

Patience

Bhante Bodhidhamma · Tips of the Day · 2 min read

The word comes from the Latin, *pati* – to suffer. We derive other words from this root – patience, a patient, passion. But the virtue of patience takes on the meaning of bearing with the unpleasant, the unpleasing, with suffering. It harbours a lot of qualities the Buddha would have also included: forbearance, tolerance, restraint, self-restraint, resignation, stoicism, fortitude, sufferance, endurance. The Pali word – *khanti* is probably best translated as patient endurance, but like all virtues has a wide coverage – everything from minor irritants to major physical pain and psychological torment. What attitudes might foster patience which the Buddha calls the greatest of all ascetic virtues. When it comes to momentary situations, to have that awareness to see our irritation arising, allows us to resist indulging it. Sometimes we have to overlay it with good will for it does not pass on the acknowledging of it. If we find ourselves in conversation with someone whose views are contrary to our own, as we feel the anger arising in us, we are aware of it and positively put our attention towards the attitude of careful, respectful listening. It may be that we can do nothing about a situation and instead of getting into conflict, it would be wiser to develop patient forbearance. It may be great pain for which there is no palliative, or a neighbour with penetrating music, or a boss who bullies. Accepting a situation does not mean to be resigned to it, but to continuously seek a solution. If, however, there is no solution to be seen, then there is no option but to learn to live with it. Here is an opportunity to practice affectionate awareness. Difficult as it may be, it is an awareness that also engages the heart into some form of kindness or caring. The Buddha offers this instruction in the Discourse of the Simile of the Saw MN21Bhikkhus, even if bandits were to sever you savagely, limb by limb, with a two-handed saw, he who gave rise to a mind of hate towards them would not be carrying out my teaching.’ Instead you should ‘abide compassionate for their welfare, with a mind of loving-kindness, without inner hate.’ Majjhima Nikāya 21.21 Bhikkhu Bodhi The Middle Length Sayings of the Buddha In order to do this, it would help to recognise in the other their Buddha nature and that they like us are also seeking happiness, no matter how deluded it may be.

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