

Patience and achieving your ambitions

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"We have all disappointed ourselves through being impatient at some time. There are many times in our life when we have to do, to go, to act. Patience is not always staying still, not hurrying, not rushing. Everything has to be ready on time, and patience is the discipline and training to be able to achieve that objective.

Patience brings beauty. Patience brings strength. Patience brings happiness. Practise patience and you will achieve your goals !"

If you asked me which characteristic that could help you most, I would choose patience. I like this word very much. It is the one thing in the world that you can never have too much of ! Some people think Monks have more patience than others. I'm afraid we monks are only human too, and we have as much difficulty in remaining patient as everyone else.

If you compare ourselves with animals, they have much more patience. Human beings are very weak. I asked a doctor once, how long we humans have complained about back-pain. He said humans have had back-pain for as long as they have been standing upright !

For example, the earthworm is very patient. It doesn't complain if the soil is too wet or too dry ! It just continues making holes and helping bring air to the soil.

Some scholarly monks class patience into four categories;

- Patience for natural movement.
- Patience for mental suffering.
- Patience for physical suffering.
- Patience for human action.

The first type of patience is exemplified by your feelings for hot or cold weather. We need patience for natural changes. If we want our hair to grow long, we must wait for it to grow. Sometimes we will be wet and sometimes we will be dry.

We must wait for the weather to change before we can collect water, or perhaps before we can have a picnic. We must be patient with the elements and accept the weather conditions.



We need patience for mental activity. Sometimes we feel so sad in our minds. We feel so alone, everything goes wrong and we feel depressed. Yet when we open our eyes at other times, our mind is happier and we can see that everywhere on this planet there is great beauty, even under the sea.

The object of learning Buddhism is to overcome yourself. It is to realise that our mind will fluctuate through the different emotions of happiness and sadness, enthusiasm and disappointment, anger and calm, excitement and boredom.

Some people say that they think they are being very patient if they want to go to the pub but don't go. You need restraint and tolerance. Sometimes you think you are very patient because you stay in the pub all night ! But this is not self control.

We also need patience for physical suffering. When you go to the hospital, you have to have a lot of patience ! I have been here 9 years and recently I was very sick with the flu. I went to the doctor but he could not help me. He said "Just stay in bed and keep warm. Be patient and the flu will pass !"

When I was in the country as a young boy, I used to climb trees. I fell down many times but never hurt myself. But my friend next door fell out of the tree one day, hurting himself very badly. He had to stay many months in hospital. He had to be patient enough to allow his bones to knit together again.

As students you have to study very hard. You will then have to earn money for your family. Afterwards, you may have to carry many heavy loads and greater responsibilities. Then you may even become your own boss. You will be even more important and have an even greater load and responsibility.

But having patience will bring you strength. Patience will bring you happiness. Patience will bring you beauty.

In Asia, the people can be very patient. In Thailand especially, the women sit in the "Angel" position and do not move. They are very patient and can sit still in this position for a long time. It used to be very important for Thai ladies to be able to clasp their hands together for long periods. The Westerner could not understand why the Thai women behaved in this manner. But the Westerner could see that the Thai women were very refined (disciplined) and had great patience.

If we don't learn to practise in this way, how can we succeed ? If you have a calm body, if you have a calm mind, you will have beauty, strength, and happiness.

You can wear necklaces and adornments over your body, but your movements and your actions are far more visible and apparent to everyone. You can't hide how your mind is behaving. Patience is very beautiful. Patience does bring strength.

The ears of the fox in Europe are short whereas the ears of the fox in Africa are long. Why is this ? The ears of the fox in Africa are longer to let the heat out. The fox had patience and adapted to its different environment.

When winter time comes, the trees must have patience, and animals must have patience and hibernate. They don't eat, they just stay still. For sure they must get cold, but they still survive. They learn from nature to be patient.

Sometimes you put chemicals on ants, and initially they die. But they have patience. After a few years they are patient enough to adapt to the poison and then it doesn't hurt them any more.

Our own body can also adapt. When I was in Darwin recently, I saw aboriginals talking together in the sun. It was very hot then, over 35 or 40 degrees. I couldn't believe that they could stand out in the sun for several hours and talk together. They did not show any awareness of the sun or its great heat.

Supposedly I come from a hot country, Thailand, but it was far too hot for me. The aboriginals have had the patience to adapt to the sun and now have a pigment in their skin to survive in that environment.



When you do a marathon, you have to run 42 km, or perhaps you are a good swimming athlete and like to swim in 1500 metre races. You have to have patience to train. They say there is no gain without pain. Each year those athletes at the Barcelona Olympics have been building up their patience, and training harder and harder. They have the patience to succeed, the patience that brings them strength, the patience that brings them happiness and satisfaction that they are performing well.

You come here to learn Buddhism, and to find happiness. It is difficult but you have to have patience to make small gains, and build on those gains. Some people like to run and cannot wait. Sometimes you have to be patient. If we want to grow a big tree, we have to wait. It will not grow for us in 10 minutes ! If we want to improve ourselves we should realise we can not do it in 10 minutes either. Sometimes you can not get an immediate result from your actions and you have to wait.

Sometimes when you wait, you think there is something wrong. Think of the hermit crab. It is like a shrimp, but it takes over a vacant shell, and then carries the shell as its own house to protect itself. If they didn't have a shell, they would be eaten by all the other sea creatures and birds. The hermit crab can go everywhere, can feed, but it must carry its shell, - its house, on its back. And then it survives !

We should carry our patience around like the hermit crab carries its shell. Our patience will also protect us and help us survive ! Please understand that the hermit crab does not live like a parasite, it lives like an orchid.

Consider turtles. They are very slow, patient, creatures, yet I heard some one say they have very long lives, up to 150 years !

Coconuts are abundant in the Pacific region. When the coconut drops into the sea, the saltwater can not get in. The coconut can float for a 1,000 miles, find land and then grow itself into a tree. Coconuts grow and travel around the Pacific by themselves. The coconut is very patient and can exist and remain intact without succumbing to rot for many years.

And do you remember that Australian man who survived in the Nepal snow recently for 43 days ? What patience he had !

You can also eradicate your anger through patience.

Sometimes when you wait for someone, you can lose your patience. Let me tell you a story: In Japan, there were two very powerful, though evenly matched wrestlers. They decided one day that they would have a competition to see who actually was the best. So they set the time

for the match the following day at 2 o'clock. One wrestler came promptly at 2 o'clock. The other wrestler decided purposely to come 2 hours late, at 4 o'clock.

So who won the fight ? - The wrestler that had waited from 2 o'clock was so impatient and upset for waiting, that he could not concentrate properly and lost the fight !

In Chinese Kung Fu films, they always emphasise how patient the characters are !

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We can train animals, dogs and monkeys. I heard monkeys are hard to train apparently because they are more intelligent. The monkey is naughty and tricky, and knows what it is supposed to do, but prefers not to. Dogs have more patience, and accept training much more easily.

How can we have more patience like the dog and gain more wisdom ? I never saw the crocodiles run in the Northern Territory, but I heard that they never eat turtles which are much slower than them. Why is this ?

If we use our wisdom, we can decide when we should use waiting or acting patience. I love patience. I love wisdom second. You can train yourself to become more patient. Look at the earthworm. it has no eyes nor fur. Yet it must be patient and gather its food searching through the soil.

Practise patience and you will achieve your goals. In Barcelona, you must be fast, strong, and tough, or skilled as in soccer. But in gymnastics, they give you points according to your poise, steadiness, and patience. The athletes have had to be very patient to go to the Olympics, - all the years that they have been training and the effort they have been putting towards achieving this ambition. It didn't take them 10 minutes to get there.

There is so much to tell about patience and its application in this world. I wish I could put patience in a bottle and offer it to you all this evening ! Thank you all for having good patience to listen to me.

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