

Part Three:
NĀGĀRJUNA'S STORIES ON PATIENCE

Devadatta's Ruination Through Affection for Offerings

Nāgārjuna's Preamble

Question: What is meant by patience with respect to beings?

Response: There are two kinds of beings who come and approach the bodhisattva: The first are those who are respectful and who contribute offerings. The second are those who are hateful, who scold, and who may even bring injury through blows. At such times, the mind of the bodhisattva is able to be patient. He does not feel affection for the beings who contribute offerings, nor does he hate those beings who heap evil upon him. This constitutes patience with respect to beings.

Question: How is it that one can speak of "patience" with regard to respectfulness and the giving of offerings?

Response: There are two kinds of fetters (saṃyojana): The first are the fetters which belong to the sphere of affection. The second are those fetters which belong to the sphere of hatefulness. Although respectfulness and the giving of offerings do not generate hatefulness, they cause the mind to become affectionately attached. These are known as the soft thieves. Hence one should cause himself to be patient with these things so that he does not become attached and is not moved by affection.

How is one able to be patient? One contemplates that these situations are impermanent and that they constitute a point for the potential arising of the fetters. As stated by the Buddha, the wounds which occur through offerings go deep. It is as if they cut through the skin and reach the flesh, cut through the flesh and reach the bone, and then break through the bones and reach the marrow. When a person becomes attached to offerings, then he breaks through the skin of upholding the precepts, cuts into the flesh of dhyāna absorption, breaks through the bones of wisdom, and brings about loss of the marrow of the subtle and marvelous mind of goodness.

Story: Devadatta's Ruination Through Affection for Offerings

This principle is exemplified by a case which began when the Buddha first roamed to the state of Kapilavastu. He went together with twelve hundred and fifty bhikshus, all of whom had the physical appearance of brahmacārins. Because they had previously been involved in making offerings to fire, their form and appearance were haggard. Because they had previously been engaged in

the ascetic practice of fasting, their skin and flesh were emaciated and black.

King Śuddhodana thought to himself, "Although my son's retinue is pure in mind and pure in conduct, they are utterly lacking as regards their appearance. I should select from among those families with many sons and grandsons and have each send one man to become a disciple of the Buddha." After he had this thought, he issued an edict throughout the country so as to be able to select from among the sons of the Śākya nobility. Those who came forth in response to the official declaration were all ordered to leave the home life.

At this time, Devadatta, the son of King Droṇadana, left the home life, studied the Path, and memorized the sixty-thousand [verse] Dharma collection. He was vigorous in his cultivation for a full twelve years. Afterwards, for the sake of the benefit of offerings, he came to the place where the Buddha was and sought to study the superknowledges. The Buddha told him, "Gautama, if you contemplate the impermanence of the five aggregates, you can succeed in gaining the Path and will also gain the superknowledges." But he did not instruct him in the method of obtaining the superknowledges.

Devadatta left and sought this same thing from Śāriputra, from Maudgalyāyana, and eventually from five hundred arhats. None of them would explain it to him, saying instead, "You should contemplate the impermanence of the five aggregates. You can thereby gain the Path and can also gain the superknowledges."

He did not get what he was seeking and so wept and felt unhappy. He went to where Ānanda was and sought to study the superknowledges. At this time Ānanda had not yet achieved the knowledge of others' thoughts. Out of respect for his elder brother, he passed these techniques on to Devadatta as they had been explained to him by the Buddha. Having gotten the method for studying the superknowledges, he went into the mountains and before long gained the five superknowledges.

After he had gained the five superknowledges, he thought to himself, "Who should become my *dānapati*?¹ There is, for instance, Prince Ajātaśatru. He possesses the features of a great king." Seeking to become his close intimate, he went up to the heavens and acquired heavenly food. Returning by way of Uttaravātī, he obtained some "spontaneous" rice. Finally, he went to the jambū

forest, got some jambū fruit (*eugenia jambolana*),² and then presented these as gifts to Prince Ajātaśatru.

Sometimes he would transform himself into a precious elephant or into a precious horse so as to play tricks on the Prince's mind. At other times he would become an infant and sit on his knee. The Prince would cradle him in his arms and he would coo and gurgle and drool. Each time he did this, he would utter his own name thereby causing the Prince to become aware of it.

He manifested all sorts of unusual appearances in order to move the Prince's mind. The Prince's mind was tricked by this. In Ambavana Park he built an immense *vihāra*.³ He prepared the four kinds of offerings as well as all sorts of other assorted gifts. There was nothing not present in abundance. He provided them all to Devadatta. Each day he brought along all of the great officials and personally presented five hundred dishes of fine foods with rice.

Devadatta received offerings in great measure and yet his following of disciples was very small in number. He thought to himself, "I possess thirty of the marks of a great man, only slightly less than the Buddha. It is only that I have not yet had disciples gathering around me. If I was surrounded by a great assembly, how would I be any different from the Buddha?" After having had thoughts like this, he developed the idea to break up the Sangha and so gain five hundred disciples. Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana spoke Dharma and provided instruction. As a result the Sangha became harmonious and united again.

Devadatta then had the evil idea to push down [a boulder] from the mountain to crush the Buddha. A *vajra*-bearing stalwart intervened from a distance by throwing his *vajra* cudgel [to deflect it]. A broken piece of the boulder rolled up and injured the Buddha's toe. Floral Appearance Bhikshuni⁴ rebuked Devadatta who responded by striking the bhikshuni with his fist. The bhikshuni's eyes popped out [from the force of the blow] and she immediately died.

He committed three of the mortal (*ānantarya*) transgressions⁵ and drew close to such evil and fallacy-promoting non-Buddhist masters as Pūraṇa. He severed all roots of goodness and his mind became devoid of a sense of shame or regret. Additionally, he imbedded a noxious poison under his fingernails, wishing to take the occasion of bowing to the Buddha to injure the Buddha through poisoning.

He was about to proceed, but had not yet arrived when the ground in the city of Kings' Abode (Rājagrha) spontaneously split open and a fiery carriage came forth. It took him on board and transported him, still alive, down into the hells.

Devadatta's body possessed thirty of the marks of a great man and yet he was unable to resist and overcome his own mind. For the sake of the benefits of offerings, he created great offenses and entered the hells even while still alive. It is for this reason that it is said that the wounds inflicted by offerings go deep, breaking through the skin and reaching even to the marrow.

One should cast off and get rid of the mind which feels affection for those persons who make offerings. This is what is meant by the bodhisattva's mind of patience not becoming affectionately attached to those persons who make offerings or demonstrate respect.

Notes

1. A *dānapati* is a layperson who provides support to the monastic community.
2. A species of rose apple.
3. A *vihāra* is a monastic dwelling.
4. "Floral Appearance" (Utpalavarṇā) was a nun who had gained arhatship.
5. The five mortal (*ānantarya*) transgressions are: patricide; matricide; killing an arhat; creating a schism in a harmoniously-dwelling community of the monastic Sangha; and spilling the blood of a buddha. The Sanskrit term connotes immediacy, unavoidability, and relentlessness of hell-bound retribution. These transgressions are discussed in Vasubandhu's *Abhidharma Kośa Bhāṣyam*, Ch. 4.

The Kashmiri Tripiṭaka Master

Nāgārjuna's Preamble

Moreover, there are three kinds of offerings: The first are those which come on account of the causes and conditions associated with past-life merit. The second are those where one receives respect and offerings from people on account of the present life's merit associated with cultivating the precepts, dhyāna absorption, and wisdom. The third are those where one gains offerings through falseness and pretense by deceiving others at the time when, although one is inwardly devoid of actual meritorious qualities, one makes it appear outwardly as if one is utterly pure.

With respect to these three kinds of offerings, one should consider to oneself, "If one now obtains offerings through the causes and conditions of former lives wherein one diligently cultivated merit, this is just something which has been created through personal diligence and thus is naturally obtained. What would be the point in becoming haughty over something like this? This is just like planting in the spring and reaping in the fall. This is something gained for oneself through the application of one's own efforts. What in it is sufficient cause for arrogance?" After one has reflected in this manner, he is able to endure and overcome his own mind so that he is able to refrain from becoming attached or prideful.

If on account of efforts in the present life, one generates merit and so consequently obtains offerings, one should think to oneself, "This comes to me on account of wisdom, whether through understanding the true character of dharmas or whether through being able to cut off the fetters. It is on account of this associated merit. When this person makes offerings, it has nothing to do with me." After having reflected in this fashion, one is able to overcome his own thoughts and refrain from arrogance or condescension. He realizes, "Truly, this is just a case of people having a fondness for merit. It is not that they are fond of me."

Story: The Kashmiri Tripiṭaka Master

This is comparable to the case of the Kashmiri tripiṭaka master bhikshu who cultivated the dharma of the *araṇya*¹ and who went one day to one of the King's temples. The temple had set up a great convocation. The person who guarded the door observed the coarse and low-quality nature of his robes and so blocked the door and did not allow him to go on ahead. In this manner, time and time

again, on account of his robes being of low quality, he was never allowed to go on forward.

He then employed the skillful means of borrowing a fine robe before coming. The doorman observed this and permitted him to go forward without restriction. Having arrived at a seat in the convocation he obtained all manner of fine foods. Before eating, he first made an offering of it to his robes. Everyone asked him, "Why do you do that?"

He replied, "I have of late been coming here repeatedly and on every occasion have been unable to gain entry. Now, on account of wearing these robes, I have been allowed to sit in this seat and obtain all kinds of fine food. It is actually on account of the robes that I have obtained it. It is for this reason that I present it to the robes."

When one obtains offerings on account of the merit of cultivation, on account of upholding the precepts and on account of wisdom, the practitioner should think to himself, "This is on account of merit. It is not the case that it is on account of me." When one contemplates in this fashion and is then able to overcome his own thoughts, this qualifies as patience.

If one were to gain offerings through falseness and deception, this would be tantamount to self-destruction and thus it is a behavior to which one cannot draw near. One should consider to himself, "If I were to employ this falseness and then obtain offerings as a result, it would be no different from an evil thief committing a robbery to get his food. This would be a case of falling into the offense of deception."

When in this fashion one's mind refrains from becoming affectionately attached to the three types of offering-bearing persons while also refraining from arrogance, this qualifies as patience with respect to beings.

Notes

1. An *aranya* is a secluded hermitage.

Māra's Daughters and Buddha at the Bodhi Tree

Furthermore, if it happens that women come who are desirous of sensual pleasures and who seek to seduce the bodhisattva, at such times the bodhisattva should overcome his own thoughts, have patience and not allow them to arise.

This situation is comparable to that of Shakyamuni Buddha beneath the bodhi tree. The king of the demons was distressed and so sent three of his "jade" daughters. The first was named "Blissful to Behold." The second was named "Pleasurable to Others." The third was named "Lust." They came, revealed their bodies, and assumed various poses, desiring to destroy the Bodhisattva. At this time the mind of the Bodhisattva did not move for even a moment and he did not lay eyes upon them for even a moment.

The three maidens thought to themselves, "The minds of people are not the same. That which they are fond of is different in each case. Some are fond of the young, some are fond of the middle-aged. Some are fond of those who are tall and some are fond of those who are short. Some are fond of those who are black and some are fond of those who are white. There are many preferences like these. Everyone has that of which he is fond."

At this time the three maidens each transformed themselves into five hundred beautiful maidens. Each of the transformationally-produced maidens assumed innumerable unusual poses as they emerged from the forest, like flashes of lightning appearing momentarily from the midst of black clouds. Some displayed their eyebrows and fluttered their eyelids, or posed alluringly, or offered subtle gazes. They made many sorts of music and showed all kinds of seductive mannerisms. They drew close to the Bodhisattva, desiring with posed bodies to touch and pressure the Bodhisattva.

At that time the secret *vajra*-bearing stalwarts bellowed and glowered hatefully at them, "Who do you think this is that you dare to approach him seductively to touch and bother him?" At that time those secret stalwarts uttered a verse in which they scolded them:

You are unaware of the fate of the gods.
They lose what is fine and their beards turn yellow.
The waters of the great sea which were clear and beautiful,
Today have become entirely bitter and salty.

You are unaware that your days are diminishing.
 All of the Vasu gods are bound to fall away.¹¹
 Fire is originally the mouth [consuming] the heavens.
 And so now everything therein is bound to be devoured.

You remain unaware of all these matters.
 Thus it is that you dare to slight this ārya.

At this time the crowd of maidens suddenly retreated a little and spoke to the Bodhisattva, saying, "Now these numerous maidens are beautiful and adorned beyond compare. They could serve to delight your mind. Why do you just sit there so uprightly?"

The Bodhisattva said, "You all are impure, foul-smelling, filthy and detestable. Depart from here and cease this deceptive discourse." At this time the Bodhisattva then spoke forth a verse, saying,

This body is a thicket of filthiness.
 It is but a collection of decaying matter.
 This truly is a walking toilet.
 What in it is sufficient to please the mind?

When the maidens heard this verse, they thought to themselves, "This man is unaware of our pure heavenly bodies and thus utters this verse." They then immediately transformed their bodies, returning to their original forms. They radiated light which shimmered and illuminated the forest and proceeded to make heavenly music. They then spoke to the Bodhisattva, saying, "Since our bodies are like this, what is there to criticize?"

The Bodhisattva replied, saying, "When the time comes you will realize this for yourselves."

They asked, "What do you mean by these words?"
 He replied with a verse:

In the parks and forests of the heavens,
 And in the seven-jeweled lotus blossom pools,
 The gods enjoy with one another the pleasures of the senses,
 When that is lost, you will realize this for yourself.

At this time, you will observe impermanence.
 And realize the pleasures of the gods are all wedded to suffering.
 You should renounce the pleasures of desire
 And cherish the Path that is right and true.

When the maidens had heard this verse, they thought to themselves, "This man is possessed of a great wisdom which is measureless. He realizes the ills inherent even in the pure pleasures of the gods. He is not one who can be obstructed." They then immediately

disappeared.

The bodhisattva contemplates in this fashion the pleasures involved in sexual desire. He is able to control his own mind. His patience is such that he is not even slightly moved.

The Fisherman's Burning Desire for the King's Daughter

There once was a king who had a daughter named Kumuda. There was a fisherman named Śubhakara. He was walking along the road when he looked from afar and saw the princess's face in the window of a tall building. In his imagination, he developed thoughts of defiled attachment which he could not relinquish for even a moment. He went through days and months during which he was unable to drink or eat properly. His mother asked him the reason and he revealed his feelings to his mother, "I saw the daughter of the King. My mind is unable to forget her."

The mother explained to her son, saying, "You are a man of lesser station. The daughter of the King is an honored member of the nobility. She is unobtainable."

The son said, "My mind prays for this bliss and is unable to forget it for even a moment. If I cannot have it as I will it, then I will be unable to go on living."

For the sake of her son, the mother entered the palace of the King, constantly providing gifts of fat fish and fine meats which she left for the daughter of the King without asking any remuneration. The Princess thought this strange and so asked her what wish she was seeking to fulfill.

The mother addressed the Princess, "Pray, dismiss the retainers. I must relate a personal matter." [She then continued], "I have only one son. He cherishes a respectful admiration for the daughter of the King. His feelings have taken hold in a way that has caused him to become ill. He is not likely to survive much longer. I pray that you will condescend to have pity on him and give him back his life."

The Princess said, "On the fifteenth of the month have him go into such-and-such a deity's shrine and stand behind the image of the deity."

The mother returned and told her son, "Your wish has already been fulfilled." She then described what had transpired. He bathed, put on new clothes, and stood behind the image of the deity.

When the time came, the Princess told her father, the King, "I have something inauspicious which has come up. I must go to the shrine of the deity and seek for auspiciousness and blessings."

The King replied, "That is very good." He then immediately had five hundred carriages nicely adorned and had them escort her to the shrine of the deity. Having arrived, she ordered her retainers to

close the doors and wait as she entered the shrine alone.

The shrine's celestial spirit thought, "This should not be this way. The King is the lord of the land. I cannot allow this petty man to destroy and dishonor the Princess." He then cast a spell on the man, causing him to fall into a deep sleep from which he could not awaken. Having entered, the Princess saw him sleeping. She shook him very hard and yet he did not awaken. She then left him a necklace worth a hundred thousand double-ounces of gold and went away.

After she had left, this man was able to awaken and see that the necklace was there. Next, he asked a person in the crowd. He then knew that the King's daughter had come. Because he was unable to follow up on his infatuation, he became distressed, full of regret, and overcome with the affliction of grief. The fire of lust broke loose within him. He was burned up by it, and then died.

The Patience-Cultivating Rishi

Nāgārjuna's Preamble

How does one succeed in being patient in the midst of people who are hateful and tormenting? One should consider to oneself, "All beings possess the causes and conditions associated with transgressions and thus alternate in attacking and harming one another. That I now undergo torment is also owing to causes and conditions from my own actions in previous lives.

"Although this is not something I have committed in this present life, it is the retribution for evil committed in a previous life. I am now paying for it. I should accept it agreeably. How could I go against it?" This is analogous to the circumstances surrounding indebtedness. When the lender asks for it, one ought to repay it happily. One can't legitimately get angry over it.

Moreover, the practitioner constantly implements thoughts of loving-kindness. Although there may be torment and chaos forced on his person, he must certainly be able to have patience and undergo it.

Story: The Patience-Cultivating Rishi

This is exemplified by the rishi who practiced *kṣānti*. He dwelt in a great forest where he cultivated patience and practiced kindness. At that time King Kali brought his courtesans along with him as he entered the forest to wander and sport about. Having finished his refreshments and meal, the King took a short nap.

The courtesans wandered off amongst the flowers and trees and then saw this rishi. They offered their reverential respects and then stood off to one side. At that time, for the sake of the courtesans, he spoke in praise of kindness and patience. His words were so fine and marvelous that the listeners could not get enough. They remained a long time and would not leave.

King Kali woke up and failed to see his courtesans and so picked up his sword and followed along behind so as to catch up with them. He saw them standing before the rishi. He became filled up with arrogance and jealousy. With hate-filled glowering, he brandished his sword and demanded of the rishi, "Just what are you doing?!"

The rishi replied, saying, "I'm abiding here in the cultivation of patience and the practice of kindness."

The King said, "I'm now going to put you to the test. I'm going to take a sharp sword and slice off your ears and nose. I'm going to chop off your hands and feet. If you don't get angry, then we'll know that you cultivate patience."

The rishi said, "Do what you will."

The King immediately drew forth his sword, sliced off his ears and nose, and then chopped off his hands and feet. He then asked, "Has your mind moved or not?"

He replied, "I cultivate loving-kindness and compassion. The mind has not moved."

The King said, "You are just a single person here. You have no power in this situation. Although you claim that you have not moved, who would believe it?"

The rishi then straightaway made a vow, "If I truly cultivate loving-kindness and patience, the blood ought to turn into milk." The blood immediately transformed into milk.

The King was both greatly frightened and delighted. He then left, leading away the courtesans with him. On account of his actions toward this rishi, the dragons and spirits of the forest then set loose a cataclysmic storm with thunder and lightning bolts. The King was mortally wounded by it and, sinking away, was unable even to return to the palace.

Thus it is that it is said that one should be able to practice patience even in the midst of torment and chaos.

The Contentious Kauśāmbī Monks

Nāgārjuna's Preamble

Again, a person who is possessed by hatred, like a tiger or a wolf, is difficult to remain together with. He is also like a purulent sore which readily exudes discharges and easily decays. The person who is full of hatred is like a venomous snake. People take no delight in encountering him. The evil mind of the person who accumulates hatreds becomes gradually greater so that he ends up doing what one cannot do, killing even his father, killing even his ruler, and even developing evil intentions towards the Buddha.

Story: The Contentious Kauśāmbī Monks

This idea is well illustrated by the case of the bhikshus in the state of Kauśāmbī. For relatively minor reasons, their hateful thoughts for each other became so severe that they split into two factions. If they had wished to come to a breaking off of relations, they should ordinarily have had to wait to the end of their three-month retreat. But they remained unable to put their differences to rest. The Buddha eventually came and, in the midst of the Assembly, raised up his wheel-marked hand to quiet them. He then told them:

All of you bhikshus—
Don't generate such disputation.
When evil thoughts continue on,
The bitter retribution grows extremely severe.
You are seeking to gain nirvāṇa.
Cast off and relinquish worldly benefits.
When abiding in the dharmas of goodness,
How could you be so hateful and full of disputation?
When worldly men become angry and contentious,
This is something one might yet forgive.
But with men who have left the home life,
How can it be that they dispute and struggle?
When in the mind of one who has left the home life,
One cherishes venomousness, this brings harm on oneself.
It is as if from a cool cloud
Lightning struck forth and burned the body.

The Bhikshus addressed the Buddha, saying, "The Buddha is the king of Dharma. But pray, may he remain silent for a moment. This group assailed us. We cannot but respond."

The Buddha thought, “These men cannot be crossed over.” From the midst of the group of those Sanghans, he soared aloft and disappeared. He went into the forest where he remained still in samādhi.

In just this manner, the offense of hatred is such that, at its extreme, one does not accept even the words of the Buddha. It is for this reason that one should get rid of hatred and cultivate patience.

Moreover, when one is able to cultivate patience, it is easy to gain loving-kindness and compassion. If one has gained loving-kindness and compassion, one succeeds in reaching the Buddha Path.

The Demon King Confronts the Buddha

Nāgārjuna's Preamble

Question: How is one able to be patient with respect to the dharmas in one's mind?

Response: The bodhisattva reflects, "Although I have not yet gained the Path and have not yet cut off the fetters, if I do not maintain patience, then I am no different from a common person and it is not the case that I am a bodhisattva."

He additionally considers to himself, "If I gain the Path and cut off all of the fetters, then there will be no dharmas remaining with which one must be able to be patient. Additionally, hunger, thirst, cold, and heat are the outward demon armies. The afflictions of the fetters are the inward demon insurgents. I should break these two armies and thereby perfect the Buddha Path. If it is not done in this way, then the Buddha Path will not be perfected."

Story: The Demon King Confronts the Buddha

This is as told of the Buddha when he was cultivating ascetic practices for a period of six years. The demon king came and said, "Noble man of the *kṣatriya* lineage. Of a thousand parts of your life, you have only a single part left to live. Hurry, get up and return to your country, perform acts of giving and cultivate blessings. You will be able to gain the path of bliss among men and in the heavens in the present life and in later lives. It is unacceptable that you uselessly subject yourself to intense suffering. If you don't yield to these gentle words, but instead continue this confusion and so fail to get up, I will lead forth a great mass of troops which will come and strike and break you."

The Bodhisattva replied, "I am now going to break even your extremely powerful inward army, how much the more so your outward army."

The demon said, "What is it that makes up my internal army?"

He replied:

Desire is the first among your armies,

Worry is the second.

Hunger and thirst are the third army.

Craving is the fourth.

Drowsiness is the fifth of the armies.

Fearfulness is number six.

Doubt and regret are the seventh army.

Hatred and anger are the eighth.

Beneficial support and an empty reputation are the ninth.
Elevating oneself and belittling others is the tenth.
Such a company of armies as these
Vanquishes those people who have left the home life.

I employ the power of dhyāna and wisdom
To break these armies of yours and,
After perfecting the Buddha Path,
Deliver everyone to liberation.

Although the bodhisattva is not yet able to break all of these armies, he dons the armor of patience, takes up the sword of wisdom, holds onto the shield of dhyāna absorption and deflects the arrows of the afflictions. This is what is meant by inward patience.

The Bhikshu Impatient with the Fourteen Imponderables

Nāgārjuna's Preamble

Furthermore, with respect to the unanswered dharmas associated with the fourteen difficult questions such as permanence, impermanence, and so forth, he finds no obstacle to investigating them but still does not lose the Middle Way. When one is able to have patience with these dharmas this constitutes patience with respect to dharmas.

Story: The Bhikshu Impatient With the Fourteen Imponderables

A related case is that of the bhikshu who contemplated and investigated into these fourteen difficult questions, found that he was so unable to break through them that his mind was unable to endure it. He took up his robe and bowl and went to where the Buddha was and addressed the Buddha, saying, "If the Buddha is able to explain these fourteen difficult questions for me so that my mind is caused to completely understand them, then I will continue to be a disciple. If he is unable to explain them, then I will seek after another path."

The Buddha told him, "You foolish man. Are you not basically presenting me with an ultimatum whereby only if I reply to the fourteen difficult questions will you continue to be my disciple?"

The bhikshu replied, "No."

The Buddha said, "You foolish man. Why then do you now say, 'If you don't answer these for me, I will not remain as a disciple? I explain Dharma for the rescue and deliverance of persons who are subject to aging, sickness and death. These fourteen difficult questions are dharmas of disputation. They possess no benefit for the Dharma. They are only frivolous dialectics. What is the point of inquiring into them? If I were to offer an answer for your sake, your mind would not completely comprehend it. You would go to your dying day without being able to understand and would be unable to gain liberation from birth, aging, sickness, and death.

"This is analogous to a man who has been shot by a poison arrow. His relatives call a physician who is about to extract the arrow for him and then apply medications. But he then says, 'You can't take the arrow out yet. I must first know your first and last name, the village from whence you come as well as the ages of your father and mother. Next, I wish to know from which mountain this arrow came, from which tree it is made, from what sort of feathers it is fletched,

who the arrowhead maker is and from which sort of metal it is cast. I wish also to know from which wood and on what mountain the bow was manufactured as well as what animal's horns were used. Additionally, I wish to know where the poison was produced and what type it is. After I have completely understood all sorts of other such matters I shall give my permission for you to extract the arrow and apply medications.' "

The Buddha asked the bhikshu, "Would it be possible for this man to come to know all these many matters and only later extract the arrow or not?"

The bhikshu said, "He would not be able to succeed in knowing them. If he waited to completely understand this then he would already have died."

The Buddha said, "You are just like this. You have been shot by the arrow of erroneous views smeared with the poison of love and it has already entered your heart. It was out of a desire to extricate this arrow that you became my disciple, and yet now, you do not wish to pull out the arrow, but instead next wish to find out in its entirety whether the world is eternal or non-eternal, bounded or unbounded, and so forth. Before you have succeeded in finding these things out you will have lost your wisdom life and will have died in a fashion identical with the beasts. You hereby cast yourself into darkness."

The bhikshu felt ashamed, deeply understood the words of the Buddha, and then immediately gained the path of arhatship.

Conclusion: The Bodhisattva Transcends the Fourteen Imponderables

Furthermore, the bodhisattva desires to become a person possessed of omniscience. He should pursue investigations into all dharmas and understand their true character. He should not be bogged down in or obstructed by the fourteen difficult questions and so should know that they are a severe illness of the mind. When he is able to transcend them and is able to endure them, this constitutes possessing patience with respect to dharmas.