# Right Attitude to Work

*by*

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We will look at right attitude to work from two key perspectives, attitude to whatever we do or our actions of our daily life and attitude to our work as what we do for living, our profession, occupation or job.

Looking from the first perspective, we know that we do things all the time, from the moment we get up in the morning till we go to bed, and even when we go to bed, in sleeping we act, in the sense that it is the act of sleeping. This means that we always do something, from the morning to night and from birth to death.

We do things physically, verbally, and mentally, by 'three doors of action' in Buddhist language. An action becomes an action when it is preceded and accompanied by a corresponding intention. For example, when I wish to do ordinary day-to-day things such as getting up, sitting down, walking to the kitchen etc. I have a mind to do so even though we do most of these things as if those things happen automatically. But, in fact, even if such acts may appear spontaneous, they are not. Morally and ethically speaking, however, such acts could most often be neutral, meaning neither moral nor immoral. The very same acts, nonetheless, could be morally evaluated as good or bad, right or wrong, pleasant or unpleasant, kind or unkind, violent or peaceful, rude or mild, harsh or soft, just or bias, cultured or uncultured, civilized or uncivilized, reasonable or unreasonable, etc. depending on the state of mind or intention behind the act.

In Buddhism we are taught that there are roots for our actions or that our actions are rooted on certain states of mind. Accordingly, actions are negative or bad when they have greed, hatred and delusion *(lobha, dosa, moha)* as their roots, and our actions

are positive when they have opposites of those characteristics, generosity, compassion and understanding *(alobha, adosa, amoha).*

This means that whenever we do whatever action we need to be aware of the underlying intentions or motives of those actions. The positive lesson to be learnt is that, in all types of things we do in our day-to-day life we need to do those with right attitudes, right intentions and right motives.

Looking from the second perspective, we know that usually we do some work for a living, what we call our occupation, profession, work or job. A very important thing to make sure is that what we do for a living has to be guided by those good states of mind mentioned above, generosity, compassion and understanding. This means that our occupation cannot cause harm to us who are engaged in it, or to others who receive the results of it and finally to both ourselves and others. For instance, if you are a trader you cannot trade in things harmful to others such as weapons, poisons, alcohol, intoxicating and addictive drugs and the like. If you are a seller, you cannot use wrong weights and measures and deceive your buyers. If you are a professional such as a physician, lawyer, engineer, teacher, pharmacist and the like you have to be honest and compassionate in what you do and not do. You have to supply your service to all those who need it without compromising its quality or quantity in any manner.

The right attitude to work requires you to have a right mind-set about your occupation or profession guided by right understanding and compassion. If we become arrogant on account of our professional status and treat others indignantly that is to have wrong attitude to our occupation. The same applies to its opposite, if you think what you do for a living is low or unworthy, so long as the work is not immoral, we should not feel so. So long as you attend to your work in that mentality you are not providing your service properly. In fact, so long as what you do for a living is not harmful or immoral, there is nothing to be ashamed of it. In brief, your occupation should not be a cause to be arrogant, to look down upon others, or to feel disheartened about.

Right attitude to work entails good work ethics: In our society, the prevalent attitude among all types of workers is to do the minimum and get the maximum – not attending to work, not doing work completely, not attending to work on time, doing work haphazardly, getting all possible leave are some usual features of our bad work ethics. The right attitude to work requires us to draw our salary only after doing our work adequately. In other words, we need to deserve what we get as compensation for our work.

To sum up: work is our life from getting up in the morning to going to bed at night, and from our birth to death. It is our collective work that is responsible for the functioning of the world we live in, whether it be our small world at home, our workplace, or the larger world of the country, which constitutes a part of the world we inhabit. This means that the right attitude toward work is of paramount importance for the smooth operation of even the entire world.



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Mind is the fore-runner of (all good) conditions
Mind is chief; and they are mind-made.
If, with a pure mind, one speaks or acts,
then happiness follows one
even as the shadow that never leaves.

*Yamaka Vagga, Dhammapada, v.2*

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