

Dharma Talk at Buddha Center, Second Life
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On Patience

There's a passage in "A Course in Miracles" that reads "Infinite patient yields immediate results". To me, this says clearly that by simply becoming fully present, not waiting for anything to "come to us", not "hoping" for some better condition or situation in the future, enlightenment is ours, right now. It is to be with no aims, no wants. We can experience peace right now. What is preventing you from being enlightened right NOW? Patience is being fully present, with no attachment to outcomes, no attachment to something you feel is "out there" in time or space. It is awakening to the reality that you don't have to feel that you need to get or have something in order to feel peaceful, happy, fulfilled. Drop that sense of needing and become infinitely patient, infinitely present. Just like it happened for the Buddha. The fruits of infinite patience are enlightenment. Don't create time between where you are now and your "enlightenment". It is right now or it is never.

Infinite patience is the realization that there is nothing you need to wait for to be at peace, to be complete. The entire universe and you are one. You need nothing for completeness. There are organic needs, of course, hunger, thirst, breathing, etc. that need be met, but there is no more sense of impatience, of restlessness, of boredom. There are no more feelings that you are not at peace in this present moment. Impatience is a function of ego, in an attempt to gain emotional control over a situation it has no control over. Restlessness, a sense of separation, is what the Second Noble Truth is referring to. The source of suffering is this sense of separation and all the negative emotions engendered by sense of separation.

All suffering is based in addiction. Addiction is simply the belief that you require something outside yourself to make you feel whole and complete. This does not mean that one should not look for the things that one needs to live or not set goals. There are objectives we all have, and it is fine to have them. Just don't attach your happiness or misery to their attainment or lack of attainment.

Look at the "Law of Attraction" movement, these so called "success gurus" who teach people that they can "create their own reality" and attract all the things they want- money, cars, homes, a great relationship- all the things they want that would make them happy. So people try these exercises and experience more or less success and if they don't get the things they want then they think the law doesn't work. The problem is that there is no "Law of Attraction", there is no mechanism by which we can turn ourselves into a "magnet" and attract all the material things we want just as a magnet attracts iron. Because there is nothing to attract that is outside of ourselves. All things are one thing. This is a misunderstanding and oversimplification of how the universe really works.

Rather, the real "Law" is the "Law of Projection" and Reflection. We, our consciousness, are projecting our reality. There is not a universe separate from us. The whole universe is a product of our projection, the projection of our consciousness. If there are "things" that you want, you will get everything you need, those things will find their way to you eventually, but you actually have everything right here and now in potential and can feel whole, fulfilled and complete right in this moment.

Setting goals and steps is fine but the trick is, the finer point is, to have intentions, but intentions without attachment. Not attaching to goals, to outcomes is how you don't feel restless, bored, impatient or incomplete because you have not achieved your goal. The ego feels it must manipulate people, situations, and things to get what it needs to feel satisfied and complete, but with our understanding of Buddhism and meditation we understand that the ego is a misguided part of our consciousness. The idea of separation is an illusion enforced by the ego.

We are already Buddhas, our practices are designed to strip away the devices of ego that keep us from realizing our Buddhahood. Look at the present moment and see what is wrong and missing. Zen master Hakuin said "At this moment, what is lacking?" The ego says that things are incomplete, that in this moment, unless we have what we desire we are unhappy and unsatisfied. We are in a state of separation from our source. The ego is energy entity that has separated itself from source, from the "goodness" that is our innermost self. It continues to maintain the illusion. It is a meta-construct and an actual thing. You might hallucinate it as a demon which would be the projection of an illusion. It is that part of your consciousness that has hijacked your identity and connection with source. When we set goals and objectives with attachments, we won't feel complete, whole or satisfied until we accomplish them, and we hold ourselves in state of misery while we strive for them and then if we do not attain them we experience and even greater sense of misery. We need to drop these ego strategies, drop this sense of separation and feel that we are totally connected with source.

Some people think of it this way, that you create an image of what it is you want and hold that image clearly enough, with enough emotional energy, and like a magnet you will attract the material expression of that image into your material experience. I prefer to think of it as, there is no separation, that in a way you have already attained it, you just don't need it on the material level right now.

Ignore the ego! Acknowledge it when you feel that sense of lack. Look at it, say thank you for sharing that point of view, and shift your attention to being present. Pet your "inner brat" and tell it that you aren't listening any more. The ego identifies with the illusion of separation from infancy; it acts like a spoilt child. But if you are working with children who are in state of emotional turmoil, you don't tell them to shut up, you acknowledge them but then ignore them and turn your attention elsewhere. Don't feed it the energy it needs by resisting it.

Carl Jung said that which you resist persists. But you transcend it by shifting your attention, using the A-B-C exercise that we do at the beginning of every dharma talk here. Enlightenment is shifting your point of view. The ego tantrums makes you feel impatient, miserable, lacking, so the way to transcend is practicing various forms of meditation which help to focus attention on the present.

I like to say that being present, here and now, is as simple as A-B-C. Shift away from thought patterns that are creating feelings of unhappiness or lack and bring attention to right now. Do it without judging, by breathing in this moment. There is a way to pay attention to your surroundings in which you automatically become present, in connection with all that is. Also focus on your inner energy field, your inner body, that feeling of presence of your body and all its parts, feeling it from the inside out. We rarely pay proper attention to our body, most of us go thru the day and we are in our heads all the time but forget the body until we are in pain. We live our lives on automatic pilot.

In the Dhammapada, the Buddha states:

All that we are is the result of our thoughts
It is founded on our thoughts,
It is made up of our thoughts.
If a man thinks or acts with pure thoughts
Happiness follows him
Like a shadow that never leaves him.

What are the purest thoughts? The purest thought is no thought.

Even our physiology can be shifted when we focus on thoughts of health instead of illness. The main thing is to control our attention because we can't control our thoughts and what you think is going to affect your entire physiological system for good or ill. The most important skill is to be able to shift attention so you don't pay attention to your thoughts but rather to your being.

There is no such thing as solid matter anywhere in the universe. Thoughts don't solve problems, they create them. Only an empty mind solves problems. Thoughts are just tools, they are a reality, but they are not "reality", only an abstraction of reality. They have energy signature, they are real but they have no meaning other than the meaning that you give to them. The major problem with humanity is that we create thoughts like Dr. Frankenstein created his monster. We imbue thoughts with such energy, usually negative energy, and we allow them to beat us over the head. They are just thoughts.

If we could only shift our attention from thought-dominated consciousness, we would see that the whole universe is dancing energy, writhing in ecstasy in front of our eyes and saying "how can I serve you?" And instead we pay attention to crappy thoughts. What do you want as your master? Thoughts or your true nature? Tell those crappy thoughts to go away.

Enlightenment is falling in love with yourself again, reawakening to your true nature, your Buddha nature and the Buddha nature of those around you and learning to stop beating yourself up with your thoughts. Even if you think you are still mired in the illusion of separateness, the reality is that we are all one. We can change that sense of separation; there are ways to help people to open their eyes to their true nature. That is what all spiritual practice is about.

Remember the old slide show projector? There's the projector and there's a screen. The projector has a light that shines through the slide, through a lens that focuses the image on the screen. Imagine that you have a projector with a slide in it, the light shines through the slide and the lens and the screen receives the image from the slide. That is how the entire universe works and YOU are all of those things. The slide is your thoughts. What we see supposedly outside of ourselves, a little picture on an infinite screen. That is our immediate reality at any given moment and you are all of that. You are the projector, you are the slide and the lens, you are the projectionist who chooses which slide will be put in the carriage to be projected, you are the screen, and you are the light that creates the image. When the Buddha woke up, that is what he realized.

So, everything is just one thing, each of us just has a different point of view. There is one underlying energy with many different aspects. Think about the slides you have in your projector

and you will understand why you have the experiences in your life that you do. If you are projecting good vibrations, having good thoughts, what you see on the screen is beautiful and joyful. And vice versa. But it is not like a magnet pulling something in closer to you because you are all that, there is nothing outside of you. So it is the law of projection. We create that which we experience. Who you are and what happens to you are one and the same thing. We create by extension and inference, not attraction.

Your supposedly exterior universe does not change out there independent of what slides you are projecting right now. If you don't like what you see, if you don't like what you are experiencing, take responsibility for putting that slide in the projector carriage and ask yourself, how can I take that slide out of projector and put in one that I prefer. And you do that by learning how to control and guide your attention so that you become master of thoughts instead of letting them be your master. Meditation will get you to that "stillpoint" before thought. Then you can project whatever you want. You can see the glass half full instead of half empty.

What do you want? That is the question to ask when you are in a stressful situation. The Course in Miracles says "I could see peace instead of this". Shift away from the thoughts and negative emotional reactions that are actually creating the situation to being fully present.

When the Fifth Patriarch of Zen, Hung Jen, was dying, he wanted to choose a successor who was truly enlightened. He told all of his disciples write a poem that would demonstrate their understanding of Zen, and the one whose poem was the best would become the Sixth Patriarch. The Head Monk, who was the most learned monk in the temple, wrote the following poem:

"The body is the holy Bodhi tree,
The mind is like a mirror shining bright;
Exert yourself to keep them always clean,
And never let the dust accumulate."

This poem was posted on the wall of the temple.

Hui Neng, who was the humble and illiterate cook, but who had experienced enlightenment years earlier before coming to live at the temple, asked one of the other monks to read it to him. Upon hearing it, he realized that it was only a partial understanding of the true nature of things, and asked the monk to write the following poem, swearing him to secrecy:

"No holy tree exists as Bodhi known,
No mirror shining bright is standing here;
Since there is nothing from the very first,
Where can the dust itself accumulate?"

The poem was brought to Hung Jen, who knew immediately that it demonstrated a higher level of understanding, and made Hui Neng the Sixth Patriarch.

Shifting thoughts away from unhappiness allows you to become infinitely patient, giving you immediate results the same as the Buddha, where the whole universe broke in through his consciousness, and he said, essentially, "Oh wow I see everything is just as it is, everything is suchness, is is-ness", experiencing it to the core of his being.

So when you feel impatient, restless, bored, look at it, don't reject or fight it, look and shift attention deliberately to the breath, to your inner body, to the experiences you are having in the moment without label or judgment. Dive into and under the wave. The water passes over you and you are unscathed. Fight the wave and it will knock you down and batter you. When you resist you shut out the beautiful, giving universe that is in front of you this present moment which could give you everything you could possibly want, moment to moment to moment.

How do you harness the power of now? Shift your attention away from your thoughts which are pulling you away from seeing your Buddha nature. Shift to your external experience without judgment, shift to your breathing, feel the presence of your body from inside out, feel its volume, feel the inner energy, feel the air, the light, the temperature, the suchness of this moment.

