayaṃ bhante nāsakkhimhā daṇḍena’pi satthena’pi dametuṃ so bhagavatā adaṇḍena asatthen’eva danto.*

sophisticated, even subtle ways of causing violence or death to others.¹⁵⁷ Modern methods of warfare and mass destruction, such as chemical warfare, are ever more potent, and have more widespread and prolonged negative effects than ever before. Often such wars and massive destruction only benefit the weapons manufacturers and arms dealers, and those who invest in them. All this clearly should not be traded in or invested in, especially by Buddhist practitioners.

5.2.1.4 As we well know, the situation is much more complicated than this. No wise or sane leader or government today would risk wars, knowing fully well their economic costs and consequences. Ultimately, wars—especially nuclear war—are simply are MAD, “mutually assured destruction.” In other words, it is wiser for our leaders, scientists and thinkers to work together for mutual peace and the environmental sustainability.

The reality is that even Buddhism, with all its wisdom and compassion, cannot work alone to change the community, much less the world. We can dream and design a “new society,” but it will only start to work when we awake from such dreams to face the true reality around us. Like it or not, we have to unconditionally accept others for any global peace and progress to be sustained.¹⁵⁸ [5.8]

5.2.2 Trading in humans

5.2.2.1 Trading in humans, especially slavery, has had a very long history, going back even before the Buddha’s time. Some kind of slavery, however, can be said to be voluntary, even customary, that is debt slavery. This was common in ancient India, where it still exists to this day, even tolerated by some religions. While rejecting slavery of any kind, the Buddha is clearly aware of the realities of his day in giving clear instructions.

Instead of merely championing the position of the “free” person, the Buddha also lays down practical guidelines, such as in **the Sigālo, vāda Sutta** (D 13), for Buddhist householders to treat their “house slaves” humanely by allocating suitable work, giving them proper food and wages, attending to their health needs, sharing delicacies with them, and giving them timely breaks. The slaves, on their part, have to work diligently, honestly and keep up the family’s good name. In this way, the family in debt (the equivalent of our bankrupts today) have a roof over their heads, proper support and due respect.¹⁵⁹

5.2.2.2 Although slavery has been officially banned in almost every nation, various forms of slavery still exist. The most common kinds of **disguised slavery** include child labour, forced labour, forced prostitution, and the human trafficking (which includes the selling and buying of children and adults). Children should be schooling until they are old and mature enough to work gainfully. No one should be forced to work against their will or without proper health considerations, contract or remuneration. All workers and employees should be properly treated.¹⁶⁰

5.2.2.3 Prostitution is wrong simply because the person is treated and exploited in a physical sense. Even if they are paid for their services, the liaisons are rooted in *lust*, which is an unwholesome root as they are treated as mere objects of pleasure.¹⁶¹ The negative implications are greater if the perpetrator

¹⁵⁷ On some of these weapons, see SD 53.13 (2.1).

¹⁵⁸ See SD 10.16 (5.8).

¹⁵⁹ D 31,32 (SD 4.1). Chakravarti, qu **D N Chanana**, *Slavery in Ancient India* (1960:58, 162), notes: “Of the three categories of *dāsa* [slaves], *kammakara* [labourers], and *porisa* [hired men], the *dāsas* may actually have been better off since they were integrated into the family that owned them” (1986:26).

¹⁶⁰ On the reciprocal ethics between employer and employee, see **Sigāl’ovāda S** (D 31,32/3:190 f), SD 4.1.

¹⁶¹ See **The body in Buddhism**, SD 29.6a (1.2.2) & passim.

is married, as this means disloyalty to the spouse and a bad example to their children, who are likely to repeat the vicious cycle. There are also the grave dangers of sexually-transmitted diseases.

However, we should not be too quick to blame the prostitutes themselves, because they are usually the victims of abuse, poverty or social problems. The roots of the problem should be addressed in order to help them rise above their unwholesome circumstances to live dignified lives.¹⁶²

5.2.2.4 Trading in humans is very serious problem in the form of **human trafficking**, especially the buying and selling of children, is a form of slavery as they often end up in forced labour, prostitution, abuse and other unhappy circumstances.¹⁶³ Such illicit activities may include arranging spouses for forced marriage or marriage of convenience (usually to expedite immigration).¹⁶⁴

Some women may be forced into being surrogate mothers or have their ova harvested for paying clients.¹⁶⁵ In even more inhumane cases, human subjects have their organs or tissues harvested. Human trafficking can occur within a country or transnationally. Human trafficking may occur with the victims being held in a protected place. Human trafficking is a crime because of the violation of the victim's freedom and rights of movement, and because of their commercial exploitation.

Human trafficking today generated some US\$7 billion to US\$9.5 billion per annum as of 2004.¹⁶⁶ Human trafficking is probably one of the fastest-growing activities of transnational criminal organizations today.¹⁶⁷

5.2.2.5 Buddhism, however, is not against legal and proper adoption of children. In difficult circumstances, such as the children being abused or becoming orphans, they should be given proper care, protection (such as becoming wards of the state), and education.¹⁶⁸

5.2.3 Trading in meat

5.2.3.1 Here "meat" refers to the bodies, flesh, tissues, organs, or parts of beings after they are killed, which is itself against *the first precept*. **Trading in meat** is wrong livelihood because it directly involves killing. Killing is wrong because so much pain and negative force are released when death comes to anyone unready and unwelcome. More broadly, trading in meat also includes both killing and violence, profiting from the death of another or of others, then we will surely feed on death itself, or causing pain, fear and unhappiness in others, including animals. Most of us would not even think of gouging a cat's eyes out or putting a dog inside a weighted sack and drown it in a cold river; we feel nauseous just to read this (or write this).¹⁶⁹

5.2.3.2 Trading in meat is clearly wrong because of the killing involved. One important argument against meat trading is that no one has the right to destroy the life of another being. A further Buddhist

¹⁶² On homosexuality, see **Sexuality**, SD 31.7 (7). "Religious slavery" is a painful reality, too, that is, where followers are exploited through their faith and devotion, and where Buddhism is twisted or "modernized" to attract wealth and hold the followers captive and guru-dependent. See eg **Bad friendship**, SD 64.17.

¹⁶³ See Amnesty International: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_trafficking#cite_note-Amnesty.org.au-2.

¹⁶⁴ http://www.ecpat.org.uk/sites/default/files/forced_marriage_ecpat_uk_wise.pdf.

¹⁶⁵ <http://www.councilforresponsiblegenetics.org/genewatch/GeneWatchPage.aspx?pagelid=313>.

¹⁶⁶ Sarah E Mendelson, *Barracks and Brothels: Peacekeepers and human trafficking in the Balkans*, Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2006.

¹⁶⁷ See Louise Shelley, *Human Trafficking: A global perspective*, Cambridge: Cambridge Univ Press, 2010.

¹⁶⁸ See **Sāleyyaka S** (M 41), in ref to "one protected by the law" (*sa,paridaṇḍa*) (M 41,8(3)/1:286) n, SD 5.7. See also **Sexuality**, SD 31.7 (4).

¹⁶⁹ On meat-eating and the meatless diet, see SD 4.24 (3).

rationale to this is that beings that are killed or murdered, as a rule, die with pain, fear and other negative emotions, which would relegate them to subhuman states. It is very difficult for such beings to work towards awakening.¹⁷⁰ We bear the bad karma of such deliberate actions, too.

Imagine when someone working in a **slaughterhouse** who daily cuts the throats of sheep, or pigs, or cows. We can see tears in the cow's eyes before she is killed, we are often told. Imagine having to do this many times a day over many years, it will grow on us and eat us. We would surely suffer some serious mental disturbance. We would probably not last more than a year or two, or not even that, at the shambles, working like a hell warden. [5.2.6]

5.2.3.3 The Buddha allows monastics to accept “available meat” (*pavatta, māṃsa*) (including fish) but not raw meat, or meat of forest animals, strategic animals and pets. Such meat refers only to incidental meals, in other words, food that is not “seen, heard or suspected” by the monastic that have been specially prepared (killed) for them. There are at least two good reasons for this. The first is that monastics are “beggars” and *beggars are not choosers*. The monastics have to accept whatever is offered to them on their almsround.

Hence, early Buddhist teachings are not against meat eating in itself. Diet has no real bearing on our spirituality. What we eat does not make us pure or impure; *our purity or impurity is based on our conduct and habits*.¹⁷¹ A non-meat diet (or that of less and less meat) is not only healthier, if properly practised, but also makes our lives simpler.

5.2.3.4 The problem of the economic principle of “demand creating supply” does not apply to the monastics in the Buddha's times or even later, where monastics neither shop nor cook. Clearly, stream-winners and other saints would simply not break any of the precepts which means that they, too, would probably accept or use (unlike monastics, they can cook) only “available meat.” Otherwise, they are vegetarians. This can be correctly surmised from the nature of awakening the saints—they would naturally not break any of the precepts.

5.2.3.5 Buddhism is not against genetically modified (GM) food so long as no lives are destroyed or negatively affected, and there is no negative effect on its consumers or the environment. In fact, the proper production and use of food alternatives such as “meatless meat” might significantly avoid the moral problems attending meat-eating. New ways of growing plants as food should be researched and implemented if they can contribute to human health and a sustainable environment.¹⁷²

5.2.3.6 The moral problems of **meat-eating, vegetarianism and diet** need to be carefully examined here. Much of our diet today is controlled by local, national or global economic policies. For example, meat is easily available even without our having to do any killing. The issue of economic supply and demand should be discussed in-depth to understand its significance.¹⁷³

The problem of a meatless diet still remains. Clearly here, we need Buddhist scientists or ethically minded scientists and technologists guided by the principle of the “value of life” to work toward producing marketable meat substitutes or “meatless meat”—perhaps the kind of food that made by “food

¹⁷⁰ See [the parable of the sea turtle and the yoke](#), **Bāla Paṇḍita S** (M 120,24/3:169), SD 2.22. This simile is referred to at Thī 500, Miln 204, DhA 60. See **The body in Buddhism**, SD 29.6a (4.1.2).

¹⁷¹ See eg **Āmagandha S** (Sn 2.2), SD 4.24.

¹⁷² You may want to continue your reading on “[trading in meat](#)” in SD 10.16 (5.2.2.6-5.2.2.7).

¹⁷³ It should be noted, eg, that the economics of supply and demand did not arise in early Buddhism, and is not really a part of ethic. We need to discuss and understand to what extent our “eating without killing” may or may not contribute towards killing, and what we are to do about this. See eg Harvey 2000:150-186 (ch 4).

replicators” in the Star Trek series.¹⁷⁴ Apparently, we already have some hints of this.¹⁷⁵ Still, the healthier choice for the moment is to be a sensible vegetarian with a compassionate heart.¹⁷⁶

5.2.4 Trading in intoxicants

5.2.4.1 The last of the 5 precepts is “to abstain from strong drinks, distilled drinks, fermented drinks, that are the bases for heedlessness.”¹⁷⁷ As Buddhism spread beyond Asia and into western and westernized communities, this precept continues to challenge them. Some communities see it as strict teetotalism or total abstinence. Buddhist from societies where **drinking strong drinks** is the norm might rationalize that we may drink as long as we don’t get drunk. In other words, *moderation should be the rule*, but they tricky question remains: are we sober enough to judge as we sink deeper into the drinks? As followers of an admirably tolerant religion, we should often feel free—and be really *free*—to take our stand, to remain standing, wherever we are in between these two positions.

5.2.4.2 The trade in intoxicants includes the manufacturing and marketing of intoxicating drinks or addictive substances, including cigarettes. This is clearly against the fifth precept, whose value is that of mindfulness, which is the basis for liberating wisdom. Habitual drinking or taking addictive substances clouds up the mind so that it is impossible to calm it for meditation, much less to clear it up.

5.2.4.3 A drunk is more likely to break the other precepts, too, because he has less inhibitions. In other words, drunkenness weakens, even shuts down, the higher *human* parts of the brain, giving more leash to the lizard brain, so to speak. In a drunken stupor, we easily fall into subhuman states without the need of being reborn physically so. A drunkard, high on drinks, as such, is simply caught in the rut of such low states. If such a habit persists, then his future rebirth would reflect his present subhuman conduct.¹⁷⁸

5.2.4.4 The positive counterpart of the precept is **mindfulness** (*sati*; Skt *smṛti*), which is the real standard. If we can drink with mindfulness, then, we may drink; but if we can’t, then we shouldn’t. It helps to limit such drink to special occasions, when we can keep the flow of drinks in the safe hands of mindful servers. The best moderator, however, is still our own honesty and desire for right mindfulness, that is, the priority that we give to the Dharma.¹⁷⁹ It helps to remember this 3-step aphorism: *the man takes a drink, the drink takes a drink, the drink takes the man*¹⁸⁰—we must know when to stop, and to stop early, or better, not to drink at all. This is an Irish saying: the wise Irish Buddhist may have the last word on this: “It’s the first drop that destroys us”—so don’t take the last (with apologies).

¹⁷⁴ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Replicator_\(Star_Trek\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Replicator_(Star_Trek)).

¹⁷⁵ See, eg: Nestle 23 June 2014: <http://www.theverge.com/2014/6/23/5835326/nestle-wants-to-make-a-real-star-trek-food-replicator>; Mail Online, 5 May 2015: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-3069073/The-star-trek-replicator-recreate-meal-30-seconds-App-controlled-cooker-mixes-pods-ingredients.html> & Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ULTVgwcq3m4>; NASA 23 Dec 2015: <http://www.universetoday.com/102328/nasa-looks-at-3-d-food-printer-for-star-trek-like-replicator/>.

¹⁷⁶ For further discussion on meat-eating and the meatless diet, see SD 4.24 (3).

¹⁷⁷ **Sigal’ovāda S** (D 31,7+8) n, SD 4.1.

¹⁷⁸ You may want to continue your reading on “trading in intoxicants” in SD 10.16 (5.2.2.8-5.2.2.9).

¹⁷⁹ On giving priority to the Dharma, see **Ādhipateyya S** (A 3.40), SD 27.3.

¹⁸⁰ Chicago (IL) *Daily Tribune*, 25 May 1886:4 attr it to the Japanese. In Japanese, this goes: *Ippai wa hito sake o nomi, nihai wa sake sake o nomi, sambai wa sake hito o nomu*.

5.2.4.5 The Sarakāṇi Suttas 1 and 2 (S 55.24+25) record the same story: how the drunkard Sarakāṇi is able to die a streamwinner. The first reason the Buddha gives (in S 55.24) is that Sarakāṇi “has kept to the training (in moral virtue, concentration, and wisdom) at the time of his death,” and (in S 55.25) that he “fulfilled the training at the time of his death.”¹⁸¹

Both these remarks means that Sarakāṇi has kept to the “right” (*sammā*) frame of mind at the point of dying. We should be able to understand the details of Sarakāṇi’s attaining of streamwinning from any of the 10 suttas of **the Okkanta Saṃyutta** (S 25). The first discourse, **the (Anicca) Cakkhu Sutta** (S 25.1), for example, says that if we constantly reflect on impermanence, we will surely attaining streamwinning in this life itself, if not surely at the moment of dying. The Sutta clarifies that such a practitioner “is incapable of dying without having attained the fruit of streamwinning.”¹⁸²

5.2.5 Trading in poison

5.2.5.1 The fifth and last wrong trade mentioned by **the Vaṇijja Sutta** (S 5.177) [5.2.0] is **trading in poison**. This is clearly wrong because the purpose of such poisons is to destroy life. We can take “poison” to mean any kind of toxic agent that destroys life or nature, or affect them negatively, such as some dangerous radioactive materials. Such poisonous substance can also affect our environment, killing animals, other life-forms and even nature itself. Somehow our biosphere will be affected so that our lives, too, will be badly affected. This urgency of avoiding such poison is then even greater.

5.2.5.2 “Poison” here refers to any kind of chemical, substance or organism that destroys life or has a toxic or harmful effect on living beings. The worst kinds of poisons are those designed specifically to kill humans on a massive scale, such as in biological warfare. Even for survivors, the effects of such poisons are devastating, often giving them chronic pains, loss of limbs or faculties, and other misfortunes.

Another negative effect of poisons, especially when used over long periods or over a large area, is that they can have devastating effects on nature and the environment. In fact, such areas become infertile, rendering them unusable for agriculture or as pastures, and become polluted so that they are uninhabitable, negatively affect the ecology, or pose a health hazard to the public.

Medicines too can have the effects of poisons if they are not properly tested and manufactured, or if they are improperly used. Clearly, any medicine that would have any undesirable or destructive effects on our health or body should not be used. Although morphine and similar pain-killers are often used to help those suffering from painful diseases when they are in pain or during their last moments, those who are familiar with meditation often would rather forego such palliatives so that their minds can be calm, clear and focused during such a crucial moments.¹⁸³

5.2.5.3 Then, there are addictive drinks, habit-forming drugs, and attention-sucking computer games that demand or capture our full attention so that we become less mindful of what are vital to our present life, and even creating dangers to others. Drink and drugs that stupefy us, lessen our awareness and diminish our responsibility are to be utterly avoided.

Such “poisons,” including addictive computer games dehumanize us, relegating us to the realms of pretas, beings that are unable to enjoy anything at all, who just keep on seeking apparent sources of sustenance or security, and clinging on to them. Even though we have a human body, it has become a mere shell we inhabit. When our body dies, so ends the remnants of our humanity, and our preta consciousness moves on to take on a preta-body, so that we became full-fledged pretas.

¹⁸¹ S 55.24,13.2 (SD 3.6); S 55.24,14 (SD 77.8).

¹⁸² S 25.1 + SD 16.7 (4).

¹⁸³ You may want to continue your reading on “trading in poison” in SD 10.16 (5.2.2.10).

5.2.5.4 Clearly, then, we should simply avoid trading in any kind of poison. Instead, we may work to promote, even trade in healthy food, health products and health-promoting activities (such as running gyms and centres for yoga or taiji). Although monastics are disallowed from engaging in any kind of trade, whether for profit or not, the laity, however, may engage in such wholesome trades, working within the spirit of right livelihood.

5.2.6 Yama's aspiration

5.2.6.1 Wrong livelihood being pain and suffering to others, deprive them of enjoying the basic values of life, and hinder their personal and spiritual developments. The karmic fruits of those indulging in such trades are clear enough: they will themselves relive the sufferings they have caused others. In Buddhist mythology, they will have to appear before king Yama in hell. There is an interesting lesson here.

5.2.6.2 An account about **king Yama**, the lord of the hells, is recorded in **the Yama Deva, dūta Sutta** (A 3.35). The Sutta recounts how Yama dutifully questions those who have to come before him, whether they have seen his 3 messengers, but they all answer that they have not. But when Yama again asks them if they have *not* seen an old man, a sick man or a dead man—in other words: decay, disease and death—Yama's 3 messengers, they all answer that they have.

Why, then, asks Yama, do they fail to do good of body, speech and mind? They all answer every time that they have been “negligent” (*pamāda*). Yama then admonishes them that they have done the bad that brings them before him through their own actions, not on account of any other, human or divine. Yama then falls silent,¹⁸⁴ and the hell wardens dragged the dead to be tortured with various violent sufferings.

5.2.6.3 In due course, the Sutta continues, Yama, realizing that humans, on account of doing bad, have been inflicted with various kinds of sufferings, aspire that he would himself attain the human state to renounce before a buddha, and learn the Dharma. Then, the narrator, the Buddha himself, hints that he is telling this story from his own personal experience,¹⁸⁵ not some teaching he received from another (that is, not from revelation).¹⁸⁶

5.2.6.4 This is a powerful experiential story, a story about how learning can also occur in the depths or crowdedness of the hells, that the lord of the hells himself, is able and willing to learn while on the job. Yama must have learned that he is stuck with his job, powerful as he may be, but he is still in the rut of hell. He aspires to get out of hell, become human and learn from the Buddha himself how to get out of it all. The point for us, then, is that if Yama himself realizes his job is not emotionally satisfying or spiritually rewarding, shouldn't we, too, be circumspect, especially after all the existential messages he has been sending us?

5.3 IS SOLDIERING WRONG LIVELIHOOD?

5.3.1 The Yodh'ājīva Sutta (S 42.3) is about the karmic fruit of wrong livelihood, especially in terms of soldiering. A closely related text is **the Ass'āroha Sutta** (S 42.5) about a professional horseman, that is, a mounted warrior who is probably also skilled in the use of weapons and archery. The term *ass'āroha*

¹⁸⁴ On Yama's silence, see **Silence and the Buddha**, SD 44.1 (1.2.1).

¹⁸⁵ Perhaps, we may read here the hint that the Buddha has served his karmic tenure/s as Yama, so that he is aware of all this as a fact.

¹⁸⁶ A 3.35 (SD 48.10). See SD 2.23 (3): Are the hells real places?

may also refer to the professions of a horse-rider not involved in fighting, or a groom or stable manager. In these latter cases, they are not regarded as wrong livelihood.

In both the Sutta contexts, however, the protagonists are mercenaries. Each of them, separately, asks the Buddha about his livelihood, but the Buddha is reluctant to answer at first, as it would not be spiritually helpful to him. However, the effect of the teaching here is not in the actual answering, but in the *delaying* of the answer, until the third round, which gently emphasizes on the negative *aspects* of the work (as in the *Tāla,puṭa Sutta*) [5.4], and the negative *nature* of the job itself (as in the *Yodh'ājīva Sutta* and the *Ass'āroha Sutta*).¹⁸⁷

5.3.2 Both the *Yodh'ājīva Sutta* and the *Ass'āroha Sutta* warn us against violent livelihood, and the worst kind being that of a mercenary, that is, one earning a living by killing other humans, especially on a massive scale. Even then, the Sutta is careful to show that a person is not his job description, but *what he actually does*. So, here, a *mercenary* “strives and exerts himself in battle” (*saṅgāme ussahati vāyama-ti*).¹⁸⁸ In doing so habitually, he is reborn in the “hell of fallen warriors,” presumably a Valhalla-like¹⁸⁹ hell, where they fight and suffer pains interminably, like Prometheus¹⁹⁰ bound to the rocks.

5.3.3 Both the Sutta warns that even to *consider* such a wrong conduct to be right livelihood is unwholesome, “for an individual with wrong view, there is one of two destinies, either hell or an animal birth.”¹⁹¹ This is understandable, as it is the thought that leads to the act, which becomes a habit.¹⁹²

5.4 IS ACTING WRONG LIVELIHOOD?

5.4.1 The *Tāla,puṭa Sutta* (S 42.2) recounts how *Tāla,puṭa* the dance manager questions the Buddha on the fate of dancers who entertain others. He has heard that such dancers, because they amuse the people, are reborn in the heaven of laughing devas. The Buddha’s answer is very clear:

In the past, manager, when beings are not free from lust, ⟨from hate,⟩ ⟨from delusion,⟩ who are bound by the bondage of lust, ⟨of hate,⟩ ⟨of delusion,⟩ a dancer on stage or in a show would entertain them with lustful ⟨hateful⟩ ⟨delusive⟩ themes arousing greater lust ⟨greater hate⟩ ⟨greater delusion⟩.

Thus, being intoxicated and heedless himself, he intoxicates others and makes them heedless, and having done so, after death, with the body’s breaking up, he arises in the laughing hell!¹⁹³...

¹⁸⁷ S 42.3/4:308 f (SD 23.3).

¹⁸⁸ S 42.3,3/4:308 & passim, SD 23.3.

¹⁸⁹ Valhalla (properly, “Val-hall,” from Old Norse *Valhöll*, “hall of the slain”). In Norse (Viking) mythology, the slain warriors will daily assist Odin in Ragnarök, the gods’ final conflict with the giants. Having armed themselves, they ride forth by the thousands to battle on the plains of Asgard. Those who die fighting will be brought back to life. At night, they return to Valhalla to feast on the boar *Sæhrímnir* and enjoy intoxicating drinks. Although this is regarded as a mythical heaven, the cyclic nature of its events suggests a samsaric existence.

¹⁹⁰ In Greek mythology, **Prometheus** (ancient Greek, Προμηθεύς, “forethought”), was a Titan, known for his cunning, who stole fire from Zeus and gave it to mortals. For this, Zeus punished him by chaining him to a rock, where a vulture daily comes and eats his liver, which regenerates in the night. See S 42.3 @ SD 23.3 Intro n.

¹⁹¹ See **Kukkura,vatika S** (M 57) for a similar passage, about a wrong view regarding humans *behaving* like animals, leading to like rebirth (M 57,1-6/1:387-389), SD 23.11.

¹⁹² On soldiering as a wrong livelihood, further, see SD 10.16 (5.2.5).

¹⁹³ “The laughing hell” (*pahāso nāma nirayo*). Comy: There is no separate hell with this name. This is actually a part of the *Avīci* hell where beings are tortured by replaying their parts as dancers dancing and singing, and “cooked” in the process. (SA 3:103)

For a person of wrong view (that such entertainers will be reborn amongst the laughing devas), there is only one of two destinies: either hell or the animal realm, I say.¹⁹⁴

(S 42.2,6-7/4:307), SD 20.8

5.4.2 The Commentaries, however, take pains to say that this is not a special hell for actors, but merely a part of Avīci where the foolish actors are tortured by having to replay their parts—like a Sisyphian task¹⁹⁵—acting, dancing and singing, and being “cooked” at the same time (SA 3:103). The point is that what we habitually do or think about are what we will *become*.¹⁹⁶

5.4.3 Like the Yodh’ājīva Sutta (S 42.3) [5.3], the Tāla,puṭa Sutta, too, warns that even to *consider* such wrong conduct to be right livelihood is unwholesome, “for an individual with wrong view, there is one of two destinies, either hell or an animal birth.”¹⁹⁷ This is understandable, as it is the thought that leads to the act, which becomes a habit.

5.4.4 It is important to note here that the guilty party consists of those whose motivation is rooted in greed, hate or delusion, the performers themselves, *and* those who subscribe to such an idea. Implicitly, it means that this excludes those laity (it should be stressed here, only the *laity*, not the monastics) who perform wholesome shows with a mind of charity, lovingkindness and wisdom. (Novices and monastics are bound by their rules that prohibit giving such performances, and even watching them.)¹⁹⁸

6 Buddhist economics

6.1 ECONOMICS AND RIGHT LIVELIHOOD

6.1.1 Economic theories. For our purposes, **economics** can be defined as “the social science that analyzes the production and consumption of goods and services, and the creation and distribution of wealth.” Historically, there are four major schools of economic thought, that is, Marxist, Keynesian, Monetarist and Austrian. A knowledge of these four schools is helpful in understanding the nature of modern economics.¹⁹⁹

Marxist economics, based on the writings of Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Friedrich Engels (1820-1895), essentially centres on economic determinism, wherein societies evolve through the stages of primitive communism, slave system, feudalism, capitalism, socialism and finally communism. In each of

¹⁹⁴ See **Kukkura,vatika S** (M 57) for a similar passage, about a wrong view regarding humans *behaving* like animals, leading to like rebirth (M 57,1-6), SD 23.11. On rebirth in hell or the animal world, see respectively, **S 42.2/-4:307** (SD 20.8); **S 42.3/4:309** (SD 23.3); **S 42.5/4:311** (SD 69.16). See also Kvu 506. Cf **Saṃsappaniya Pariyāya S** (A 10.205), SD 39.7. See SD 34.8 (3): “Hell or animal world.”

¹⁹⁵ In Greek mythology, **Sisyphus** (Σίσυφος) was a king, the craftiest of men (who killed guests and divulged secrets of the gods), punished by being chained in Tartarus (an underworld between heaven and earth). Through his wiles, he escaped a number of times, and refused to return to the underworld. When finally caught, he was made to slave in Tartarus by pushing a huge boulder up a hill, only to watch it roll down again, and to repeat the task for eternity. The French author, Albert Camus, in his essay, *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942), sees Sisyphus as personifying the absurdity of human life, but concludes, “one must imagine Sisyphus happy” as “The struggle itself towards the heights is enough to fill a man’s heart.” See **Yodh’ājīva S** (S 42.3), SD 23.3 (1).

¹⁹⁶ See an interesting story of **Isi,dāsī**, on the karmic fate of one obsessed with sex: **Why some marriages fail**, SD 3.8(l).

¹⁹⁷ See **Kukkura,vatika S** (M 57) qu at (5.4.1) n above.

¹⁹⁸ Further, see **Yodh’ājīva S** (S 42.3/4:308 f), SD 23.3 Intro; also SD 10.16 (5.2.5).

¹⁹⁹ This section is based on Cox 2007:1-2 (ch 1).

these stages (except communism), there is a *class struggle* which inevitably leads to the next stage. Thus, in feudalism, the class struggle is between landlord and serf leading to capitalism. Capitalism, in turn, leads to a conflict between the capitalist class and the worker class, which results in the overthrow of capitalism by the latter, ushering in socialism. This, concludes Marxist theory, leads to the ultimate fate of humanity —communism.

Keynesian economics is named after John Maynard Keynes (1883-1946), who in his difficult work, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest, and Money* (1936), proposes a “macro” economic view of economic variables—total supply, total demand—working directly upon one another without the necessity of the intervention of any individual. Keynesians call for governments to manage *total demand*: too little leads to unemployment; too much leads to inflation. Only one problem occurs each time, never both together. The free market generates either too much or too little demand. Hence, there is the need to manage demand in accordance with Keynesian principles.

Monetarist economics, best represented by Milton Friedman (1912-2006) and his followers who retained the Keynesian “macro” approach, but emphasized not so much on spending as on *the total supply of money*, hence their name. In dealing with inflation, unemployment, and the fluctuations of the business cycle, Monetarists tend to consider *the individual* as the basis of their economic reasoning in areas such as regulation, function of prices, advertising, international trade, etc.

The Austrian School was started by Carl Menger (1840-1921) and ultimately fully developed by Ludwig von Mises, both of them Austrian. This school consciously emphasized on the acting individual as the ultimate basis for making sense of all economic issues. Besides, there is also a subjectivist view of value and an orientation that all action is inherently future-oriented.

6.1.2 How good is Buddhist economics?

6.1.2.0 RIGHT LIVELIHOOD’S RANGE. Like economics in general, **Buddhist economics**, too, covers a huge area of ideas and practices regarding work, wealth, living and the environment. A number of good books and writings on Buddhist economics are available and should be studied.²⁰⁰ We shall here only focus on the key ideas of Buddhist economic ethics. The RL fundamentals are clearly stated in a well known Vinaya treatise (originally in Thai), *The Five Precepts and the Five Ennoblers*, where they are defined as “the 3 kinds of rightness,” in terms of *actions*, of *persons*, and of *objects*.

“Rightness of actions” refers to the RL worker’s *general conduct*. They should fulfill their duties diligently and conscientiously, not idling away time, or claiming to have worked longer hours than they did, or pocketing the company’s goods. RL workers, in short, should observe the five precepts.

“Rightness of persons” refers to *the interaction and fellowship* of RL workers. They should show due respect and consideration to employers, employees, colleagues, and customers. An employer, for example, should assign his workers chores according to their ability, pay them adequately, promote them when they deserve a promotion, and give them vacations and bonuses on proper occasions. Co-workers should cooperate rather than compete with one another, while merchants should be honest and equitable in their dealings with customers.

“Rightness of objects” means that in RL, *the products* to be sold should be described truthfully. There should be no deceptive advertising, misrepresentations of quality or quantity, or dishonest strategies. (Vajirañanavarorasa 1975:45-47)

²⁰⁰ For an overview on Buddhist economic ethics, see Harvey 2000:187-238 (ch 5). See also E F Schumacher 1966, 1973, 1999 & Payutto 1994.

RL, in other words, has to do with moral conduct or ethics. According to Harvey, **Buddhist ethics** covers “a wide range of issues: types of work or business practices, the approach to work in general and entrepreneurship in particular, the use to which income is put, attitudes to wealth, the distribution of wealth, critiques of politico-economic systems such as capitalism and Communism, and the offering of alternatives to these in both theory and practice.” (2000:187)

6.1.2.1 STEWARDSHIP. Firstly, Buddhist economics is Buddhist; it is *Dharma-based*. While worldly economics is generally about the creation and distribution of wealth as an end in itself (theoretically speaking) [6.1.1], Buddhist economics is about *using* such wealth as a means of both worldly happiness and spiritual liberation [6.2]. In short, it is about being a true steward (*oikonomos*) of the home and the world.

Furthermore, Buddhist economics is about respect for *self, others and the environment*, not harming them in any way. **Respect** here means accepting people, things, and nature *as they are*, and work from there for the greatest benefit of the greatest number. Respect for others and for nature means that we accept not only the fact that resources are *scarce*, but that they are also *impermanent*. We must respect others and nature because we are very likely to return, through rebirth, to be with those whom we love, or live with, or work with, and to return to the places that we now occupy.

6.1.2.2 GOODS AND SERVICES. Secondly, Buddhist economics has a *pragmatic* and *wholesome* approach to **goods and services**. Goods are not merely consumables, but they should be produced without harming any life, nor exploiting anyone in anyway.²⁰¹ In other words, all this must keep to the 5 precepts and their spirit. Such goods should ideally address our basic needs, that is, food, clothing, shelter (housing) and health.

In this connection, food should be *vegetarian or meatless*, especially when we, as RL workers, are working to feed others. Such food also need to be *healthy*, and yet inexpensive or affordable. A practical understanding of healthy eating and dietetics would be in keeping with such ideals. Freely giving and receiving food are perhaps the most common Buddhist social practice called “**commensality**,” meaning “eating together,” which promotes hospitality²⁰² and fellowship.²⁰³

Similarly, RL services should be given in the spirit of the precepts, and conduce to personal and mental development. Some of the more popular RL services or activities, besides meditation, can include yoga, taiji, cooking (including vegetarian restaurants), publishing (including book-shops and libraries), and digital technology. Such activities should be of a high quality, yet be affordable, and not be too commercialized or exploitative.

6.1.2.3 GROWTH. Thirdly, growth is a key factor in economics, where it often means “more and more” —more goods, more services, more customers, more profits, even on a global scale. On the other hand, Buddhist economics as lived through right livelihood is about “less and less.” As we benefit from RL, both as producers and as consumers, we learn to let go of rush and clutter in our lives so that we feel more spacious and energized, imbued with the 4 divine abodes, the four aspects of professionalism [2.5].

Growth in RL, as such, means that there is greater personal *space*. The Buddhist heavens are often described as being spacious while the hells are stiflingly crowded.²⁰⁴ RL is not only about *living* space,

²⁰¹ See **Anaṇa S** (A 4.62/2:69 f), SD 2.2; **Ādiya S** (A 5.41/3:45), SD 2.1; **Dīgha,jānu S** (A 8.54/4:281-285), SD 5.10.

²⁰² On hospitality, see (**Upagantabba**) **Kula S** (A 9.17) @ SD 37.11 (7) & **Love**, SD 38.4 (5).

²⁰³ On fellowship, see **Spiritual friendship**, SD 34.1 (2.3).

²⁰⁴ In **Cakka,vatti Sīha,nāda S** (D 26), the Buddha declares, “Bhikshus, amongst humans whose life-span is 80,000 years, this Jambu,dīpa, will be crowded with people—it is Avīci, I say—just like a forest of reeds or a forest of rushes.” (D 26.23b/3:75) & SD 36.10 (5.3).

but more so, it is about *spacious* living. Such “outer” space is conducive to richly interactive and intellectual exchanges amongst individuals: it is a social as well as a philosophical space for personal growth.

On a deeper level, RL should be able to inspire us to cultivate “inner” space, a mental and spiritual openness. This is the practice of mindfulness and meditation. **Mindfulness** (*sati*) is a wholesome moment-to-moment awareness of the here and now, of what we are doing and of the people we are communicating with. It is a present-moment awareness of the *impermanence* of every state and situation in our lives.

Uplifted to a more focussed and sustained level, mindfulness becomes **concentration** (*samādhi*) or deep meditation that is capable to arousing dhyana, where we blissfully rise beyond our physical senses to become pure mental beings, directly tasting the calm and clear mind. This is where we are truly empowered to touch and tap our creative depths and spiritual heights to express beauty and truth [6.1.2.7], enriching our lives and those of others.

6.1.2.4 PROFIT. In worldly economics, **entrepreneurship** can be defined as “acting on perceived opportunities in the market in an attempt to gain profits” (Cox 2007:3). RL entrepreneurship, on the other hand, is *being moved by the Dharma to see opportunities or create an environment conducive to allowing others benefit from the Dharma*. Yet, the Dharma is sacred and should not be seen as merely a “product.” For, the Dharma is not something we have created or manufactured to be “profitably” marketed.

RL businesses and projects can be profitable without being exorbitant or exploitative. This means that there must be a spirit of *giving and sharing*, especially for the unwaged, the low-waged and those unable to pay the full fees for, say, a meditation retreat or a Buddhist book. Some kind of exchange could be possible, too, such as giving vouchers to those who volunteer or work at various centres, businesses, or projects. In short, RL, as businesses, should always be *people-centred*, that is, putting people before profit.

The Dharma is, in the end, a direct vision of true reality. It is a vision that has to be cultivated by each and every one of us: we need to learn to truly *see*. We can at best instruct and inspire others of the beauty and truth of the Dharma, so that they are themselves moved to see and enjoy them. It is *insight* in the sense of looking *within* our minds to see and shape our true selves, as it were. This inner vision empowers us with outward-looking *compassion* to reach out to others, informing them that they, too, need only to open their mind’s eye to be truly happy.

RL is the entrepreneurship of the spirit. The goods and services we provide are merely a prelude to personal development. Just as the dawn is the harbinger of sunrise, even so RL projects are the precursor of the liberating Dharma. While RL businesses and activities need to make a profit to be sustainable, the real RL purpose must always be borne in mind: it is a precursor, an opening, a bridge, to the Dharma.

6.1.2.5 ADVERTISING. In order to succeed, a business must inform the public or its intended market about the goods and services it offers, why they are worth buying, and how they can be accessed. People are likely to buy a product or pay for a service if they are convinced of their wholesome and worthwhile advantages. Basically, there are 2 kinds of advertising: the informative and the persuasive.

Informative advertising *informs* others as factually as possible of the RL goods and services available. It should also be done in a creative, interesting and inspiring way so as to appeal to the head as well as the heart of the public. Such advertisements, clearly, should also be *truthful, harmonious, pleasant, and useful*.

Persuasive advertising usually simply announces the availability of RL goods and services. If an RL business is dealing in Buddha images and pictures, for example, it could simply put up posters, brochures or pictures of them (preferably in full colour) and we can decide for ourselves which ones we like. Any information would perhaps simply state what posture the image is in, or its provenance.

Similarly, the more advanced meditation courses and retreats do not need as much bush as a beginner's meditation course does. Persuasive advertising, in other words, appeals more to the veterans.

Furthermore, RL advertising in itself could be both informative and persuasive. The message of a large colourful RL advertisement on a bus, for example, would mean that Buddhism is present in our midst. It is not only present, but is capable of helping us if we sign up for the RL event. Such media are useful for veterans to direct those interested to where they can have a systematic and profitable experience of Buddhism.

6.1.2.6 MONEY. In our own times, any RL project would surely *needs* money [6.2] to start off, needs money to *support* itself and to grow, and to channel as profits to various Dharma-based projects, such as supporting full-time Dharma teachers, running websites, and printing useful free books. Yet, right from the start, we need to be clear that no monastic should be involved with money or money-based activity, even as RL. This is simply and clearly against the Vinaya.²⁰⁵

Historically, the earliest trade evolved from bartering, *trading* goods directly for goods. The difficulty here is that there must a practicable coincidence of supply and demand. If I have two copies of the same Saṃyutta translation and I want a copy of an Aṅguttara translation, you must have such a copy with which you are willing to exchange (you must also have a need for the Saṃyutta translation). Exchanges do work if we allow discounts and trade-offs, without being fussy about the condition or exact costs of what is being exchanged. In short, barter is never precise.

The use of **money** as *a medium of exchange* has many advantages, as it facilitates a wide range of trade and complex business arrangements. Money allows comparisons of values: a meditation cushion can be bought for say \$25.00, while a good book for \$50.00. A common measure of value allows an assessment of profit and loss, without having to list a period's bulky exchanges of barter. Lastly, money serves as *a store of value*. This allows value comparisons to be made over time, lengthening the time window for productive work.

In RL situations, money would generally work in the same way for material goods (such as paying for meals in an RL restaurant) and mundane services (such as a house-cleaning job). However, it is difficult, if not outrageous, to fix a price for, say, attendance at a Dharma class. Understandably, in such situations, the audience could be advised to make non-obligatory donations. Indeed, this open system would inspire some to donate more, so that ultimately it attracts more funds and even sponsors than if such events were commercialized.

However, there might be some difficulties where the clients are not Buddhists, and hence would not be supportive of our work, or where the RL teacher or organizer badly needs financial support. In such cases, a range of fair fees could be chargeable, with the proviso that discounts would be given to anyone who cannot afford the full fees. [6.2.3.2]

6.1.2.7 BEAUTY AND TRUTH. Right livelihood has twin features and twin goals—those of beauty and truth. **Beauty** (*subha* or *vaṇṇa*) as an RL goal refers to two levels of health, that is, physical and mental. An RL project or activity should promote us *physically*, that is, help us cultivate in terms of body and speech. RL also provides avenues for *inner* beauty, that is, the cultivating of a beautiful mind of calm and clarity. The more mature RL veterans should serve as exemplars of physical as well as mental health for other RL workers.

The Cakka,vatti Sīha,nāda Sutta (D 26) says that the true "beauty" (*vaṇṇa*) for a monastic is his moral virtue.²⁰⁶ Such a truth also applies to practising lay Buddhists, especially if we are involved in RL.

²⁰⁵ See **Money and monastics**, SD 4.19-23.

²⁰⁶ D 26.28a(2)/3:77 f @ SD 36.10.

This is *physical beauty*, the beauty of body and speech, which is the basis for a higher beauty, that of the mind. *Mental beauty* refers to meditation and mindfulness, and broadly to wisdom, too.

Physical beauty can also be expressed as *speech*, such as Dharma talks, Dharma discussions, counselling, or poetry, and as *action*, by way of an inspiring puja, or the performing arts, or the creative arts (such as painting and music). Such depictions of beauty celebrate the Dharma, and represent the Buddha's teachings in visual or palpable forms as focusses for meditation and reflection, whose purpose is to inspire others to turn to the Dharma and live it.

Underlying all such expressions of beauty is **truth** (*sacca*). A thing of beauty is a window through which we can catch a glimpse of truth and tasting it, even for a moment, so that it can in turn inspire us to create beauty in our own actions, speech, and writing, and in plastic or other forms.

Buddhist aesthetics is based on these twin pillars of truth and beauty, and their natural relationship and integrity. A thing is beautiful because it reflects the truth: the liberating truth is always beautiful. RL, at its best, goes hand in hand with aesthetics. This is all we can ever really know, and need to know for the sake of spiritual liberation.²⁰⁷

6.2 RIGHT LIVELIHOOD AND WEALTH

6.2.1 Definitions of “wealth.”

In our times, for most people, “wealth” means almost exclusively “material prosperity.” However, this usage of the word has evolved from its oldest meaning, that is, “a state of wellbeing.” Understandably, if an RL project is successful, it is very likely to generate much income and wealth for us, but more importantly, it would also bless us with true wellbeing. At this point, it is useful to have some understanding of the early Buddhist view of wealth and what our own attitude towards wealth should be in terms of RL.

The Buddhist attitude towards wealth is crystallized in these words of the wheel-turning king, as recorded in **the Cakka,vatti Sīha,nāda Sutta** (D 26), which we shall elaborate below. The king says:

O man, with this wealth, live, support your parents, support your children and women, set up businesses, keep up alms-giving [dakshina] to recluses and brahmins for the sake of rising upwards to heaven, resulting in happiness, opening up heaven. (D 26,10.4/3:66), SD 36.10

Sadly, however, despite the king's generosity, there is no social growth, but it actually leads to the rise of crimes and social degeneration.

The lesson here is very clear. The wealth of kings, material wealth, is only what we can *have*. We can never have enough. It does not change us for the better. Only when we understand the true nature of wealth—that it is *instrumental* and *impermanent*—that we begin to understand that wealth is like *fire*, a poor master, but a good servant. The various discourses that teach about wealth and wellbeing, as a rule, explicitly or implicitly, remind us of the difference between the wealth that we *have* and wealth that we *are*. While the former is material, the latter is spiritual.

The Dīgha,jānu Sutta (A 8.54) list of 4 kinds of worldly happiness (*diṭṭha,dhammika sukha*), as such, can be harmoniously linked with the 4 joys of a layman (*gihi,sukha*) of **the Anaṇa Sutta** (A 4.62), thus:

<u>Dīgha,jāni Sutta (A 8.54)</u>	<u>Anana Sutta (A 4.62)</u>
(1) The accomplishment of diligence	the joy of ownership
(2) The accomplishment of watchfulness	the joy of enjoyment

²⁰⁷ For further discussion on Buddhist economics, see SD 10.16 (5.7).

- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| (3) Spiritual friendship | the joy of blamelessness |
| (4) Balanced livelihood | the joy of debtlessness |
- (A 8.54,3-7/4:282 f), SD 5.10, & (A 4.62/2:69), SD 2.2²⁰⁸

In this same spirit, the Buddha declares in **the Cakka,vatti Sīha,nāda Sutta** (D 26) that, for Buddhist renunciants (and those practising RL), the “wealth for a monk” (*bhikkhu bhoga*) is the 4 divine abodes — that is, lovingkindness, compassion, gladness and equanimity²⁰⁹—vital qualities which are also known as the social emotions and the qualities of a professional, amongst other things. [2.5]

On a spiritual level, the highest treasures are those that bring about awakening and characterize it, that is, the 7 treasures (*satta dhana*), that is, faith, moral virtue, moral shame, moral fear, learning, charity and wisdom [6.2.4]. These are wealth that can never be lost and benefit everyone who approaches their owners, the true saints.

6.2.2 Uses of wealth

6.2.2.0 THE ĀDIYA SUTTA. While worldly economics is generally about the creation and distribution of *wealth*, that is, wealth as an end in itself (theoretically speaking); Buddhist economics is about *using* such wealth as a means of both worldly and spiritual happiness. **The Ādiya Sutta** (A 5.41) gives a classic definition of the Buddhist uses of wealth:

Houselord, there are **these 5 uses of wealth**. What are the five?²¹⁰

- (1) Here, houselord, a noble disciple, with wealth
gotten by work and zeal,
gathered by the strength of arm,
earned by the sweat of the brow,
justly obtained in a lawful way,

makes himself happy and zestful,²¹¹ and keeps up that rightful happiness,
he makes his parents happy and zestful, and keeps them rightfully happy,
he makes his children and wife, his servants,²¹² labourers and workers happy and zestful, and
keeps them rightfully happy.

(2) ...²¹³ he makes friends and companions happy and zestful, and keeps them rightfully happy.

(3) ...he makes himself secure against all misfortunes whatsoever, such as may happen by way of fire, water, the king, robbers and bad heirs.²¹⁴ He makes himself secure, keeping his goods in safety.

²⁰⁸ For further details, see **Sigāl’ovāda S** (D 31), SD 4.1 (4).

²⁰⁹ D 26,28.1(4)/3:77 f (SD 36.10).

²¹⁰ Compare this section onwards with **Patta,kamma S** (A 4.61): see Intro. The first 3 prose sections [§(2)1-3] here appear twice in **Aputtaka S 1** (S 3.19) in connection with how a false person (*asappurisa*) fails to enjoy his wealth and how a true person (*sappurisa*) enjoys his wealth. See **Bhoga S** (A 5.227), where 5 disadvantages or dangers from wealth and the 5 advantages are both listed. See also SD 2.1 Intro 1.

²¹¹ “Makes...zestful,” *pīṇeti*, “gladdens, pleases, satisfies, cheers; invigorates, makes strong” (D 1:51, 3:130 f; S 1:90, 4:331), ie, it fills us with joyful interest, a great capacity for work. It occurs in the definition of *pīti* (zest) (Vism 143 = DhsA 115).

²¹² “Servants,” *dāsā*, lit “slaves”.

²¹³ This hiatus (*peyyāla*) and the foll 4 should be filled in with the preceding sentences from the stock: “Here, a householder, a noble disciple...justly obtained in a lawful way.”

²¹⁴ This is stock. **Mahā Dukkha-k,khandha S** (M 13) lists these 5 as the causes of suffering for one who has to protect his wealth (M 13,10). **The (Satta,dhana) Ugga S** (A 7.7) declares how worldly wealth is subject to these 5

- (4) the noble disciple makes the fivefold offering (*pañca, balī*),²¹⁵ namely:
- (a) offering to relatives,
 - (b) offering to guests,
 - (c) offering to the departed,
 - (d) offering to the king [the government], and
 - (e) offering to devas.
- (5) he makes offerings²¹⁶ to all those recluses and brahmins who abstain from intoxication and heedlessness, who bear all things with patience and restraint,²¹⁷ each taming himself, each calming himself, each cooling himself²¹⁸
- to such he offers a gift that has the highest fruit, a heavenly gift, resulting in happiness, leading to heaven. (A 5.41/3:45 f), SD 2.1

6.2.2.1 THE ECONOMIC FAMILY. On closer examination of these traditional uses of wealth, they reflect an almost *utilitarian* attitude. Wealth should *be honestly earned* for the sake of personal happiness. Such a happiness includes the support of the whole family or extended family. It is important to note that the Buddha advocates a broad conception of an “**economic family**” which includes not only the biological family, but also those who work for the family or benefit from it.

On a larger scale, the economic family includes a network of supporters and stewards of the Dharma worker or a Buddhist community. When we are supported by such people in a Dharma-inspired way, we forge a spiritual bond that grows over time, with our own deepening practice and the growing wisdom of our supporters. This is one of the key activities—the economic factor—that makes lay Dharma work possible and effective.

6.2.2.2 TRUE-HEARTED FRIENDSHIP. Secondly, there is the extended “social family” or community of **friends and contacts** who also benefit from our wisdom and wealth, especially through Dharma work. Through our generosity, we bind friendships and inspire respect and love from others. By sharing what we *have*, we convert it into what we *are*, that is, morally virtuous individuals. When we treat others with generosity, we are also inspiring others to be generous and kind to us in turn. This is a morally interactive community of positive individuals. This is such a vitally important concept that we should address it again separately. [6.2.3]

6.2.2.3 SAFEGUARDING OUR WEALTH. Thirdly, we need to **safeguard our wealth** against natural disasters (such as fires and flood)—this would today translate as having insurance policies. We need to keep to the laws of our country, and deal with others in a morally acceptable way so that we do not suffer

dangers, but not the 7 treasures (*satta dhana*), namely, faith (*saddhā*), moral virtue (*sīla*), moral shame (*hiri*), moral fear (*ottappa*), learning (*suta*), charity (*cāga*) and wisdom (*paññā*) (D 3:163; M 3:99; A 7.5,6/4:7; cf A 1:210 f).

²¹⁵ “The fivefold offerings” (*pañca, balī*), as in **Patta Kamma S** (A 4.61.12/2:68), SD 37.12. The *balī* or *bhūta, yajña* is one of the 5 daily sacrifices (*yajña*) to be performed by a householder (Manu, *smṛti* 3.67, 91). It consists of a portion of the daily meal (rice, grain, ghee etc) to all creatures, and is usually performed by throwing the offering up into the air near the main door before consuming the meal. Such practices are not accepted in the Buddha’s teachings. The Buddha instead secularized them to become more meaningful social or religious acts. See Piyasilo 1990c: 17, 71.

²¹⁶ “Offerings,” *dakkhiṇā*, Skt *dakṣiṇā*: both meaning “south = right hand direction, the right,” ie, the right hand, the giving hand, and by extension, “gift,” especially fees donated to a teacher. On this passage, cf D 3:61; A 4:45.

²¹⁷ “Patience and kind restraint” (*khanti, soracca*) beautify us or are gracing virtues (V 1:349; A 2.164/1:94).

²¹⁸ This important passage throws clear light on who are worthy of offerings, as against the schedules of “worthy recipients” given on **Dakkhiṇa, vibhaṅga S** (M 142,5-8/3:255-257).

financial losses through fines, litigation and so on. Our financial wealth must be protected against theft by keeping it in a good bank, or investing it in safe ways.

The Buddha's teachings on how the laity, especially Dharma workers, should manage their wealth is given in a number of discourses, such as **the Sigāl'ovāda Sutta** (D 31),²¹⁹ **the Dīgha,jānu Sutta** (A 8.54)²²⁰ and **the Anaṇa Sutta** (A 4.62).²²¹ The relevant sections in these Suttas and other related suttas should be carefully studied and practised in manner appropriate to our own time and circumstance.

6.2.2.4 THE 5 DUTIES. Fourthly, there are **5 kinds of traditional social and religious duties** we need to execute in terms of wealth-sharing or offerings (*bali*), given in **the Ādiya Sutta** (A 5.41),²²² that is,

(1) Offering to relatives (*ñāti bali*), especially the needy, as a support for them. Through our generosity, we not only help our relatives prosper and strengthen family ties, but also inspire them to think of the Dharma through our generous and exemplary conduct.

(2) We must be hospitable to guests (*athiti bali*), showering them with generosity through offerings of food, refreshments and so on. Such offerings include public events such as house-warming, birthday gatherings, weddings, and anniversaries, which are important occasions for strengthening our network of relatives, friends and contacts.²²³

(3) We have a duty in properly remembering and honouring ancestors and the departed (*pubba,peta bali*), which is best done by setting aside some funds for religious offerings or social projects in memory of the departed, especially those who contributed to the wellbeing of our families and the public, and dedicating merits to them.

(4) Our taxes should be duly paid for the greater public benefit. One way to alleviate our tax burden is to support public projects such as the building of welfare homes, libraries and hospitals, or to set up trust funds for the benefits of needy students, or to promote academic and scientific research that does not go against the Dharma.

(5) The Buddha, in his great wisdom, allows the "offering to devas" (*deva,balī*) as a skillful means to embrace even non-Buddhists, especially those who believe in devas, angels or the God-idea. Furthermore, if they are inclined to, they may continue to give offerings to their erstwhile teachers, especially those morally virtuous and wise, as a gesture of gratitude.²²⁴

It is imperative to understand that this fifth duty of "offering" (*bālī*) is not the Buddha's approving of deva-worship, but that it is here a "bridge," a skillful means, for theistic believers who are attracted to the Dharma, as an devotional means or inspiring meditation to deepen their mind training. The Buddha's latitude here should be understood in the light of his unequivocal statements on prayer²²⁵ or religious ritual.²²⁶ The Buddha's teaching clearly declares that prayer and ritual do *not* bring us spiritual release.²²⁷

²¹⁹ **Sigāl'ovāda S** (D 31), see esp §§7-14 (how wealth is lost), §26 (the Dharmafarer's wealth); + SD 4.1 (4).

²²⁰ A 8.54 @ SD 5.10.

²²¹ A 4.62 @ SD 2.2.

²²² **Ādiya S** (A 5.41), SD 2.2; see also SD 4.1 (4.12-4.1.3).

²²³ On hospitality, see (**Upagantabba**) **Kula S** (A 9.17) @ SD 37.11 (7) & **Love**, SD 38.4 (5).

²²⁴ See **Devatā'nussati**, SD 15.13.

²²⁵ On the Buddha's statement on prayer, see **Ādiya S** (A 5.41/3:45 f) & SD 2.1 (3+4).

²²⁶ On rituals, see **Sīla-b,bata S** (A 3.78/1:225), SD 79.10; **Kukkura,vatika S** (M 57) @ SD 23.11 (1.1); see also

Superstition, SD 79.1..

²²⁷ "Offering to devas," *deva,balī*: see SD 2.1 (2+3).

6.2.2.5 TOLERANCE OF OTHER RELIGIONS. In this connection, a brief look at the Buddha's **religious tolerance and gratitude** is in order. The story of the conversion of the houselord Upāli, an erstwhile chief supporter of the Jains, is instructive here. **The Upāli Sutta** (M 56) reports how Upāli, becomes a disciple of the Buddha by going to the three refuges *thrice*. The first time is after he is convinced by the Buddha's answer to his question. The second time is when the Buddha reminds him to carefully investigate his decision to convert. And thirdly, which is related to the fifth offering here [6.2.2.4], the Buddha admonishes Upāli, thus:

“Houselord, long indeed has your family been a wellspring to the nirgranthas [the Jains], and please consider that almsfood should still be given to them when they come.”²²⁸

Upāli, however, as a streamwinner, shows complete faith in the 3 jewels: “he does not seek the gift-worthy outside the teaching but gives his priority here (in the teaching)” (A 5.175).²²⁹ In the case of Upāli, he instructs his door-keeper that thenceforth his doors are closed to the Jains, but open to the Buddhist monastics.²³⁰ However, when they later come to his door, he instructs his servants to serve them with alms, but does not himself attend to them.²³¹ When the Jain teacher reviles him for being a renegade, he firmly responds with his lion-roar.²³²

6.2.2.6 CONTRIBUTION TO DHARMA WORK. Fifthly, we should set aside about a fifth (5%) of our income for the support of **Dharma work**, which includes making suitable offerings to worthy renunciants, virtuous teachers and Dharma workers. Cash should never be offered to monastics and renunciants, as this is clearly against the Vinaya,²³³ but may be offered to lay teachers and workers, especially where they need such offerings (as in the case of full-time lay workers and ministers).²³⁴

In Buddhist terms, wealth is *a dynamic life-centred happiness directed to the attaining of spiritual awakening*. Wealth, in other words, is not good in itself—it is all impermanent—but it has an instrumental value in providing and sustaining the best material and social conditions for spiritual growth and liberation. Wealth that we *have* is not really ours; the wealth that we *are*—our spiritual qualities—are the true wealth, that is, all the material wealth can *never* buy.

6.2.3 The social family

6.2.3.1 While the economic family [6.2.2.2] is a centripetal network benefitting us as Dharma workers or spiritual community, the *social family* is a centrifugal, growing network of those who *can* benefit from the Dharma through our true-hearted friendship (**suhadā, mittatā*) [6.2.2.2.]. According to **the Sigāl'ovāda Sutta** (D 31), a true-hearted friend is one who is a helper, constant in joy and sorrow, a good

²²⁸ M 56,17/1:380 @ SD 27.1 (see also the rest of the Sutta). As in the case of the general Sīha's conversion (V 1:236 f = A 4:185 f). Comy: *opāna* (“wellspring”) = *udapāna*, “a well” (MA 3:89); cf V 1:236; M 1:379; Miln 411; DA 1:298 & *Vinaya Texts* 2:115 n.

²²⁹ A 5.175/3:206 @ SD 45.12. For a similar list, see **Parihāna S** (A 7.27/4:25), also called **Hani S**, and (**Upāsaka**) **Parābhava S** (A 5.176/4:26). See SD 12.14 Intro (2). See also **Kiñci Sañkhāra S** (A 6.93), SD 12.14.

²³⁰ M 56.17/1:379 @ SD 27.1.

²³¹ M 56.22-23/1:382 f @ SD 27.1.

²³² M 56.24-31/1:383-387 @ SD 27.1.

²³³ Offerings to monastics and renunciants are best given in “allowables” (such as robes, almsfood and health care). Money offerings may be made to the society or group that supports them, or to a “keeper” (*kappiya*) who attends to the monastic. See **Money and monastics**, SD 4.19 (7).

²³⁴ On how this amount of offering is derived, see **Sigāl'ovāda S** (D 31) @ SD 4.1 (4).

counsellor, and who is caring.²³⁵ Another word for this is “compassion outreach,” where we nurture others so that they grow in the Dharma, and in time would be able to become wholesome individuals, even Dharma workers themselves. Then, we rejoice with gladness in this.²³⁶

A very vital application of the Buddhist notion of wealth and fellowship is in the concept of **the social family**. When properly cultivated, it is especially effective for strengthening and nurturing local, even global, Buddhists as a community. Its first characteristic is an unconditional—and classless²³⁷—acceptance of the Buddhists we know and meet, especially those from the same temple, community or locality.

6.2.3.2 Secondly, we should be aware of socioeconomic circumstances of such Buddhists, and help them if they need help, especially in the raising and education of their children and wards. They should also be given emotional and material support when the need arises.

6.2.3.3 Thirdly, the social family should joyfully and meaningfully celebrate itself whenever the occasion warrants it, that is, besides the universal Buddhist festivals such as Vesak Day and rites of passage (such as the last rites). Such a celebration can be something as simple as a birthday gathering or children’s graduation.

6.2.3.4 Fourthly, members of the social family should always be on the lookout for one another, in times good and bad. Even when a social family member has fallen in immoral ways (perhaps especially so), he should be given spiritual support (such as counselling or simply friendship). There should be neither status-consciousness nor blackballing in the social family, but only helping and healing with great compassion and wisdom.

6.2.3.5 Above all, the social family celebrates the presence of the Dharma. Just as the Buddha accepts all who come to him, and heals them whenever need, we, too, should show that presence so that no one falls by the way. Every social family member should be given the moral and emotional support to grow as social beings and mature as spiritual beings in the Dharma.

6.2.4 Happiness here and hereafter

6.2.4.1 DĪGHA, JĀNU SUTTA. In Buddhist living, wealth is of two kinds or levels: the material for the here and now, and the spiritual wealth for the hereafter. We have spoken on material wealth at some length. Here, we will examine the wealth hereafter or spiritual welfare,²³⁸ which is defined in **the Dīgha, jānu Sutta** (A 8.54), also called the Vyaggha, pajja Sutta, in the following terms:

These 4 things, Vyagghapajja, lead to the welfare and happiness of a son of family in the world to come. What are the four?

²³⁵ For details, see **Sigāl’ovāda S** (D 31,21-25), SD 4.1.

²³⁶ See SD 2.2 (1.2).

²³⁷ On the classless (*veṇṇiya*) approach, see **Pabbajita Abhiṅha S** (A 10.48,2), SD 48.9.

²³⁸ “Spiritual welfare,” that is, qualities conducive to life hereafter,” *samparāyik’attha samvattanika, dhamma*. This is actually a “secret teaching” leading to streamwinning. See **Veḷu, dvāreyya S** (S 55.7.13-17/5:355 f) where only wise faith (in the three jewels) and moral virtues are mentioned, and moral virtues for lay followers are given in full (S 55.7.6-12/5:353-355). The Buddha calls this teaching leading to streamwinning “the personal teaching” (*attūpanāyikarū dhamma, pariyāyārū*), ie a teaching for personal practice, and for the benefit of others. See S 55.7.5 n in SD 1.5, 2003a.

1. Accomplishment of faith,
2. Accomplishment of moral virtue,
3. Accomplishment of charity,
4. Accomplishment of wisdom.

1. What is **the accomplishment of faith** (*saddhā,sampadā*)?

Here, Vyagghapajja, the son of family has (wise) faith.²³⁹ He has faith in the Buddha's awakening thus: 'The Blessed One is an arhat, the fully self-awakened one, accomplished in wisdom and conduct, well-farer, knower of worlds, peerless guide of tamable persons, teacher of gods and humans, awakened, blessed.'

This, Vyagghapajja, is called the accomplishment of faith.

2. What is **the accomplishment of moral virtue** (*sīla,sampadā*)?

Here, Vyagghapajja, the son of family abstains from harming life, from taking the not-given, from sexual misconduct, from false speech, from strong drinks, distilled drinks, fermented drinks and that which causes heedlessness.

This, Vyagghapajja, is called the accomplishment of moral virtue.

3. What is **the accomplishment of charity** (*cāga,sampadā*)?

Here, Vyagghapajja, the son of family dwells in the house with a heart free from the stain of miserliness, devoted to charity, open-handed, delighting in giving, devoted to alms-giving, delighting to have a share in giving.²⁴⁰

This, Vyagghapajja, is called the accomplishment of charity.

4. What is **the accomplishment of wisdom** (*paññā,sampadā*)?

Here, Vyagghapajja, the son of family is wise, possesses wisdom directed to [noting] the rising and falling away [of phenomena] that is noble and penetrative, leading to the complete destruction of suffering.

This, Vyagghapajja, is called the accomplishment of wisdom.

These are the 4 things that lead to the welfare and happiness of a son of family in the world to come. (A 8.54/4:284 f), SD 5.10

This "spiritual welfare" that **the Dīgha,jānu Sutta** speaks of is "the qualities conducive to life hereafter" (*samparāyik'attha samvattanika,dhamma*). It is actually a "secret teaching" leading to streamwinning: "secret" because it is such a simple teaching but often glossed over and missed by many who do not look carefully enough into the suttas.²⁴¹ The Buddha also calls this teaching, that leads to streamwinning, "the personal teaching" (*attūpanāyikaṃ dhamma,pariyāyaṃ*), that is, a teaching for personal practice, and for the benefit of others.²⁴² Goodness is not a personal thing: it always benefits others, too.

²³⁹ *Saddhā*, that is, *ākāravati saddhā*, faith founded on seeing; syn with *avecca,pasāda*, that is, faith through understanding. On the 2 kinds of faith, see [4.0.2] n on "faith: in the sutta quote; see also **Sampadā S 1** n, SD 100.1.

²⁴⁰ This passage is stock, found in eg **Dhana S** (A 7.6/4:6), **Nakula,māta S** (A 8.48/4:268 f); cf **Vata,pada S** (S 11.11/1:228). At **Dīgha,jānu S** (A 8.54.14/4:284 @ SD), this serves as the def for "the accomplishment in charity" (*cāga,sampadā*). Commented upon at Vism 7.101-106.

²⁴¹ Here, **Veḷu,dvāreyya Sutta** (S 55.7) lists only wise faith (in the three jewels) and moral virtue (S 55.7.13-17/-5:355 f), and moral virtues for lay followers are given in full (S 55.7,6-12/5:353-355), SD 1.5. See S 55.7.5 n @ SD 1.5.

²⁴² On streamwinning, see the first 10 suttas of S 25, and also **Entering the stream**, SD 3.3.

6.2.4.2 DUTIES OF THE RICH. The Anaṅga Sutta (A 4.62) comprehensively defines the Buddha’s attitude towards wealth as follows:

- (1) The joy of ownership, that is, the satisfaction derived from having earned a living for ourselves so that we are economically secure: this is the joy of *having*.
- (2) The joy of enjoyment, that is, the opportunity of directly benefitting from the wealth we have rightly earned: this is the joy of *being*.
- (3) The joy of debtlessness, that is, all our debts are settled, so that we are now really working for our own happiness, doing what we wish with our wealth, and we are financially independent. We can now rejoice in the joy of *giving*.
- (4) The joy of blamelessness, that is, we have worked and conducted ourselves in a manner that no one can justly find fault with us. Our actions are in some way beneficial to others, too. This is the joy of *doing*. (A 4.62/2:69-71), SD 2.2

Clearly here, in the teachings of early Buddhism, we see wealth not merely as something that we *have*, but as something that we *are*. Wealth, in other words, has a purpose, that is, to generate and sustain happiness in self and in others. We cannot be really happy, all alone, especially when there are those who are socially and economically deprived around us. We do not merely have houses, but a home that includes its environment. On a natural scale, such an environment is society, if not the world.

It is therefore helpful in contributing towards a wholesome community, a good society and a better world. This becomes easier in a right livelihood context, where we are not just *being* good (keeping to the precepts, meditating, and so on), but also *doing* good works. This is not just doing what we are told, as in a corporation or in politics, but enjoying our work, and wanting to share that bliss with others.

The philosophy behind the Industrial Revolution²⁴³ is profitable production, and humans are merely resources, producers and consumers. The philosophy underpinning *capitalism*²⁴⁴ is that we have the right to own and enjoy the fruits of our work, or we could work for money. In both cases, we have become measurable producers and consumers, controlled by “wealth” and “market forces.”

However, Buddhist economics—the effective use of wealth as if life matter—is not only about a happy *household* (*oikos*) but it must also support a wholesome society and healthy environment (ecology).²⁴⁵ If we *have* sufficient wealth, then we *are* in an advantageous position to *act* in a proactive manner to bring about wholesome support, growth and changes around, even beyond, us.

Hence, it behooves the rich to help the poor and needy with compassion and wisdom. Poverty and need are not choices that the people make,²⁴⁶ they fall upon many individuals, who otherwise could be

²⁴³ **The Industrial Revolution** (18th-19th cent) was a period of major changes in agriculture, manufacturing, mining, transportation, and technology, which had profound effects on our social, economic and cultural conditions to this day. As a historical turning-point, it affected almost every aspect of daily life in some way, esp average income and population, which saw unprecedented sustained growth. Its success was partly due to colonialism, whereby Britain (where the Revolution started), other European countries, and Japan conquered and colonized other countries to exploit their people, space, labour and resources. The Revolution’s negative effects continue even today in terms of impersonalizing us (eg by way of consumerism), promoting materialism, and a dominant Christian “heritage.” For overview & refs: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Industrial_Revolution.

²⁴⁴ **Capitalism** is an economic system that arose in western society after the demise of feudalism. Basically, its elements include private ownership of the means of production, creation of goods or services for profit, the accumulation of capital (wealth), competitive markets and wage labour. It is closely associated with the Industrial Revolution.

²⁴⁵ See **Sappurisa Dāna S** (A 5.148) @ SD 22.15 (3): Wealth and wellbeing.

²⁴⁶ Monastics, as renunciants, are by definition economically “poor” and insecure; for, their task is spiritual security and awakening in this life itself, and to be an inspiration us, the worldly, who in turn support them out of wise faith. See SD 38.2 (1.4.2).

more productive or creative in some way. When such surplus wealth is *given* systematically, effectively and compassionately, we generate greater happiness in society. This is one important way of increasing the happiness and quality of our community.

There is a range of wholesome giving for the benefit of others. The most basic is that of material giving, that of providing the 4 supports: food, clothing, shelter and health [4.4]. Without these basics, it is hard for anyone to go beyond the routine of even surviving a human life. Yet, such giving must encourage and empower them to realize their personal potentials and talents so that their lives are rich and enriching in their own ways.

The greatest gift, as stated in the suttas, is the gift of the Dharma, that is, the teaching and spreading of the Buddha Word for the sake of moral virtue, mental cultivation and liberating wisdom.²⁴⁷ With our wealth, we can initiate or support such **Dharma-moved initiatives**, as,

- social projects, especially related to personal health, social harmony and culture (eg building and running hospitals and cultural centres);
- individual-centred projects, especially mental health and personal creativity (eg building and running meditation centres and family-care centres); and
- wisdom-based projects, that is, the nurturing of Dharma understanding that is personally liberating and socially uplifting (eg building schools, colleges, universities and running online Buddhist courses).

6.2.5 The 7 treasures

6.2.5.1 Right livelihood, like any work-based occupation, generates **wealth**, and wealth is often a symbol of *status and power*, especially *worldly* status and power. Wealth can also arise through political conquests, or through the fruiting of good karma, as related in the accounts of ancient Indian kings.²⁴⁸ As Buddhist practitioners, especially RL workers, we need to constantly remind ourselves of the difference between these two kinds of wealth, that we can only *have* worldly wealth but that we must *be* spiritually wealthy [6.2.1].

6.2.5.2 In this connection, the suttas give a number of treasure imageries, known as the 7 jewels (*satta ratana*) and the 7 treasures (*satta dhana*). The oldest reference to the first, the 7 jewels is probably in **the Cakka,vatti Sutta** (S 46/42), whose commentary lists the wheel-turner's 7 jewels and then correlates them to the Buddha's 7 jewels (the awakening-factors) (SA 3:154 f), thus:

The wheel-turner's 7 jewels

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. the wheel jewel | <i>cakka ratana</i> |
| 2. the elephant jewel | <i>hatthi ratana</i> |
| 3. the horse jewel | <i>assa ratana</i> |
| 4. the gem jewel | <i>maṇi ratana</i> |
| 5. the woman jewel | <i>itthi ratana</i> |
| 6. the steward jewel | <i>gaha,pati ratana</i> |
| 7. the commander jewel | <i>pariṇāyaka ratana</i> |

The Buddha's 7 jewels (awakening-factors)²⁴⁹

- | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| mindfulness | <i>sati sambojjhaṅga ratana</i> |
| dharma-discernment | <i>dhmma,vicaya sambojjhaṅga ratana</i> |
| effort | <i>viriya sambojjhaṅga ratana</i> |
| zest | <i>pīti sambojjhaṅga ratana</i> |
| tranquillity | <i>passadhi sambojjhaṅga ratana</i> |
| concentration | <i>samādhi sambojjhaṅga ratana</i> |
| equanimity | <i>upekkhā sambojjhaṅga ratana</i> |
- S 46.42/5:99 @ SD 36.12(3.8)

²⁴⁷ (**Saṅgha**) **Bala S** (A 9.5.6/4:364 f), SD 2.21 & Dh 354a.

²⁴⁸ See **Cakka,vatti Sīha,nāda S** (D 26,4.2/3:59) & SD 36.10 (2.3.0).

²⁴⁹ On the 7 awakening-factors (*satta sambojjhaṅga*), see (**Bojjhaṅga**) **Sīla S** (S 46.3/5:67-70), SD 10.15. The list here is simplified. Fully, each item should be read, eg, as “the mindfulness awakening-factor jewel,” etc.

6.2.5.3 While the wheel-turner's 7 jewels fulfills all worldly desires, the 7 jewels that are the awakening-factors *freed* us of such desires so that we attain a higher or spiritual wealth, that is, awakening itself. The wheel-turner's 7 jewels, being worldly, are impermanent, but the treasures that are the 7 awakening-factors, being spiritual states, can never be lost. **The Therī,gāthā Commentary** notes that material wealth (gold and silver, etc) conduce neither to peace nor to awakening. They are not proper for recluses,²⁵⁰ but the noble treasures conduce to their (and our) liberation. (ThĀ 240)

6.2.5.4 Elsewhere, in **the Lakkhaṇa Sutta** (D 30) and **the Saṅgīti Sutta** (D 33), **the Ariya Dhana Suttas 1+2** (A 7.4-6), we have another set of jewels or treasures, known as the 7 noble treasures (*satta ariya,dhana*) or, more simply, the 7 treasures (*satta dhana*), which are, namely:²⁵¹

*Saddhā,dhanaṃ sīla,dhanaṃ
hirī ottappiyaṃ dhanaṃ
suta,dhanañ ca cāgo ca
paññā ve sattamaṃ dhanaṃ*

The faith treasure, the moral virtue treasure, the treasures that are moral shame and moral fear, the learning treasure, and charity, too indeed, with wisdom as the seventh treasure.

*Yassa ete dhanā atthi
itthiyā purisassa vā
adaliddo'ti taṃ āhu
amoghaṃ tassa jīvitam*

Whoever has these treasures, be one female or male, that one is said not to be poor, one's life is not in vain.

*Tasmā saddhañ ca sīlañ ca
pasādam dhamma,dassanaṃ
anuyuñjetha medhāvī
saram buddhāna sāsanaṃ'ti*

Therefore, to faith and to moral virtue, to bright faith²⁵² in seeing the Dharma, the wise be devoted, recalling the teaching of the Buddhas.

A 4.52/2:57* = 7.5/4:5* = 7.6/4:6* = Tha 509²⁵³

Whoever has these treasures, are declared by the buddhas and the pratyeka buddhas to be truly "wealthy," and that their lives are not in vain (A 4:5+6).²⁵⁴ The Majjhima Commentary explains that these 7 treasures are "the Teacher's great legacy" (*mahantaṃ kho paṇ'etaṃ satthu dāyajjāṃ*, MA 1:295). **The Visuddhi,magga** declares that the streamwinner of the path²⁵⁵ actually enjoys these 7 treasures (Vism 22.14/675).

²⁵⁰ V 2:294, 3:236-239; see also **Money and monastics**, SD 4.19-23.

²⁵¹ See Soma Thera, "Treasures of the Noble." Bodhi leaves B27. Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1965. <http://www.bps.lk/olib/bl/bl027-p.html>

²⁵² "Bright," *pasāda*, here meaning "joyful, inspired," close to "joyful interest" or zest (*pīti*). Meanings: (1) joy, satisfaction, happy or good mind, virtue, faith (M 1:64; S 1:202; A 1:98, 222, 2:84, 3:270, 4:346; SnA 155; PvA 5, 35); (2) clearness, brightness, purity (esp in ref to colours) of the eye (J 1:319; SnA 453; DhA 300, 307); (3) repose, composure, allayment, serenity (Nett 28, 50; Vism 107, 135; ThA 258) (PED). While the first 3 three of the 4 sights of prince Siddhattha arouse "religious urgency" (*samvega*) in him, the 4th sight, that of a pleasant-looking recluse, inspires "joyful faith" (*pasāda*), so that he is moved to renounce the world (J 1:59; cf AA 1:36; DhA 1:84 f). See **Deva.dūta S** (M 130) @ SD 2.23 (3.2) n.

²⁵³ Cf A 7.7/4:7, which has almost the same verse, except for the last 6 lines; cf also S 912 @ 11.14/1:232. For nn, see SD 37.6.

²⁵⁴ **Ariya Dhana S 1** (A 7.5/4:5), SD 37.6(2); **Ariya Dhana S 2** (A 7.6/4:6), SD 37.6.

²⁵⁵ "The streamwinner of the path" (*sotāpatti,magga*) is the full-fledged saint (the first of 4 kinds) and who is certain of attaining awakening, ie, within 7 lives. See **Entering the stream**, SD 3.3.

6.2.5.5 The Cakka,vatti Sīha,nāda Sutta (D 26) states that, for Buddhist renunciants and those practising RL, the “wealth for a monk” (*bhikkhu bhoga*) is the 4 divine abodes—that is, lovingkindness, compassion, gladness and equanimity.²⁵⁶ This is of great spiritual significance because the 4 divine abodes are also known as the “immeasurables” (*appamañña*). They are wholesome mental states of unconditional acceptance of others, that is, to all beings human and non-human, when they are suffering or in difficulty, or when they are happier than we are, or whether they benefit from our efforts or not. These are positive spiritual mental states that see goodness in ourselves and in others. This is the truly priceless wealth, to be cultivated by those who truly *profess* right livelihood [2.5].

6.3 BALANCED LIVELIHOOD

6.3.1 The worldly conditions.

Our livelihood needs to be balanced²⁵⁷ for the simple reason that dualities characterize our lives and the world. We are mind and body; there are self and other, male and female; and of course the “8 winds” or worldly conditions (*loka,dhamma*) of gain and loss, fame and obscurity, praise and blame, joy and pain.²⁵⁸ These are “worldly” conditions; they are the nature of the world, that is, we must readily face such uncertainties in right livelihood life and work.

More importantly, in RL living, we should be prepared for these worldly conditions, for they often arise unexpectedly. Of course, with some business acumen, we could foresee certain possible problems or developments, but the rule is that nothing is certain until it actually happens. And when things do change, we need to astutely and promptly work with “damage control” and recovery plans.

6.3.2 Growth above profit

We must remind ourselves that RL projects are not so much profit-based as they are *growth-based*. Growth here means the cultivating of wholesome states in an individual, that is, *personal growth* through spiritual friendship and mental cultivation. RL provides the environment and means for such a growth through selling or giving access to products and events that promote personal and spiritual growth that people can afford and would benefit personally (better health), socially (networking) and spiritually (mental peace and creativity).

As a human activity, RL must always place *people above profit*. Surely, prices of goods and fees for events need to be regulated to generate income. Yet, there must be a Dharma-spirited *latitude* for those who have difficulty to pay for them. Those who are unwaged or low-waged should be given some kind of discount, subsidy, or even should not be charged at all [1.5.3]. However, to prevent abuse, there should be a limit to such discounts and free places.

Occasionally or whenever necessary, some products (like beginner’s books) and events (like an introduction to meditation) can be offered free of charge. Such gifts can be effective ways of informing others of the Dharma, and also educating others on the nature of RL and the Buddha Dharma.

6.3.3 Friendship

One of the great benefits of right livelihood is that it is the ideal environment for cultivating *warm and lasting friendship*, the kind of friendship that really “works,” that is, it is *functional* (healthy) and *productive* (helps in effective work). Conversely, right livelihood is defined, in a very vital way, by this kind of friendship. Otherwise, it is no different from worldly work and corporations.

²⁵⁶ D 26.28a(4)/3:77 f @ SD 36.10.

²⁵⁷ For a personal balanced living, see **Dīgha,jānu S** (A 8.54.7/4:282 f), SD 5.10.

²⁵⁸ The 8 worldly conditions: *lābho ca alābho ca yaso ca ayaso ca nindā ca pasamsā ca sukhā ca dukkhañ ca* (A 8.5/4:156 f; Vism 7.38/205, 22.51/683, 22.67/685).

Although work, whether as a living or leisure, can be done privately (such as a home office or professional writing), there is a significant amount of interpersonal communication if we want to work effectively and enjoy its benefits. Understandably, a key element in such a success would be networking, which effectively, is not merely a mailing or customers' list, but a living and positive communication amongst friends.

Since work is often purpose-driven or goal-oriented, it attracts like minds to share the task and deepen the bonds of acquaintance so that we mature as good friends. Through regular association, especially through living together (as in some right livelihood projects), we know a friend's *virtue*, especially moral virtue. Through work interaction, we see his *honesty*. In adversity, we benefit from his *fortitude*. And in discussions, we share his *wisdom*.²⁵⁹ Work, as such, is a great way of bonding with others as the work progresses through common efforts, and we benefit from their success in many ways.²⁶⁰

6.3.4 Fellowship at work

6.3.4.0 BENEFITS OF WORKERSHIP. The slogan, "give what you can, take what you need," should be properly understood and not abused. It certainly does *not* mean "work hard and surrender all the money you have made, and we will give you just enough for your daily needs" [7.1]. **The Sigāl'ovāda Sutta** (D 31) statement on the duties of an employer to the employee is instructive here:

In 5 ways, young householder, slaves and hired workers [employees and charges]²⁶¹ as *the direction below* [the nadir], should be ministered to by **the master [the employer]**, thus:

- (a) By allocating work according to the strength of the worker.
- (b) By providing them with food and wages.
- (c) By attending to their medical and health needs.
- (d) By sharing excellent tastes (food, etc) with them.
- (e) By giving them timely breaks and holidays.

(D 31,32/3:190 f), SD 4.1

The *nadir* is the direction below or the earth,²⁶² representing the material support and services provided by such workers in the Buddha's time. Slaves and hired workers are symbolically located at the lowest quarter (the earth) because they have to work the hardest but have no control over what they produce (their labour), and they are at the mercy of their masters or employers. Yet, they are the foundation of a society that depends on surplus labour, which is descriptive of the economic conditions of the Buddha's times.²⁶³

In an RL situation, workers are the foundation as well as the structure of the whole system: the workers *are* the right livelihood. RL works best as a spiritual community of co-workers guided by

²⁵⁹ These 4 qualities are found in **Jaṭṭila S** (S 3.11/ 1:78 f = U 6.2/65 f), and discussed in detail in **Ṭhāna S** (A 4.-192/2:187-190), SD 14.12.

²⁶⁰ On friendly love, see **Love**, SD 38.4 (6).

²⁶¹ *Dāsa, kamma.kara*. Slavery evidently existed in Indian society of the Buddha's time and these instructions reflect his attempt at manumission (the emancipation of slavery), or at least their humane treatment. Chakravarti, qu **D N Chanana**, *Slavery in Ancient India* (1960:58, 162), notes: "Of the three categories of *dāsa* [slaves], *kammakara* [labourers], and *porisa* [hired men], the *dāsas* may actually have been better off since they were integrated into the family that owned them" (1986:26).

²⁶² In contrast, the "zenith" is the direction directly above, ie, the sky, representing our spiritual teachers: D 31,33/3:191 (SD 4.1).

²⁶³ See Chakravarti 1987:26-29

personal development, creating a sustainable living environment, and above all, committed to opening up the Dharma to others.

6.3.4.1 ALLOCATION OF WORK. In RL, work is allocated according to *the strength and ability* of the worker. Ideally, it should be the best people in the best position, that is, the best qualified and experienced attending to key tasks. But, in RL, a “position” (say, a manager or chairman) is not a power post, but serves only as the centre or coordinator of a working community of equals. Everyone has a say in the work and its goals, in the light of Dharma-based ideals.

Ideally, RL work builds the worker’s working experience, moulding his character, and strengthening him in the Dharma. A programme of apprenticeship or mentorship would serve well to introduce and train such a worker even in new kinds of work. Such mentoring further creates spiritual fellowship amongst RL workers.

Through work and associating with others in common projects, we get to know others better.²⁶⁴ Such an observation or evaluation should not be taken so much as “profiling” or “quality control” as the noticing and responding to the needs and weaknesses of others to provide them with mentoring, counselling, training and upliftment. Regular “house meetings” or “feedback groups” would facilitate RL workers in inspiring exchanges, and building up fellowship and work quality, and being charged with the RL spirit.²⁶⁵

6.3.4.2 SUPPORT FOR WORKERS. RL workers should be provided with wages, but also, ideally, with *support of their basic needs*, that is, food, clothing, housing and health benefits [6.3.4.3]. If wages are only enough for the RL worker to support himself day-to-day, then he would not be able to save. Savings are vital for the RL worker so that he is not totally dependent, financially speaking, on RL work. The RL work, in other words, should be a supportive, yet liberating, lifestyle.

If we are to follow the RL teachings of **the Sigāl’ovāda Sutta** (D 31) and **the Ādiyā Sutta** (A 5.41), then, an average worker’s wage should include 25% as suggested *savings*,²⁶⁶ that is to say, it should be about 25% more than what he would generally need for his daily and monthly needs. This amount, as a rule, should be saved by him. As these relate to financial matters—what is stated in these Suttas relate more to Indian society than—proper adjustments should be in order for our own situation without going against the spirit of the Dharma.

Such savings should, of course, be judiciously used in due course. Besides spending on personal interests, such as books, or going to the theatre or opera, it could be used for going on an extended retreat, a holiday, or overseas travels (whereby we could make new contacts and expand our networking). Such savings could also be used to start new RL companies. Or, they could be donated to worthy persons or projects, or to an RL trust fund. Or, they could be used for RL insurance policies, or saved in an RL bank.

6.3.4.3 HEALTH BENEFITS. Of all of profits, health, that is, physical and mental health, is the most basic. Hence, it is said, **health is the highest gain** (*ārogya, paramā lābhā*, **Dh 204**). *Physical health* means suitable work, proper exercise or physical exertion, and proper rest and good holidays. *Mental health* is a positive view of life, an ability and willingness to face problems and solve them, inner stillness and a clear mind. RL should focus on providing the training and environment for such health.

²⁶⁴ On the ways of knowing a person’s true character, see **Ṭhāna S** (A 4.192/2:187-190), SD 14.12.

²⁶⁵ On the houseworker’s qualities and duties (traditionally mentioned as those of a wife, but in our times, this task could be that of the husband, or shared): see **Nakula, mātā S** (A 8.48,3/4:268), SD 5.3.

²⁶⁶ D 31,26/3:188 (SD 4.1); A 5.41,5/4:45 (SD 2.1). On financial management, see esp SD 4.1 (4).

In the Buddhist context, being physically and mentally healthy are the best conditions for cultivating the way to awakening. In fact, physical health or wellbeing of the body is an important aspect of *moral virtue*. Keeping to the 5 precepts [2.2] not only keeps our human mental state intact and healthy, but it also keeps us physically healthy or prevents further bodily harm, and also refines our social interactions. In this sense, the precepts act on as *humanizing and socializing catalysts*.

Even more important than physical health is mental health. We are born with only a human *body*; our human *mind* and *humanity* come from being humanized with love and care by our parents and carers in the first seven years of our childhood.²⁶⁷ To be human is basically to show respect to other humans as we would respect ourselves.

Such a social wellbeing and mental health are the bases for a higher mental cultivation, or “divinizing” our being. Our divine state is the ability and willingness to respect *all living beings* as we would love ourselves. This is of course *the golden rule* [2.1.1]. This is also the practice of the divine abodes [2.5], the bases for the professional life in RL.

Since health is of such a high premium in spiritual growth, understandably RL should provide a conducive environment for it. As such, any RL worth its name should at least provides its workers with some form of medical and health benefits. This would include the defraying of medical bills, or even setting up our own medical and meditation clinics, providing subsidized or even free services.

6.3.4.4 FRINGE BENEFITS. The Sigāl’ovāda Sutta (D 31) admonishes that an employer should show compassion to workers “by sharing excellent tastes [food, etc] with them” (*acchariyānaṃ rasānaṃ saṃvibhāgena*).²⁶⁸ Such a practice is very meaningful in the RL context because it is *a celebration of life through work*. RL workers are not monastic hands or temple slaves who are subject to higher authorities and often work under internal stress.

To work in an RL environment is to live joyfully in Dharma-spirited fellowship, in communion with the Dharma. Whether we work and live together as single persons, as married couples or as committed couples, we rejoice in living in the Dharma. Our community then is *a still centre in life’s storm*.

On special occasions, such as Dharma festivals, anniversaries or birthdays, we could have communal meals to rejoice in the occasion. Such festivities are vital in uplifting the community in its commitment to joyful living and mutual welfare through deepening fellowship.

Whenever we are thus joyfully gathered together, we do so in the Buddha’s name, rejoicing that the Dharma is still with us. Such occasions, therefore, should be enriched with some sort of Dharma talk or reflection, reminding us that even as we rejoice, we must unrelentingly work to sustain and upgrade our togetherness and purposefulness.

<i>Sukho buddhānam uppādo</i>	Happy is the arising of Buddhas.
<i>sukhā saddhamma,desanā</i>	Happy is the teaching of the Dharma.
<i>sukhā saṅghassa sāmaggi</i>	Happy is unity in the community.
<i>samaggānaṃ tapo sukho</i>	Happy is the austerity of those in concord. (Dh 194)

6.3.4.5 REST AND BREAKS. The Sigāl’ovāda Sutta (D 31) admonishes that an employer should show compassion to workers “by giving them timely breaks” (*samaye vossaggena*).²⁶⁹ The very nature of RL work entails some form of selflessness in merging ourselves into the purposeful flow of Dharma-spirited work. As in any work, we need to be in contact with others, to work with others, which means that our

²⁶⁷ Cf “A man of little learning | ages like an ox. || His flesh grows | but his wisdom grows not. (*Appa-s,sutāyaṃ puriso | balivaddo’va jīrati || mamsāni tassa vaḍḍhanti | paññā tassa na vaḍḍhati*, Dh 152).

²⁶⁸ D 31.32(d)/3:191 (SD 4.1).

²⁶⁹ D 31,32(e)/3:191 (SD 4.1).

attention must be present with such people. Such wholesome attention serves as a part of our training in moral virtue, that is, communicating healthily with others.

At proper times, we need to spend **quiet time** with ourselves. This could be done on a daily basis at an appropriate time, such as in the stillness of dawn upon waking, or just before turning in. Such a quiet time can be used for personal meditation, mindful reflection or Dharma reading. During longer breaks, we could go on retreats, even solitary retreats in some beautiful and quiet nature.²⁷⁰

Precept days (*uposatha*) are especially significant in RL living because they are traditional holy days for keeping extra precepts (especially those on celibacy and personal simplicity). How strictly such a day is to be observed depends on the community or the individual. Ideally, precept days should truly be *holy days*, special occasions dedicated to the Buddha Dharma. This might mean that RL business could remain open on Sundays and public holidays, which could be more convenient for those who are unable to shop during other days.

RL workers, in other words, should be given time off to go on meditation retreats. Workers who have proper and enough rest are more likely to execute their duties more effectively, and also be resourceful and creative in their tasks.

6.4 TEAM-BASED RIGHT LIVELIHOOD

There are 3 basic models for **right livelihood businesses**, namely, the sole proprietorship [6.4.1], the partnership [6.4.2] and the cooperative [6.4.3]. Whichever model we choose for our RL, we must keep in mind that **the workers** are the foundation as well as the whole structure: *the worker is the right livelihood*. Ideally, no RL worker works *for* another, but *with* another. Work, in the RL spirit, is an exploration of the strength and wisdom of our bodies in building a space that conduces to wholesome communal living and spiritual cultivation. In other words, there is always some kind of team spirit underlying RL.

As a business is, as a rule, *a legal entity*, an RL business must be registered with the authorities. It has to be properly constituted and run. We must be qualified or experienced enough to run the business that we have chosen. We could start off as an apprentice or understudy of an RL business that is running well. Sometimes, we might need to start from scratch and learn as we go along, especially where no such RL business has been set up.

We need some **funds** to start a business. Such funds can come from our savings [6.3.4.2], or from some kind of loan from an RL fund or trust. As a last resort, such funds could be borrowed from a bank if the repayment scheme is fair and affordable. One of the simplest ways of raising such initial funds is the pooling together of donations or loans from RL colleagues or relatives. Unless such funds are outright gifts, it is wise to ensure that such loans are properly and legally done.

6.4.1 Sole proprietorship

This is also known as a **sole trader** or simply a **proprietorship**, and is a type of business entity that is *owned and run by one person*, where there is no legal distinction between the owner and the business. The owner keeps all profits, subject, of course, to taxes.

A sole proprietor may register and use a trade or business name. In the United States, such a business must be registered by way of a statement with the local authorities.²⁷¹ In the United Kingdom, the proprietor's name must be properly shown on business stationery, business emails and business premises.²⁷² In Singapore, a sole proprietorship (and all other businesses) must be registered with ACRA (Accounting and Corporate Regulatory Authority), and is quite easily done.

²⁷⁰ On quiet moment, see **Paṭisallāna S** (It 45/2.2.8/38 f), SD 41.4.

²⁷¹ <http://www.dbaform.com/faqs-dba.php#986>

²⁷² <http://www.companieshouse.gov.uk/about/gbhtml/gp1.shtml#ch10>.

Some of the **disadvantages** of a sole proprietorship include the following. It might be difficult for it to raise funds if it needs them, and it is not allowed to raise public funds. As the business grows bigger, so does its risks. One of its biggest disadvantages is *unlimited liability*, that is, the owner's assets could be seized.

A small business might lack funds to expand, and its size might limit the range of management skills since the proprietor is alone or working with only a few people. If such a business is not run by skilled people, it is likely to fail. Even if it succeeds, it might lack continuity, or even be crippled if the proprietor should fall sick, or takes a long holiday.

However, under the RL aegis, a sole proprietorship is the simplest kind of business to manage. The sole proprietor could have under him as many assistants or apprentices as he wishes, such as a spouse, or a friend. In many ways, running a sole proprietorship is much easier under RL if we are contented with a small-scale business, such as a small Buddhist bookshop, a gift shop, or a flower store.

6.4.2 Partnership

In legal terms, **partnership** refers to a type of business organization where two or more persons form a voluntary association for the purpose of doing business. On a larger scale, a partnership may also be formed amongst two or more businesses in which partners (owners) *voluntarily cooperate to achieve and share profits and losses*.

Non-profit organizations, non-government organizations, and religious groups are often more effective when they partner together to extend their reach and realize their common mission. In fact, many successful RL sole proprietorships could, in due course, form partnerships to limit their liabilities and expand. All these may need to be discussed and negotiated, and once agreement is reached, the partnership is typically governed by civil law.

While partnerships have the advantages of amplifying mutual interests and success, some might be considered unethical. For example, when a politician partners with a business to advance its interest in exchange for some benefit, a conflict of interest arises, to the disadvantage of the public. Such problems, however, are unlikely to arise where RL businesses partner together.

Partnerships may enjoy special tax benefits. In developed countries, for example, partnerships often enjoy better tax benefits than corporations, since dividend taxes are only incurred on profits before they are distributed to the partners.²⁷³

6.4.3 Cooperatives

A cooperative (also **co-operative** or **co-op**) is a *group of producers or purchasers who set up or operate a business, the profit from which is shared out among the members of the group*.²⁷⁴ A cooperative may also be defined as *a business owned and controlled equally by the people who use its services or by the people who work there*. Various aspects regarding cooperative enterprise are the focus of study in the field of "cooperative economics."²⁷⁵

The International Cooperative Alliance (ICA), in its "Statement on the Cooperative Identity"²⁷⁶ defines a cooperative as "an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise."²⁷⁷ The ICA's co-operative 7 principles, guidelines by which co-operatives put their values into practice, are as follows:

²⁷³ See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Partnership#cite_note-0 & *Ency of Capitalism*, 2004 2:636-638.

²⁷⁴ See Arthur O'Sullivan & Steven M Sheffrin, *Economics: Principles in action*, Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2003:202.

²⁷⁵ See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cooperative>.

²⁷⁶ <http://www.ica.coop/al-ica/>.

1st Principle: Voluntary and open membership

Co-operatives are voluntary organisations, open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without gender, social, racial, political or religious discrimination.

2nd Principle: Democratic member control

Co-operatives are democratic organisations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting their policies and making decisions. Men and women serving as elected representatives are accountable to the membership. In primary co-operatives members have equal voting rights (one member, one vote) and co-operatives at other levels are also organised in a democratic manner.

3rd Principle: Member economic participation

Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their co-operative. At least part of that capital is usually the common property of the co-operative. Members usually receive limited compensation, if any, on capital subscribed as a condition of membership. Members allocate surpluses for any or all of the following purposes: developing their co-operative, possibly by setting up reserves, part of which at least would be indivisible; benefitting members in proportion to their transactions with the co-operative; and supporting other activities approved by the membership.

4th Principle: Autonomy and independence

Co-operatives are autonomous, self-help organisations controlled by their members. If they enter to agreements with other organisations, including governments, or raise capital from external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control by their members and maintain their co-operative autonomy.

5th Principle: Education, training and information

Co-operatives provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers, and employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of their co-operatives. They inform the general public—particularly young people and opinion leaders—about the nature and benefits of co-operation.

6th Principle: Co-operation among co-operatives

Co-operatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the co-operative movement by working together through local, national, regional and international structures.

7th Principle: Concern for community

Co-operatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies approved by their members.

It is clear from these principles that the spirit of cooperatives closely parallels those of RL. The main difference is that RL is Buddhist and Dharma-oriented. If we take cooperatives as a global travel agency, the RL is like a travel agency that specializes in bringing us back to our beautiful and blissful homeland.

²⁷⁷ <http://www.ica.coop/coop/principles.html>.

6.4.4 Free-lance work

The more creative (in the fine arts sense) amongst us might not feel connected with any kind of business. We are simply moved by artistic beauty, or beautiful sounds, or expressive movements, or creative writing. Most such people would become free-lance “self-employed” workers, and rightly, too, so that we can focus our special talents and energies on what we are best at to express the Buddha Dharma.

Creative people can be an integral part of RL, as it is not merely about commercial business. RL, after all, is the business of living purposefully, creatively and spiritually. It is an independent and joyful way of life that is conducive to artistic and spiritual expression. In short, it is about living fully. Even if we think we have no special creative talent, living in RL would eventually inspire us to discover our untapped energies and genius. RL also provides an open platform for displaying such creative talents to others for mutual benefit.

If an RL worker is especially talented in some creative area, he can support himself in different ways, such as:

- sign up for a special talents support scheme from the RL community;
- be a silent or sleeping partner in a partnership to market his works;
- publish his own works, hold his own exhibitions, have his own training centre, and so on.

The whole idea of having RL is so that we do not have to worry about money and material support. The focus is not so much on what we could *have*, but more on what we can *be*. We are less moved towards *quantity* than we are drawn to *quality*. Small becomes beautiful; spaciousness blissful. Indeed, RL makes it a reality for us to see *our work as Dharma practice*.

7 Conclusion

By way of summary, it can be said that right livelihood, as business and life-style, rests on the three pillars of *giving, moral virtue and mental cultivation*, that is, the 3 grounds for merit, namely, *dāna sīla bhāvanā*.²⁷⁸

7.1 GIVING

Buddhism recognizes the fact that our fundamental lack, both physically and mentally—what we might conveniently call “suffering” (*dukkha*)—as observed by **J L Garfield**,

is both caused and constituted by fundamental states of character, including pre-eminently egocentric attraction, egocentric aversion and confusion regarding the nature of reality. Hence the cultivation of virtues that undermine these vices is morally desirable. Suffering is perpetuated by our intentions, acts and their consequences. Hence attention to all of these is necessary for its eradication. Our own happiness and suffering are intimately bound up with that of others.

Hence we are responsible for other[s] and obligated to take their interests into account.

(Garfield 2009:8 f; cf Keown 2005:22-27)

Our responsibility, then, begins with *responding* to others with an open acceptance, with a spirit of charity and generosity.

²⁷⁸ See eg **Puñña, kiriya, vatthu S** (A 8.36/4:241-243), SD 22.17.

The RL spirit of giving may be crystallized in the saying “**give what you can, take what you need**” [6.3.4.0]. This is not about money, but about the whole *spirit* that makes RL possible. We “give what we can” in the sense that *how* we contribute our energies, talents and resources will define an RL project. It is not just a matter of financial investment, but a pooling of the person and his spirit. Such a giving entails *giving up* what is unwholesome in ourselves and a willingness to *cultivate* wholesome qualities so that we are ever stronger as an RL community.

“**Take what you need**” has two important meanings. Firstly, it means that our basic support comes from our RL work, that is, we are *self-supporting*. As such, it is more of a *sharing* rather than taking. If we only take what we need—that is, for our sustenance and health—then there will be enough to go around. “Take what you need” also means that we need to *engage* ourselves with the key RL activities, especially training in personal development (such as meditation) and social development (such as fellowship and management training).

As such, “**giving**” is not merely a quantitative idea, but a *qualitative* one, where we *give* ourselves the opportunity for personal growth. By the same token, this entails giving *space* to others to grow, too. Above all, giving here means that *we give ourselves fully to RL work*: we commit ourselves fully to a life of spaciousness and growth.

7.2 MORAL VIRTUE

If *giving* is an appreciation of others, that we are moved to connect with them, then moral virtue is based on such a reciprocal appreciation. Moral virtue relates to giving our bodies and speech the space and direction to grow in an ever more inclusive manner. We keep the 5 precepts [2.2] not merely because it is “meritorious” to do so, that we accumulate good karma in doing so, but more so because we want to be *compassionate* to others.

It is this compassionate spaciousness—expressed as wholesome bodily acts and speech—that are the bases of *a good society*. Indeed, for any meaningful and fruitful human interactivity, we need some level of moral virtue. We best interact in the valued space of lovingkindness, generosity, respect, truthfulness and clarity. [2.3]

Our training in moral virtue not only curbs our negative and anti-social tendencies, it also allows us to see and understand why such unwholesomeness exists in us at all. We begin to understand how such emotions are conditioned by our past, by others and by the environment. Yet, we must realize, too, that we can take charge of ourselves and transmute such energies into their positive opposites, and then refine them into ennobling virtues.

7.3 MENTAL CULTIVATION

RL is of course more than merely about doing work as we are told, being nice to people, or recycling things. While all this conduces to a wholesome working and living environment, even to a delightful space for play and rest, there is a more important aspect of RL that must in time demand our full attention. This is the whole purpose of RL itself, namely, *personal development and mental cultivation*. We need to grow as a person, to become a true individual.

At its best, the RL environment allows us to grow and flower intellectually, emotionally and spiritually. Intellectual growth refers to the assimilation of theoretical and practical knowledge that helps us know *about* the world, and cultivate with some skill, even finesse, enriching our interactions with others. Emotional growth is a growing self-knowledge and the extending of our inner space, even to the point of breaking all barriers so that we easily accept others, energizing our common space for even greater growth.

Spiritual growth arises from our directly seeing into the true nature of things. Such a clear vision, in turn, is the result of a calm and clear mind arising from mindfulness and mental cultivation. A spiritually

mature person, understandably, is also intellectually mature (capable of profound thinking) and emotionally mature (capable of uplifting feelings).

In short, RL is a way of life that conduces to our becoming true individuals. A **true individual** (*sappurisa*) is an emotionally independent person, who by nature is inwardly happy. He does not need the approval of others for personal security, and yet he is spontaneously responsive to the emotional needs of others, so that he is capable of helping and healing others.

As a community, RL workers and members, are independent financially, socially and spiritually. Insofar as RL only sees money as a tool for economic and social change, it is not a “money-based” activity. Indeed, it is the RL activity that makes wealth meaningful and purposeful: this is not wealth-centred Dharma, but a *Dharma-centred wealth*. [6.2.2]

The RL community is a viable way out of the crowded and noisy world. It allows us to *renounce* the noisy crowdedness, as it were, for peaceful spaciousness. The RL community is also a viable alternative to the monastic life, especially where it has degenerated into a highly formalized, ritualistic and cyclic lifestyle fuelled by the desire for an easy life of pleasure, power and wealth. For the RL life well and fully lived often overlaps the best of the monastic as envisioned and lived by the Buddha himself.

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