

Special flash News

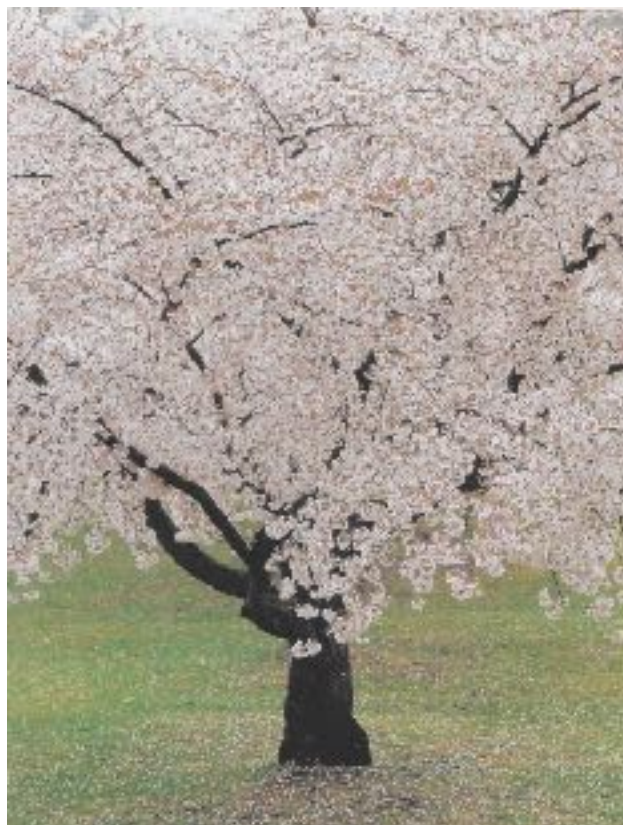
Ksanti : Patience (Nin in japonais) by Guy Mokuhô Mercier

All the difficulties and sufferings of beings have one cause. To resolve them or free oneself from them, we need to take the time to examine ourselves, study ourselves. This is Buddhist practice explained by Buddha in his first sermon at Benares, on the Four Noble Truths. The practice of the paramitas is inseparable from the fourth Noble Truth, which describes the stages of an eightfold path leading to the end of suffering.

In the texts, it is said in relation to patience, that it can bear all torments, destroys anger and enmity, and brings good to oneself and others. The disposition of the Bodhisattva towards this virtue is such that it cannot be satisfied while there is still one being left to save. The completion of this vow seems so far off that it can't be imagined or seen. This vow, which the bodhisattva is always disposed towards, as his patience is infinite.

In these texts we can distinguish three great patience.

- The patience to bear criticism, insults, hate and evil deeds of others and adversity. For this reason, it is the cause of maturing of beings.
- Patience to accept unhappiness, grief and pain. Patience towards oneself. This virtue is the cause of the emergence of the quality of Buddha, for it bears without recoiling many different painful situations, cold, heat, hunger, thirst and other disagreeable feelings in both the physical and psychic body.
- Patience in contemplating the Dharma, universal Truth, emptiness, the foundation itself of the practice of meditation and regrouping. It gives birth to clear vision, allowing us to see things as they truly are, in their 'thusness.' For this reason, it is the support of the two previous ones.



If patience is a part of the group of pure practices of the bodhisattva, it's also because, despite its apparent simplicity, it touches the very foundation of our habits and conditioning. It concerns the function of 'me' (thus of Samsara) and suggests calling into question the desire we have to control, to impose ourselves, to be right, to be unassailable, to constantly validate our self- image , the one that we would like other people to believe in.

The play of 'me' in its scenarios and plans, impulses, is, in the end, a way of trying to escape the finality of existence, which is death. This disappearance, which we know we have no choice about, is even more insupportable when we identify with our bodily form and our discriminating mind, while at the same time we have a confusing inner sense of eternity.

“The person who is sick, declared Vimalakirti, should reflect on this: ‘ The sickness which is affecting me today is just the product of my negative emotions, and these result from erroneous notions and distortions that I have accumulated in the past and during my previous lives : they aren't real at all! So, who is sick?’”

To observe and understand how this 'me' is constructed, since childhood and even before demands a great deal of sincerity, and a lot of patience and perseverance. Without a lot of patience, this examination can't end, since every day brings us new dissatisfaction, makes us re-imagine insults, demands of us again that we change our paradigms and to find in ourselves other responses than our hyper, and often violent, reactivity.

Recognition of our fragility in the face of everyday and continuing manifestations of impermanence and interdependence, gives birth to patience. This appearance can start in meditation, naturally, without any effort of our personal will. Zazen is the very place where we learn patience.

Being sick, we recognise our sickness and will become patient!!

A '**Patient**' etymologically is '*a person who suffers, endures adversity without complaint, setbacks, and bears the faults of others.*'

The patient who recognises his sickness should put his trust in the best of doctors, a title which the Buddha willingly accepts for himself. The medicine which he prescribes leads to recovery , that is to say, to the end of attachment to desire, Nirvana.

The patient, still sick, lying in his hospital bed, has to face existential pain, the mystery of existence and fear of death, so often ignored. Without the virtue of patience, this face to face with life and death is deprived of its beauty and of the unveiling of its revelation.

Patience reveals attachments to 'me', its neurotic and reactive habits. It's the beginning of a real labour and a possible healthy change, as it leads to better listening, better feeling, better observing and better expression of feelings. Patience helps to tame our natural reactivity, our anger and violence and to see their causes. Patience gives rise to great humility once we see that everyone is a prisoner of his conditioning and his compulsive and unhealthy reactions. We need application and discipline in this apprenticeship of patience.

Patience can only give birth to a deep acceptance which leads to revelation. The same acceptance as Christ on the cross “May your will be done and not mine” Zen translates this surrender as “stripping away of body and mind” To disidentify with the ephemeral and thus to penetrate into the Real. ‘Me’ gives up the fight, relinquishes its supremacy and its role as judge and dissolves into the cosmic Me. We call this awakening! It’s as if we arrive in an unknown land which is none other than our own mind.

We learn patience in meditation itself. Time stands still, freeing the mind from the need to project itself into scenarios, to fixate on objects, and attach itself to points of view. The distance created by patience from the phenomenal world does not mean we must deny it. Patience allows us to put things back in their place. Life includes problems, conflicts, hardships, sorrows and to wish that everything would slide into an imagined or dreamed perfection is an illusion and unwise.

“It is only the sickness that we should suppress, not phenomena, Vimalakirti taught.

Teachings are meant to cut off evil at the root.

What then is the root of evil ? asked Manjushri.

Grasping, declared Vimalakirti.

Grasping what?

Grasping the three worlds (*which are Samsara, the cycle of death and rebirth, the world of desires of the illusory ‘me’ and its functioning.*)

How to stop this grasping?

In seeking what cannot be found, as there is no grasping there.

What cannot be found?

The end of duality.

What is duality?

The vision of an inside and an outside, which cannot be found, concluded Vimalakirti.”

Some commentary on this exchange:

“ Grasping ‘ is the way in which the mind loses its unlimited grandeur and reduces itself to a thought, a desire, a reaction, a material or immaterial object.

‘To end this grasping by seeking what cannot be found’ is the very merit of zazen, where there arises a natural inclination of our vision towards its Source which cannot be found. For That which sees cannot see itself and therefore must always remain That which cannot be found. This is the secret of zazen. There is no awakening other than melting into regathering, the non – temporal and still Presence of That which sees, The Treasure of the Eye.

“What cannot be found” is the end of duality, for That which sees, feels, and contemplates cannot be divided. One sole consciousness observes the interior and the exterior without ever being able to separate them. There is neither inside nor outside!

So today how can we exercise patience in the face of these exceptional circumstances over which we have no real control?

A little patience, as it deepens, becomes a universal practice. It is that short time that we place between an event and our response to it, whether by a thought, a word or an action. It is a real inner work which cures us of selfishness and opens the way to giving up that neurotic 'me.' It is also one of the gateways to compassion.

It is in the thousands of small things of our daily life that we can exercise patience and help it to ripen for our inner well-being and that of others:

- Listen to the silence behind sounds, thoughts, the noises of the world.
- Listen to the other person without immediately allowing a judgement to come in between.
- Neutralise our passion for ourselves and our aversion to the other person.
- Stop taking out our difficulties on others.
- Feel our inner emotions without immediately covering them with words or excuses.
- Accept not knowing, whilst waiting with trust and silence.
- Do not allow ourselves to be polluted with the flood of contradictory information, or even avoid it.
- Do not jump on an opinion to validate one we personally hold.
- Be aware that our attitude conditions that of others.
- Perform daily tasks that we find ineffective or useless with love.
- Recognise human misery from our own state of imperfection.
- Truly give ourselves time to listen to a child's stories.
- Truly taste the food that is offered to us, right to the last bite.
- Truly observe nature, mountains and valleys, the burst of spring.
- Take the time to do everything with attention and delicacy.

In order to become universal, our patience requires our consent and personal commitment, for in our life such as it is, we remain ourselves and the other persons also remain themselves. Patience allows us to see that the other person is animated by the same motivations as ourselves and that they operate under the same illusions as we do ourselves. This observation will straight away cause compassion to arise in us and capacity to find in the first instance the response in our heart, as we lean into the immanent wisdom of all beings.

Buddhist life is simple. It demands, however, that we abandon our false beliefs and attachments. All our attachments are rooted in fear that only patience can illuminate so we are capable of seeing the inconsistency and emptiness of them. And on this path we must avoid creating new illusions which will make us fall into an institutional Buddhism, which profits from fear.

Patience leads us to see grasping in ourselves, which imprisons our mind and deprives it of its fundamental freedom. Even grasping Buddhism. Right at the moment when we realise there is nothing to grasp and no one to grasp anything, that patience only exists because of our ignorance and once ignorance ends in the heart of our own mind, we find once more the space of the luminous Presence which we never left: Prajna, The Great Wisdom.

Guy Mokuhô.

Zazen testimony Onlign in England – tradition and Innovation ? by Chris Seiho Preist.

An important part of the Zen, and Mahayana, tradition is practicing together. Can we find ways of continuing this when we are all in isolation? This is the challenge that we in the UK - both at a national level as IZAUK, and at a local level in our various groups and dojos, have been discussing. While some people are very enthusiastic about the online world and social media, I have never been really drawn to it - seeing it as a tool which is good, but can become too exciting and addictive if we are not careful, pulling our attention away from the concrete world around us. But the Coronavirus lockdown forced us collectively to engage with it as a tool for practice. And, mostly, I have found it a tool that is good at supporting collective practice.

Different groups in the UK have experimented with different approaches - For example, Zoom meetings (such as London) and WhatsApp led sittings (Wells and Oxford). In Bristol Zen Dojo, we have used an internet broadcast platform, MixLr (<https://mixlr.com/bristolzendojo/>), together with WhatsApp as our tool. The person responsible for the sit 'broadcasts' the wood and gongs, their kusen, and then leading the Hannya Shingyo at the end of the sit - and we take it in turns doing this, sharing it between a team of four of us currently. In addition to this, we use WhatsApp to send out chant sheets to group members, and to say good morning and swap news after the sit. We sometimes use a video conference tool such as Zoom for an informal chat, or a more formal questions session after a teisho is broadcast.



The disadvantage compared with meeting at a dojo, of course, is that people can't easily follow by watching. More words of guidance are needed, and it would not be possible for a newcomer to join. It is for maintaining practice among a community which already exists. The advantage is that people do not need to travel - and so members of our community who live far away, such as in Wales, or who have caring responsibilities at home, are able to attend far more often than they do physically. As a result, we have a strong core group of sitters, meeting every weekday morning at 7am, twice a week early evening, and Sunday morning for an extended sit and ceremony. It has helped us maintain a sense of sangha, with a deep sense of shared practice, despite our distance, and for many of us has strengthened our commitment and practice.

It is not for everybody, though. Some people don't take to the technology, or find it does not work for them. Some of these choose to continue sitting at the same time as the group, so even if there is no online connection, there is still the deep connection that comes from sharing the practice of Zazen together.

Chris Seiho

Zazen testimony Onlign in French by Jean-Marc Kukan Delom.



We are about to start our second month of lockdown here in France, and for some of us this may be a source of difficulties, aggravated by a rather stressful communication.

This situation is nevertheless the opportunity to go back to the essence itself of our practise : this presence we are regularly talking about in the dojos or during sesshins.

Efforts have been made in some sanghas or dojos to set up meditation online through applications such as zoom or skype.

This is the case in our dojo in Esvres sur Indre which has been offering for a month meditations on Monday, Wednesday and Friday nights. These moments when we meet give us a chance not only to practise together, but also to settle down and listen to the teachings of the Buddha. The lockdown creates in us emotions and sensations that have been discussed in the sutras.

We go from the idea to the experience, and are able to complete these teachings in our daily lives, in the long term. For a month, we have talked about and draw a parallel between our experiences during the lockdown and the paramitas.

But these meditations also give us the opportunity to practise together. For some, meditating on one's own is not so easy ; we often compromise with our practise. Even when we do have time, it is not easy to devote an appropriate moment in the day when we give ourselves up without thinking about the time and space in which we are. Simply giving ourselves up to the presence and see how much we need courage, patience and humility to face this disease and this situation we no longer control.

We usually like being in control, we believe we can control our lives , control our time ; in one word we mix up liberating our mind and escaping our body. So these daily meetings bring a different look on the perception we have of ourselves and make us realise how much difficulty « the other » we practise with us also encounters. Paradoxically, distance generates attention and love that link all beings. This resonance between people that practise together is without limits.

It expresses itself through :

Great compassion

Infinite benevolence

Boundless equanimity

All three of which bring nameless joy.

Every evening when we meet and at the moment we re-affirm our commitment to the Way by singing the 4 vows of the bodhisattva, we let go all ideas of « me », of retribution, of acknowledgment, and we express this together, when leaving and doing gassho : unity of body and mind, gift and immense gratitude.

Jean-Marc Kukan

I practice Zazen online by Erika koji Lecadre Andrei

Since the beginning of the lockdown, meditation through videoconference with the zoom application has been offered by Jean Marc Kukan Delom as part of the activities of his association Badaiju. We meet three times a week to practise together, listen to teachings, sing the 4 vows of the Bodhisattva and share views during an informal mondo.



As the dojos are closed, it is no longer possible to practise zazen in a group and meditating at home often prove difficult during these peculiar moments, in between tele-working, family obligations, help with homework... these initiatives prove precious as they restore a certain regularity, which gives us a chance to continue practising with others and to maintain our links. It's also such a pleasure to see these familiar or not so familiar faces, to share a smile, a presence

Erika Koji



Humor: Watch out for « overactivity" !

<https://youtu.be/3NqHs-XhJy0>



INFORMATIONS ET RENSEIGNEMENTS

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