



Undergraduate assignment feedback form
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<i>Student Name: Qiaoman Dai</i>	
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The Wisdom of Patience

In the *Exalted Treatise on the Response on the Tao* 太上感應篇, there is a good deed listed as: ‘Do not be resentful if you are insulted.’¹ Most people find it hard to accept insults without feeling angry, especially when they did not do anything wrong. This line from the book reflects an essential principle in Buddhist cultivation: Kṣānti. This word is in Sanskrit, and the English translation is ‘Patience’, but the Chinese translation of this word into English is ‘Having Patience under Humiliation’. From this, we can see that humiliation is the most intolerable thing for the Chinese. Also, patience is often misunderstood as foolishness or weakness. Most people couldn’t figure out why we should have patience.

So, this presentation will explore the topic of ‘Patience’ from three aspects: what, why and how.

First, we need to understand ‘What is true patience under humiliation?’

Second, I am explaining ‘Why should we have patience?’

Finally, we will know ‘How can we practice it correctly?’ and get a conclusion.

Let’s start with the first part.

What is true patience

In Buddhism, the practice of patience has multiple levels. Drawing from the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Śāstra* 大智度論² and the *Diamond Sūtra* 金剛經³, we can roughly divide it into two main layers. The first is patience rooted in compassion and wisdom, which transforms resentment and conflict. The second is the deepest level of patience that transcends all attachments and not abiding in the notions of self, person, sentient being, or life span.

Today we focus on the first layer. But how can we gain wisdom and compassion? It relates to understanding the truth of life and space. Let’s move on to the next part to find the answer.

Why should we have patience ?

To answer this question, we must go back to the perspective of karma and clarify two things: the past cause and the future effect. There is a famous saying, ‘To know the causes from your

¹ *Taishang ganying pian huibian* 太上感應篇彙編 (Taibei: heyu chubanshe, 2013), P.362.

² Kumārajīva 鳩摩羅什, *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Śāstra* 大智度論 (2025)

<https://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw/zh/T1509_014>[accessed 04 June 2025].

³ Kumārajīva 鳩摩羅什, *The Diamond Sūtra* 金剛般若波羅蜜經 (CBETA 2025.R1, T08, no. 235, p. 750b11-14). <https://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw/zh/T08n0235>[accessed 04 June 2025].

past, look at the life you now experience; To know the effects in future born, behold the deeds you presently do.’⁴欲知前世因，今生受者是，欲知來世果，今生作者是 This saying could help us understand the following content.

First, to clarify the past causes. When we encounter adversity, we must recognise it as the ripening of our past cause, not something caused by external forces. It is the result of actions we have taken in the past, and we should accept the consequences with understanding. Second, to clarify the future effect. How we respond to adversity in the present moment will become a new cause that determines our future outcomes. So, there are two choices: patience or anger. If we choose anger, the results may include:

1. Physical harm: As Madam Teresa Hsu once said, ‘Each time we lose our temper, it takes at least three days to recover our inner peace fully.’

2. Negative impact on appearance: Frequent anger distorts one’s appearance over time, and even in future lives, one may be born with unattractive features, like the fearsome-looking males in the Asura realm, born from the karma of hatred.

3. Damaged relationships: Anger can turn small resentments into deep grudges, continuing cycles of conflict and revenge.

4. Life obstacles: *The Avataṃsaka Sūtra* says, ‘One moment of anger opens a million doors to obstruction.’⁵一念瞋心起，百萬障門開 Anger clouds the mind, scatters thoughts, and leads to poor decisions. It prevents achievement and invites trouble.

5. Karmic causes for hell: Anger resonates with the hell realms. If one clings to anger at the time of death, it may lead directly to a hellish rebirth.

On the other hand, if we choose patience, we gain:

1. Peace of body and mind.

2. A more refined and dignified appearance: *The Sūtra on the Ten Wholesome Ways of Action* teaches that ‘Patience brings noble qualities and the perfect voice of a Buddha.’⁶忍辱莊嚴故，得佛圓音，具眾相好 Not only will one’s appearance improve in this life, but in future lives,

⁴ Jingkong laofashi yingyin tuwen jiansuo zhongxin 淨空老法師影音圖文檢索中心, Wuliang shou jing Episode 67 無量壽經 第 67 集 (1978) <https://ft.amtb.tw/dv.php?sn=02-001-0067&lang=zh_TW> [accessed 04 June 2025].

⁵ Cheng Guan 澄觀, *Da Fang Guang Fo Hua Yan Jing Sui Shu Yan Yi Chao* 大方廣佛華嚴經隨疏演義鈔: (CBETA 2025.R1, T36, no. 1736, p. 21c23). <https://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw/zh/T1736_003> [accessed 04 June 2025].

⁶ Śikṣānanda 實叉難陀, *The Sūtra on the Ten Wholesome Ways of Action* 十善業道經 (CBETA 2025.R1, T15, no. 600, p. 159a7-8), <<https://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw/zh/T15n0600>> [accessed 04 June 2025].

one will be even more radiant.

3. Resolution of karmic conflict: Even if we don't remember past-life resentments, meeting adversity with patience instead of revenge brings old karma to an end—nothing more is owed.

4. Great achievements: 'All practices succeed through patience.'⁷一切法得成於忍 This includes both worldly and spiritual paths. The greater the patience, the greater the success.

5. Freedom from anger: Patience cuts off the root of hatred and breaks the karma leading to hell.

The benefits of patience and the harm caused by anger are far too many to count. Here, we've listed only a few key points. From this, it becomes clear why cultivating patience is essential. Let's move on to the next part.

How to practice patience correctly?

Lay Buddhist Huang Nianzu offered six progressive methods for cultivating patience⁸, which we can practise step by step according to our capacity:

1. Forced patience: Though still feeling anger inside, one restrains outward conflict or revenge. This shows self-discipline, but it doesn't truly dissolve karmic resentment. In this life, you may endure with reason, but the karmic entanglement may continue into future lives. So this is just the first step.

2. Forgetful patience: Letting go of the grudge and forgetting the incident altogether.

3. Reflective patience: Turning inward to examine whether we were at fault, or what karmic causes may have led to this situation.

4. Insightful patience: Observing the situation through wisdom. All conditions are ultimately illusory—so why cling to them? We can also see that harmful actions come from suffering causes; those who hurt others are often suffering themselves.

5. Joyful patience: Treating adversity as a valuable opportunity to grow, refine our character, and eliminate karmic obstacles.

6. Compassionate patience: Responding with compassion. Realising the other person is still trapped in delusion, we consider how to help them break free from their suffering and afflictions.

⁷ Jingkong laofashi yingyin tuwen jiansuo zhongxin 淨空老法師影音圖文檢索中心, Amituo jing shuchao yanyi Episode 116 阿彌陀經疏鈔演義 第 116 集 (1984), https://ft.amtb.tw/dv.php?sn=01-003-0116&lang=zh_TW [accessed 04 June 2025].

⁸ Huang Nianzu 黃念祖, *Cong jingang jing tandao wuliangshou jing* 從金剛經談到無量壽經 (Gaoxiong: baishi wenhua chubanshe, 2017), P.60~62.

In practical life, you can combine the above methods and use them together. According to my experience, the key to correctly practising patience instead of suppressing emotions lies in the belief in karma deeply, so that you will not hold grudges against others or complain about the external environment. Naturally, you will avoid conflicts with others in your behaviours, cut off the development of bad karma, and always bring up the heart of thinking for others, which can then become good fate or even Dharma fate. Now, let's listen to a story to see how the main character avoids a disaster through patience.

In Jiangyin, there was an Elder Xia. One day, while playing chess with a friend, a man suddenly burst in, shouting, 'I only owe you two taels of interest—why do you keep sending people to pressure me?' Before Elder Xia could respond, the man cursed him, flipped the table, and ruined the game. Elder Xia calmly smiled and said, 'Are you asking to be forgiven?' He picked up a brush, wrote a note cancelling the debt, and handed it over. The man quickly thanked him and left.

The guest praised Elder Xia's generosity. Elder Xia replied, 'Patience is the gateway to wisdom. In life, when others mistreat us, it's like walking through thorns—move slowly and you won't get hurt. Why get angry at thorns? That man looked fierce and spoke rudely—he must have had something backing him. If I fought back, things could have turned ugly. So I chose to let it go.'

Later that day, news came that the man had died in a toilet. Turns out, he was desperate over debt, had taken poison, and came intending to scam Elder Xia. But touched by Xia's kindness, he couldn't go through with it. He rushed home, tried to counter the poison, but it was too late.

He had trained his temper, so he was able to stay calm and wise, which helped him transform a bad fate. Through this story, we can testify to the truth that 'Heaven cannot harm those who can have patience with insults.'⁹能忍辱者，天不能禍

Conclusion

Patience is not weakness—it is wisdom, strength, and compassion in action. In the face of injustice or insult, it is easy to react with anger or seek revenge. But through the lens of karma, we come to see that these challenges are opportunities, not punishments. We can purify past causes and create better future outcomes. When we have patience with understanding, reflect with insight, and respond with compassion, we not only free ourselves from suffering but also

⁹ Jin Ying 金纓, *Ge Yan Lian Bi* 格言聯璧 (Zhengzhou: zhongzhou chubanshe, 2010), p.65.

help dissolve the suffering of others.

The six methods provided by Lay Buddhist Huang Nianzu—from forced patience to compassionate patience—offer us a clear path to gradually deepen our capacity for true patience. The story of Elder Xia strengthens our faith in the practice of patience under humiliation.

Finally, may we all learn to ‘Dissolve old karma through conditions, and refrain from creating new afflictions.’¹⁰ 隨緣消舊業，莫更造新殃

¹⁰Jingkong laofashi yingyin tuwen jiansuo zhongxin 淨空老法師影音圖文檢索中心, Amituo jing shuchao yanyi Episode 26 阿彌陀經疏鈔演義 第 26 集 (1984), https://ft.amtb.cn/dv.php?sn=01-003-0026&lang=zh_TW [accessed 04 June 2025].

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