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Understanding the Meaning of *Khanti* - Patience in some *Theravāda Sutta* and *Jātaka* Texts and its Conceptual Evolution

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ABSTRACT

Khanti, commonly translated as patience, forbearance, or endurance, is an important ethical and soteriological concept in *Theravāda* Buddhism. Although frequently associated with non-retaliation and the restraint of anger, its semantic and doctrinal dimensions extend beyond conventional understandings of patience. This paper examines the meanings and functions of *khanti* in selected *Pāli* canonical texts, particularly the *Sutta Nipāta, Saṃyutta Nikāya*, Dhammapada, *Cariyāpiṭaka*, and *Jātaka* literature, with particular attention to its relationship with loving-kindness (*mettā*), wisdom (*paññā*), non-hatred (*adosa*), and the perfection of patience (*khanti-pāramī*). Through textual and philological analysis, the study explores how *khanti* is represented in different narrative and doctrinal contexts, including the *Khantivādi Jātaka*, the *Sakka Saṃyutta*, and the *Kakacūpama Sutta*. It argues that patience in early *Pāli* literature encompasses mental composure amid worldly vicissitudes, endurance of physical and verbal adversity, and the deliberate cultivation of non-resentment through wisdom and compassion. The paper further investigates the interpretation of *khanti* in relation to its Sanskrit counterpart, *kṣānti*, and examines its elaboration in later *Mahāyāna* Buddhist literature, particularly in classifications concerning endurance of suffering, acceptance of the Dharma, and tolerance of others' wrongdoing. By comparing these textual traditions, the study highlights both continuities and shifts in the conceptual interpretation of patience. It concludes that *khanti* represents not passive submission but an active ethical and contemplative discipline directed towards non-harm, spiritual development, and liberation.

1. Introduction

The meaning of *khanti* in *Maṅgala sutta* is 'patience and gentleness' (*khanti ca sovaccassatā*[1]), such that it leads to, when touched by the eight worldly vicissitudes the mind remains undisturbed. That is the 'steadiness of mind', which leads to the non-grief (*asokaṃ*), stainlessness (*virajaṃ*) and safe well-being (*khemaṃ*). Here *khanti* is interpreted as being in a state of steady mind when faced with both the states, that is, say, when praise and disdain come on the way. This can be considered as the earlier meaning of *khanti*. Ledi Sayadaw gives the meaning of *khanti* as *sammānavamānakkhamo*.[2]

In another instance, *khanti* means enduring both good and evil like the earth, the water, the fire and air, the balance of mind with respect to the four *mahābhutās* (*pañcakhandhā* as in the *Cūḷa Vedalla sutta*[3], *Kakacūpama sutta*[4]). We see that the method of balancing of the mind is different for different *mahābhutā*. Forbearance or endurance is like the earth's characteristic of 'equally accepting' *samānāvamānakkhamo* whatever is thrown over it, whether it be urine or garland.

However, *khanti pārami*, means the noble deeds of 'not reacting' or 'not losing calm' when faced with confronting situations without allowing ill-will to arise in the mind. Another meaning of *khanti* is to bear the wrong of others as in enduring harsh speech of others as in *sahana* (*Dh* vv21-23 *Sāmāvati vatthu*). This term *sahana* is used in many Indian dialects even today, like Hindi, Marathi, Punjabi and others.

1.1. Khanti in Cariyāpiṭaka commentary

Cariyāpiṭaka commentary in 'The Great Chronicles of the Buddha' defines the following three stages in the cultivation of *khanti pārami*:

Karuṇūpāyakosallapariggahitaṃ sattasaṅkhārāparādhasahanaṃ adosappadhāno tadākārappavattacittuppādo khantipāramitā.

(i). *sattasankhāraparādhasahanam* means enduring the wrong-doings of other beings.

(ii). *adosappadhāno* means bearing non-hatred as the foremost (exertion).

(iii). *tadākarappavattacittuppādo* meaning 'at that time turning the mind (consciousness) to arise in accordance with (the foremost intention of non-hatred).[5]

1.2. Alternate Definition of Khanti

An alternate definition by Venerable *Mahāthera* Rerukane (2003) defines *khanti*[6] as follows: "It is the mentality dominated by non-hatred, tolerant of the crimes committed by human beings and softened with an encompassing attitude of compassion and efficiency in means."

Further, Venerable Rerukane explains 'what patience is not' and 'what patience is', thus:

Patience is an excellent quality praised by the Buddhas and other great beings. It is not the quality of suffering complacently in silence without attempting to extricate oneself from one's difficulties. What patience implies as a virtue and a *pāramitā* is not becoming confounded and perplexed in the face of difficulties and obstructions. There are some who, failing to do the needful in the face of a problem, adopt wrong measures resulting in confusion and chaos. Patience as a virtue and a *pāramitā* comprises refraining from abandoning the practice of one's accustomed good deeds in the face of difficulties and problems as also refraining from becoming angry and resorting to acts of vengeance.[7]

One of the meanings of *khanti* is 'no hatred' or '*a-dosa'*. *Mettā* is a positive aspect signifying *adosa*, an extension of *adosa* as a good-will. Because the absence of anger, whether *mettā* or not, can also mean indifference. A mind of goodwill, that is the presence of a positive aspect which indicates evidence that it is free of the negative aspect. Therefore, the foremost effort is the intention of *adosa* or non-hatred towards other beings or things.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Difference Between Patience (Khanti) and Loving-kindness (Mettā)

Questioning the wise [*paññā*], I put forth the best energy [*vīriya*], reached perfection in the matter of forbearance [*khanti*], and obtained the Enlightenment par excellence. … Intent on truth [*adhiṭṭhāna*], I fulfilled the perfection of truth [*sacca*]; reaching perfection in friendliness [*mettā*], I obtained the Enlightenment par excellence.[8]

[1] AN i 47 *Mudu sutta* states: Mind when developed and cultivated becomes soft and pliant. *Sovaccassatā* means compliance, willing to practice instructions given by the Noble Ones.
[2] Vaishali Sanjay Gaidhani, "Understanding the Concept of Khanti: Patience in Theravāda Pāli Texts" (PhD diss., University of the West, 2025), 45.
[3] M i 299.
[4] M i 122.
[5] Mingun Sayadaw and Vicittasārābhivamso, "*Great Chronicle of Buddhas.*"
[6] Rerukāne Candavimala Mahāthera, *Analysis of Perfections: English Translation of Paramita Prakaranaya*, trans., AGS Kariyawasam (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 2003), 88.
[7] Rerukāne Candavimala Mahāthera, "*Analysis of Perfections,"* 88.
[8] Dwijendralal Barua, "Buddhā*padāna,*" in *B. C. Law Volume,* Part 2, ed. R. Bhandarkar (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1946), 183–90.

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Through the determination of truth - *saccādhiṭṭhāna*, the *Bodhisatta* can practice forbearance without anger, the inconvenience caused due to mosquito bites and weather conditions, abuses and ailments, well. In addition, through *saccādhiṭṭhāna*, he does not deviate from the truth, does not follow the wrong course of hatred. Through *saccādhiṭṭhāna,* is attained the happiness of renunciation and first meditative absorption- *paṭhama jhāna.*[9]

The meaning of *khanti* in the earlier *suttās* indicates the inclination of the mind towards a happy state, as in *mettā*, the result of which is conducive to attaining *samādhi* or concentration of the mind. This is seen in the Sn 1.8 *Karaṇīyamettā sutta* as well as the Dhammapada story of the five hundred *bhikkhūs*. In this story the act of *khanti*, is by the practice of loving kindness (*mettā*), the Buddha instructs the five hundred *bhikkhūs*, is the weapon of wisdom (*paññāyudhena*) which helps to fight the forces of evil and win victory over an adverse situation.

In addition to the *Apadāna* and the *Cariyāpiṭaka*, the *Buddhavaṃsa* is an important text of reference. It is considered by most scholars to have been written during the *1st and 2nd century BCE.*

However, it seems to be a later development that *khanti* indicates the meaning of the mind which has not yet reached the happy state, but just before that state when the mind is in a state of experiencing the physical or mental pain caused by the adverse situation, as a state of enduring the pain, seen as a circumstance difficult to go through. The meaning of *sahana* indicates the latter state of the mind. This can be seen in the *Sāmāvati sutta*. The term *sahana* may also indicate 'to bear the pain (*kilesadukkha*) by a non - *Arahat*'; that is one who still has some *kilesās* or defilements left. Venerable *Ānanda* suggested the Buddha that they should leave the city of *Kosambi* when queen *Magaṇḍiya*'s men were verbally abusing. Regardless, the Buddha let allow the situation to persist and replied that this adverse situation will not last any more than seven days. *Khanti* here inclines towards the state of mind leading to happiness.

The Buddha seeing through the situation skillfully is thus considered: This situation has arisen as a result of past unwholesome action and that 'patiently waiting while facing the situation without aversion' is the only skillful way to overcome the unwholesome resultant (*akusala - vipāka*) of the corresponding past unwholesome deed (*akusala - kamma*). By doing so the Buddha's compassion, results in others' welfare even in return for their wrong-doings.

However, all those others' who have committed unwholesome actions of verbal abuse in this life towards the Buddha, regardless any which ways, will certainly have to reap the unhappy results in their future lives. Other vivid examples are the multiple attempts of *bhikkhu Devadatta* to murder and even cause a schism in the monastic Sangha.

2.2. Patience (Khanti) and Religious Urgency (Dhamma Saṃvega)

As a matter of fact, wrong-doing, whether as a shame (*hiri*) or fear (*otappa*), therefore, finds mention here. Considering the aspect of others' fear of wrong doing, *khanti* is sometimes misunderstood as a *saṃvega*. In the sense that both *khanti* and *saṃvega* are influenced by the external factors of being in existence that lead to the positive aspects of turning the mind towards the *dhamma*; *khanti* arises out of the intention of good-will; while *saṃvega* arises due to fear (*otappa*) by seeing danger of the unknown or the unwholesome result, which re-orients the mind's attention towards appropriate wholesome action. This is termed as religious urgency (*dhamma saṃvega*):

The group of four kinds of fear (*bhaya*) of birth (*jāti*), old age (*jarā*), sickness (*vyādhi*) and death (*maraṇa*); the knowledge that these four are fearsome dangers is called as *saṃvega*. The first three are the *saṃvega nimitta* as they give rise to the sense of religious urgency, cause terrible fright and alarm.[10]

In another instance, *khanti* means enduring both good and evil like the earth, the water, the air and fire, the balance of mind with respect to the four *mahabhutā* (*pancakhandhā* as in the *Cuḷa Vedalla sutta*). We see that the method of balancing of the mind is different for different *mahabhutā*. The method of the earth's endurance is of 'equally accepting' *samānāvamānakkhamo* towards what is thrown over it, whether it may be urine or garland.

There is no rigid concept that the Buddha teaches to adhere to. As can be seen in the *Brahmajāla sutta* of sixty - two views and the view of non-attachment to these sixty-two types of views need to be removed. This suggests there is no specific view to be attached to, in the practice of the noble path (*sīlabbattaparāmāsa* is one of the three fetters eliminated at the fruition of first stage of stream-entry). Even the Dhamma is to be set aside when one reaches the far end shore of liberation (*Nibbāna*). It is well known that in the Buddha's teachings even the perceptions (*saññā*) as one of the five aggregates (*pañcakkhandhās*) are to be eliminated. Therefore, there is no attachment to any fixed view to be followed. The Buddha teaches the truth (*sacca*) by two ways of conventional (*sammuti sacca*) and ultimate realities (*paramattha sacca*). According to the teaching of the Four Noble Truths, the Buddha is referred to as *Sacca - vādi.* The

[9] Mingun Sayadaw and Vicittasārābhivamso, "*Great Chronicle of Buddhas,*" 149.

[10] Mingun Sayadaw and Bhadanta Vicittasārābhivamso, *The Great Chronicle of Buddhas*, trans. U Ko Lay (Singapore: The Buddha Sasana Council, 2008), 226.

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Master is also known as saccanāma, 'he whose name is truth.' Also, in the subtle teaching of the *Abhidhamma* method, the Buddha is referred as *Vibhajja-vādi*. According to the *Abhidhamma* texts, *khanti* – patience and *mettā* – loving kindness, both qualities are indicated by the beautiful mental factors (*sobhana cetasika*) of non-hatred '*adosa*,' as ultimate realities.

From the *Nibbedhika sutta*, *Cuḷakammavibhaṅga sutta*, the *Mahākammavibhaṅga sutta*, and the fundamental teachings based on the theory of 'action and its result' (*kamma-vipāka*) in the many *suttās*, the Buddha is referred as *Kamma - vādi*.

However, from the *Khanti-vādi Jātaka*, the *Bodhisatta* is a preacher of the doctrine of 'patience'. This previous life teaching is reflected in the *Kakacūpama sutta* (Discourse on the Simile of the Saw)[11]. The Buddha very firmly conveys to His novice disciples the principle of forbearance. Even when faced by violent harsh situation, a *bhikkhu* should strictly follow harmlessness, without even a trace of ill-will in the mind. Rather, on the contrary, endure the situation with a mind of loving kindness (*mettā*) with equanimity (without discrimination) for all beings; as a means of 'rising above the so-called notion of self', abandoning not just the hatred (*dosa*) but also the desire (*lobha*) to exist (*bhava*). Therefore, to the minister's request, in the *Khanti-vādi Jātaka*, the *Bodhisatta* replies, that those who go by this way (*mādisā*) do not incur cuss on anyone.[12]

How could have the *Bodhisatta* practiced *khanti* if it was not for someone to make such a condition to occur? Considering the three characteristics, (*ti-lakkhaṇa – anicca, dukkha, anatta*) the changing nature of the material body as no - self (*anatta*). Here the Buddha is said to be *Anatta-vādi*. In the subtle teaching of the *Abhidhamma* method, the Buddha is referred as *Vibhajja-vādi*. However, even if the Buddha teaches different concepts of the *Dhamma* according to the understanding of the interlocutor; the purpose and intention of the Buddha's teaching here can be solely and certainly said to be of non-harm (*na samaṇo hoti paraṁ viheṭhayanto*) towards others as a *Khanti-vādi, the Professor of Patience*.[13]

2.3. Bodhisatta Khanti in Saṃyutta Nikāya - Sakka Saṃyutta[14]

How does one practice patience? Is it by fear or otherwise, what motivates the practice of patience? In the *Sakka Saṃyutta*, the Buddha narrates the stories of the past life as a *Sakka*, the king of gods elucidating that one practices patience not by fear but by wisdom.

The *Sakka-Saṃyutta*, in the *SN.179 (283–287),* describes *Sakka*, the king of gods residing in the 'Heavens of Thirty-Three' (*Tāvatiṃsa*), as one practicing patience with *Vepacitti*, the king of demons (*Asūrās)*. *Vepacitti* who is imprisoned in *Sakka*'s royal palace, on *Sakka*'s arrival there, hailed abuses and reviled him from his prison. When *Sakka* came out of the royal palace again, *Vepacitti* couldn't refrain from bad-mouthing, slandering, and abusing the king of the *Devās*. But *Sakka* remained calm and serene.

Seeing this, the charioteer *Mātali* asked, if *Sakka* is quiet because of fear of *Vepacitti*. "Sire, this king of the *Asūrās* insults you over and over again. Do you accept this so calmly because you are afraid of him?" *Sakka* replies him saying, *Vepacitti* is his prisoner, and that *Sakka* can retaliate *Vepacitti* the way he wishes. "Young friend, this king of the *Asūrās* is in my power. I can do with him as I like." "Then why do you accept his such a behavior?" inquired *Mātali*. "But in spite of this, I forbear with his harangues, defamation, and aspersions," said *Sakka*.[15]

But *Sakka* does not do so as he sees wisely with patience. Because he understood the great benefits that forbearance brings. Although he knew that he could do anything he wanted to his prisoner and that his prisoner would not be able to pay him back, he remained calm and patient. The Buddha said that this is the highest form of patience: to forbear even though you do not have to, even though you could change the situation. Of course, it is also good to practice forbearance when you have no other choice, but to forbear voluntarily is the highest and best sort of forbearance. [16]

Sakka has great power, but if he should react to such insults without being the stronger one, what would happen to him? Just like the king of the *Asūrās*, he would be defeated and have to endure imprisonment. He would have to suffer. Whoever tries to be something he is not, has to suffer a lot. So, even though he could have taken action, *Sakka* observed this practice of developing forbearance in his mind, and that is very noble. The noble ones of old practiced forbearance at all times. *Bodhisattā* practice this too.[17]

Venerable *Bhikkhu Bodhi's* translation of the verses are as follows-
It is neither through fear nor weakness

[11] M i 122.

[12] *Tattha mādisāti mama sadisā khantibalena samannāgatā paṇḍitā, ayaṃ maṃ akkosi paribhāsi pahari, chindi bhindī"ti taṃ na kujjhanti.* "Those like me are the wise endowed with the power of forbearance, "This (king) shouted abused hit, cut (me) into pieces, (yet) towards him I did not get angry."

[13] The Buddha is referred to as *Kamma-vādi, Sacca-vādi, Dhammavādi, Anattavādi, Ātakkavādi, Vibhajjavādi, Khantivādi, Paramatthavādi.*

[14] Gaidhani, "Understanding the Concept of Khanti," 78.

[15] Bhikkhu Bodhi, trans., *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Saṃyutta Nikāya* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2003), 317-327.

[16] Bodhi, "*Connected Discourses,*" 317–27.

[17] Bodhi, "*Connected Discourses,*" 317–27.

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That I am patient with Vepacitti.
How can a wise person like me
Engage in combat with a fool?
... Of goals that culminate in one's own good
None is found better than patience.
...One who repays an angry man with anger
Thereby makes things worse for himself.
Not repaying an angry man with anger,
One wins a battle hard to win.
He practices for the welfare of both,
His own and the other's,
When, knowing that his foe is angry,
He mindfully maintains his peace.
When he achieves the cure of both—
His own and the other's—
The people who consider him a fool
Are unskilled in the Dhamma.[18]

2.4. Bodhisatta Khanti in Jātakās

According to this logic, Wakefield (2022), opines that the practice of *khanti* is extensively beneficial to all those in conflicts. *Khanti* as non-retaliation and forgiveness, in such a situation is a conscious letting go of negative emotions towards another person. One refrains from resentment, even if one is at the receiving end of wrongdoing. He says:

This aspect of *khanti* removes the harboring of pain and humiliation, and the elimination of anger removes the temptation, or possibility, to seek a corrupted form of justice through acts of revenge, whether in a military or a civilian context.[19]

The Buddha then commended to his followers *Sakka*'s praise for "patience and gentleness" (*khantisoraccassa*)." [20] The term *khanti* (patience) and *soracca* (gentle speech) is often seen together. This connection is established in the *Sarabhaṅga jātaka 522,* where *Sakka* visits the *Mahāsattā*[21], ascetic *Sarabhaṅga* to inquire about the characteristics of patience and how to practice it.

The *Khanti-vādi jātaka 313* is the previous life story of the *Bodhisatta* as *Khanti-vādi* meaning 'the preacher of patience' and is a prelude that subsequently connects to the story of ascetic *Sarabhaṅga* who answers *Sakka* and the three kings' questions enfolding answers about the results of the grave events elocuted in the *Khanti-vādi jātaka*.

Another interesting attestation to the understanding that the Buddha's knowledge in the *Jātakās* relies on a perception into other peoples' karmic conditioning, and not only into his personal history of transmigration, is that the Buddha is commonly called *Dasabala*[22] in the text—'he who has the ten powers'." "… this knowledge [of omniscience] can then be used by the Buddha benevolently in order to help people make the best of their life situations, through his deep care and love for them. [23]

'In the *Jātaka Aṭṭhakathā*, 'Exposition on Patience Birth Story' (*Khanti-vaṇṇanā-Jātaka: 225*), the Buddha narrates his former life as *Brahmadatta*, king of Benares. the king disclosed his knowledge of the courtier's betrayal and stated: "Good men, I trow, are rare enow: so patience is my rede."'[24]

2.5. Wisdom (Paññā) and Patience (Khanti) in Yakkha Saṃyutta

The Buddha visits *Āḷavaka yakkha*, (*Saṃyutta Nikāya*) and by way of patient skillfulness teaches the mighty angry *yakkha* (spirits). This shows the Buddha's forbearance (*khanti*) of the *yakkha*'s ego attitude. However, this type of *khanti* is not of the mundane (*lokiya*) one but of the supramundane (*lokuttara*) *khanti*. Instead of forbearance, in this sutta, the Buddha dealt with the *yakkha*, not with forbearance but with wisdom of the functional consciousness (*Ñāṇasampayutta Mahākiriya Kāmāvacara Sobhana citta*), because of the Buddha's Knowledge of others' effluents (*āsavānusaya ñāṇa*).

In the *SN Āḷavakasuttaṃ*, The Buddha answers the questions of *Āḷavaka yakkha.* In Point # 602, Venerable *Bodhi* co-relating the two tetrads in vv. 853-854 mentions *dhiti* is replaced by *khantyā.* The vv.852-854 are as follows:[25]

v.852: *patirūpakārī dhuravā, uṭṭhātā vindate dhanaṃ.*

v.853: *saccam dhammo dhiti cāgo*

v.854: *saccā damā cāgā khantyā*

Venerable *Bodhi* gives the correlation thus:

852 dutifulness, initiative = 853 steadfastness *dhiti* = 854 patience *khanti*.

Explaining the above schematically shown correlation, Venerable *Bodhi* says:

[18] Bodhi, "*Connected Discourses,*" 317–27.
[19] Alex Wakefield, "'Freedom from Hatred': The Role of *Khanti* in Complementing the Work of International Humanitarian Law (IHL)," *Contemporary Buddhism* 22 (2021): 281–98, https://doi.org/10.1080/14639947.2022.2038030.
[20] Bodhi, "*Connected Discourses,*" 321-23.
[21] In the *Sarabhaṅga jātaka*, the *Bodhisatta* is addressed as "*Mahāsatta*", the Great-being. Generally, the Buddha is referred as the *Satthā* (Teacher), *Dasabala* (one of ten powers) and *Bhagavā*
[22] As in the *Mahasihanāda sutta*.
[23] Eviatar Shulman, *Contemplating the Buddha in the Jātakas* (Sheffield, UK: Equinox Publishing, 2018), 19-20.
[24] W.H.D. Rouse, *The Jātaka: Or Stories of the Buddha's Former Births*, vol. 2 (New York: Dover Publications, 2004), 145-46.
[25] Bhikkhu Bodhi, trans., *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Samyutta Nikāya* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2003), 316, 487.

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"Come on now ask the ascetics and brahmins whether there is … any greater means for finding mundane and supramundane wealth than patience, which is identical with activated energy, (called patience) in the sense that it endures heavy burdens, and which is referred to by the names dutifulness [*dhuravā* = mental energy] and initiative [*uṭṭhātā* = physical energy]."[26]

From the above narration, patience is the zealous nature of persistent energy until attaining the goal of *Nibbāna*. Explaining wisdom in the above verses, Venerable Bodhi states: "Wisdom is called *Dhamma* because of bearing up and examining (*dhāraṇato upadhāraṇato*) entities in accordance with actuality. (As the verb *dhāreti* (> *dhāraṇa*) is the stock etymological explanation of *dhamma* in commentaries…."

Regarding the question whether there is any greater means for gaining mundane and supramundane wisdom than self-control (*dama*), Venerable Bodhi suggests reading (*damā*), "which explains that wisdom is so designated because it controls (*dameti*) the defilements as well as body and speech, etc.", thereby giving the following corelation:

851: Wisdom [*paññā*] = 853: *Dhamma* [*dhāraṇa*] = 854: self-control [*damā*][27]

Thus, the Buddha answers *yakkha*'s questions and explains by doing so, one does not sorrow when passing from this world to the next.
Placing faith in the Dhamma of the Arahants[28]
For the attainment of Nibbāna,
From desire to learn one gains wisdom
If one is diligent and astute.[29]

3. Comparing *Khanti* in *Sutta* and *Jataka*

3.1. Buddha's Explanation of Khanti in Suttās[30]

There are few more *suttās* in the *Sutta nipāta* which emphasize on the quality of patience as noble and necessary to develop. Some *sutta* exemplify the Buddha's patience. While teaching the two *yakkhā*, *Hemavata* and *Sātāgiri*, the Buddha's patience is portrayed in the dialogue that goes between the two *yakkhā*. The *Hemavata Sutta* from the *Sn* v153-180, is a conversation between two guardian spirits, *Hemavata* and *Sātāgiri*.

Example of the *Nāga Bhuridatta's* practice of patience through restraint with regard to the precepts (*uposatha saṃvara - sīla*)[31]. The *Jātakā* are the stories that narrate the *Bodhisatta*'s zeal, effort and skillfulness to fulfil the perfections, that narrate the *Bodhisatta*'s marvellous heroic deeds called *pāramī.*

Chamā, a term seen in the *Tipallattha-miga Jātaka,* is used for the earth or ground, came to define the root cham (= *kṣam*) from *Skt. kṣam*, cp. of *Pāli- khamati. Khamati* in the meaning of 'forgiveness'. Elder *Sāriputta* compares his own conduct to the patience of the earth. The characteristic of the earth to bear both good and bad with equanimity. In a way that even if any kind of waste is thrown on the earth or garlands put on it, the earth accepts both with equal fervor, without any distinction between the two.

AN 4.28. The practice of the path to *Nibbāna* is the flow of the mind away from its habitual *kammic* stream- *paṭisotagāmi*. The Buddha said this practice requires a 'willingness' to develop and abandon the inherent *kammic* tendency to flow with the stream. To develop such supreme skillfulness requires great effort aiming with mindfulness, concentration and discernment towards the goal of *Nibbāna*. A lack of commitment in the principle of *kamma* would cut short the patience and commitment required to fulfil the requirements towards the supreme goal of peace.

Another aspect of 'patience' can be seen in the *Kālāma sutta*, where the Buddha urges his listeners to follow His teachings not just based on faith, but through one's own experience. To apply the skillful method in the present moment and to try and establish a relationship of those skillful actions with the results obtained. However, the favorable results are not always obtained immediately and require some time for the intentional seed of skillful actions to mature. In such a case, patience in practice is required. It is due to this delay in the principle of *kamma* that the need for faith arises. Faith in the action and the result it generates.[32]

Unwholesome actions lead to undesirable results and result in suffering- *dukkha*. Wholesome actions leading to favorable results and thereafter generating happiness- *sukha*. Patience here is just another concept of faith in this regard. This process of developing faith from the not-knowing (*micchādiṭṭhi*) - *diṭṭhinijjhānakkhanti*, to the knowing

[26] Bodhi, "*Connected Discourses,*" 487 - 488.
[27] Bodhi, "*Connected Discourses,*" 487 - 488.
[28] *Arahants* or *Arahatās* are the *Sammāsambuddha, Paccekabuddha and the Sāvakabuddha*.
[29] Sn v851: '*saddahāno arahataṃ, dhammaṃ nibbānapattiyā. sussūsaṃ {sussūsā (sī. pī.)} labhate paññaṃ, appamatto vicakkhaṇo.*'; Bodhi, "*Connected Discourses,*" 316.
[30] Gaidhani, "Understanding the Concept of Khanti," 78.
[31] The fivefold *saṃvara* are*: sīla - saṃvara, sati- saṃvara, ñāṇa-saṃvara, khanti- saṃvara, viriya- saṃvara,* that is, restraint by virtue, mindfulness, insight, patience, effort. In DhsA 351, in Pāṭimokkha-*saṃvara*, one of the five restraints *saṃvara*, is *khanti- saṃvara.*
[32] In the *Dhammapada* story of *Ahipetavatthu* is mentioned: "If the results (*vipāka*) of one's actions (*kamma*) could be immediately experienced thereafter, then none would do unwholesome (*akusala*) actions."

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(*sammādiṭṭhi*) - *dhammanijjhānakkhanti,* involves practice of patience- *khanti*.

…in the *Paṭisambhidā-magga*, on the one hand, acceptance (*khanti*) occurs as one of the knowledge, of the Knowledge Discourse. 'Acceptance knowledge is understanding as a result of having known (the aggregates, etc. as impermanent, etc.).' Later in the Insight Discourse (*Vipassanākathā*) (based on A, III, 437; 431–433) the term occurs as *anulomikā khanti* (suitable acceptance). Here it is in close association with 'certainty of rightness' (*samattaniyāma*), a term which is linked with stream-entry.[33]

Aññā-khantika also means (from. *aññā* -|- *khanti*) belonging to another "faith". There were six other teachers contemporary to the Buddha's time. Their 'beliefs', 'teachings' or 'faith' are referred to as *aññā-khantika.* All religions teach to be patient. The human endeavor of competitive mind falls short of the message. Which is the smallest group of people following a religion in the world? It also teaches patience. In fact, a mother who is the first teacher teaches patience to her child.

It is said that religion is the most powerful instrument that unites people in groups. However, it is seen that language has a yet stronger connect amongst people that helps to understand each other and bind them together with the tool of better communication. Venerable *Dhammika* is of the opinion: "The richness and utility of language is that the words can be accepted and the language can be learnt to enrich the language of own learning." Venerable S *Dhammika*, states the spirit of the Buddha's *Dhamma*, thus: "That which is 'well-spoken' is the word of the Buddha."[34] (*A. IV, 164*) Venerable *Dhammika*[35] translates the *Dhammapada* v54 in *Vācāvagga*, thus:

If he does not speak up, others know him not; he is just a wise man mixed up with fools. But if he speaks about and teaches the Deathless, others will know him. So let him light up the Dhamma, let him lift the sage's banner high.[36]

3.2. Khanti-Pāramī in the Pāli Texts

There are three paths[37] specified in the *Pāli Tipiṭaka* to attain liberation. We here discuss the path of *Mahābodhi*, the path to *Sammāsambuddha* - hood; and the other is by the *sāvakabodhi* path to *Arahat* - hood. The *Mahābodhisatta* aspires to attain the state of Bodhi (enlightenment) through own effort. The *sāvakabodhisatta*[38] aspires to attain Nibbana (liberation) under the guidance of the *Sammāsambuddha*. The *Sammāsambuddha* accumulates the knowledge of the Universal Law through actual lived experience by journeying in the rounds of *saṁsāra* as many times as is required to gain fulfilment of the meritorious deeds (*Pāramī*) therein.

The Buddha shared this knowledge in the form of stories supported by His past experience that provide a directional solution for the disciples to continue their effort in the right path. The *sāvaka* or disciple of the Buddha learns the Universal Law by listening to the *Sammāsambuddha*; and it is by this virtue of listening to the Dhamma that one is so called, in *Pāli, sāvaka* means a listener, (A 1.88), a disciple of the Buddha who attains enlightenment by listening *sāvaka - bodhi*. 'Patience (in listening)' means that one is like a saint, understands well, never hesitates in one's speech and does not flatter (* unintelligible). This is called 'patience (in listening)'.[39]

Primarily, there are the 547 *Jātaka* stories in the corpus of the *Pāli* Canon that illustrate the Buddha's past lived experiments when the *Mahābodhisatta* journeyed with great compassion (*mahākaruṇā*) amongst beings with wisdom (*upayakosallañāṇa*). Wynne[40] is of the opinion, "Numerous texts portray the Buddha as a master of adapting his instruction to particular didactic situations – what is generally referred to as the Buddha's 'skill in means'. …" Gombrich (1996: p. 17) suggests "Although the term "skill in means" translated as (Skt.) '*upāyakausalyañāṇa*' is post-canonical, but the Buddha's exercise of skill to which it refers, the ability to adapt one's message to the audience is of enormous importance in the Pali Canon."[41] Another aspect is that the *Pāli* term *upayakosallañāṇa*[42] is referred generally, to the *Bodhisatta*'s skill in fulfilling perfections (*Pāramī*); Whereas the Buddha's mode of instruction is the knowledge of other's taints (*āsavās)* referred as one of the Buddha's ten knowledges *āsavānusayañāṇa*. What Wynne refers to the lone Canonical term found in the Th 158,

[33] L. S. Cousins, "The Origin of Insight Meditation," in *The Buddhist Forum*, vol. 4 ed. Tadeusz Skorupski (1994-96), 55.

[34] Bhante S. Dhammika, *An Anthology of Verses from the Pali Scriptures*, The Wheel Publication No. 342/344 (Kandy, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society, 1987; digital edition, 2010), 5.

[35] Bhante S. Dhammika, *An Anthology of Verses from the Pali Scriptures*, 1987, 19.

[36] *"Nabhasamaṇam jananti missam balehi panditam; bhasamaṇañ ca jananti desentam amatam padam; bhasaye jotaye dhammam pagganhe isinam dhajam."*

[37] The three paths are of *Mahābodhi to* Sammāsambuddhahood, *Paccekabodhi* to Paccekabuddhahood and *Sāvakabodhi to* Arahathood.

[38] *Sāvaka* is a disciple of the Buddha. Also, there are *Paccekabodhisatta* who aspire for *Paccekabuddhahood*. They know by themselves but cannot teach the *Dhamma* in words.

[39] Arahant Upatissa, *The Path of Freedom (Vimuttimagga)*, ed. and pub. D. Roland D. Weerasuria (Colombo: Balcombe House, 1961), 50.

[40] Alexander Wynne, "The Buddha's 'Skill in Means' and the Genesis of the Five Aggregate Teaching," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 20, no. 2 (2010): 193.

[41] Gombrich, Richard F. 1996. How Buddhism Began: The Conditioned Genesis of the Early Teachings. London: Athlone Press, 17.

[42] Mingun Sayadaw, *The Great Chronicle of Buddhas* (Yangon: Department for the Promotion and Propagation of the Sasana, 1999), 62.

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upāyakusalenāhaṃ[43] indicates the wholesome (*kusala*) act of complete eradication of taints with the goal of *Nibbāna*.

Pāramī are the noble meritorious deeds that set the foundation of the attainment of Enlightenment in the final birth. Of the ten *Pāramī* which are the apparatus necessary in the experimental search for truth, *khanti* is one such *Pārami*. However, *Pāramī* need to be fulfilled by *sāvakabodhisatta* also. But the degree of the noble deed varies in the sense that for *sāvakabodhisatta*, it is not mandatory to fulfil the *Pāramī* by giving up their life, like the *Mahābodhisatta*. That is why in most of the *Jātakās* the *Mahābodhisatta* is referred to as *Mahāsatta*, the 'Great Being'.

There is also a third type of *Bodhisatta* called as *PaccekaBodhisatta* - one who aspired to be a *Paccekabuddha*, translated as a 'Silent Buddha' or a 'Solitary Buddha' or a 'Private Buddha', because even though they are able to find the path of Buddhahood by and for themselves, they are unable to teach the *Dhamma*. Therefore, *Sammāsambuddha* is the foremost of the *Paccekabuddhā*, the Supreme Teacher (*Satthā*), who can teach and explain the difficult *Dhamma* of the 'Universal Law of Dependent Origination' in simple words of 'Four Noble Truths'[44] in the language of the people, so that those hearing the *Dhamma* are able to understand and practice accordingly by own self to attain liberation.

The understanding of the *Pāli* term *khanti* and its Sanskrit counterpart *kṣānti* has been a discussion long-standing among the scholars, right from Gegun Sasaki until today. Sungtaek Cho, 2016 in the recent past tries to unfold the meaning from the *Mahāyāna* perspective, as it has evolved. However, reviewing the two meanings of *khanti*, P V Bapat concludes that *khanti* in *Pāli* should be translated as *kanti* in Sanskrit, because the aspirated word *kha* in *Pāli* should be *ka* in Sanskrit, in lines many other words translated such from *Pāli* to Sanskrit. It sounds parallelly reasonable to state that if *khama* (pardon) is translated as *kṣama*, then *khanti* is rightly translated as *kṣānti* according to this norm.

The second point of discussion is about the meaning of *kanti* given as liking, seems to be deflecting from the definition of *khanti* given as *samaṇavamanakkhamo* = forbearing like and dislike in the same manner.[45]

4. *Khanti* in Early *Pāli* Texts

Sungtaek Cho is of the opinion that the term *khanti*, which forms an important term in *Mahāyāna* soteriology as *kṣānti* has not been understood correctly. Although from the term *anutpattika-dharma-kṣānti*, as 'patiently waiting for the dharma that have not yet arisen' seems suitable, Cho observes 'patience' is not the correct meaning that is seen in the *Sutta nipāta*, one of the Early Buddhist texts.

The interpretation denoting *khanti* as just 'attentive "intentionality" or mental states', he probably draws from the *Pārāyaṇavagga* of *Sutta nipāta*. Several suttas mention *khanti* in the *Sutta nipāta*. A *Gāndhārī* version of the *Khaggavisāṇasutta* - the discourse on the Rhinoceres' Horn, a manuscript which is recently discovered in Central Asia, are said to be the earliest Buddhist texts, dated to belong to the period from 1st century BCE to 3rd century CE. The Buddha in the *Khaggavisāṇasutta* encourages one to live alone like a horned rhinoceros, as does a solitary Buddha (*Paccekabuddha*). Although the word *khanti* is not mentioned, the quality of *khanti* is described in verses as:

Heat and cold, hunger and thirst, wind and sun, flies and snakes:

having put up with all these things, live alone like a horned rhino.[46, 47]

Some of the *suttas* mentioning *khanti* in the *Sutta nipāta* are as follows-

1) 2. 4 *Maṅgalasuttaṃ:*

268. *Khantī ca sovacassatā samaṇānañca dassanaṃ,*

Kālena dhammasākacchā etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ.

2) 2. 7 *Brāhmaṇadhammika suttaṃ:*

294. *Brahmacariyañca sīlañca ajjavaṃ maddavaṃ tapaṃ*

Soraccaṃ avihiṃsañca khantiñcāpi avaṇṇayuṃ.

3) 4-13. *Mahāviyuha suttaṃ:*

901. *Yā kācimā sammutiyo puthujjā*

Sabbā'va etā na upeti vidvā,

Anupayo so upayaṃ kimeyya

[43] Th 158: *"upayakusalenāham buddhenadiccabandhunā, yoniso paṭipajjitva bhave cittam udabbahin ti."*

[44] *Paticca – samuppāda*, the Universal Law of Dependent Origination is explained in the Buddha's enlightenment story in the VP Mahavagga *Bodhikathā*; while in the *Dhammaccakkappavattana sutta*, the first *Dhamma* teaching to the *pañcavaggiya bhikkhūs*, the Buddha explains the Four Noble Truths (*Cattāri Ariya Saccāni*).

[45] Mingun Sayadaw, *The Great Chronicles of the Buddha*, trans. by U Ko Lay, vol. 1 (Yangon, Myanmar: Tipitaka Nikaya Sangha Council, 1991), 1620.

[46] *"sītañca uṇhañca khudaṃ pipāsaṃ, vātātape ḍaṃsasarīsape ca; sabbānipetāni abhisambhavitvā, eko care khaggavisāṇakappo."*

[47] Bhikkhu Sujato, trans., "*Sn 6 Khaggavisāṇa Sutta* ("The Horned Rhino")," *SuttaCentral*, accessed August 6, 2025, https://suttacentral.net/snp1.3/en/sujato?lang=en&layout=linebyline&reference=main&notes=none&highlight=false&script=IASTPali

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Diṭṭhe sute khantimakubbamāno.

4) 4-15 *Attadaṇḍa suttaṃ:*

948. *Purāṇaṃ nābhinandeyya nave khantiṃ na kubbaye,*

Hiyamāne na soceyya ākāsaṃ na sito siyā.

The earliest instruction that the Buddha gave to the congregation of the noble monastic disciples (*ariya bhikkhū*) is the *Ovāda Pāṭimokkha* that states: the austere practice of forbearance (*tapo titikkhā*) is the highest of all ascetic practices.

The *Dh-a* narrates the story when once Venerable *Ānanda* asked the Buddha if the basic instructions for the conduct of the monks were the same in case of the past *Buddhās*, or whether each *Buddha* sets His own monastic rules. The Buddha replied with this verse (*Dh v*184) and with the preceding one (*Dh v*183) and with the following one (*Dh v*185), saying that they (monastic rules) were all the same, adding that the previous *Buddhā*s did conduct the *ovāda-pāṭimokkha* similar exhortation as these three verses. In the *Digha nikāya, Mahāpadāna sutta*, *Vipassi Buddha* gives the *Ovāda – Pāṭimokkha* to His noble disciples. Also, *Dh v*184, the Buddha explains the verse of *Ovāda – Pāṭimokkha* that begins with *khanti* (patience).

5. Philology of *Khanti*

Linguistics is the scientific study of language structure and function, while philology is the historical and humanistic study of language through literary and written texts. Unlike the written words, the spoken words have an intonation which consists of rise and fall of voice according to emotion and meaning. The writing method is limited in the sense, what is said and heard by the listener is different from what is written and understood by the reader, with regards to the meaning. Writing method is restricted in this context of understanding the meaning of what is said.

You will know that the Buddha stated, as reported in the *Theravādin* texts, that there was no "teacher's fist", as far as He was concerned, that is He did not hold anything back for an élite, but was making his teaching known to all who wished to listen.

"*na tatth' Ānanda Tathāgatassa dhammesu ācariya-muṭṭhi*";[48]

Scholars Richard Gombrich and Bhikkhu Bodhi suggest that, the language that the Buddha must have used is not much different from the *Pāli* language we read now. Such that, in event of a hypothetical situation, where we discover the transcripts of the original discourses that the Buddha gave on His teaching rounds, would not seem to be variated more than ten percent and therefore will be understood by one who knows *Pāli* well, says Venerable *Bhikkhu Bodhi*. Especially, the *Suttanta* which 'provides an almost transparent window into the words and expressions the Buddha used.'[49]

While Venerable *Bhikkhu Bodhi* mentions that although the language *Pāli* descended from Vedic Sanskrit, this language captures the nuances of the thought-word of the Buddha, He inherited from the prevailing Indic culture without the intrusion of alien influences. The Canonical texts in *Pāli* are not 'translations', rather 'transfers' from one Middle Indo Aryan dialect into another.[50]

This is in contrast to the later translations into Chinese, Tibetan or English. Can a similar idea be considered about the Sanskrit texts that were translated later during the 4th Buddhist council around circa 1st BCE under the patronage of Emperor Kanishka?

Walsch (1995), is of a similar opinion that,

All the same, the language the Buddha actually spoke was in all probability not very different from *Pāli*. From the point of view of the non-specialist, we can think of *Pāli* as a kind of simplified Sanskrit. Its development, like that of other early Indian dialects, can be thought of as similar to an early form of Italian just breaking away from Latin.[51]

… But the two languages are still so close that it is possible to convert whole passages of Sanskrit into *Pāli* simply by making the necessary mechanical transposition.[52]

Pāli is a milder language composed of simple, soft-spoken words in comparison with Sanskrit language, which is also grammatically more complex. Walsh further says:

It follows that while the form of a Sanskrit word cannot be predicted from its Pāli equivalent, the Pāli form can usually be predicted from the Sanskrit, provided the word occurs. The meanings of Sanskrit and Pāli words are also not quite always the same.[53]

However, even if we see the comparison between Latin-Italian or otherwise, one thing scholars are united on, is *Pāli Tipiṭaka,* formed in the 3rd c. BCE, in the 3rd Council was translated to Sanskrit almost five hundred years after the Buddha, during the time of King Kanishka around 1st c. CE in the northern sub-continent, during the 4th Council. Therefore, according to the period of translating the original texts, one can conclude that the Sanskrit word *kṣānti*

[48] D ii 100, 4 = S v 153, 19.

[49] Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Reading the Buddha's Discourses in Pāḷi: Texts Selected, Translated, and Explained* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2020), 1-3.

[50] Bodhi, "*Reading the Buddha's Discourses*," 2020, 2.

[51] Maurice Walshe, trans., *The Long Discourses of the Buddha* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1995), 48.

[52] Walshe, "*Long Discourses,*" 48.

[53] Walshe, "*Long Discourses,*" 17-18.

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originated to convey the meaning of the existing *Pāli* word *khanti. Certainly, khanti* was translated as *kṣānti* in Sanskrit at a later period.

6. Evolution of *Khanti* as *Kṣānti* in Later *Mahāyāna* Texts

Hence, there is all the more reason for the word *kṣānti* to convey the meaning of *khanti* in a different perspective, a perspective prevalent at the time of translating the text according to the social, cultural and religious condition prevailing at that time. No wonder, that the meaning of *kṣānti* finds detailed expression in the later *Mahāyāna* texts so much so that *kṣānti* or patience gains prominence as a prime doctrine of Buddhism professed by later *Mahāyāna* school which upholds forbearance as its primary principle to Buddhahood, in comparison to the *Theravāda* school.

Sasaki mentions, B C Law translates *khanti* as forbearance. Edgerton translated *khanti* as 'receptivity', and Sylvain Levi translated it as 'acquiescement'. *Kṣānti* also refers to "manifold receptivities" as defined in Nagarjuna's *Dharma-saṃgraha* (section 107) in the 2nd c. CE.:

dharmanidhyāna-kṣānti (receptivity from seeing the dharma),

duḥkhādhivāsanā-kṣānti (receptivity from forbearance with suffering),

paropakāradharma-kṣānti (receptivity from the state of helping others).[54]

Since then, *kṣānti* gained prominence as illustrated by Shantideva in the 8th c. CE.

Śāntideva in the 8th c. CE, defines *kṣānti* (क्षान्ति, "patient endurance"). *Śāntideva* divides patient endurance (*kṣānti*) into three major varieties: first, enduring suffering (*duṣkhādhivāsanakṣānti*); second, dharmic patience, the patient endurance that comes from reflecting on the Buddha's teaching, the dharma (*dharmanidhyānakṣānti*); and third, patience toward others' wrongdoing (*parāpakāramarṣanakṣānti*).[55] In all three cases, one remains calm and even happy in the face of various undesired events pains, frustrations, wrongs that one might face.

According to the 2nd century *Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra* chapter X, there are two kinds of patience (*kṣānti*): A *Bodhisattva* who practices: (i). patience towards beings (*sattvakṣānti*) - acquires immense merit (*apramāṇa-puṇya*), and (ii). patience towards *dharmā* (*dharmakṣānti*) - acquires immense wisdom (*apramāṇa-prajñā*). Endowed with these two benefits, merit and wisdom, he obtains (*yatheṣṭa-siddhi*), the realization of all his wishes, he is like the person who, having eyes and feet, can go wherever he wishes.[56]

6.1. Anupātikadharmakṣānti

Kṣānti concept in *Mahāyāna* literature is *anupatikadharmakṣānti*. *Kṣānti* in this sense is pertaining to wisdom as an act of understanding the non-arising of *dharma*, rather than the act of forbearance.

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[55] Śāntideva, "Śikṣāsamuccaya," 179.

[56] Śāntideva, "Śikṣāsamuccaya," 179.

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