

Reflections on patience from David:

When I reflect on Khanti, the parami of patience, my first thought is how much we are already practicing this. In scripture, patience is described as the highest virtue. We return, over and over and over, to the present moment in our meditation and our daily life. We let go of the hindrances over and over, our irritations, our fears, desires, distractions.

Sometimes there is a stuckness, an adhesiveness to a hindrance, and we can't get loose. Suzuki Roshi said that "When our practice is greedy we get discouraged." We want this to end, to not exist now. What has had more impact on your life---practice with good times, or in difficult times, conflicts and struggles that you found your way through, in meditation, in daily life? Riches, transformations come from our patient struggles. Patience tells us to relax and work with this, with devotion to our aspiration, our aspiration to be liberated from stresses, conflicts, aggravations, afflictions caused by greed, hatred and delusion. This is when patience shows its beautiful richness, when it is linked to our devotion to liberation. These places, when tended carefully, attentively, and with patience, yield the best and most long lasting results.

There are many kinds of seeds, aspects to practice, that are applicable to various times and places---mindfulness always, compassion, good will, virtue, contemplation on death, seeing change, seeing awareness. We patiently tend to our practice and let Dharma take care of the rest. We don't keep one eye on the destination, measuring how far we have come. Are we there yet? Just patiently tending our practice, focussing on the path, allowing seeds to germinate, sprout, grow in their own time.

There is the story of the farmer who pulled sprouts out of the ground to see how far they have grown, killing them. If it is difficult we stay with it, devoted to our aspiration, and confident in our way. The Bhagavad Gita, the great Hindu text, says we should act without attachment to the fruit of our action. We can do what we do with full commitment, but the outcome is often beyond our control. When we act without attachment to the outcome, then our minds remain peaceful no matter how things unfold. The Dalai Lama emphasizes that the value of an action is measured not by its success or failure, but by the **motivation** behind it. When our motivations are skillful, then we can abide in our patient

practice, with ease and peace, regardless of whether we succeed or fail in our endeavors.

With our appreciation of Khanti, there can be more steadiness in our practice, and this steadiness, this perseverance, perhaps more than any other practice quality, is what develops our wisdom and freedom. How would it be to mindfully get up and out of bed, staying mindful of the body, intimate with the present moment, going to the bathroom, brushing teeth, dressing, walking to the kitchen, making breakfast, and through the day. Not pushing, not striving, but with a steady and light mindfulness. Just enough - constant, patient attention. At Zen Center we would say, "practice is enlightenment." There is freedom in mindfully scrubbing a tatami mat, "cleaning our mind" when as we clean the mat.

Reactivity comes into our lives, particularly in social situations. Keep heart and mind moving with aspiration, small many moments of gentleness. This is what we do, what we know to do. Let others have their views, have the last word. We pause, and speak the way we know to speak, without reactivity, perhaps with kindness, and we save the relationship. At least we don't harm others and ourselves. We let many moments of impatience pass by, many moments of aversion, of doubt, of frustration at not getting what I want, of judgements of self and others. Ajahn Chah said that "Patience is the supreme incinerator. Drop it in, let it burn." It strengthens our hearts, and is an antidote to our ailments.

There is so much of the time when nothing is wrong at all. We are pretty free. Appreciate that. Know that. We don't have to change that. Notice cats and dogs. It is ok to be content, to notice happiness. Patience with our peace and happiness. Everything is all right. We are all right, pretty good, pretty kind, pretty moral, mindful, aspiring to truth and beauty. Look to your intentions, not outcomes. We need to be patient with our goodness and the alrightness of everything.

I delivered furniture in high school with a man named Ray, who would admonish anyone rushing around with, "What's your hurry?" When a car would honk at our truck, he would say, "What's your hurry?" He was a high quality worker, steady, thorough, never bumping into walls when carrying sofas and refrigerators, moving mindfully and slowly, always getting the work done efficiently and surprisingly quickly. I imagined

him being the same when he went home, easy going, sitting in his favorite chair, helping around the house, living his life.

Practices for the Week:

Practice 1: See if you can notice times when nothing is wrong at all, when things are pretty alright. This may even feel like the neutral aspect of feeling tone i.e. pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral (neither pleasant or unpleasant). Once you notice this state of all-rightness, notice how it feels in the mind and body. What are the sensations associated with this state of being? If you wish, talk to a friend or write about your experience.

Practice 2: When you find yourself in a rush or even semi-rush, ask yourself, “What’s my hurry?” Notice what happens in your mind and body when you ask yourself this question. Does the mind and body contract in rebellion or soften and open? If you wish, talk to a friend or write about your experience.

Reflection:

Reflect on the following question from paragraph two above: What has had more impact on your life---practice with good times, or in difficult times, conflicts and struggles that you found your way through, in meditation, in daily life? Can you think of specific examples? If you wish, talk to a friend or write about your reflections.

Optional Reading:

Sylvia Boorstein’s chapter on patience in the book, *Pay Attention For Goodness Sake*, available at your local library if you don’t have a copy.