

Texts from Buddhism on Work and Workers¹

Vanijja Sutta (AN 5.177)

Monks, a lay follower should not engage in five types of business. Which five? Business in weapons, business in human beings, business in meat, business in intoxicants, and business in poison. These are the five types of business that a lay follower should not engage in.

Magga-vibhanga Sutta (SN 45.8)

And what, monks, is right livelihood? There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones, having abandoned dishonest livelihood, keeps his life going with right livelihood: This, monks, is called right livelihood.

Cunda Kammaraputta Sutta (AN 10.176)

And how is one made impure in three ways by bodily action? There is the case where a certain person takes life, is a hunter, bloody-handed, devoted to killing & slaying, showing no mercy to living beings. He takes what is not given. He takes, in the manner of a thief, things in a village or a wilderness that belong to others and have not been given by them. He engages in sensual misconduct. He gets sexually involved with those who are protected by their mothers, their fathers, their brothers, their sisters, their relatives, or their Dhamma; those with husbands, those who entail punishments, or even those crowned with flowers by another man. This is how one is made impure in three ways by bodily action.

[. . .]

And how is one made pure in three ways by bodily action? There is the case where a certain person, abandoning the taking of life, abstains from the taking of life. He dwells with his rod laid down, his knife laid down, scrupulous, merciful, compassionate for the welfare of all living beings. Abandoning the taking of what is not given, he abstains from taking what is not given. He does not take, in the manner of a thief, things in a village or a wilderness that belong to others and have not been given by them. Abandoning sensual misconduct, he abstains from sensual misconduct. He does not get sexually involved with those who are protected by their mothers, their fathers, their brothers, their sisters, their relatives, or their Dhamma; those with husbands, those who entail punishments, or even those crowned with flowers by another man. This is how one is made pure in three ways by bodily action.

¹ Translations taken from www.accesstoinsight.org, trans. Thanissaro Bhikkhu. These texts are from Theravada Buddhism, the oldest branch of Buddhism still practiced today, and are translated from the ancient Pali language.