

THE PERFECTION OF PATIENCE

Khanti-parami

Khanti: patience, endurance, forbearance, forgiveness

Words associated with *khanti* in the Theravada tradition:
gentleness, kindness, compassion, strength.

Patience is the unimpeded weapon of the good in the development of noble qualities, for it dispels, without residue, anger, the opposite of all such qualities. It is the adornment of those capable of vanquishing the foe; the strength of recluses and Brahmins; a stream of water extinguishing the fire of anger; a mantra for quelling the poisonous speech of evil people; the supreme source of constancy in those established in restraint. Patience is an ocean on account of its depth; a shore on account of bounding the great ocean of hatred.

Patience should be fortified by reflection: “All beings are like my own children; who becomes angry over the misdeeds of his or her own children?” Or, “I am wronged by others because of some residue of anger in myself; this residue I should remove.” Or, “A wrong-doer is a benefactor, for he or she is the basis for developing patience.” Or, “If there were no wrong-doers, how could I accomplish the perfection of patience?”

“When there is patience, the mind becomes concentrated, free from external distraction. With the mind concentrated, all formations appear as impermanent, stressful, and not-self. In addition, Nirvana appears as unconditioned, deathless, peaceful, and sublime. The groundlessness of “I-making” and “mine-making” becomes evident to reflection thus: ‘Mere phenomena alone exist, devoid of self or of anything pertaining to a self; they arise and pass away in accordance to their conditions. They do not come from anywhere, they do not go anywhere, they are not established anywhere. There is no agency in anything whatsoever.’” (Dhammapala’s *Treatise on the Paramis*)

Patient endurance is the supreme austerity. (Dhammapada 184)

It is through adversity that a person’s endurance may be known, and then only after a long period by one who is attentive and discerning. (Anguttara Nikaya IV.192)

And how is a practitioner patient? By being resilient to cold, heat, hunger, and thirst; to the touch of flies, mosquitoes, wind, sun, and reptiles; to ill-spoken, unwelcome words and bodily feelings that, when they arise, are painful, piercing, disagreeable, displeasing, and menacing to life. (Anguttara Nikaya V.140)

Whoever endures abuse, assault, and imprisonment

Without animosity,

And who has patience as one’s strength,

As one’s mighty army,

I call a Brahmin.

(Dhammapada 399)