

## WAYS TO CULTIVATE RIGHT LIVELIHOOD AS A PATH TOWARD HONORING LIVING

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### ABSTRACT

Right livelihood is an integral part of Buddhist, not only important in Buddhism but also related to all people in society. It is a connection between inner transformation spirit with external transformation spirit. The development of any society strives together with spiritual development, the right livelihood will lead that society to development and prosperity through spiritual development, and vice versa, wrong livelihood propriety will lead that society closer to superstition and other ills and increasingly to the decline of society. In this article consists of two objectives: (1) To study the general view of honoring living and (2) To suggest ways to cultivate right livelihood as a path toward honoring living. The research consisting two parts: a documentary research and an in-depth interview research. Its methodology of the documentary research can be divided into 4 stages as follows: (1) Collecting data from the primary sources; five Nikāya, Commentaries (Aṭṭhakathā), Sub-commentaries (Tīkā). (2) Collecting data from the secondary sources; researches, theses, books, journals, documentary related with this. (3) Discussing, analyzing and systematizing the collected data in order to construct the outline of the study. (4) Formulating conclusions, identifying significant results, and areas for further research. The in-depth interviews research involves with collecting data from the interview with six key informants. The SMSDE (Sīla, Mutual respect, Samādhi, Dāna, Ethical act) is a suggested platform of ways to cultivate right livelihood as a path toward honoring living. It is the synthesized ways that are derived from the analyses of the general view, the Buddhist concept and the Key-informants' notions of right livelihood. Therefore, the SMSDE becomes the suggested foundation of ways toward Honoring Living not only for monks and laypeople, but also for all those who seek an honorable, living life.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of honoring living in this era may not be unfamiliar to everyone, but to apply the moral teachings left by the ancients without being influenced by outside influences such as money, material... then quite a little people practice those teachings.

Right livelihood in creative ways to match modern reality is taking positive steps to create a working lifestyle that supports their spiritual development. Proper right livelihood development will be done on a daily basis in every individual or organization's actions and it will deeply reflect the social nature, socioeconomic and many other parts of society, so that be developed further. All in all, the Buddha suggested the way to merge with worldly conditions, so that sentient beings could attain an honoring living like him through training in satipatṭhāna, practicing meditation, encouraging positive thinking and contemplate the three characteristics.

No matter how good or rich a life is, it can be destroyed and the core goal of life is a new moral quality that can be maintained and passed on to the next generation. Therefore, the good benefits in this thesis is part of a collection of things that the Buddha taught and also from the beautiful words of the ancestors passed on so that the next generations will continue the good virtues. Human dignity is rooted in the holiness of human life. Dignity is not a concept that can be lost, so depending on others cannot make us lose our dignity.

Disciples of Shakyamuni are always advised to live to benefit mankind through activities of improvement, cultivating the mind to obtain good qualities, without harming any creature while living together, this is morally positive. The right livelihood is always a key part of society and it is also in the right path, which applies morality specifically to the question of how one earns one's living.

All activities include positive and negative. When we do positive activities, it will consume less energy and keep all the creatures around us in a positive state and vice versa, negative activities will consume a lot of bad energy and energy. It affects the creatures and individuals around them, so the Buddha always encourages to do the smallest even better because many people have good energy that will help spread good things to society.

According some scholars right livelihood simply means living a life with daily activities like work at home, work at office and work outside to earn our money in the rightful ways to make ourselves physically and mentally happy.

“Work is the place in the time and space; where I am most fulfilled. And work provides me with most of the opportunities I have to practice mindfulness”.<sup>1</sup>

The Eightfold Path is used the words "right" or "wise" to clearly describe the suffering and the end to progress to a better stage of morality and way of life. And to be clearly explained the highest value of liberation through deep understanding, enlightenment.

Being a Buddhist living a wholesome life by earning and spending righteous ways can live a happy, healthy and peaceful family, society. According to Ven. K Sri Dhammananda:

“Right Livelihood is a factor under moral conduct which refers to how we earn our living in society.

One important aspect of Buddhist ethics is the recognition that our actions may also indirectly contribute to others’ suffering. It is our intention rather than the directness of the effects of our actions which has the karmic effect. Indirect effects are often important in economic life. For example, by making or selling things that are harmful, we can indirectly contribute to harm even if we don’t actually directly apply that harmful thing. This is why Buddhism traditionally considers trading in poisons, weapons or alcohol to be wrong livelihood.”<sup>2</sup>

The traditional livelihood is that of a monk or a nun when you have given up owning money. Responsibilities require lay people to make money, monastic monks or nuns solely rely on gifts to meet their basic needs. This is harmless and is also a way for lay people to have a chance to accumulate merit. Traditionally, this is considered a completely innocent vocation. Through the lectures, we can see that many considerations about a suitable livelihood and family life will not apply to monks and nuns, who are "homeless", single, do not use money, talent, personal property, and never ask for payment of any kind. But nowadays, Buddhism is spread to many countries and there will be different points to suit each development stage of life in different countries. Non-attachment is the core cause of the cessation of suffering, which is so important.

The Buddha’s teaching is very valuable. Right livelihood is one in the eight factors of the Noble Eightfold Path. In this thesis, the details how the Buddha advised, preached and instructed regarding the term “Right Livelihood” will be discussed. Since its meaning is so profound, it encourages the seekers to research more, to practice and to check how right the Buddha’s teaching is. Specially, it’s leading to the way of an honoring life and moreover is the only direct way to lead

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<sup>1</sup> Whitmyer Claude, *Mindfulness and Meaningful Work Explorations in Right Livelihood*, (California: Parallax Press, 1994), 57.

<sup>2</sup> Dhammananda K. Sri, *What Buddhist Believe*, (Malaysia: Buddhist Missionary Society, 2002), 115.

to nibbāna. Therefore, this paper will be beneficial for readers in researching and learning about right livelihood.

## 2. MEANING OF RIGHT LIVELIHOOD

The term *ājīva* indicates a way of living, *sammā* means good, right or correct livelihood, an accurate understanding of the nature of things, defines as knowledge of the Four Noble Truths.

*Sammā-ājīva* is from the ancient language Pāli as used in the oldest Buddhist Sutras. It roughly translates as 'Right Livelihood' and is one of the 8 aspects of the Buddhist Noble 8-fold path. These tenets include such aspects as Right Speech, Right Action & Right Livelihood and approach to all activities.

Right livelihood is one of the eight components of the Buddhist Eightfold Path of self-development, able to lead to the cessation of suffering (attain ultimate happiness) or vice versa. Thus, right livelihood both in theory and practice is very important.

The right livelihood kamma in the previous life also contributes to making this life clean without making mistakes. Thus, the right livelihood is maintained from one life to the next.

“And what, bhikshus, is right livelihood?

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

Bhikshus, there is the right livelihood with influxes, partaking of merit, ripening in birthbasis [acquisition of aggregates].

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

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 with influxes, partaking of merit, ripening in birthbasis.”<sup>3</sup>

Those who are giving up the wrong livelihood, to start joining the right livelihood through mindfulness, this right livelihood will help them to be happy from now on.

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

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<sup>3</sup> M. 117, 30-31.

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

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.”<sup>4</sup>

Right livelihood with right action and right speech related to the present social life, the outside world; The practice of *sīla* (morality) is the bridge between inner transformation, as attained through the practice of mental discipline or concentration (Right Effort, Mindfulness and Right Concentration) and external transformation.

Wisdom or panna (Right Understanding and Right Concentration), which can be achieved in part from mental training or meditation, can lead to a significant change in moral maintenance and understanding of the purpose of life.

When we read the Buddhist scriptures, we find that on many occasions, the Buddha explained to his disciples, the lay followers and deities about right way of living.

“Bhikkhus, the noble disciples completely abstains from a wrong way of livelihood and makes his living by a right means of livelihood... is called Right livelihood”.<sup>5</sup>

### 3. THE GENARAL VIEW OF HONORING LIVING

An honorable life is aimed for by anyone because they will be honored by everyone, reminded a lot about them to set a good example for the next generation to follow and promote those good qualities in everything you do in this community, society and in this world.

Always dedicate the best and do the best to help life. If one do these things with heart and soul, talents, opportunities and influence will spread throughout this world. In the end there will be full accomplishments in this life.

In Theravada Buddhism, ariya-puggala means noble person, a person who has attained one of the four levels of holiness. Sotapanna is a first type of holy person, called as stream-winner, is

<sup>4</sup> M. 117, 32-33.

<sup>5</sup> DN 22 – Mahasatipatthana sutta.

one who will attain nibbana, release from the cycle of death and rebirth (no more than seven rebirths). Another type of holy person is Sakadagamin (once-returner), or one who is destined to be reborn in the human world only once more before reaching nibbana. A third type is the anagamin (never-returner), or one who will not be reborn in the human realm and will enter the realm of the gods at the time of death. The never-returner, however, is still not considered to have reached nibbana. The highest level of Theravada Buddhist holiness is the arahant, one who has reached final and absolute emancipation from all rebirths in any human or superhuman realm. The arahant is a model person for Theravada Buddhists.

The honoring living holds several senses of meanings. In the Western sense, it means “living a happy life”. In the Buddhist sense, it means “living in the way of dhamma”. In this research, living in the way of dhamma refers to ones who has a good life in association with the precepts (*sīla*), which focus on the five precepts and the 38 blessings in *Maṅgala Sutta*. Finally, in the Buddhist economic sense, the honoring living means *sammā-ājīva* or the “Right Livelihood”.

The three senses of meanings of honoring living will be discussed by placing emphasis on the last sense of meaning of right livelihood. To live with honor means to strive to do your best in all aspects of your life. It means living with courage, integrity, purpose, and dignity. Above all, to live with honor means pursue excellence in all that you do, and ultimately, to make the most of your life and time in this world.

To make the most of your life, to make the most of your opportunities in this life, and to make the most of your impact in this world... this is what it means to live honorably. Maximize your life ... Do all the good you can, and do it all the very best that you can do it. Always give your all, and always do your best. If you strive to do these things with all your heart and soul, then you will make the most of your talents, opportunities, and influence in this world. As a result, you ultimately will end up maximizing your life.<sup>6</sup>

### 3.1 HONORING LIVING AS LIVING A HAPPY LIFE

A lot of people think that they only have one life to live, to be happy and to be able to do what they like. This opinion is not necessarily wrong, but there are many people who can understand the meaning differently, so they can defy everything, sacrifice everything so that they can get what they want, even they break the law. This form of lifestyle will begin to satisfy the

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<sup>6</sup> Frank DiCocco, *Live with Honor*, Accessed March 3, 2021, [https://www.realmaninc.org/index\\_files/Page3437.htm#:~:text=To%20live%20with%20honor%20means,and%20time%20in%20this%20world.](https://www.realmaninc.org/index_files/Page3437.htm#:~:text=To%20live%20with%20honor%20means,and%20time%20in%20this%20world.)

smallest things endlessly and will not be able to fulfill all their desires. Mostly related to money, property... This lifestyle is often found in poor, underdeveloped countries because they put the criterion of having money to have everything.

For example, a person in poverty just wants to have enough food and clothing; when they have enough food and clothing, they want a house to live in; when they have a house to live in, they want a bigger house; followed by cars, expensive vehicles, telephones, expensive telephones and other items. Non-fixed assets are usually updated every year, so they have to follow to buy them.

### 3.2 HONORING LIVING AS LIVING IN THE WAY OF DHAMMA

The living in the way of dhamma can only be seen by monks, priests and missionaries. They dedicate their lives to maintaining good qualities to lead and pass on to the next generations.

The holy life, people who follow this lifestyle always put morality first, they keep the precepts or commandments according to the religion they are practicing. They live on faith and wisdom through practice in daily life to achieve a state of inner peace and tranquility. Money and material things are no longer an obstacle for people who follow this lifestyle because their destination is a good spiritual life.

We have noted that the moral training (*sīla sikkhā*) section of the eightfold path comprises right speech, right action and right livelihood. Now, right speech is the avoiding of speech that are false, divisive, harsh or frivolous, and right action consists of abstinence from killing, stealing and incelibacy (or else, sexual misconduct). These seven items, we should note, actually constitute the core of the Nikāya teachings on moral virtue (*sīla*).<sup>7</sup>

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.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Piya Tan, *The Nature of Wealth & Living the Spiritual Life in the World*, (Singapore: The Minding Center, 2007), 109.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 112.



It is clear that the Dhamma is not to be bought or sold. Moreover, monastics strictly have nothing to do with money. 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.”

As such, whatever activities a monastic carries out—Dhamma 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. However, a “keeper” (*kappiya*) or appointed treasurer of the monastery or centre may announce the need for funds, etc, as appropriate.<sup>9</sup>

### 3.3 HONORING LIVING AS LIVING BY RIGHT LIVELIHOOD

The living by right livelihood can be said that the number of people who have followed this lifestyle is quite large, regardless of religion, believers also accept the principle of loving all, sharing good things with those less fortunate, in order to improve the quality of life. This lifestyle can be applied to everyone, any class or society can do it (any job or richer or poorer can apply). The basic purpose is pure body, speech, and mind to lead a happy life.

## 4. WAYS TO CULTIVATE RIGHT LIVELIHOOD AS A PATH TOWARD HONORING LIVING

To cultivate right livelihood as a path of honoring living in terms of the following *dhamma* (Buddha’s teachings). In brief, those four groups of ways can be abbreviated as the SMSDE, which can be stated as follows:

- (1) *Sīla*: Here, it refers to commendable behavior that consists of observing the precepts, in particular, the Five Precepts and ethical behavior, including good words, speech, and thought.
- (2) Mutual respect: It means the foundation of humane and ethical behavior, and mutual respect underlies good relationships.
- (3) *Samādhi*: It refers to praiseworthy effort that includes mental development such as mindfulness meditation and concentration practice, i.e. *jhāna*.
- (4) *Dāna*: It signifies meritorious action comprising giving, generosity or charity.

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 113.



(5) Ethical act: It is the unwritten rules of behavior instilled in their upbringing and environment that are widely disseminated.

Cultivating SMSDE (*Sīla*, Mutual respect, *Samādhī*, *Dāna*, Ethical act) to develop Right Livelihood focus on Achievement of Honoring Living:

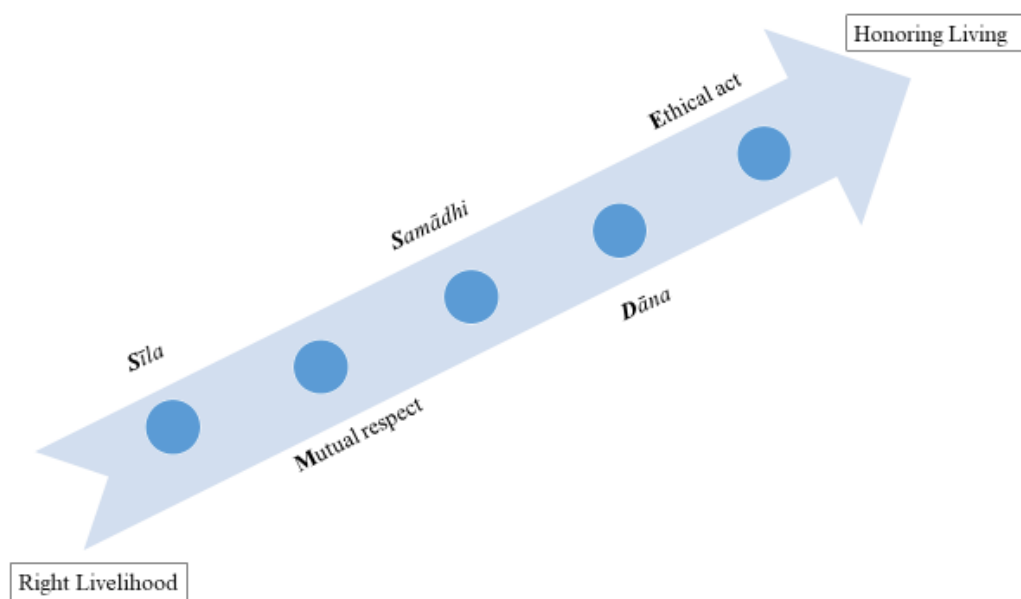
*Sīla* are the foundation for developing and maintaining good qualities, eliminating and avoiding bad qualities, living in the congregation keeping good precepts, each individual in the congregation also has the benefit and responsibility of being a member of the community. Keeping the precepts for yourself is also keeping the precepts so that the congregation is clean. If there is no assembly, then you must practice to keep the precepts clean. The sentient beings around will enjoy this benefit.

Mutual respect is Dhamma reflection when comparing oneself with others, which means putting oneself in the place of another person or being, in order to have correct understanding and have empathy and sympathy for what happened.

The growth of *Samādhī* is indispensable because concentration helps the mind to remain calm, clear, and to see the ultimate phenomena, thus knowing what to do and what to avoid.

*Dāna* helps to reduce greed, frugality and gain peace from sharing, great meaningful deeds always start from small meaningful deeds.

Ethical act comes from right understanding, a good moral foundation, a sense of wanting to benefit, not harming oneself, other sentient beings, and always bringing good things to those around them.



## 5. CONCLUSION

Happiness in the western thought is assorted. It has diverse meanings, shift time by time and level of happiness is not stable, easy to chaos. This kind of happiness is easily carried away by fame, fortune, and power; another kind of happiness is the living in the way of dhamma can be only suitable monks, priests and missionaries. This living is awesome but it cannot be applied to everyone; the last kind is living by right livelihood which can be applied to everyone, any class or society can follow it.

The right livelihood is given many specific examples for the monks, lay people to follow, without being inclined to extremes or favoritism. It helps to understand how to live and practice the right livelihood to help practitioners easily see the truth, reduce greed and hatred in the most natural and effective way.

The three theoretical doctrines of happiness in Buddhism are the Sensual Happiness, Happiness of Meditative Absorption and the Supreme Happiness. The first one is not recommended because it is also part of the cause of many loops of reincarnation. The second and third are recommended because it helps to create a peaceful, balanced mind that can attain enlightenment to end the chain of of samsara. Also, Boon (puñña) is happiness, a social product introduced from the Buddhist economics of happiness to play a strategic role in promoting infinite happiness, and a solution to the happiness paradox problems.

Related from SMSDE (Sīla, Mutual respect, Samādhī, Dāna, Ethical act); people with pure precepts will always do the right thing without harming the living beings around; people who respect others will always be treated with courtesy and respect; A person whose mind is always clear and who strives to persevere in meditation is always admired and respected by the world; Doing charity to share what is available to those in need to eliminate greed and have a joyful mind; Ethical behavior shows a person's character, the ethical behavior of any individual will generally affect that community or collective, and when other people see that a person has moral behavior, they can follow. Buddha did and let others see the good and good from him for them to follow, this spread may be slow but will be stable and sure.

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