

2011-02-04 The Paramis Patience Part 1

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SPEAKERS

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In the last minutes of this meditation I'd like to introduce the theme of today which is patience by asking you to see first, if there's some way that you feel patients on your patient to some way that your body responds or is activated. When you're a patient your patience is associated with any parts of your body.

When you feel the need for patience, what's happening in your body? And the need is there

in a situation where your patience was strong and helpful, what does it feel like to have that patience? It's the inner experience of patience.

And when your patience is sorely tested, you felt the need to be patient but it was a struggle to be patient. It was that inner experience like wanting to feel like in your body, your heart, your mind to have to make a lot of effort to be patient.

And more generally, what associations or attitudes or reactions Do you have to the idea of patience?

Are the associations you have with patients pleasant or unpleasant is the idea of being patient welcoming for you or something that is not so welcoming within you

And finally,

perhaps you can give some thought to how it might be useful to have patience. today. Be patient with the unfolding of this Dharma practice day in one way might be important for you to be more patient than you may be normally would be

more accepting less reactive

Good morning, and welcome to our Dharma practice day. And for those of you who are new today, you're very welcome. These days are offered in some ways to be self standing. But they're also part of a series of the year on what's called the 10 perfections or the 10. virtues are qualities of character that are developed through Buddhist practice and they're supportive of Buddhist practice or supportive of the efforts to be free and compassionate. The Dharma practice days are kind of, in some ways, days for community practice. You know, if you come here on a Saturday with one day sitting where we're sitting in silence, it's a little bit more even though we're sitting in community, the focus is more kind of being in your own practice today, these kinds of days are more meant to be practicing in community. And so it's a very important part of Buddhist practice to be able to share yourself, share your practice

with others, be able to reflect and contemplate the practice together with other people, to hear other people to hear their experience, and to feel the both the commonalities we have and also the differences we have in doing the practice, being people. And so, in a little bit, it's meant to kind of replicate the way that Buddhist practice has traditionally been practiced in monasteries, where it's not just minute meditation all the time, silence all the time, but the monks and nuns have a lot of time to talk, but the practice did some teacher gives a Dharma talk and then afterwards To spend the next day or two, whenever they run into each other, they have a deep Dharma discussion about that theme that came up and sometimes you have opportunities to have discussions with people around some deep aspect of life Dharma that you normally would never have a chance to have in normal life and that kind of focus. So the today's summit will be interactive, a lot of be interactive today. So it'll be a chance for some discussion with another person about a topic with small groups. And it'll be a teeny bit of meditation as little short sized short section sections little bit, maybe in the afternoon again, but it's not a big meditation day today. So the patience is one of the 10 perfections one of the state's virtues or qualities of character that is You know, it's a common idea that the usefulness of patience. And in many situations in life, people have to practice patience. And so, but here it's seen as a really beautiful quality, all these care all these perfections are considered to be beautiful qualities and very rich and actually the word for patients in Pali is khunti. k j and ti is usually translated as patience, but it's a much deeper and broader meaning in Buddhism, so we'll go into that but it's really kind of meant to be something very, you know, considered very profound moreso than you think it's just the word patience. And, and,

and some of the ways that the past in our in segmentation is taught here in the West. that's defined is often done with ways that kind of implicitly, is infusing the practice with patients. So for example, in a way that's probably never really, you know, it's never used to describe mindfulness in, in Asia or in traditionally Buddhism. Here in the West. Mindfulness is described as non reactive awareness, non judgmental, non reactive awareness. And it's kind of interesting, that's that definition doesn't really get you know, you go into Burma or Thailand you'll find teachers there say non reactive awareness, but it's got to be has it become really big here in the West as a definition, but the non reactive and non judgmental aspect of it would be partly one of the ways that we've talked about is it's very important to have patience when you practice and patience has isn't it is nonreactive quality to one aspect of it, where you're not acting On impulses which are not healthy to act on. So if there's a situation that's difficult, and your, your reaction is to be angry, and maybe it's not useful to be angry, then you try to relax, breathe deeply and to be patient with the situation. So you don't, your anger doesn't get the upper hand if you can stay nonreactive. In the situation, even though inside you might be boiling, someone looks at you and said, well, that you're really being patient. And you are because you haven't bitten the person's head off. The and there's all kinds of, you know, meditation, law patients is really important as non reactive attention is really important because it means not giving in to every impulse that comes up every you know, it could be as simple as not giving into wanting to scratch, not getting into wanting to bulk out of the room, or you know, whatever it might be that's going on or not giving in to certain trains of thought. Their mind thinks a certain way and we're patient with it. So we don't Kind of get into our judgmental reaction to it or get aversive to it or caught up in our desires for more of it or whatever it might be. So a big part of this is kind of a nonreactive awareness. Now one of the one of the values of non reactive awareness and sometimes the first definition of patience in Buddhism, of patience is what's called patience, pressive perseverance, to patiently and continue with what the course we've set. So it's not just simply kind of being kind of, you know, empty, relaxed, do nothing kind of patience, you sit there and be be present for what it is. But you have a task, you have something you need to do. And there could be a lot of obstacles to that a lot of it could be doubt inside, there can be all kinds of difficulties in the world that gets in the way of our persistence. There can be our versions, our desires for other things, there's a lot of things that can come up, then making it hard for us to keep on track. And so part of the function Patience is in this word Kunti needs to be able to persist with what we

set ourselves to do. And that's a very important quality for Dharma practice, because we set your intention to practice Dharma to meditate, then how do we keep the persistence going? And it's very hard to do sometimes keep it up in a busy life. And so, or even on retreat, when we're doing it, sometimes it's hard to persist with some of the challenges that come up as we're sitting there to keep at it, you know, hour after hour. And so part of this patience is the ability to persist without getting pushed off track. And the other part of important part of

patients in the way that it's traditionally talked about, is it's also has to do with forbearance, or endurance, and forbearance is a really valued, quality or capacity in Asian Buddhism in Southeast Asia. I find a lot of texts talking about forbearance. It's very rare quality, the emphasis emphasized here in the West forbearance. Maybe we talked about, you know, acceptance and letting go and non reactivity. But I think forbearance has a very, to my mind has a very strong associations with it, it means you have to really make effort isn't just kind of relax and not Don't be reactive, it means you're really it might be the impulse to bite that person's head off is so powerful, because the person's yelling at you, and how, you know, maybe there's even an injustice being done or maybe, who knows, there's all kinds of things going on, that maybe are unfortunate. And the situation doesn't call on you to do anything about it, but somehow for, you know, to endure it in some way. And, you know, I'm thinking about my visit to San Quentin last week I go every year, and you know, many, many of the ways it's pretty inhuman their, the way that these prisoners are treated and And it doesn't help them one bit to complain, no matter how difficult it is, and so they have to Ender. And sometimes that endurance takes a lot of effort not to give in to their anger or frustration, or a parent. You know, parenting sometimes requires forbearance. You know, it's, you know, a lot of enduring of forbearance under insult is the classic kind of ways described. And, you know, isn't necessarily under insult, but certainly our ego gets insulted a lot in that situation, you know, we're used to a certain way of being in the world and we should simply, you know, certainly can't do it anymore as a parent, you know, you remember my kids were young, I mean, yeah, I mean, something as simple as taking a shower and wearing clean clothes in public. You know, it's kind of a standard thing we do in our society. I think But, you know, that's not sometimes available to you have these, you know, and yet, if you haven't had kids maybe have don't have a clue, you know, how can that be but you know, you don't get sleep, you don't get to take care of yourself. He says you're lucky you get to eat yourself, you know. And just the demands are so great. And so then to get me going, going in the public with your dirty clothes and you know and unwashed and who cares? Or you do care, but you have to just kind of endure it. Patience, endurance. There's lots of situations where it's appropriate, you know, that's what's called on. Another aspect of patience is usually the, the practice of forgiveness is spit, put under the category of patience. So this candy, this word candy, so to be to be forgiving, which is a very rich, deep quality. And for some people, it's one of them, becomes at some point in their life, one of the deepest spiritual or heart There's like logical things they need to do work they have to do is to practice forgiveness. Some people it becomes the work of the end of their life before they die, they have to somehow practice forgiveness in some very deep way or receive forgiveness or how forgiveness things become one of the, the major tasks a person has to do and to feel complete in their life. And, and then the most, by the you know, the Buddhist tradition in some ways, the most profound aspect of Kunti or patience, which maybe comes even closer to their kind of Western idea of, you know, nonreactive awareness, kind of deep acceptance of the present moment is, is defined as the patient is called the patient acceptance of the truth.

And, and there are some aspects of that what's true, that is very hard to face. And so, for example, the, the whole experience or the insight into not self when we've already And that our whole life around self identity, being a certain person in the world, that people see a certain way. And then to see that, that's a construct, and see that as a construct, not really who we really are. And that in order to really relax or accept the truth, to be in harmony with the truth, there has to be some acceptance of the fact that I'm

not really that identity, that roll or whatever it might be. And that can be difficult for people to, to take on. And so kanthi is that quality that allows us patience, acceptance of the truth, some difficult thing to face, but you have to face it. And so there's this kind of nonreactive willingness or openness or acceptance, where even though it's difficult, we stay and we face the truth and might be there. I mean, we know this is a big deal because there are people who when they retire their identity around work disappears. And they fall apart it becomes their life becomes very difficult. They don't have any they don't have the patience, acceptance, they've been a bit rather they get. And then there's other things also kind of deep spiritual truths that are kind of hard to face another one, the Mahayana tradition, which points to emptiness, the deep teachings of emptiness is something and when you get a set, it's kind of like teaching them not self, that if you get his intuition or sense or insight into how everything is empty, it's a very difficult thing to face. It's like if you feel like there's no ground to stand on. And, and so it takes what's called in the Mahayana tradition is a patient accent or they call it Kunti of emptiness or translated English to the patient, patient acceptance of the truth of emptiness. So in the course of today, we're going to go through some of these and look at it the More detail, I have a chance to explore what these things mean for you and the value of them your relationship to this in variety of ways. And, and I hope by the end of the day, you will appreciate patients in a way that maybe you haven't before the depth of it, the value of it, the importance of it, and why it's maybe one of these 10 perfections that they get cultivating, developed. The, you know, it follows now I like the sequence of these perfections. And it follows after we've done immediately, but after wisdom, for example, wisdom, people associate wisdom with Buddhism, and it's and so there's wisdom, and now there's energy effort, and we make effort, you better be patient. So this is where the patient endurance, you know, keeping up persistence is important. So it's kind of makes sense that that follows effort or energy, it because we've got to be patient with the results and the consequences, but it also follows wisdom. And so patients have some wisdom has wisdom, quality, wisdom aspects to it. It's not meant to be stupid patients just and so we'll see how it goes today. My wife suggested that it doesn't I do a bad job today so that you guys could practice patience. So, you know, I didn't say I would do that but but in case we do, then that's really becomes your practice, then you're going to start our responsibility, what you know what you do with it. So you're much better off if you practice patience with how it goes. And if you want to say a few words about patients kind of its introduction for

If there's impatience, there's resistance to what what is. And so one of the things that that I always look at is, what is the when I'm feeling that impatience, that sense of the restless and patience, is the recognition of that there's Duca enough moment, that there's some form of clinging to wanting things to be different than they are. And that gives me the, you know, the impatience is really connecting with that quality of acceptance, you know, that's working with that impatience is working with that quality of acceptance of what doesn't feel what some pleasant

The

what a lot of the practices have is the ability to actually be present for unpleasant and painful experience, increasing our capacity for discomfort, for awkwardness for all the difficulties, you know, from the really little minor difficulties like the little edge if we can't be present and patient with that little edge, how do we become present and patient with the really big things that happen? So that's really the beauty of the practice and we sit there with these little physical body aches and physical and to really show up for them without letting go of the resistance time after time after time.

So that's, yeah, that's what I want to say.

Thank you. So you guys are ready to be patient. If you are, because I thought we would turn it over to you now by having a few guys pair up have a discussion around patience between you. And what I had in mind was that I thought it might be interesting for you to review your bit your history with patients. So what I mean by this is not like confessions. But what is what has been your family and personal history and relationship to patients? Just that is a big question you might have in your own family growing up might have been, you know, you might have learned something from them about patients or you didn't learn about patients at all. And but what might we know what were the attitudes and understandings, but patience and your own personal experience with it and attitudes in relationship to it? Some people find that patience is a very oppressive idea. And because the way the way they were told to be patient in the past was one that really squashed some natural beauty and instinct and, and, and life force within them. It meant to kind of kind of being a belittling of you or going along with some kind of social suppression even when you should be patient with people oppressing you. And, like, I think some women sometimes have gotten that message you should be patient without, you know, rather than stand up and speak for what's right or stand up and just be a full human being. So what is even your history with patients and if you want to kind of you know, expand a little bit further, what areas of your life and what areas life has patients been difficult? You go to the back over your life. So those kinds of kind of a review kind of discussion. And so what I had in mind was that you would pair up with someone and, and spend 10 minutes each so one person has 10 minutes just to kind of explore the topic for themselves. And the idea is, it's your, when you're talking and ideas, it's your exploration of the topic. And 10 minutes is long enough that some of the obvious things maybe you could think about would be said in the first minutes. And maybe perhaps the beginning kind of exploring it. The hope is that you're as you're as you're exploring as you're discovering aspects or for yourself, they're new to you. And that what, what these diets is not, this is not you, explaining to another person. It's not for the sake of the other person here. You're telling us an authentic conversation with telling people things for their sake or something The other person is really a witness as you do your own exploration. And what it means is that if you find yourself saying telling a story about you know, sometime and you were had to be really patient in high school or something, and, and, and it's a long story, and you know the story really well, you only have 10 minutes. It's not for the sake of the person doesn't the person listening doesn't have to understand the story, kind of jump to the conclusion or something or truncate the story. So you can kind of explore it. Sometimes it's useful to tell a story as an exploration. So if you feel like you're exploring it, great. But if you feel like it just you're doing facility or the person to they're up to speed what's going on with you in your life. You don't have to do that in this exercise. Makes sense? So it's really your and some people find when they do when they're talking, that at some point in the exercise, maybe they even find useful to close their eyes. So they can kind of stay in touch with their feeling what's going on inside and stay in touch with kind of inner exploration as they talk about their lives. superstream with the theme right now, it's patience. The other person's job is primarily to listen. And, and, you know, you can you know, you might, you know, basically your job is not just not to say anything mean don't ask any questions. Don't give any advice. And, and, but, you know, there's, there's some really simple things you can say like, you know, wow or you know, yeah, you know that's great or that was beautiful or that you know that must been hard or something I don't know just some really simple, simple neutral kind of comments. They just feel like see if they feel that they talk or feels connected, that'd be okay. But mostly you're the witness when you're listening. So committed in a few moments you'll find a partner. And then if you don't have a partner, pretty quickly stand up so that the standing people We can kind of see each other across the room. And if we're a

odd number, then we'll have one group of three. But don't don't assume that there's an odd number until we really make clear, don't jump. That's the case. And, and so we'll do it for 10 minutes each person, I'll ring a bell after 10 minutes, so that you'll know when it's time to switch and then switch to the other person and then to 10 minutes. Okay. So why don't you find someone there? So it might be nice

to spend just a couple of minutes now, if you would just report a little bit what that was like for you to Yes, surprises, challenges, insights your head and doing it.

For me, when I was talking, I

discovered that I had sort of

defined patience as passivity In other words, I'm, you know, I thought I was being patient, but I was really being passive.

Great, am I quick discovery?

So I couldn't wait for today to get here.

One of the insights I have, which was a bit of a surprise to me came from just something you said when you were introducing the exercise. And that is that I that I didn't learn about patients in a family of great impatient New Yorkers. Well, you know, that if you didn't answer a question immediately, we thought you were stupid. So what I didn't connect with that was the forbearance part of it. That there was a whole bunch of stuff that I needed that I had to put on hold for a long time. And so I don't know where to go with that except that that maybe means to me some sort of negative association with patients at something you just have to grit your teeth and endure and while there are plenty of things to endure in life, gritting your teeth and enduring them is a different

different kind of a construct. Thank you through the next 60 are in your

firm wait for

something occurred to me about the process not so much about patience. But I feel like I I shared and learned more about my partner and shared more about myself in 20 minutes, then a lot of people I've known for a long time know about me or I know about that and it really quite nice

Great, thank you. Over here. You're right.

Well, I loved it when you ask the question, think about your history with patients, and particularly your family because of course, I thought about my parents and I realized that through their modeling, I got a mixed message about patience. I had an impatient father and a very patient mother. And then I realized that throughout my entire life, I've been getting mixed messages about patience. You know, the role of a woman raised in the 50s, and then going through women's liberation. Things like being in the workplace and learning total quality management, which is all about process and patience, but being held responsible for getting it done really fast. So it was just fabulous to kind of look at that. No wonder I'm conflicted and I can't I don't even know whether I'm patient or not patient.

Thank you. Anybody else You take the mic, please.

I wanted to ask for some comments from both of you about discerning

when to be patient and when to not be patient. You know, one of the things that came up in my mind

when you were talking was, you know, patience in the political realm, and that word being used to keep people oppressed. And, you know, oh, just be patient, you'll get the right to vote, you know, meaning we're not

paying attention.

And so

yeah, discerning that as a

political and even personally political. It's a great question. And I think, as far as many things in this kind of practice we do here. The issue is, we look at our intention. what's motivating us? And what we think is going to be helpful. So if you're being patient in any realm at all political or family or practice, whatever, what's motivating that attitude or that approach a patient's? Is it fear? Is it a version? Is it wisdom? Is it? Is it motivated by some received? policy or attitudes other people are telling us we should be patient? You know, sometimes so there's a lot of bought things come into our motivation. And I think we have to take responsibility for our motivation. More than what and then if we know what, what motivates us, then we'll know if we're holding back in an unhealthy unhelpful way or unhealthy way. And then if we're if we know from our motivation that our motivations really we've internalized lessons for other people telling us You should be Hopefully you can see the difference between when it comes from inside your own wisdom or whether it's internalized lessons externally. And now you want to see whether it's helpful to be, you know, I don't think you know, patience is not meant to be a substitute for action when action is needed, but when action is not helpful, then we'll have to be patient with the situation. And so there are situations that is not helpful to do anything at all about it. And we have no power, no signal, no possibility. And so maybe it's better just to be patient with it, then let the let it pass. What comes to mind was my Zen teacher was part of a community of people that was quite dysfunctional, his teeth, his kind of the abbot at the time, and he was kind of, he was already a teacher, independent teacher, but he was still on the board of the organization. And he could see that something was really amiss with Whether evergrande this organization, and he felt that he had no possibility of making any change. But he knew that this was going to come to a head someday. So he thought, I can't, I can't do anything now. I was going to be patient. And then I'll try to be helpful in the situation. When when, when a situation comes to a head, he had to wait 12 years. And then when doing the 12 years past, then he was there ready to help the situation in a way that was very helpful for everyone concerned. 12 years of patience and he knew he felt he had no choice because there was no other way to get in situation that time. And so I think that sometimes people rush to action at times when action is not so useful. Sometimes we need to be patient let things play themselves out. And there's no way of knowing 100% with the right when you're when you're predicting the future. And what's helpful is you can't know hundred percent for sure. But we have to use our experience our best guess I guess, you know, logic wave rehab? Is it is it useful to act or not useful? It's not useful, then patients is more useful than helpful. And, you know, rotations has two sides. It has a side of not doing anything. But also patients is very helpful for doing something. And sometimes patience is what allows us as patient endurance allows us like you brought the political realm, it, sometimes it might take 20 years. And you have to kind of patiently keep at it. It's not being patiently patiently passive, it's patiently keeping at it, keeping it keeping at it until you know, the situation is ready for you. Okay, so we should take a break. So we'll take a 20 minute break, partly so you can have time to hang out with each other. And it's just a community day. So we'll start again here at 10 minutes after 11 Thank you