

Patience

My first teacher, Dainin Katagiri had for his Dharma name Dainin or great patience. I think that when he was younger he did not have patience, but his teacher saw a great potential for this in him, and therefore gave him this name. Patience is truly a wonderful quality to have and cultivate. It seems to be something few people have these days with all our supposed ability to multitask.

Patience is an allowing process – it allows things to complete themselves, it allows beings to express themselves, it allows us to experience the moment fully. The other day I had to do some laundry, and in our apartment building there is only one washer and dryer for a lot of people, so getting washing machine time can be difficult at times. When I entered the laundry room, I noticed there was five minutes left on the dryer (I only needed to dry some things), so I waited until someone appeared for their laundry. I had very little time in which to do this, so I was hoping for a quick removing of the clothes, then on with the drying. It was interesting to see my mind set of, “so on with the drying.” This person, whom I had not talked to in months, proceeded to slowly take his clothes out of the dryer and fold them, giving me cues that this was his time, but reassuring me it would be done shortly. At first, I was a little irritated, also an interesting view of my mindset, and an awakening one. I realized this was his time and also the chance to share that time with him, so we talked about our lives. I noticed the evening sky with a plane slowly climbing high heading toward the sea and the breeze that gently blows at that time of the day. We forget to savor life, to appreciate its unfolding because we have an agenda – our agenda. But the universe has its own agenda. Things rarely truly happen according to our agenda, even though it appears that way. Our agenda is

something we throw out on top of reality, things as they are, and tenaciously hold on to that framework, ignoring what the universe is trying to tell us, ignoring the needs of others or the incredible spaciousness of allowing the moment to happen, to unfold as it is. We usually think of patience as something we have to wait for or that has to be done at a slower pace, but almost always patience means something that we can deal with, even though it may be a little difficult. But real patience is when we feel we cannot deal with the situation, that we cannot possibly, at that moment, wait or allow the event to unfold or happen as it is happening. It has to be unbearable, impossible to wait for things to unfold that is the true experience of patience. Patience is not when we can bear the situation, it is when we cannot bear the situation and then we do it, we stay with it. We take a deep breath, and we just settle, and we take each moment, then the next moment and the next. Real patience demands a deep settling, a going beyond our conceptual framework of what we think we can bear. This is why we do sesshin. On the third of fourth day we cannot imagine of doing 3-4 more days; it is impossible. Everything hurts, every position is uncomforable. We have to sit through long talks, long meals and 12 or more periods of zazen a day. But we do it moment by moment. We transcend our conceptual framework of what we think we can do or bear moment by moment. We come to exist in a string of moments which is reality itself. Everything exists this way in the universe – just now, this moment. Then, almost unbelievably sesshin becomes easier, and we actually enjoy the last few days. We have transcended our ideas of what we think we can do or bear. We

have dropped off our computer gridwork of reality, our conceptual mind and experienced what true patience is, what true time is. The enlightened being realizes this is not just an