

Strength of Patience

Written by the Venerable Abbot Hua in the Hall of No Words

Translated by Bhikshuni Heng Tao

If you are good to people, you shouldn't seek a reward from them. So, when you bestow kindness, you don't ask for recompense. And after you've given something to other people, you don't regret it. If you are kind to people, you don't want them to pay you back. Why is that? You should say, "It's because I'm representing the Sages. I'm representing heaven and earth to maintain true principle." Do things that benefit people. You don't have to make other people benefit you. "I want to help others; I don't need other people to help me." If you want other people to help you, then you are a spineless person. Only people who don't have resolve will keep on asking others to help them. They drag their feet in the mud, so to speak, and are very unenergetic. They just can't get their energy up.

It's said you should have a firm will. Adverse conditions make for great people. When people are not good to you, it's because they're testing to see whether you are true. If you are true, and are not seeking for any reward, what does it matter if they are good to you or not? So you better not believe principles I tell you. Because once you believe them, you will always be taking a loss.

WHENEVER OPPRESSIONS AND DIFFICULTIES PILE UP. That means when people are really piling it on thick, such as being very discourteous to you, TO THE POINT THAT OTHERS SLANDER US--you should KNOW THAT THOSE ARE GOOD KNOWING ADVISORS COME TO AID US IN IN-CREASING OUR VIRTUE AND CULTIVATING THE WAY. They are helping you foster your blessings and wisdom and accomplish your Way-virtue. They are actually helping you out.

I always say to you there are many people who scold me, and slander me. Most people who scold me are left-home people. I'm telling you the truth. Some people say, "I haven't seen left-home persons scold you!" Well, how many left-home people have you seen? Actually, there are many lay-people who slander me, as well. So there's a saying that goes,

"If you do not attract jealousy,
Then you are somebody with very ordinary talents."

But we should investigate, "Why are people scolding me?" It's because they're afraid their Dharma Protectors will believe me and that they won't have anything to eat. They think if they scold me, then their Dharma Protectors will protect their Dharma, and then they will have food to eat. Well, that's a good thing. I'm indirectly giving to them. If they scold me, and after scolding me they get food to eat, is that not saving a person's life? Isn't that good? So, because they scold me, they get Dharma Protectors, and if they scold me, they obtain benefits, that's very good! In Buddhism, we talk about compassion. So this is okay; I'm helping them.

What follows is a verse and I call it a gatha or a verse. It's not a poem. The words don't have to rhyme, and it doesn't have to adhere to a fixed meter. I'm just very casually speaking eight lines as a gatha which has a much looser structure.

FACE TO FACE WITH ADVERSE CONDITIONS, ACCEPT
THEM GRACIOUSLY--THIS IS
PARAMITA.

This is a method of crossing to the other shore.

DEVADATTA IS JUST THE GOOD KNOWING ADVISOR WHO
COMES TO AID US.

Shakyamuni Buddha himself said, "Devadatta is the very one who helped me realize Buddhahood." Devadatta was willing to fall into the hells himself, so as to help the Buddha realize Buddhahood.

KINDNESS AND ANIMOSITY FROM PAST LIVES, WE OUGHT
TO REPAY.

Whether people are kind to you or unkind to you, that's all because of conditions from past lives. Now you have to pay them back; clear your accounts. So if somebody says, "I don't believe in past lives," well, do you believe there was a yesterday? "Yes, I do." Well, do you believe there was a last year? "Yes, I do." Well, if you believe that, that's just past lives. Say, last year you killed a person, and this year, somebody else kills you. You kill someone's father, somebody will kill your father. If you kill someone's brother, somebody will kill your brother. If you scold people, then people will scold you back. If you kick somebody with your foot, then another person will slap your face. That's called repaying in kind. You say you don't believe in past lives, but if I hit you now, does it hurt? Well if it hurts, that's also a retribution. Then it says,

GRIEVANCES AND FEUDS FROM DISTANT KALPAS ARE NOW
BEING CLEARED UP.

Past feuds and grudges are being cleared up.

ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR ACCOUNTS AND DEBTS; DO NOT
DELAY REPAYMENT.

People are too concerned about progress. But can it end birth and death? If you can progress to the point that you don't have to die, that's real progress. "Well," somebody says, "I don't believe in the principle you are talking about." I didn't ask you to believe. You're too smart, so you won't believe in something that a stupid person like me says.

ESTABLISH MERIT AND ATONE FOR YOUR OFFENSES--DO
NOT PASS YOUR LIFE IN VAIN.

So, own up to your debts--pay them back. Don't drag them on. Don't seek foreign aid, so that you accumulate more debts. Instead you should establish merit to redeem the offenses you created in the past. Don't pass your life in vain.

CLEARLY UNDERSTAND GOOD AND EVIL;
BE CAREFUL ABOUT CAUSE AND EFFECT.

You should understand that if you do good, you'll get a good reward, and if you do evil, you'll get an evil retribution. Such is the cause and such is the effect.

THE DEEP ABYSS AND THIN ICE--
HOW CAN ONE EASILY ESCAPE THEM?

It's as if you were approaching a deep abyss or treading on thin ice. It's very difficult to get out of cause and effect. You have to be very careful. Now someone is saying, "Dharma Master, what you said today, I just can't believe--not a single sentence!" Then, I haven't uttered a single sentence.

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