

c. Patience

i. Giving up anger (as a cause)²⁰

Hard to practice, patience knows no peer,
So never allow yourself a moment's rage.
Avoid all anger and you will become
A Non-Returner, so the Buddha said. (15)

There is no other difficult practice equal to patience—not getting angry with someone who harms you, and even if you do get angry, not remaining so. It is the ultimate austerity. **Therefore do not allow yourself even the slightest occasion for anger**, which is incompatible with such a sublime austerity as patience. Should you wonder why, **the Buddha himself declared that by being patient and avoiding getting angry one will attain the ultimate result of Non-Returner**, as we find in one of the sutras:

Monks, rid yourselves of anger, and thus attest to Non-Return.

ii. Giving up resentment (as a result)²¹

"He's abused me, struck, defeated me,
And all my money too he has purloined!"
To harbor such resentment leads to strife;
Give up your grudge and sleep will easily come. (16)

By harboring resentment—"He insulted me with abusive language, he hit me with things like stones and sticks, he got the better of me by ridiculing me and using his power, he ran off with my money"—one builds up the motives for negative actions, physical and verbal, thereby **sparking off disputes**. **By abandoning grudges** one will gain the temporary result²² of a mind free of anguish and so **fall asleep happily**. *The Way of the Bodhisattva* sums this up as follows:

*Men of anger have no joy
Forsaken by all happiness and peace.*

and,

*But those who seize and crush their anger down
Will find their joy in this and future lives.²³*

iii. In connection with this, a particular feature of the mind that is the basis for patience

Understand your thoughts to be like figures drawn
On water, sandy soil, or carved in stone.
Of these, for tainted thoughts the first's the best,
While when you long for Dharma, it's the last. (17)

Of all the various constant and inconstant mental activities that different kinds of sentient beings can have, you should **know that thoughts are like figures drawn on water**, which instantly dissolve, or like drawings on **sand**, which are erased by different conditions, or like figures drawn on **stone**, which are indelible. Where thoughts, either positive or negative, are like drawings on sand, this is of medium value. **Of these three cases, the first**, where the thoughts are inconstant like figures traced on water, is the **best** as regards **emotionally tainted** thoughts. **As regards aspirations** to undertake **Dharma practice, the last**, where the thoughts are stable like figures drawn on stone, is the best. So practice accordingly.

iv. Avoiding harsh words, the main condition that sparks off anger

Three kinds of speech are used by humankind,
And these the Victor variously described:
Like honey, sweet; like flowers, true; like filth,
Improper speech—the last of these eschew. (18)

The Victorious One who has overcome evil ways spoke of three kinds of speech in human beings, namely, sweet, **pleasing** words, **truth**, and **improper speech**. **Of these three kinds of speech that people use, the first, he said, delights, like honey**; the second is beautiful and worthy of praise, like a **flower**; the last, because it is to be despised, is like **filth**. Accordingly, **avoid the last of these**, and make good use of the first two.