

Mindful Consumption

by Thich Nhat Hanh

Aware that true happiness is rooted in peace, solidity, freedom, and compassion, and not in wealth or fame, we are determined not to take as the aim of our life fame, profit, wealth, or sensual pleasure, nor to accumulate wealth while millions are hungry and dying. We are committed to living simply and sharing our time, energy, and material resources with those in need. We will practice mindful consuming, not using alcohol, drugs, or any other products that bring toxins into our own and the collective body and consciousness.

...The aim of Buddhist life is to realize insight and to help people, not to gain fame, power, or wealth. How can we have time to live the Buddhist ideal if we are constantly pursuing wealth or fame? If we do not live simply, we have to work all the time to pay our bills, and there is little time left for practice [of the path]. The Sutra of the Eight Realizations of the Great Beings says, "The human mind is always searching for possessions and never feels fulfilled. This causes impure actions ever to increase. Bodhisattvas, however, always remember the principle of having few desires. They live a simple life in peace in order to practice the Way, and consider the realization of perfect understanding as their only career."

In the context of modern society, simple living also means to remain as free as possible from the destructive momentum of social and economic pressures, to avoid modern diseases such as stress, depression, high blood pressure, and heart disease. We must resolve to oppose the type of modern life filled with pressures and anxieties that so many people now live. The only way out is to consume less, to be content with fewer possessions. We must discuss this with others who share our concern for finding better ways to live simply and happily together. Once we are able to live simply and happily, we are better able to help others. We have more time and energy to share. Sharing is difficult if you are wealthy. Bodhisattvas who practice the *paramita* of living a simple life are able to give both their time and their energy to others. [Pages 32-33]

Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful consumption, I am committed to cultivating good health, both physical and mental, for myself, my family, and my society by practicing mindful eating, drinking, and consuming. I will ingest only items that preserve peace, well-being, and joy in my body, in my consciousness, and in the collective body and consciousness of my family and society. I am determined not to use alcohol or any other intoxicant or to ingest foods or other items that contain toxins, such as certain TV programs, magazines, books, films, and conversations. I am aware that to damage my body or my consciousness with these poisons is to betray my ancestors, my parents, my society, and future generations. I will work to transform violence, fear, anger, and confusion in myself and in society by practicing a diet for myself and for society. I understand that a proper diet is crucial for self-transformation and for the transformation of society. [Page 71]

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