



Nalandabodhi Connecticut

Paramita of the Month Newsletter



"No evil is there similar to anger,
No austerity to be compared with patience.
Steep yourself, therefore, in patience -
In all ways, urgently, with zeal."

Shantideva, *The Bodhicharyavatara* 6:2

This month's paramita is that of patience (Zodpa tib., Kshanti sk.). In the *Diamond Sutra* the Buddha stressed two paramitas as being particularly important on the path. These were the paramitas of generosity and patience. The *Mahayanasutralankara* of Maitreya describes several of the qualities of patience:

"Patience decreases all opposite sides.
One possesses nonconceptual primordial wisdom.
One can perfectly fulfill all wishes.
And one ripens all sentient beings along the three vehicles."

In his commentary on the 37 Practices of a Bodhisattva Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche interprets the first and last of these as meaning that patience pacifies anger and leads us bear affection towards all beings. It is thus a powerful remedy for as Shantideva exclaims in the *Bodhicharyavatara* 6:1 "*Good works gathered in a thousand ages, A single flash of anger shatters them.*"

In his text *Dharma Paths* Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche describes the paramita of patience as having three aspects: patience with the various difficulties we go through in life, patience with the practice of the Dharma, and patience and tolerance for others who may cause us harm or create impediments for us.

In the Samadhiraja Sutra the Buddha has said that patience offers us ten protections. Amongst those are protection from harm, protection from poisoning, and the protection of divine beings. (Samadhiraja Sutra, Chapter 29) Why is this so? As Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche explains in his commentary on the sutra, when not patient it is our nature to be irritated, to get angry, to be aggressive. When obstacles arise in life they will irritate us, blinding our ability to see things as they truly are. As Thrangu Rinpoche reminds us angry, irritated people will meet with much hostility and enmity from others. Our own anger creates our enemies.

So if we practice patience with the various difficulties of this life we will not become agitated by them and will be able to fully bring them on to the path as suggested in the root text of Lojong. We will be able to maintain our clarity and will be able to foster nonconceptual primordial wisdom. If we practice patience towards others we will not

become angry or respond with enmity if they create difficulties or impediments for us. We will not be motivated to retaliate against them and in this way we will not create enemies for ourselves. We will be able to see the ways in which beings can truly be helped and will be able to accomplish true benefit for them.

Bardor Tulku Rinpoche states in his text *Living in Compassion* that those trying to practice Dharma properly should always be gentle and fluffy as soft cotton in their conduct of body, speech, and mind. No matter how much cotton is spun or handled it remains soft and comfortable. A Dharma practitioner should be like that. He goes on to say that if one does not apply such patience to one's practice that one can develop great arrogance about their knowledge of the Dharma and their practice. It will make your mind so tight and narrowed that as soon as someone expresses any difference to your opinion you will explode in anger. Everything begins to seem like a criticism. In this way the Dharma and your mind are completely unconnected.

Sometimes in our practice of the Dharma our lack of patience can be an impediment. In *Dharma Paths* Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche points out that practice of the Dharma requires patience. Sometimes we wish that our Dharma practice would progress faster and that we would achieve greater progress to relieve the sufferings of the beings we see around us. As Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche reminds us the practice of Dharma requires hearing and understanding the teachings and then investigate how the teachings relate to our own lives. Accomplishing this task requires some patience. We may have to give up some things that we enjoy or may need to make other sacrifices to achieve our goal. It may require physical and mental work. We need to practice consistently. In this sense, patience related to Dharma practice means not simply tolerating suffering but working to eliminate the suffering of others through our practice of the Dharma.

In closing, these verses from the *Bodhicharyavatara* of Shantideva might make for a helpful contemplation:

So come what may, I'll never harm
My cheerful happiness of mind.
Depression never brings me what I want;
My virtue will be warped and marred by it.

Never thinking, "Now I will be angry,"
People are impulsively caught up in anger.
Irritation, likewise, comes-
Though never plans to be experienced!

Who indeed should I be angry with?
This pain is all my own contriving-
Likewise all the janitors of hell
And all the groves of razor trees!

If a patient quality of mind is mine,
I shall avoid all the pains of hell.
But though indeed I save myself,
What of my foes, what fate's in store for them?

If I repay them harm for harm,

Indeed they'll not be saved thereby;
And all my noble actions will be spoiled,
Austerity of patience brought to nothing.

Some additional resources:

Comments by Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche on patience can be found at:

<http://www.jimsande.org/KTGR1.html>

Comments by Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche on the Six Paramitas can be found in the following text:

<http://www.rinpoche.com/nbp/PDFCHAPTERS/06%20Tibetan%20Vinaya%20Sample.pdf>

Some comments by Pema Chodron on the Six Paramitas can be found at:

http://www.innerself.com/Meditation/Actively_Creating_Peace.htm

An interesting commentary on the Paramita of Patience:

<http://buddhism.about.com/library/weekly/aa101802a.htm>