

06. Khantī — Patience

Bhante Bodhidhamma · DhammaBytes · 11:19

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato samma sambuddhassa

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Homage to the Buddha, the blessed, noble and fully self-awakened one.

So the next on the list is *khanti*, which translates as patience, and I've just got three quotes here from the Buddha. "O monks, even if bandits should come and brutally saw you limb from limb with a double-handed saw, should you indulge your hatred towards them, you would not be followers of mine." I once said that to a group, and somebody said the Buddha had a great sense of humour.

"Patience, in force, in strong array, in someone that is, that person I call a Brahmin." A Brahmin was his way of saying somebody who was truly a spiritual, a developed person. Remember in his day there was a little fight going on between the Kshatriyas, the warrior caste, and the Brahmins as to who were the top notch of society. Eastward of him in Bengal the Brahmins had won really. They were the top of the society. But where the Buddha was there was still that fight going on. It took a few more years before they finally became top dogs.

And the other one is "There's no greater thing exists than patience." I think "There's nothing greater than patience" is probably a better translation. So we have to ask why the Buddha made it so important.

Well, if you go back to his basic teaching which he reduced to a simple three words in the Pali: *dukkha dukkha nirodha*, which just means suffering and the end of suffering. So he's talking about suffering and the end of suffering. When you think, every time you're impatient, you're suffering. So patience is not being impatient. And what is it that makes us impatient? It's not getting what we want and getting what we don't want. And every time that happens, you get irritated, you get angry, you get frustrated. So all that's to do with developing patience.

Once we go back to that essential teaching of the Buddha around *dukkha*, about suffering, about unsatisfactoriness, then you see a lot of our impatience, a lot of our suffering, arises with not being able to accept conditions as they are. It's very simple. We always want them to be some other way. If only. This isn't the way it should be.

Remember, did you ever see Clint Eastwood in *Unforgiven*? Right at the end there's this usual big shootout and he's shot everybody. And the leader of the gang, as he's dying, he said, "This shouldn't have happened." That's what we say: this shouldn't happen, this shouldn't be like this. So we're constantly

unable to accept the situation as it is. And that manifests in this impatience, frustration, anything which is that anger and whatnot is a lack of patience.

If you go back to the root meaning in English, which is really good, go back to your Latin school. *Patio, pasi, patio, pati, passo* - to suffer. I suffer, *patio*. So we get words like patient, to be patient, passion. So our own word patience tells us that it's about being able to bear, forbearance, patient forbearance, being able to bear something.

If you just consider little times in your life where you find yourself getting just irritable about something, even if a door won't open or a door makes a noise when you close it, you get irritable. And if you look at all these little irritations that come up during the day, it's always because we want it to be something other than it is. This isn't the way it should be. So it's catching that, catching that moment and noting, being able to be aware of the arising of irritation, impatience. And as that arises just to bear with it, bear with it, allow it to pass, and then remind ourselves: this is the way it is, this is the way it is.

And the big antidotes, of course, as usual, is just loving-kindness, compassion. So when somebody irritates you, it's because they're doing something you don't want them to do. You have to wait for that irritation to arise, wait for it to pass. You can do it even while you're talking kindly. You can feel it there in the background. And making that effort to put yourself in their shoes. Put yourself in their shoes.

Even if somebody is purposefully getting up your nose, purposefully trying to get you irritated, even then that reaction of wanting to respond with irritation, with impatience, one tries to just let it arise and always approaching the person with at least a sense of non-violence, of putting yourself in the other person's shoes.

So the antidote is always to accept things as they are and to see it from the other person's position. To do that is to undermine this sense of self. Now one of the ways the self manifests is that it sees the world only from its perspective: this is me, this is my opinion, this is the way it should be for me. And as soon as you deposit your attention outward into somebody else's situation, you necessarily have to lose the barrier which the self always puts up. You can't go beyond the barrier. It's not as though there aren't marking off points, but there's between a barrier and a mark which separates one thing from another. What's the word I'm looking for there? What do you have around a property? A boundary, thanks.

There's usually a boundary and a barrier. Boundaries are passable. You can move in and out of them. But a barrier just puts up a wall. The self always likes to have walls. It likes to be firm. It gives it a sense of strength. And contemplating *anicca*, impermanence. Wanting things to be the way things are. You want it to change before it will change. You want the weather to be better. You want the job to move on. So this impatience, and that impatience is not accepting. In fact, that change also has its own rhythm, its own momentum.

One of the blessings of living in Sri Lanka, at Kanduboda, but just living with the Sri Lankan order, was

their attitude to very annoying people who turned up at the monastery. I only remember one person ever being asked to leave - one monk this is - ever being asked to leave. And that's because he had a very peculiar idea of what the Vinaya was. But generally speaking, there was just this patience.

So we had one Westerner turn up who was - he actually told us he was schizophrenic. He probably hadn't taken his tablets. But he was doing the most strange things. I mean, talking to everybody, walking around nude, taking his bath at the wrong time. Everything that you could possibly expect a person to do in a monastery, he did the opposite. And everybody complained to the abbot. He would just say, "Oh well, patience and all that," and he just wouldn't ask him to leave. And then of course the time came when he just left anyway.

Now if you consider most times when somebody aggressive, somebody something evil comes into a situation, generally speaking you find the good people fly away. They leave. They won't hang on in there and wait until that negativity has passed. And that's why you get this takeover of evil, because they don't want to bear the suffering of that evil. Because they fight it, of course, they become part of that bad energy. But they won't hang on in there. Always escaping. And that escaping, that wanting to get away from what is irritating and not pleasant and all that, that's the impatience. That's the lack of patience, lack of patience for bad.

So this is one good reason why we should develop patience. It makes you feel much more at ease with the situation, just opening up to it: this is the way it is. Even in our bodies, when the body gets sick, when it gets ill, people don't like that. They're always fighting it. They don't want to have the flu. So they're actually putting this negative thing into their body of not wanting it to be like that. But if you were to put yourself in the position of your body instead of this person who wants to be somewhere else, then you naturally take care of it and it heals the better for it.

So you can understand why this patience becomes a really important virtue in the Buddhist teaching. It's all rooted in unsatisfactoriness, suffering, and the cause of unsatisfactoriness and suffering.

I can only hope my words have been of some assistance, and I must thank you for your patience in bearing with my little homily. May you be liberated from all suffering through your exercise of patience, sooner rather than later.

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