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Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammasambuddhasa

Summary

This article authored by resident Dhamma teachers; Anita Carter, Frank Carter and Simon Kearney, emphasises the importance of developing patience in our Buddhist practice and everyday life.

The Buddhist way of developing patience through the cultivation of the following five wholesome cetisikas of mindfulness, fear of unwholesomeness, wisdom, flexibility, amity or compassion can lead us closer to the peaceful state of Nirvana.

Developing Patience in Everyday Life

There is not any other life than your everyday life. Patience is developed through understanding that everything is created by oneself. Either in this life or in other lives.

We should make the distinction that whilst we may need patience particularly when subject to difficulties and adversity, the time to develop this skill is during one's meditation and when the conditions we are experiencing are not so adverse. The reason for this is because when the mind is stressed it is difficult to learn and apply a skill which has not yet been well developed. So at first, we need to learn how to develop and strengthen patience when we don't need it, so that it is available to us to use when we do need it.

What are the nuts and bolts of how we develop patience? Let us first consider what mental factors we need to produce in our mind for patience to arise. Patience is a mental state which is built out of the following five wholesome cetisikas (mental factors):

1. Mindfulness
2. Fear of unwholesomeness
3. Wisdom
4. Flexibility
5. Amity or compassion

The first occasion we should practice the development of patience is in meditation. The mind in meditation can develop patience through looking at the characteristics of each element of a given situation. For example, when pain in your leg arises, you direct your mind to focus on the pain and what it is composed of. Generally what may arise first is aversion or hate, because we don't like the pain. We need to adjust our mind at this time through reflecting that hate is a hindrance which we need to abandon before we can proceed to the next step.

On a material level when we direct our sati or mindfulness to the pain we see the circulation has been effected, the nerve is being compressed, the water element and air element are not present and hence eventually we come to the understanding of why the feeling of pain is arising. However, even before we come to this understanding we have started developing the mental factors we need for patience to arise.

In the same way, in our everyday life, when someone is saying something unpleasant to us we usually don't like it. We have aversion to that experience which means we won't be able to deal with it in a skilful way. If our mind reacts with aversion and dislike we are unable to hear or appreciate what the other person is saying and why they're yelling at us.

However if we are mindful at that time we can recognise that hating the other person is a dangerous way of looking at the situation as we will be caught by that unwholesome mental state which can easily progress in intensity to anger. This is the basis of much conflict in the world, society and individual relationships and needs to be stopped from our side as part of our practice to cultivate wholesome and skilful mental states and behaviour.

There is a wholesome mental factor named fear of unwholesomeness which will protect us from hating that person. Fear of unwholesomeness protects our awareness so that we can hear what they're actually saying, who they're saying it to, and we can listen to the content of what they are saying to us. This

mental factor can be prompted by our recollection of the dangers of reacting to the other person with aversion or hate.

We have also need to produce flexibility of mind to recognise the two points of view that are parts of the situation. We need to be able to see their point of view, to shift from being fixated on our viewpoint to allow space to appreciate what they are saying and meaning. Our mind has to be able to actually do that. Although the other person may not be treating us well, there are many factors at play which cause them to be behaving in this way.

When we switch from the subjective to the objective point of view we are better able to appreciate and recognise the pain or distress they are feeling and caught by. When we understand their situation it gives us the space to be able to send them our love or compassion.

By prompting the right factors, the mind comes automatically to the wisdom view which enables patience to arise because patience is based on wisdom not on reactivity. So we have to view patience as the result of the active process of practicing the right elements rather than something that just spontaneously arises. It could spontaneously arise in the future by the causes we create now by this type of activity.

This is a skill that needs to be learnt first and applied, even poorly at first. And certainly the best opportunity to do it is when things are slightly, or mildly difficult. If we can learn to practice these five factors when the situation is of slight difficulty, over time things that are hard to do will become easier. So we should have patience in the development of patience.

In order to further build familiarity with these five factors we need to look at them individually.

Mindfulness means knowing the elements of a situation or issue that is presenting itself at any time. So if someone is yelling at you or you are just watching the news on the television, it is knowing what is actually happening - away from how you are feeling. Mindfulness segregates what is happening from how you are feeling, and your reaction to what is happening. Otherwise it is a tangled ball the content of which cannot be discerned.

Fear of unwholesomeness is our protection from aversion and hate arising. Aversion and hate will arise if you let them because of our habit of reacting to unpleasant situations. So again we have to actively prompt fear of unwholesomeness. We know we will never progress through using hate or aversion. Hate and aversion cloud the mind and make it difficult to see the situation.

Amity or compassion means we generate compassion and love for ourself and the other person. When we love something we embrace it. Only by embracing something can we actually see it fully. Amity allows us to be receptive without screening off the event so we see it warts and all. We are not afraid to see it. Of course this does not mean we should just allow ourselves to be persecuted or bullied by another person. It just means we can protect ourself from the arising of unwholesome mental states and deal skilfully with the situation rather than join in and fighting back.

Flexibility is the ability to shift our position to seeing from your point of view and the other persons point of view. Instead of being rooted in our own view flexibility enables us to have empathy for the other persons point of view rather than wanting to punish them or reject them; you no longer care who is winning or losing.

So then we come to wisdom because of the combination of those wholesome factors. We have appreciation and understanding from a broad view, without our ego bias clouding our minds.

These factors lead persons away from Mara (the negative forces acting in the world) and away from the conflicts of the world, Samsara.

Practicing these five factors leads to the peaceful state of Nirvana.

The meaning of the Pali word *khanti* is vast. There is no single English word that can adequately give a good translation. The Pali Text Society, *Pali-English Dictionary*, translates *khanti* as patience, forbearance or forgiveness.

The English word forgiveness is an inaccurate definition of the Pali word *khanti*, as forgiveness is a form of delusion caused by holding on to something that happened in the past as if it still existed, when in fact it has vanished.

The qualities of patience could be described as; steady, relaxed and alert regardless of what may be happening to the body, speech or the mind.

Real inner strength comes from practicing patience.

Insights appear by observing what is arising and falling without becoming involved in those thoughts and the process.

The Lord Buddha said that the practice of patience leads to great compassion and loving kindness and the accumulation of much merit.

Hatred (Pali: *dosa*) is one of the major causes of black karma and the depletion of merit.

In order to remain patient in any particular situation, it is wise to remember the destructive nature of *dosa* and the obstruction it creates to benefiting other sentient beings.

Patience can be developed in many ways and in many situations. One way might be called "the patience of having compassion for the enemy", which means practicing patience with any being who harms you or makes trouble for you.

The practice of patience brings about many realisations, for example, the realisation that in the past many unwholesome causes were made for this present harm to come. Most people find it is difficult to be patient when experiencing harm, but if they do not develop patience their troubles will never come to an end.

Patience is one of the virtues that builds a foundation of tolerance.

Patience is advised when any afflictions arise, internally or externally, of body, speech or mind.

It is the basis of religious tolerance in society.

Human beings are born into different cultures, with different skin colours and speaking different languages, but we are still all members of the human race.

Buddha Dhamma is the same, there is Ch'an, Zen, Theravada, Yogacara, Vajrayana but it is all Buddha Dhamma and each one has the same taste, the taste of freedom or the way out of suffering.

Buddha Dhamma takes different forms so that it is relevant to different cultures.

No Buddhist practitioner who understands the Lord Buddha's Teaching thinks that other religions are wrong and any person who has made a genuine effort to examine other religions with an open mind would come to the same conclusion.

The first thing you notice when you study different religions is how much they have in common.

All religions acknowledge that the present state of human existence is unsatisfactory.

All believe that a change of attitude and behaviour is required for that state to improve.

The idea of practicing 'Right Thought' is common amongst many religions, yet cruelty, the desire to be cunning, wickedness and selfishness are displayed amongst the followers of all these religions.

Likewise, the practices of kindness, compassion, honesty, patience and tolerance are also common amongst all these religious people.

How then can we say that only Buddha Dhamma develops the Paramita of wisdom?

The answer is that the Buddha Dhamma path is the path out of suffering.

All religions teach ethical principles that include love, kindness, patience, generosity and social responsibility and they all accept the existence of some form of absolute.

Tolerance can be defined as "allowing others to hold opinions on religious, political and other matters differing from oneself or from whatever the dominant authority, and allowing their free expression in speech or by bodily acts provided that these do not cause harm to others in any way either mentally, emotionally or physically".

For those who wish to become tolerant it is indispensable that they practice patience.

Furthermore, just as the Buddha guides us along the Path, all sentient beings help us to achieve our goal. For example if a being causes us trouble we should take that opportunity to practice patience.

The Buddha's Sermon on "What is True Blessedness the Mangala Sutta" highlights the importance of developing an intellectual framework for comprehending the Dhamma.

The Lord Buddha, was asked, 'Many gods and me, yearning after good, have held diverse things to be blessings; declare Thou, What is true blessedness?'

"Patience, obedience, the sight of the Samanas (religious practitioners) and religious discussions held in the due season - this is the Highest Blessing."

Regarding the subject of protection, the Buddha states: "I shall protect myself and I shall protect others: Protecting oneself one protects others; Protecting others one protects oneself".

A quotation from the Dhammapada states:

"By self alone is evil done.

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By self one is defiled;

By self evil is left undone,

By self alone is one purified." (3)

If a being is in pain we should develop the understanding of compassion or friendliness. If a being is unhappy we should give them a suitable gift they may enjoy.

The Dhammapada states: "One should not pry into the faults of others into things done and left undone by others. One should rather consider what oneself has done and left undone."

If somebody says "he beat me" or "he slandered me" and wants to react to that beating or slander in some violent way, then that person does not understand the Dhamma, because it is just the return of what was done in the past.

Hate can never be cured with hate.

To **unknowingly** persecute a religion will bring greater suffering in the future than that of persecuting a religion **knowingly**.

So a person who wants to close down a religious centre for imagined reasons, creates a great negative karma for themselves and for those they influence.

May you not meet with bad advisors who have no religious tolerance.

If you do meet with bad religious advisors (which you will in this Dhamma ending age) may you not be swayed by their negative influence.

However, there is no doubt that if you are practicing successfully, you will meet with religious opposition, just as Buddha's' followers have done during the last two and a half millennium.

Bodhisattvas teach with great compassion and through their Teaching, some practitioners understand and develop tolerance. All people can develop tolerance, if they try, and this can be increased step-by-step until it extends to all beings in all realms.

When Practitioners have a base of tolerance, the six Paramitas or Perfections, which are: morality, generosity, patience, perseverance, concentration and wisdom, can be practiced with greater ease.

When all six Paramitas accord with tolerance it is possible to help many beings who are suffering.

When tolerance increases, your attachment and desire are reduced little by little and disciplined minds are developed.

The relationship of the Teacher and Student is important. Rules of conduct are taught to the students and have to be developed to maximise tolerance towards the Teacher.

It is normally difficult to calm the mind, but through practice of concentration comes patience.

Patience and concentration lead to wisdom and tolerant actions, actions based on wisdom, are more effective than intolerant actions.

Teachers demonstrate patience by explaining the Teachings over and over again without any intolerance appearing on the Teacher's mind.

Teachers have great tolerance and use the text method to help the students understand. In the beginning, students are taught to develop tolerance for themselves, and then to develop tolerance for others. They discover that when they have tolerance for others, others have tolerance towards them, and over time this creates a good will.

One day you will speak to your neighbour, and your neighbour will reply in a friendly manner.

Normally people don't compare which actions are more beneficial.

In simple terms, it can be reasoned that if an action is accompanied by a good feeling then that action is beneficial to others. If an action is accompanied by an unpleasant feeling then it can be altered by remembering the values and good qualities displayed by other people.

How can we change our feelings towards those we view as enemies who lack tolerance towards us?

If a patient did not want an operation that would cut the body, the doctor would explain the benefits, and after a time, the patient would accept the idea of the body being cut.

Feelings are not permanent and can be changed. When a Student is able to sustain short periods of tolerance they can extend the practice by understanding the disadvantages of not practicing tolerance.

There are Ten Paramitas or Perfections. These are:

Viriya (Pali) , energy (English)

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Dana (Pali), generosity (English)
Sila (Pali), morality (English)
Nekkhamma (Pali), renunciation (English)
Panna (Pali), wisdom (English)
Khanti (Pali), patience (English)
Sacca (Pali), truthfulness (English)
Aditthana (Pali), determination (English)
Metta (Pali), loving-kindness (English)
Upekkha (Pali), equanimity (English)

An extract from the "Great Prayer for World Peace" compiled by Venerable Geshe Acharya Thubten Loden is featured today with the kind permission of Geshe-la.

May all living beings be adorned with love,
Compassion, joy and equanimity.
May they possess generosity, ethics,
Patience, effort, concentration and wisdom.
Thus by the virtue collected
Through all that I have done,
May the pain of every living being
Be completely cleared away.
May the poor find wealth
Those weak with sorrow find joy
May the forlorn find new hope,
Comfort, happiness and prosperity.

As long as any sentient being anywhere
Has not been liberated,
May I remain in the world for their sake,
Even though I have attained Enlightenment.
May all worldly beings
Never experience war, fighting or conflict,
And forever remain without bad conditions,
Such as earthquakes, disease or drought.
May peace pervade the hearts of all
That they ever abide in joy and abundance.
May you develop the courage to support wisdom and tolerance and
preserve the Buddha Sasana.
May you become skilled in the preservation of religious principles in this
very life.
May you practice patience and preserve the Buddha Dhamma.
May you live in a society that practices patience and religious tolerance.
May you be well and happy.

This article was authored by Anita Carter, Frank Carter and Simon Kearney
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