

What is the meaning of patience in Buddhism? – Ajahn Succito

PATIENCE DEALS WITH checking emotional reactions, but it's not a denial of emotional intelligence. Patience has the gut-knowledge that recognizes that a problem or a pain is not something to run away from, get flustered by or be self-pitying about. It has the wisdom to know that we have to prioritize the steps through which we can resolve suffering.

It's true that it may be possible to find an alternative route to the destination; it may well be that more negotiations are needed to resolve the problem; it may be that there's a medicine that will ease the pain. But the first thing to do is to not react — to not rage, despair or mentally proliferate. Our first effort is to draw a line around the suffering, take a step back and know 'that's that.' Then there's the effort to recollect that we can be free of the suffering: that we can let go; we don't have to take suffering in and adopt it as final, real and solid. After that initial recollection we have the encouragement to investigate, and then to draw out the hook that snags our hearts on the rough stuff of life.

All this takes patience. Patience holds us present with the suffering in a spacious way, encouraging the mind to open. And an open mind both feels more peaceful in itself, and more readily sees into the cause of its suffering.

Patience is not a numbing resignation to the difficulties of life; it doesn't mean that suffering is all right. It doesn't mean shrugging things off and not looking to improve our behaviour. Nor does it mean putting up with something until it goes away. The practice of patience means bearing with *dukkha* without the expectation that it will go away. In its perfection, patience means giving up any kind of deadline, so the mind is serene and equanimous. But if the patience isn't pure yet (and it takes time to develop patience!), the mind still feels pushy or defensive. Impure patience is the attitude: 'Just hold on and eventually things will get better; I'll get my own way in the end if I'm patient enough.' This approach can temporarily block or blunt the edge of suffering, but it doesn't deal with the resistance or the desire that is suffering's root.

Pure patience is the kind of acceptance that acknowledges the presence of something without adding anything to it or covering it up. It is supported by the insight that when one's mind stops fidgeting, whining and blaming, then suffering can be understood. It is this suffering that stirs up hatred and greed and despair, and it is through practising the *Dhamma*, or Way, of liberation that its energy and emotional current can be stopped. Reactivity isn't the truth of the mind; it's a conditioned reflex, and it's not self. Because of that, suffering can be undone, and when it is, the mind is free.

– From *Pāramī, Ways to Cross Life's Floods* by Ajahn Sucitto