

Peaceful Presence
July 11, 2023

Introduction

Hello, my name is Kristi Iverson, a member of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Palo Alto and of the Steering Committee of Multifaith Voices for Peace and Justice. As a Unitarian Universalist, I have learned about several different faith traditions. The one I identify with most closely is the Buddhist tradition. One key Buddhist teaching is about what are called the Ten Paramis, or Ten Perfections. One of the ten paramis is "Patience", so tonight I will share with you some readings about this parami.

Excerpts from a talk given on July 1, 2003 by Gil Fronsdal, founder of and primary teacher at Insight Meditation Center in Redwood City, California

"In our busy lives, we may easily overlook the value of patience in our quest for accomplishment, efficiency, and fulfillment. When we recognize that clear seeing, peace, compassion, and love are quite different from, even incompatible with, compulsive behavior and reactions, the value of patience becomes apparent. Patience entails choosing not to respond reactively, allowing other possibilities to arise; it provides tremendous support for mindfulness practice. Gentle perseverance, patience under insult, and acceptance of truth are three traditional facets of patience that give strength to mindfulness.

The patience of perseverance keeps us from succumbing to doubt, discouragement, and fear....

Patience under insult means not succumbing to anger, aggression, or despair when threatened. Instead, it means being mindful of our reactions and emotional responses, and perhaps finding wiser ways to respond.

Pausing, even for a moment, before reacting to a difficult situation is a powerful form of patience. A pause may give us a better understanding of the situation and our intentions within it. Sometimes, a pause allows for something wonderful and unexpected to arise, something that would not have happened had we rushed in to comment, react, or control.

Sometimes people find patience by changing their point of reference for understanding a challenging situation. Our understanding is often self-centered; other perspectives may be equally, if not more, appropriate. During the civil rights movement, for example, many people endured a tremendous amount of physical, mental, and emotional insult by understanding its role in a larger context than their own individual suffering. Struggling for civil rights gave their suffering a purpose that transformed the whole country.

The third form of patience is acceptance of truth. It is the willingness to see deeply, without resistance, the truth of the moment and the truth of the deepest levels of reality. This includes living in accord with the insight that at our core there is no self to build up, hang onto, or

defend.... Most of us orient our lives around a limited view of ourselves; it can be quite frightening to let this view go. The patient acceptance of truth that allows us to let go is a personal strength developed together with the strengths of virtue, discernment, wisdom, resolve, and loving-kindness.

The ultimate perfection of patience does not come from endurance or a re-evaluation of a situation. Rather it comes from the absence of our habitual, automatic triggers, and reactive hooks to the challenges of life. Fully mature patience is effortless; it is not a doing at all."

Quote from the Buddhist Dhammapala text, "Treatise on the Paramis"

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?"