

## Reflections from David on Patient Perseverance

A student told Suzuki Roshi in an interview, "I want to be enlightened." Suzuki Roshi looked at him for a while, and said, "If your practice is good, enlightenment will come. But even if it doesn't it is almost the same." This story has always encouraged me, to appreciate the almost sameness of enlightenment and my practice right now, the enlightenment right now, the light now everywhere in life, the light of awareness that is abundant and clear when I look at it, appreciate it, see that it is clearly and obviously so close to me, right here. And still, there is an "almost," in the "almost the same." One could spend a lifetime with "almost." The subtle nuances of clinging, of the "are we there yet?" like a child in the back seat, the small voice of striving in the background. The "almost" is the heart of practice. Enlightenment is always, almost here.

In the discourse on the main code of his teaching, the Ovada Patimokkha, the Buddha began, Patience, that is to say forbearance, is to be considered the supreme endeavor. Suzuki Roshi called practice "beginners' mind," because even the most experienced practitioner is always beginning again.

We live in an irritating realm. It is too hot, too cold, hateful thoughts, judgmental thoughts, comparative, lustful, fearful thoughts, bragging people, loud people, bad smells, sickness, restlessness, ambition, measuring---endless irritations. We can be committed to this expansive mind of awareness and relax, and still include all of our stewing fulminating destructive thoughts and feelings, with the wide perspective of forbearance. Elation sinks into fear into depression into anger, rises into acceptance, into contentment, back to happiness, patiently aware through myriad endless permutations. This too shall pass, all of this. We relax "almost" and temporarily into the still point, with acceptance and allowing of the permutations, free from fundamental disturbance.

Patience is wise and confident about arising and passing. Through this forbearance we do not act on harmful thoughts and impulses, knowing those actions will create perhaps long lasting disturbing scars of remorse and regret in our consciousness. The more harmful they are the more we remember. We endeavor to do good, to be generous, to be moral, to be considerate, and refrain from acts that cause division and harm. We bring out our best qualities and move toward silence.

We go round and round the circle of the worldly Dharmas. Someone says we are wonderful, we are on top of the world. The next minute someone says we are horrible, we are at the bottom of the stack. All we can trust is our

forbearance of these vicissitudes accompanied by a patient return to what we can really trust. Awareness accepts and includes, with a cool, clear and pleasant detachment, all that we hate and like and what is neutral, without making it more complicated.

Patience allows us to relax into and trust our original purity, and from this perspective allows the constant irritations and impurities of this realm to come and go. We bear with wanting to hold onto what we like, (including the longing to be non attached), and wanting to get rid of what we don't like. From this perspective we see that the more we resist or want anything the worse it gets. We have space to see—we got it all wrong about someone. He is not so bad. And we are grateful that we did not act out in a harmful way. We got it all wrong about ourselves. We can bear, accept, allow emotions, thoughts, fears, desires, greed, hate, delusion, the body, and the way other people are.

We are so fortunate that we know the cool ease, beauty, pleasantness and peace of beginning again, when we patiently return to the still point of a relaxed expansive mind, and feel closer to “enlightenment” than to “almost.” We can't purify ourselves or any conditions. That is a hopeless task, and we will only fail. But we can always return to the purity of our true nature. This is real, and it is always ready to receive us. It is said that the road to Nibbana is paved with patience. We can be provisionally enlightened, with infinite consciousness trusting and allowing this moment, over and over again all day long. We don't need to hold onto anything.

Reflection: What's your experience of patient perseverance, of the act of returning over and over again to our breath, to our body, to whatever is happening at that moment? Reflect on this quality of patient perseverance as it relates to your sitting practice as well as daily life. We invite you to write about your experience and/or talk to a friend.

#### Reading and Practice from Ajahn Sucitto's chapter on Patience

Patience may at first strike you as a teeth-gritting 'hang on until it's over' quality. But this would not be perfect patience, because in such a case, the mind is still longing for the end of the experience — aversion hasn't been relinquished. Perfect patience has the soft and heartfelt strength of having 'all the time in the world' to rest in an experience. It relaxes the edge of time. The transformative power of patience is such that, as the mind relaxes its defensiveness and bristling, the annoying delay becomes an occasion for spaciousness, and the other person's irritating behavior is something you can meet, with empathy, as their unfortunate problem. Naturally it also includes the wisdom to know what

one just has to bear with, and when there is the occasion to act in a clear and responsible way. Patience is not meant to transform you into a doormat, but to act as a firebreak on immediate impulses that will not bring around your welfare.

This week, notice what your experience is of discerning when “one just has to bear with, and when there is the occasion to act in a clear and responsible way”. We invite you to write about what your experience and practice of this and/or talk to a friend.

### Talks

Here are talks from Abhayagiri on Patience. We invite you to pick one or two talks to listen to and write your own reflections on same or talk to a friend about them.

<https://www.abhayagiri.org/talks/subjects/2/22-patience?p=4>