

# 2005-04-18 Paramis: Patience

Thu, 7/16 5:33PM • 41:31

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

patience, develop, meditation practice, impulses, mind, practice, patients, qualities, people, buddha, life, arise, person, zen, integrity, waited, perseverance, endurance, insult, mindfulness practice

## SPEAKERS

Gil Fronsdal

So I'm doing this year long course on what's called the power of these are the perfections, the power meters. And there's 10 of them. And these are considered very important qualities of character qualities of personal inner strength that can support Dharma practice, Buddhist practice. They have a mythological origin, in that there's a myth that the man who became the Buddha spent many, many lifetimes, developing himself, so that he could develop those perfections those qualities of beings that would take to become a Buddha and, and their stories about the called kind of like some of them are like aisa fables, various stories about how he developed himself over the many, many lifetimes that he practiced. And some of these stories have to do with with any of them has to do with the development Have these 10 qualities called the 10 perfections with 10 armies. And as the Buddhist tradition developed, especially in Southeast Asia, these 10 qualities, were also understood to be very supportive of anybody who wants to practice the Buddhist practice. People who are not set to becoming a Buddha don't have to develop them to the level of perfection that a Buddha does, but still very important qualities. And you find in Asia sometimes, when people reach a wall in the practice of practicing and practicing and meditation practice is going along. And then they reach a wall or plateau and they don't seem to go any further. Sometimes teachers will say, oh, now it's time for you to develop your character or develop these personal qualities. And once those qualities of character are present, then perhaps you can begin again and go further with your meditation practice with your spiritual practice. So these 10 qualities are. The first one is generosity. The second is integrity. The third is renunciation or letting go. The fourth is wisdom. And the fifth is bigger or effort or energy. And then after that comes patience, which is theme for this month. And then after patience comes truth, truthfulness, dedication to truth, being honest. And then comes, determination or resolve having a strong resolve for what you want to do. And then comes loving kindness, and then equanimity. That's list of 10 and the terror bond tradition. And some of these are developed naturally as a byproduct of dedicated mindfulness practice. It's as if my if you've tried to be mindful, which is Another way of saying being honest, really honest, show up, be present and really honest what's happening here. And learn to do that in a way that's nonreactive. that a lot of these it that that simple practice, maybe just

not that simple, but that practice is a magnet for developing other personal qualities or developing of character. And some people prefer not to do anything about developing their character. Aside from just developing the mindfulness practice showing up being present being here. Some people find it very useful to develop themselves develop their character, because as they become more developed, it becomes much more important to do the mindfulness practice. So for example, integrity may be an obvious one, that if a person lacks personal integrity, it's actually very hard to go very deep, are very far in meditation practice because the two go dimetric post to each other. If you want to practice a practice which is focused on being honest, you got to be honest. And if you're not, you don't have that integrity, you know you those two clash and one is going to win out. So. So if you cultivate your integrity, you develop it and think it's important quality to have, then that becomes a soil or a bed or foundation in which meditation practice can advance a lot easier, and sometimes a lot faster. This tradition says the same thing about generosity. If you develop the ability to give and have a generous heart. It turns out it's a lot easier to develop a mindfulness practice, develop concentration and mindfulness. If you develop your capacity to let go appropriately. That also helps develop meditation practice. Now patience, the theme for this month is one of those things which is that for many people, the first lesson they have To learn if they begin a meditation practice. And for some people, it's also the last lesson. I think most people, when you sit down to meditate, will have to cultivate a certain degree of patience with the speed of the practice and with what they have to encounter in themselves, or in their environment when they sit down to try to be still quiet, relaxed and calm. The if you don't develop patience, if that quality you somehow come upon, you probably going to suffer. Because if you don't develop some kind of patience, some kind of broad acceptance or broad spaciousness around some of the things that you've discovered about yourself and your practice. Then your expectations, your agendas, your demands, your ideals, your impatience, your aversions, your fears. will get the upper hand. And if they get the upper hand, then you get swept away by them. They get caught, but then you get entangled in their web, their sticky webs. One of the ways that I develop patience through my Buddhist practice was when I practice Zen practice in my early years of meditation practice. And in doing Zen practice, I wasn't told to do much. It was part of the beauty and sometimes the irritation of Zen practice. You're not told anything, except show up and be be there be present for what's there. And the way I understood that was to practice on compromising acceptance of what was present now. And as I did that, I found that often there was impulses inside of me that didn't want to be present. Wanting to be in the future. In the past, I wanted to kind of react to what was there at way wasn't accepting what's there, but was reactive pushing it away or wanting to hold on to certain things. But at the Zen training was a training of complete acceptance of what is here. One way that translated into Zen Meditation was physically and mentally, to sit still, with whatever arose, whatever was there. So an impulse would arise to itch. Now, here in our tradition, we don't say anything about that. So, not so uncommon to see people teach themselves scratch themselves. But not in Zen. You know, you have to sit still. And if you have an itch, you can't move. So you can't move your body. So that's ground rule. You said there was no Zen book, the Zen of teaching, you know, attending oneness with rich. And so you sit there with rich, but then you notice that your mind moves. Even though you keep your body still the mind moves. And so so the mind is irritated, the mind is angry is impatient, the mind is begins thinking about this must be skin cancer, the mind starts being afraid, the mind starts getting agitated

and spinning out. And it can get quite wild in the mind, if you don't get to scratch that itch. To my knowledge, no one has ever died in meditation from an itch. So it's a relatively safe phenomenon to sit still with. And so the mind moves. But this is us in practice I did was, in a sense, not to let the mind move, we're not not to pick up the movements of the mind not to get involved in them. So it's as if there's some capacity of the mind, to have an impulse and to leave it alone. So it's like the container of the mind. Stay still. Even though Popcorn tapping inside of it. Or another very different kind of approach analogy would be that it's that it's like you have a very calm center. And you don't leave that calm center. Even though around the center, there's agitation in the mind. So you learn to stay there, you don't pick something up, you don't go towards something, you know, go away from something. And so in Zen practice, that's sitting still, physically and mentally, with all the mental and physical stuff that might happen. Day after day after day, month after month, year after year, develops patience develops the capacity not to pick up not to get involved in the reactions of the mind. And that's my definition of patients these dislike this week at least is the ability to not get caught by The reactive impulses of the mind and there's a wide range of them. There's the reactive impulses, to wonderful things happening. Someone comes along and praises you. To have patience is to not get caught or get aroused, we get excited to get carried away, don't let go to your head by that praise. If someone criticizes you, that ability to be patient, is the ability not to get caught up in the web of thoughts or reactions that might appear when you're being criticized. Oh, maybe maybe you don't like it. Maybe you're afraid with the criticism. But the fear arises. And there's a place of stillness, a place in the mind that doesn't move for against that. Unless you think unmoving mind is a boring mind. It's one of the most beautiful things in the human psyche, is that place where the mind doesn't move. It's luminous. It's all encompassing. It's soft, it's beautiful, beautiful thing. So, the word for patience is Kunti, in Pali and Sanskrit Shanti. And the way that it often works when you translate between different languages, there's not as often not a one to one correspondence between English and Indian words. And that's the case with Kunti. and patience is the most common translation, but it misses a lot. And perhaps we can understand patients to have different aspects or different ways that patients manifest itself in different circumstances. Patients takes different forms. And so sometimes it's appropriate to translate this word other ways besides patients. One of the meanings of patients of content is perseverance. And that is when you're doing something that's worthwhile doing this country this patience is perseverance is not giving up, not getting, not getting what you can get discouraged. That can be a reaction to the mind. You can't necessarily prevent your mind from getting discouraged. But you can with patience or this perseverance. You don't pick up the discouragement. You don't get entangled with it, you don't get caught by it. So the story I've often told when I was writing my dissertation, I think most people when they write dissertation, as sooner or later are visited by discouragement by this is impossible. Why did I do this? I can't do this. It's kind of the nature of dissertation anybody under dissertation. Anybody not had that and done a dissertation. And, but because of attributed to my Buddhist practice that when I was you know, plugging away and had those kinds of thoughts. I treated them like pesky little flies flying around the back of my head kind of, and I just ignore them. I can't do this. This is impossible foods gonna take too And I just would focus my attention on doing the next footnote. Whenever we know the next, the next, the next word, the next sentence, and so the so patients had the form of perseverance, where I didn't get entangled in those impulses that would

distract me from continuing the direction I was going. In other form of patience is endurance. And sometimes the Translate is forbearance, endurance. And in, in the Asian Buddhism, the forbearance or endurance is considered a very important quality. Here in the West, we talk a lot about loving kindness as being very important. And sometimes I get the sense that in Asia, they actually put forbearance or endurance, and they talk about it more and they talk about loving kindness. We almost never talked about it here in the West. But endurance has the meaning and some people have the idea of endurance, even patients. It's But endurance, often has kind of negative connotations. And patients can have that it's kind of like being at being passive. It's maybe being kind of accepting things which shouldn't be accepted. Or it's kind of putting a limitation on us. And we don't want to be limited. And endurance can have that feeling also. But the most common example given for endurance, is endurance, under insult, if someone insults you, and this is something that schoolchildren try to teach each other or try to tease each other with, you know, sticks and stones can break my bones, but words can never touch me. And usually the little bit taunting me right, I think, but when they're trying to learn, the insult doesn't have to affect me. And I can endure it without getting caught, either with my reactions, or I can direct without having reactions arise at all. So To endure insult Why would a person want to endure insult? Or why would a person want to endure certain kinds of challenges or difficulties that might arise today? Well, maybe it's not good example. Maybe bring it up back later. But one of the reasons I think is very interesting, and that is that one of the most precious treasures or resources that any individual has, is their own integrity or is their own peace of mind. And why sacrifice that? Because you've been insulted. The Buddha said, that if you sacrifice paraphrasing, if you sacrifice your peace of mind, your sacrifice Is your own integrity by getting angry at the person who's insulted you, or insulting back, you're doing your enemy a favor and your cause you're a lot, you're doing a harm to yourself that your enemy can never do directly. And so you're actually doing them a favor, because you kind of picked it up and you've kind of lashed back and that you don't have to lash back. You can Ender or stay peaceful or stay kind of more nonreactive say spacious about what's going on. It's might be helpful to see that the Buddha came from a particular caste. In India, there were various views, caste society, and so people belong to different castes. And he came from a warrior class, warrior caste, and a warriors, especially someone who has some ability like the Buddha was a son of a prince or king. Sometimes put a lot of value in traditional culture. At least a lot of value on their honor, on their integrity, on their purity of heart on their cleanness of their, of their intentions and behavior. And it's something that reputation is something that sometimes it's classic nights and summarize and different plays, have put so much value on there don't even lose sacrifice their life in order to maintain that honor. So I think that for the Buddha, there was something tremendously precious about personal integrity that had so much higher value than the value we make might get back from lashing out in anger or lashing out and insult to other people, even if it might seem a good cause. Or even if in the short term, it might seem like a good idea, because if I can just lash out at that guy, he'll just leave me alone finally. So it's really works. I lashed out at him. He left me alone, that work? Isn't that great proof that it works proof it was right. Maybe it was right. And this is kind of funny way. But it's right at a tremendous cost to yourself. And maybe there's a different way of getting what you need besides lashing out. So last night, we had a parents discussion group here. And it was a great story of one of the parents here, who has three children. Two of them are ones in college and

one maybe almost in college and one's eight years old. And she said that all three of her children had trouble at school with bullying, being bullied. And the older ones, they're going to try to figure out what to do about it then the school didn't administrators didn't seem to help much and I guess you've never ever really satisfied how they handle it with these two older ones. But the younger When the eight year old when the bullying when he was being bullied by this particular kid at school, what she figured out to do was she invited that bully home to her house for a special meal, and then took this kid out to some special event with her family. And the bullying stopped. And not only that, but her son and this kid became best friends. So, someone could have lashed out at that boy, the bully, someone could have gotten to paddle and paddling really well. And he probably never maybe never would have bullied again. But is that good? Is that useful just to get them to stop their behavior? I don't think that's good. I know a father who kind of said to once when my son was three or four years old, only once diverse banking. From that time on, we never had any problems with him. Now Was that good? Did that straighten out the kid once and for all and he wasn't, you know? Or was the kid so afraid or so intimidated that some life force in him was Kelvin check from that what you know that experience? I don't know. So what is being sacrificed, what's lost, what opportunities are lost with potential of our own is lost when we get swept up in our reactive behavior. And it's patience, or endurance, or perseverance is one of those qualities very important qualities that preserves or helps us not to get caught up by our reactivity. It's really an essential quality, I think for civilized human life for saying productive human life is to have that done. I suspect everyone One who's alive has some degree of patience. It takes it can take effort. Sometimes the effort of perseverance hanging in there making the effort is continuing. And meditation practice requires a lot of perseverance. Sometimes meditation practice is not good news. No self knowledge is seldom good news, they say. So in mindfulness practice where you're seeing yourself, or sometimes things don't go according to plan in meditation. So often, in fact, that good meditators usually give up planning for the meditation, you know, but people who don't have that don't have that experience that try not okay, I'm not concentrated yet. You know, it's not happening. And it's best not to, you know, be in some kind of timeline, the spiritual life, the inner life, that the spiritual life of the psyche really has his own time. I think it has a rhyme and reason to that time, but it's not usually the time That is the agenda or small mind, or the timeframe of our society which is ever going faster and faster. And there's a story once of the Dalai Lama giving teaching to a big audience of people. And I believe he was talking about the Bodhisattva path. And someone asked him a question in the hall and asked him what the fastest way was to becoming enlightened or becoming a Buddha. And, as the story's been told to me, the Dalai Lama stopped for a long time, just was really silent. And then apparently, tears went down his cheek. And then at some point, he said something about how sad was this, this, you know, this drive is ambitious greed to get results. fastest possible. I think the inner The heart is shy. The heart is slow. It's paradox is a nice story. Also, as I know someone, I don't know who it is anymore but some story about someone who's said, Every day I meditate for half an hour. When I'm really busy, I meditate for an hour. The last meaning of country of Shanti is forgiveness. So it's kind of interesting that the word for patience and forgiveness are kind of conflated in this one word Shanti Shanti. And one of the meanings of forgiveness is simply to not hold a grudge, not hold resentment, not be a person who is unsafe for another person. If you're holding resentment, you're kind of unsafe for that other person. I like that

very simple definition because it's a lower bar to cross than to say forgiveness is to open your heart and welcome them back into your home or to welcome them lovingly. You know, I love you and everything's forgiven. To say no, you know, I'm not going to harm you anymore. I'm not going to hold a grudge against you. That's a lower bar, I think. However, the Buddhist nation does put a lot of emphasis on developing loving kindness. But I see it as two different steps. And it's the two steps are tied together. Letting go of resentment and loving it's maybe kind of too much to handle all at once. But if we can simply focus on letting go of a resentment because if there is no resentment, there's no need for forgiveness. So if we can let go over over our resentment, then you know, that's the first step and then later we can work on opening our hearts to them or having a love for them. So there are lots of opportunities for cultivating patience for cultivating perseverance or endurance or forbearance or forgiveness. I was here meditating peacefully, happily at the dissenter until 430. And between 430 and coming back here, I actually came late 740 something I was surprised how many occasions were patients I had. I had the kind of had to kind of you know, oh, and normally I wouldn't have thought of it as there was patients that I was doing as practicing patients, but because we're going to talk about Oh yes, patients operating. And just thought, you know, they get to go from here home. Because it's five o'clock my son had little league practice. So I got there on time. But it took a while to realize we were in the long field. Wrong Park. Mostly they meet in one place, but once in a while they meet someplace else. I was I'd been told it was a good thing because there's another parent there. So it's all good. It's I could help her she didn't know so I could tell her Oh, we have to go to the place. But the other place was in the other side of Redwood City. And it's five o'clock, the traffic and El Camino. And I could feel myself starting to get a little bit impatient for getting there, a little bit irritated. And I did a little bit of reflection. So why in the world is this worth getting irritated about For what reason I finally got through the list of reasons why should I get irritated? because someone told me to go to the wrong field, hold a grudge. That didn't make any sense. Because it was, you know, a life threatening to my son if he didn't get there on time, too literally. It was really, he was really relaxed. He didn't seem to care. He was happy. He was happy to go, but it was just this is what was happening, life was happening this way. And he didn't seem to you know, he just, he just was going along with the flow. And so he was okay with it. The coaches, you know, was like concerned about the coaches and what they would think, you know, I went through all the reasons I could think about, and none of them held any water. None of them had it, you know, didn't make any sense. I think that if I hadn't done that reflection, some of those voices would have operated kind of in the background. And I wouldn't have question them. But I took the time. Wait, no, I was very curious. What are their reasons? I couldn't find any Why would I bother to get impatient around this? And in fact, nothing dire was going to happen, nothing wrong was gonna happen. Everything was cool and fine as far as I could tell, there was no reason to pick up getting late for literally practice as a cause of sacrificing my peace. In all these perfections, including patients are seen as being strengths. And as they develop their strengths, they can be appropriately called them powers. They become personal powers that we carry with us. So there can be a power of patience. So another thing again, that patience is something passive, or something like an act, an absence of something that can be a very powerful form of inner strength that we carry with us into different situations. And little bit, I had a little bit extra strengthen that department this afternoon. Because I'd spent a little bit of time this afternoon meditating here, a little bit calmer, more centered or had a little

more ability to stay present and to question what's going on and look at it. So certainly meditating or being careful with how we live our life. So we don't get we meditate a little bit or do something that calms us or relax us or create some space in the mind is very helpful. Another step that's helpful for developing patience is reframing the situation. So it's one thing to question the authority of how we are framing it, but in other ways to reframe the situation in different ways. And one of the ones is somewhat classic in Buddhism is formulate sometimes formulated with the idea. See, everybody, see, everybody in the world except for one person is about Buddha is fully enlightened. And they're all here to teach that one person who's not. And who's that one person. You. So no matter what the circumstances are happening, there's they're there to teach you something. And there's a story, the famous story of Gurdjieff having a little ashram or colony or going to community outside of Paris, and spiritual community. And there was a really difficult person who lived there. And everyone else in the community didn't like him. And they made it kind of hard for him to be there, apparently. And so one day he left he packed up and left. So Gurdjieff went to Paris and found him and said, Can you please come back? And no one wants me there. No one likes me to please come back. I'll pay you to come back. And okay, I'll come back. And so he came back, and then everyone looked at Gary, but we finally got rid of this difficult person and gorgeous said you need him? Because you need someone if everything's smooth and easy, you're not developing something not being challenged, so to see ever see even difficult people as your teachers, so in the terrible tradition, this reframing is said this way a difficult person is a benefactor for he or she is the basis for developing patience. If there were no wrongdoers, how could I accomplish the perfection of patients? So, look for those opportunities. I mean, don't go too far away. When they come looking for you, then use those opportunities. See, see what it takes to understand yourself. And if you simply understand Oh, this is an opportunity to develop myself to cultivate my To discover where's my integrity, to look at the authority of your beliefs, look at authority of the ways you've understood the situation, to look at how you relate to your impulses, your reactions, your feelings, and use the opportunity, maybe not use the opportunity to have some strength and power of staying still not moving. If you have very strong impulses, like if you're an addict, and Buddhism says everybody's an addict, you know, we're all recovering humans. Because, you know, if you're not addicted to substances, we're addicted to our thoughts or our ego. But if you find a very strong impulse, say you have an addiction, like cigarettes or alcohol or food or something, or you have a very strong impulse towards being angry Some very strong impulses arises in you. Look for one, look for one to arise, don't make one happen, don't manufacture it. But look for the opportunity from a really strong thing happens. And if you have a partner or a good friend, you can if you if you're, if you dare, you can enlist their help. And they can say, this is the time. You know. So you tell you that now's when you should do this practice that guilt recommends. And the practice is waited out. Write it out to write out the way we waited out. So you feel this tremendous urge and you know it with addiction, it can be extremely compelling. All the lawyers in the mind come out and give all the reasons and all this very strong sense compelling feelings in the body can arise so compelling the feeling like the physical feelings can have so much authority, that How could you anybody in their right mind, not Listen to it, waited out, don't act on it, stay still. Find a nice chair and just don't move. And wait it out until you find yourself on the backside of the wave. When you were sooner or later it will dissipate. I guarantee it. You'll get your data back. If it doesn't. Sooner or later, it might be later. But

sooner or later it'll pass. And it's very empowering, very encouraging. And very instructing, very, very strength producing, to have waited about and sometimes you can feel like you're in the rodeo, even if you're sitting still to do that. And I've known people who've been attics who've done that practice of waiting things out and felt like it was like a revelation. I can do it. I don't have to give into these impulses. So I recommend that you find that impulse. And I mean, don't go make one up, but find a good one. And if the next day or later in the day, even better one arises and do it again. And then if you have a better one rise later too strong was oh, I guess I chose the wrong one. And then and then you know, and then you know, do that one. And, and, and then explore patience, explore endurance, explore perseverance, explore forgiveness, explore, holding the mind still. If the mind is still the body will be still. Yours to hold in mind still is not to give in to those impulses. I'm very fond of the idea that patience as a part of me, is sandwiched between vigor, energy and truth, which is next month. It's, it's after having engaged developed the capacity for engagement, for practice for energy and practice that this list talks about to patients. So patients is not a substitute is not giving up effort. In a sense, it's perfecting the effort. And then patience is followed by truth, honesty. And in some way or other, truthfulness is said to perfect patients. Not sure how that is. Maybe I'll know figure it out, or discover it between now and then next. month so what do you think of that? And I hope it's been inspiring a little bit. Does anyone want to say anything? We had a couple of minutes before the end put them in here for you please you please use the mic.

Good topic for me because

I was last weekend

my friend asked me to come over to his house in the East Bay and help him with a construction project with you know, a few other friends and I on public transportation, so it can take, you know, three hours for me to get over there. And I was already running late and I was getting to the art station. And you know, there are a few people in front of me and there was a train already there and I was like, Oh, I get this train, I might get there in half an hour. And, you know, they're just three people in front of me getting the ticket and I'm sitting there and taking longer and longer and longer anything on the trains, you know, just waiting for me right there. And if I finally gets the one person right before me and and, you know, they're, I can tell they really don't know how to use the machine and I'm just going crazy, saying they're like, come on, come on, come on. And of course the train, you know, leaves right then and I'm like, you know, I'm getting so angry and focusing all my frustration on this person. Oh my god, you know why why why why? Why don't have to be you standing and, and you know and of course I make it it's fine it doesn't matter I'm a little late These are my friends they're lazy they don't care. And you know I'm hearing you say this Nate occurred to me you know I missed out on an opportunity I should have helped this person you know, they've probably not from around here, they don't know how to use this machine and I've been using it all my life. I couldn't help this person, get their ticket and get to where they're going and they're probably frustrated if I had just been a little more patient getting caught up in my rush to go nowhere.

So the, you know, the idea that patience follows the perfection of effort. My mind is associated with the idea that we we engage in life the best we can with the best effort we can without having too much at stake. So, you know, we try to do the best job we can, but we don't we don't invest it with our ego and you know, we don't we don't have nothing's at stake in our hearts doing it. We do the best we can. And then we ask what it is and if it doesn't work out, then we have a sacrifice the quality of our hearts. So I hope that all of you are I hope I love you cherish

your hearts

The good quality of your heart, the good qualities there. And if you don't know that they're there, then maybe you could take my word for it. And I'll tell you what it is their good qualities aren't every heart and it's something to be safeguarded taken care of. And it's something to be discovered and developed. May the goodness of your heart benefit others. Thank you.