



## A Portrait in Patience, by Pavithra Mehta

Patience they said was a virtue. Only I wasn't ever quite sure why.

I always saw her as a rather plain-faced girl with a sweet smile. Too sweet. She was wont to sit in a straight-backed chair. Legs crossed neatly at the ankles, eyes downcast, hands cupped in lap, one inside the other- and in this way she managed to turn waiting into some kind of colorless prayer.

Patience- the Artist's model posing prettily for her portrait through the passage of time. But what did that accomplish is what I wanted to know. And where again lay the nobility in that bland brand of immobility?

But now I am beginning to realize that she is not quite as- lifeless- as that :-)

Patience has eyes that are keen and kind and look like they want to laugh. And she actually doesn't sit still very much (except on the inside) and instead walks, sometimes runs, towards the things around her that are most in need of doing and she does them if she can and if she can't she tries anyway- even when it isn't really her job and no one told her to do it. Patience sweeps the floor and changes the water in the flower bowls. She attends to phone calls and remembers to feed the dog. And you'd never know she was waiting for something important to happen- because she always seems to be happening in the middle of something important. Even if it's just cooking dinner.

And she makes me want to cultivate that quality inside.

Patience isn't a kind of soggy cereal endurance of Intervals or the flat fizzlessness of soda forgotten on the windowledge. It isn't a somnambulist whirling through the night. Mindless of the waking world. Blind to everything but what Is Not.

It's crisper than that. And Real-er too. And so much more- engaging- and Alive.

Patience is a kind of understanding. An understanding that transcends the 'limitations' of the moment. It's a teacher standing at the blackboard repeating A is for Apple. B is for Boy. Day after day to small puzzled faces. Because she believes that one day they will make the leap that connects the sound to the letter the letter to the word the word to the shiny red contours of a classic fruit. Patience is a kind of trust. A trust that does its part and holds the rest lightly in an open palm. It's a farmer sowing seeds in springtime. Hoeing, watering, weeding. Because he believes the earth will do her part when

the time comes. And Patience is a kind of acceptance. An acceptance that allows for doubt. It's a friend who holds your hand when you're not sure of the next step. Because no matter which way you go she'll come with you. Patience is a kind of love. A love that is its own explanation in bewildered circumstance. It is an old, old woman placing a wrinkledparchment hand against the cheek of a reckless child. Because her heart is too wise to make room for reproach. Too full to find place for offence.

And Patience is a kind of virtue. I think I see that now.

--Pavithra Mehta

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