

RIGHT LIVELIHOOD

Making a Living...and a Life!

By Judith Goldberg

"All work is empty save when there is love...Work is love made visible."
Kahlil Gibran



The Protestant Work Ethic

When God banished Adam and Eve from Paradise, he sentenced them to hard labor as punishment for their transgressions. The equation of work and penance became lodged in the collective consciousness where it gave rise to the great Protestant work ethic, and even to our contemporary workplace malaise--oppressive and dysfunctional work environments and high rates of worker dissatisfaction. (Check out the popular lexicon--"Why do you think they call it work?" "The dirtiest four letter word in the English language ends in 'k', etc.) Statistics show (survey by Career builder.com) that one in four Americans are dissatisfied with their jobs, workers in general want more from their careers and in 2005, 61% of American workers planned to leave their current employment for other pursuits such as finding a dream job, starting a business or returning to school. Women in the work force have additional burdens and often need to make difficult lifestyle choices. Examining how and why people choose their work (often for priorities like money and prestige) and how they define success, yields important clues to the degradation of fulfillment in the workplace. How do we reconcile this reality with Gibran's "work is love made visible"? Slowly, new values are beginning to filter into the mainstream. This trend is evidenced by the growing popularity of books like "Do what You Love and the Money Will Follow", "Find Your Calling; Love Your Life", "The Practical Dreamer's Handbook" and "What Should I Do with My Life?"

The Spiritual Side of Work

When Buddha laid out the "Eightfold Noble Path to Enlightenment" he included "right view, intention, speech, action, effort, mindfulness, concentration, and right livelihood". He put work squarely into a spiritual context (albeit quite different from the Western biblical one). Contemporary teacher and 'prophet' Neale Donald Walsh, in his book, "Abundance and Right Livelihood", echoed the Buddha's sentiment when he defined Right Livelihood as "work that is ethical and helpful to one's spiritual development." As a karmic astrologer, my definition of right livelihood goes a step further. I view it as "the work you were born to do".

Life is purposeful and we are on an evolutionary path. Right work is the creative expression of our true essence—love—and is part of our life plan. Work is a vehicle for achieving growth, personal power and wholeness. We find wholeness by discovering God inside ourselves and expressing Spirit in our lives. *"When you work with love you bind yourself to yourself, and to one another and to God"*. (Kahlil Gibran) The two major channels through which we learn and grow in life are relationships and work. In relationships, we seek love and a connection with others. Through work we explore our creative power. Love and creativity are our natural state of being. They are gifts of the Creator—how we are "made in the image of God". We are here on earth to use our gifts!

In former times, those who chose a path of spiritual service often retreated from society into religious or monastic orders, living lives of poverty, or at least simplicity. Contemporary solutions demand a balance of both mundane and spiritual needs. Work can serve our ideals, utilize our gifts and support a comfortable lifestyle. It can fill our souls and our pockets.

Work History

The culture of work that has existed in the world for at least the last 4000 years is intrinsically survivalist. It is rooted in our tribal and agrarian past where its purpose was the provision of food, clothing and shelter. The Industrial Revolution ushered in a new paradigm, whereby work became the exchange of time, labor and skills for money. In post WWII America, greater availability of secondary and higher education created an explosion in career options, upward mobility and even leisure time. Yet conventional attitudes regarding stability and security prevailed. Baby Boomers grew up and came of age in a "train for a lifetime career; hang in til age 65; then retire and play golf" world. Changing careers was generally stigmatized-- a sign of disloyalty, irresponsibility or failure. In the '70's & '80's advances in technology created the first wave of modern workplace obsolescence and a shifting economic climate undermined the foundations of many previously secure professions. These trends continue, along with shifting attitudes, realization that all change isn't bad and a new freedom of choice. Today, career changing is a socially acceptable norm. More change lies ahead as longevity increases, expanding the productive years of life. Retirement, once looked upon as a sort of return to Eden, is also undergoing a transformation.

Astrological Guideposts

Self-actualized individuals with a well developed social consciousness and a desire to make a difference in the world are those most likely to seek and find their true calling. The key to finding right work is in knowing your life purpose. To this end, an astrological birth chart yields much useful information. In the chart, the life path is framed by two opposing points in space called the nodes of the moon (one in the southern and one in the northern hemisphere). The south node is the karmic entry point (what we bring from the past), while the north node represents our growth potential or "dharma". The chart provides a strategic blueprint for the journey from south to north, with the planet Saturn acting as facilitator, guide and catalyst.

Saturn Cycles

An oft quoted Biblical verse comes from the Book of Ecclesiastes. "For everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven." Authorship is assigned to the wise King Solomon. As the planet Saturn represents age and maturity, the old king is a perfect Saturnine role model. Solomon's words provide a guideline for charting Saturn's cycle. Saturn's movement through the natal chart is one of the most important vehicles astrologers have for timing life cycles. Because the ringed planet rules career issues, it is an influential significator in this arena. Life moves forward, not in a straight line, but in an upward spiral that is both circular and progressive. At times it wraps back around, for review & rectification. Astrologers mark time by the cycle of Saturn. Saturn completes a round of the birth chart every 30 years. Every seven years it creates a major aspect that catalyzes change. At the completion of the 30 year cycle it returns to its natal position, a time known as a Saturn Return. The first Saturn Return (age 28-30) marks the entrance into adulthood. At this juncture individuals begin to make more conscious pro-active choices.

In the Beginning

Much of an individual's early career life is devoted to preparation in two major categories. The first is work related—getting a basic and/or professional education, developing natural aptitudes, collecting credentials, learning the ropes, building a positive work ethic, and sorting out what fits and doesn't fit. The second category pertains to personal and spiritual growth—meeting challenges, mastering important life lessons, managing relationships and gaining maturity. In the final analysis, all these experiences contribute in some meaningful way to personal progress and subsequent results. Every experience is an opportunity for learning and advancement. Right livelihood is not an end product or a destination; it is an open ended quest or journey. By this yardstick, there is really no "wrong livelihood"—just evolving stages of "right-for-now" livelihood! Each stage is important in its own right and as a building block for future development. Every career is a work in progress and the path unfolds over time. Buddha said *"Your work is to discover your work in life and then to give yourself to it passionately"*.

Mid-Life Crisis

The movement of Saturn around the chart activates each unfolding stage along the parallel paths of life and career. The mid life-crisis (in the mid-forties) occurs when Saturn opposes its natal position in the chart. This opposition is a "push me, pull me" experience wherein one may feel torn in two different directions. At this juncture, individuals often find they can no longer cling

to the security of the past while ignoring the promptings of the heart or of the little voice inside their head. External circumstances can also force change. The Saturn opposition frequently catalyzes a 180 degree turnaround. A check of the horoscope can provide good information as to what change is warranted and where the best future course lies.

Maturity

Seeds planted at the Saturn opposition (age 43-45) typically yield mature fruit at the second Saturn Return, around age 57-60. This is a time of reaping, when life comes full circle. It is often marked by preceding work & life experiences coming together into a new gestalt. With greater longevity, the second Saturn Return is now also the beginning of a third cycle, the entrance into the sage years. Like tribal elders, this is a time of life when individuals become mentors and teachers and often focus their energies on serving the wider community or the world and leaving a legacy.

Charting the Course

An astrological career consultation is an investment in your future that can change your life (or at least your perspective on life). It can help you to identify and develop your God-given talents and connect with your passion. A chart analysis can help you understand your relationship to money, and reveal hidden barriers to success, like a need to please others or prove your self-worth. It can also provide practical strategies to make your dream a reality. But, remember--there are no magic bullets. Even when you find your bliss you will still need commitment, persistence, hard work, and sometimes adequate investment capital! Discovering your right work is an investment in a more fulfilling future. Whether vocation or avocation, right livelihood can be a joyful part of a balanced, healthy lifestyle, feeding mind, body and spirit, making a living--and a life!

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