

*"Life is glorious, but life is also wretched . . .  
Gloriousness and wretchedness  
need each other.  
One inspires us,  
the other softens us.  
They go together. .  
Whichever of the two occurs, be patient .  
Allow things to unfold  
at their own speed  
rather than jumping in  
with your habitual response to either  
pain or pleasure . . .  
Patience is not learned in safety.  
It is not learned when everything  
is harmonious and going well . . .  
Patience implies willingness to be alive rather  
than seek harmony."*

Pema Chodron



**Do You See The Gloriousness or the Wretchedness  
first?**

Photo by [solrac111@gmail.com](mailto:solrac111@gmail.com) - [morguefile.com/archive](http://morguefile.com/archive)

Do you oftentimes find yourself seduced by the notion of harmony? Does the idea conjure up ideas of beauty, quiet, calm, and comfort? Does it herald images of safety, the bees buzzing, soft fragrances wafting by on a gentle breeze? Harmony, as we generally define it, proclaims a general atmosphere of accord and agreement without conflict or disturbance. This is a place where the need for patience doesn't even arise - since nothing is out of order.

Yet, our mystic is telling us that inherent in true patience and harmony is the ability to also allow the rebellious element of aliveness which, of course, often generates discord, friction, and disagreement. Is our mystic telling us to rest in the presence of this dance between order and chaos, and safety and risk? Is she guiding us to be present with an impatient patience or a patient impatience? Is this way of relating to life, in fact, where our inner harmony is rooted?

To side with the gloriousness of life *or* the wretchedness of life is to create suffering. 'Why?' is an excellent question. Investigate for yourself whether gloriousness (reaching your goal, falling in love, recovering your health) and wretchedness (losing your job, divorce, diagnosis with a terminal illness) actually do work together to produce the very aliveness and creative freshness we seek, despite our paradoxical drive for safety and security.

As you look at the above image, the fire, in all its power, beauty, and aliveness, is a truly glorious and awesome phenomenon. Yet, in this setting, it is destructive – eating alive a

person's home and life possessions. If you choose one of these elements – gloriousness or wretchedness – as being good and the other bad, the mystical perception will fall out of reach. To literally see through the seeming conflict between the two reveals the presence of a larger harmony of life unfolding in the service of change, creative freshness, and re-balancing.

Because we are *unconsciously* driven to move *towards* pleasure and *away* from pain, it becomes essential to understand these polarities and how they move together in one harmonious whole. As our mystic states, 'one inspires us, the other softens us'. Becoming conscious of how to navigate this strange universe of 'oneness hidden inside the organic unity of duality' will free your mystical eyes to actually *perceive* a different world - one that is harmonious within the presence of discord, loving within the presence of hate, and safe within the presence of the wild aliveness that smolders and burns within, awaiting its time to flame forth and risk its heart's desire.

Please join me again next month for another Reflection. Meanwhile, I invite you to contemplate the wisdom of this mystical guidance and explore for yourself the deep partnership between the awesomeness and awfulness of life.

Ragini