



Living the Paramis

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We have spent the last year exploring and practicing with the ten Paramis – Generosity, Virtue, Renunciation, Wisdom, Energy, Patience, Resolve, Truthfulness, Lovingkindness, and Equanimity. The Paramis are also called the ten perfections. The word “perfection” can be the source of a lot of difficulties for “perfectionists” like me. We can become consumed in *becoming a _____ person (insert Parami of your choice)*. We find ourselves trapped in the mind’s web of trying to get it right, trying to be perfect in our practice of the Paramis. This short article is offered to help us release this habit of mind and open us to the full possibility of liberation inherent in this practice.

First, it can be helpful to consider each Parami as a particular energy of an awakened mind. The energetic flow of any one of the Paramis may be strong or weak depending upon my physical health, the heaviness or busyness of my mind, the level of chaos or clutter in my environment, the strength of my ability to remember my practice, etc. The more aware I become of the presence or absence of these energies, the greater my comprehension of the truth in any given moment. Instead of trying to *be* - say generous, truthful or patient – I look for how generous, truthful or patient I feel in the moment. Giving out of obligation feels very different than freely giving. Waiting feels very different than patience. Resolve feels very different than pushing through. Learning to trust my felt sense of the Paramis, I have gradually come to know for myself (rather than because someone told me or the world expects me) that the more I am willing to relax into the energy of any one of the Paramis, the greater my capacity to live fully into the moment.

Second, these Paramis are designed to gladden the mind. I spent the bulk of my young adult life in scarcity and complaint but the more access I have to a liberated mind, the more awareness I have to the truly abundant and joyous nature of existence. Each of the Paramis point to the abundant spacious nature of existence. They are all practices of opening, relaxing, releasing into experience. I routinely use the Paramis to support me in opening to this abundance. Gradually my mind is turning away from the habit of negativity and dread. I am finding that the more fully I open, relax, and release into my experience, the greater my sense of gladness. I have no doubt that practicing the Paramis is a fundamental reason Buddha’s early practitioners were called the “happy ones.”

Next year we will be starting a new theme – the Four Noble Truths – and while it may seem that we will be leaving these Paramis behind, we are not. The Four Noble Truths are a continuation of the Paramis. We will need to stand upon the foundation of the Paramis to penetrate the wisdom of these four important truths.