



## KHANTI ABILITY FOR HARMONIOUS MISSIONARY WORK: A BUDDHIST PERSPECTIVE

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### Introduction

The Pāli word “*Khantī*” is well known in Buddhism. It means “patience” or “forgiveness” and it is a *pāramī* (perfection) in both *Theravāda* and *Mahāyāna* Buddhism. It is one of significant discourses in Buddha Sāsana. The Buddha taught on the advantages of *Khantī* in many places of *Tipiṭaka*. From the life *Sumedhā* who began to fulfil the perfections (*pāramīs*) on the Blessed One practiced the habit of patience until the end of Buddhahood. The training of patience is very important for success in life. Therefore, the present work will present to discuss on how *Khantī* (patience) support the missionaries in disseminating or spreading Buddha Sāsana.

Every religion in the world represents peace. However, when they perform to propagate their religion or view, the religious conflicts often used to occur. In the history, there had been even religion war. It is result which gave by the religion, the symbol of peace. Hence, we need to reflect on ‘how to perform the missionary work avoiding religious conflicts and wars.’

We can learn some lessons regarding with the peaceful and harmonious missionary way from the life of the Buddha, one of the religious founders in history. One of his missionary abilities is *Khantī* (patience). Although the kings and businessman were making the great devotional offering to him, in the other hand, he was receiving obscenities, assassinations, underrates, etc., from others. He incessantly continued his missionary work forgiving everything for 45 years until the end of life. His opinion is that the missionary persons should be patient like the earth.

In fact, patience is a behavior that makes welfares or benefits for both of self and others. Besides, it is a good way in order to adjust in social relations and social life because it can generate optimism.

### **Definition of Khantī**

The book of *Abhidhānappadīpikātikā* explains that *khantī* is “patience” or “forbearance” or “forgiveness”.<sup>1</sup> Patience means forgiving physical and verbal expressions of impatience and enduring the hot and cold weather, etc.<sup>2</sup>

According to these definitions, it means that we don't retaliate another person's bad committing and condemnation on us. Besides, forbearance bearing in mind “it is in accordance with the nature” without unhappiness with regard to the weather “too hot or too cold, etc.” is *khantī*, too.

According to the text “*sammānāvamānakkhamo*”<sup>3</sup>, one should neither be elated when meeting with pleasant objects nor upset when encountering unpleasant objects. It is no tolerance of satisfaction if we create greed under fortunate circumstances or of dissatisfaction if we create hate under unfortunate circumstances. The essential meaning here is: we are truly patient only when favorable situations are faced without greed; and unfavorable ones without hate.

As with effort, we can see the significance of spiritual attitude in patience. If we do not tolerate spontaneously, we can at least make the effort to restrain verbal and physical expressions of impatience. If we perceive ourselves closely, however, we will possibly find that if we are not yet spiritually patient, subtle expression of our displeasure will escape before we can control ourselves.

### **Patience being optimism**

Patience is a spiritual thing that makes welfares or benefits for both of self and others. In addition, patience is a good way in order to adjust in social relations and social life because it can generate optimism.

For example, the weather, according to the nature, sometimes is hot and sometimes cold. That is often changing. The patient and the impatient react differently to the changing of weather conditions. The impatient would not endure such conditions ‘too hot or too cold weather’ and they are usually irritated the weather lamenting “it is so hot” or “it is so cold”.

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<sup>1</sup> Sirimahācaturaṅgabala, *Abhidhanappadīpikā Tikā*, Ed., Caṭṭha Saṅgāyanā, Yangon, Myanmar, Department of Religious Affairs, 1991, p.161.

<sup>2</sup> Sāriputta, Bhaddanta, *Sāratthadīpanī Tikā*, Volume I, Ed., Caṭṭha Saṅgāyanā, Yangon, Myanmar, Department of Religious Affairs, 1960, p. 441.

<sup>3</sup> *Buddhavamsa Pali*, Khuddaka Nikaya, Ed., Caṭṭha Saṅgāyanā, Yangon, Myanmar, Department of Religious Affairs, 1991 p. 317.

Thus, the impatient used to have big pessimism. All their speeches and thought also would be just pessimistic.

The patient one is opposite of the above and not being angry or unhappy the extreme weather conditions. They try to forbear bearing in mind “it is hot or cold in accordance with the weather-nature”. They usually have great optimism or proper attitude. Between both of them, only the patient one will be agreeable with the people. The nature of human dislikes the pessimist and sometimes even family, relatives and close friends dislike the pessimist among them. So, the missionary persons should develop the optimism called “patience” in mind for the missionary work.

*Pārājika atthakathā* explains that being balanced mind at the object desired (*iṭṭhārammana*) and the undesirable object (*aniṭṭhārammana*) is *khantī* (patience).<sup>4</sup> Accordingly the patient ones are not exceedingly happy when meeting with the desired and are not sad exceedingly when meeting with the undesirable object.

The people usually would feel exceedingly happy when facing the desired object and would feel exceedingly sad or sorry when facing the undesirable object, and when they are praised, they enjoy and when they are condemned, feel sorry. Such happiness, sadness, sorrow is because of lack of patience. So, the book “*Maghadewa Linkāra*” describes as follows;

“Hatred and love on human beings are not regular always, the worldly persons speak both of truth and untruth.”<sup>5</sup>

That highlights the nature of human beings. The people will praise whom they love and they will condemn whom they hate, and sometimes they used to speak truth but sometimes not. If the people cannot forbear such nature, their works and welfare may ruin.

The missionary persons propagating by philanthropy or learning doctrines (*pariyatti*) or practicing meditation (*paṭipatti*) usually are to treat various kinds of people. At that time, they will face the above nature of humans surely. In such situations, they need the optimism called *khantī* (patience). If having no optimism, the missionary persons will make preference to one who they like and will condemn one who they dislike. That is only pursuing a wrong course of conduct (*agati*) called *chandāgati* (going wrong through desire) and *dosāgati* (going wrong through hatred). Pursuing the wrong course of conduct is a cause to break society, the

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<sup>4</sup> Buddhaghosa, Bhaddanta, *Pārājikakanda Atthakathā, Volume II, Vinaya Pitaka*, Ed., Caṭṭha Saṅgāyanā, Yangon, Myanmar, Department of Religious Affairs, 1991, p. 188.

<sup>5</sup> Manle Sayarday, *Mahāsutakārī Maghadevalinkarhit*, Yangon, Myanmar, Department of religious affairs, 1983, p. 263.

works of welfare. Such a wrong course of conduct is also because one cannot forbear the nature of vicissitude bearing in mind truly on the object desired and the undesirable object. Therefore, if the missionary persons cannot cultivate *khantī* (patience), they will come to have pursuing a wrong course (*agati*), and if they come to have pursuing a wrong course, their missionary work also will not be successful.

At the time of the Buddha, many people often praised the Venerable *Sāriputta Thera* for his forbearance and patience. Once a layman said of him that his teacher is a great patient and extreme endurable man and if someone abused him or even beat him, he would not lose his temper but remains calm and composed. As this was often said of the venerable *Sāriputta*, a *brahmin* who believed in another religion declared to the devotees of *Sāriputta* that he would provoke the venerable *Sāriputta* who was on his alms-round, appeared on the scene; the Brahmin went after him and hit him hard on his back with his hand. ‘The *Thera* did not even look back to see who was the person that struck him but continued on his way as though nothing had occurred. When seeing great fortitude and the magnanimity of the venerable *Thera*, the Brahmin was very much unnerving and shaken. He was down on his knees at the feet of the venerable *Sāriputta*, admitted that he had improperly hit the *Thera*, and requested to pardon his fault.<sup>6</sup>

Everybody in the world meets with both of the good vicissitudes and the bad vicissitudes, and besides, may meet with not only the clever but also the cruel. Just so, the missionary persons also are to meet with such. Nobody can avoid such vicissitudes. Among the missionary persons, only the patient may endure difficulties and continue forward, and accomplish or get to the goal. Consequently, the missionary persons should propagate Buddha *sāsana* by bearing patience (*khantī*) in mind.

### **Conclusion**

In summary, we can see that how much patience is significant not only for the missionary work but also for others as stated the teachings and story-evidence before. The Buddha also admonished his followers repeatedly about the importance of patience. Therefore, the patience ability is essentially needed to perform the missionary work harmoniously and peacefully, but patience (*khantī*) merely supports the missionary persons only not to totter from the work. The missionary persons need also other abilities such as *Sati* (mindfulness), *Vīriya* (effort), *Paññā* (wisdom), etc.

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<sup>6</sup> Mya Tin, Daw, Trans, *The Dhammapada verses and stories*, Burma Tipitaka Association, Rangoon, Burma, 1986, p. 344-345.