

Part Three:
THE PERFECTION OF PATIENCE
(Chapters 24–25)

Chapter 25: Patience with Dharmas

III. PATIENCE WITH RESPECT TO DHARMAS

A. PATIENCE WITH DHARMAS DEFINED

Just what is meant by “patience with respect to dharmas”?¹⁸ “Patience with respect to beings” refers to having patience toward all beings who display reverence or who make offerings and refers as well to having patience with all persons who are under the influence of hatred or sexual desire. “Patience with respect to dharmas” refers to maintaining patience towards their dharmas of expressing reverence or presenting offerings as well as to maintaining patience with their dharmas of hatefulness and sexual desire.

Additionally, “patience with respect to dharmas” involves remaining unattached inwardly regarding one’s own six sense faculties while one also refrains from taking on the outward six sense objects. One thus remains able to refrain from making any discriminating distinctions with respect to either of these two spheres.

How so? “Inward” characteristics are identical to those which are “outward.” “Outward” characteristics are identical to those which are “inward.” This is because neither of these two categories of characteristics can finally be gotten at. This is because they are of a single characteristic, because they are only a conjunction of causes and conditions, because, in reality, they are empty [of any inherent existence], because the characteristics of all dharmas constantly abide in a state of purity, because they are characterized by identity with ultimate truth and the nature of dharmas, and because they are subsumed within the non-dual. Although they are not dual, they are not singular, either. When one contemplates all dharmas in this manner and yet one’s thoughts of faith remain undeflected, this qualifies one as possessing “patience with respect to dharmas.”

B. SCRIPTURAL CITATION

This is as set forth in the *Vimalakīrti Sutra* where Dharma Dwelling Bodhisattva said, “Production and extinction are dual phenomena whereas it is that which is neither produced nor destroyed which constitutes the Dharma gateway of non-duality.”

And so it continued until Mañjuśrī said, “In the absence of hearing and the absence of seeing, where thought is extinguished and there is no utterance and no discourse—this is the Dharma gateway of non-duality.”

Then Vimalakirti, [in offering his comment on the matter], remained silent and said nothing. All of the bodhisattvas exclaimed in praise, “Good Indeed! Good Indeed! This is the true non-dual Dharma gateway.”

Then again, one may say that “all dharmas” consists of two categories: The first is beings. The second is dharmas. The bodhisattva maintains patience in the midst of beings as explained above. Now we shall explain how it is that one maintains patience in the midst of dharmas.

C. TWO TYPES OF DHARMAS: MENTAL AND NON-MENTAL

In this context, “dharmas” may be classified into two types: “mental” dharmas and “non-mental” dharmas. Among the “non-mental” dharmas there are those which are inward and those which are outward. Outwardly, there are cold, heat, wind, rain, and so forth. Inwardly, there are hunger, thirst, aging, sickness, death, and so forth. All other sorts of phenomena of this type qualify as “non-mental” dharmas.

“Mental” dharmas themselves consist of two sub-types: The first includes hatred, worry, doubt, and so forth. The second includes sexual desire, arrogance, and so forth.¹⁹ These two sub-types make up the “mental” dharmas.

1. “PATIENCE” IS TOWARDS BOTH MENTAL AND NON-MENTAL DHARMAS

When the bodhisattva is able to maintain patience and remain unmoved in relation to the two primary types of dharmas (i.e. both the mental and the non-mental), it is this which qualifies as “patience with respect to dharmas.”

2. CHALLENGE: WHY HAVE PATIENCE WITH NON-MENTAL DHARMAS?

Question: If, in relation to other beings, one becomes hateful, engages in torment, and inflicts injury on their lives, one commits a karmic transgression, whereas, if one acts out of sympathy for them, one gains karmic blessings as a result. However, in reacting to cold, heat, wind, and rain, there is no production of any gain or any loss for anyone. Why is it then that one should remain patient with such phenomena?

3. RESPONSE: NON-PATIENCE GENERATES KARMA EVEN HERE

Response: Although one does not thereby bring about any gain or loss for anyone, still, if one brings forth disruptive afflictions and distressful bitterness, one does inflict injury upon one's own practice of the Bodhisattva Path. It is for this reason that one should maintain patience.

Additionally, it is not the case that one commits karmic transgressions solely through the killing and tormenting of beings. Wherever one courses in causes and conditions associated with evil thoughts, one generates karmic transgressions as a consequence.

How might this be the case? For instance, one might happen to cause the death of a being, but if it was done with a neutral mind, this would not necessarily involve any incurring of an offense.²⁰ On the other hand, if one were to maintain a lovingly-kind mindfulness of beings, although there might be nothing which one actually provides for them, one would thereby still gain a great measure of karmic blessings.

Hence, although there may be no gain or loss for anyone wrought through one's reactions to cold, heat, wind, or rain, still, allowing them to instigate one's own generation of evil thought does indeed involve the commission of associated karmic transgressions. Therefore one should maintain patience with these phenomena.

D. REFLECTIONS INSPIRING PATIENCE WITH NON-MENTAL DHARMAS

Moreover, the bodhisattva naturally realizes, "It is on account of the causes and conditions associated with karmic offenses in previous lives that one is reborn in this place so fraught with suffering. This is something I created myself. Hence I ought to be bound to personally endure it." It is through reflecting in this fashion that one remains able to maintain patience.

Additionally, the bodhisattva considers and realizes that there are two kinds of countries: There are those which are pure and there are those which are impure. If the bodhisattva is born into an impure country and experiences these bitter sufferings, hunger, cold, and the manifold torments, he makes a purifying vow to himself: "When I achieve buddhahood, the country will have none of these manifold sufferings. Although this place is impure, it will ultimately work to my benefit."

Furthermore, the bodhisattva reflects, "Not even the Worthies and Āryās are able to avoid encountering circumstances precipitating the eight worldly dharmas.²¹ How much the less could this be

the case for me.” On account of this, one should be able to maintain patience.

Moreover, the bodhisattva reflects and realizes that this human body doesn't possess any particular durability or strength. It is pursued by aging, sickness, and death. Although the bodies of the gods are pure, show no aging, and have no illness, they become indulgently attached to the pleasures of the heavens. In this they are comparable to people who have become intoxicated. They are unable to cultivate the karmic blessings associated with the Path and are unable to leave the home life and transcend desire. Because of this, one constrains oneself even while in this human body to maintain patience, cultivate karmic blessings, and benefit to other beings.²²

Then again, the bodhisattva considers, “I have taken on this body composed of the four great elements and the five aggregates. It ought therefore to be the case that it is freighted with all manner of aspects entailing suffering as a consequence. There is no one who takes on such a body and yet remains invulnerable to suffering.”

Whether one is rich and of noble birth or poor and of humble status, whether one is a monastic or a householder, whether one is foolish or wise, and whether one is intelligent or dull, no one is able to avoid it. How is this?

Those persons who are rich and of noble birth are constantly subject to fearfulness and the compulsion to protect their material wealth. They are analogous to the fat sheep taken early to the butcher's chopping block. They are like the crow which holds a piece of meat in its beak and is pursued by a flock of other crows.

Those who are poor and of humble status are subject to the sufferings of hunger and cold. Although monastics are subject to sufferings in the present existence, they receive karmic blessings in their future lives while also achieving success in the Path. Although householders may experience pleasures in the present life, they are bound to endure sufferings in their future lives.

Foolish people take pleasure-seeking in the present life as their primary priority. When they encounter death (lit. “impermanence”), they are bound to undergo subsequent suffering. The wise initially contemplate impermanence and suffering and consequently become able later on to experience happiness and realize success in the Path. Examples of these sorts serve to illustrate that there is no one who takes on a body who does not thereby become subject to

suffering. Therefore the bodhisattva should course in the practice of patience.

Furthermore, the bodhisattva reflects, "The entire world is subject to suffering. How then could I possibly abide within it and yet still expect to enjoy happiness?"

Again, the bodhisattva considers, "I have constantly endured manifold sufferings throughout the course of an incalculable number of kalpas and yet have not derived any benefit from it. So far, it has never been for the sake of the Dharma. Today, for the sake of beings, I strive to realize the Buddha Path. Although I now undergo this suffering, I will gain great benefit from it in the future. Therefore, whether it be outward suffering or inward suffering, I should patiently undergo all of these forms of suffering."

Additionally, the bodhisattva makes vows with the great mind, "I will patiently undergo even the sufferings of the *avīci niraya* (hells). How much the less might it be that I would fail to maintain patience with minor sufferings? If I fail to maintain patience with even minor sufferings, how could I be able to maintain patience with major sufferings?"

When one maintains patience with all sorts of external dharmas such as these, this is what qualifies as "patience with respect to dharmas."

E. PATIENCE WITH RESPECT TO MENTAL DHARMAS

Question: How does one become able to maintain patience with the inward dharmas of one's own mind?

Response: The bodhisattva reflects, "Although I have not yet gained realization of the Path and have not yet cut off the fetters, if I fail to maintain patience, then I become no different from a common person and do not qualify as a bodhisattva."

He also thinks to himself, "If I gain realization of the Path and thus cut off all of the fetters, then there will be no further dharmas requiring the exercise of patience. Additionally, hunger, thirst, cold, and heat are the outward demon armies. The fetters and afflictions are the inward demon insurgents. I should crush both of these armies and thereby gain perfect realization of the Buddha Path. So long as I fail to proceed in this fashion, I will have no success in the Buddha Path."

1. THE DEMON KING CONFRONTS THE BUDDHA (STORY)

This is illustrated by the story told of the Buddha when he was cultivating ascetic practices for a period of six years. The king of the

demons came and said, “Noble man of kṣatriyan lineage. Of a thousand parts of your life, you have only a single part left to live. You should hurry up, rise from this spot, and return to your country to perform acts of giving and cultivate blessings. Then you will still be able to gain the bliss among men and in the heavens in both the present life and later lives.

“Your path is unattainable. It is in vain that you subject yourself to such intense suffering. If you don’t yield to these gentle words, but instead persist in this confusion, failing to rise from this spot, I will lead forth a great mass of troops to attack and break you.”

The Bodhisattva replied, “I am now going to break even your extremely powerful inwardly-attacking army, how much the more so your outwardly-attacking army.”

The demon said, “What is it that composes my ‘internal’ army?”

The Bodhisattva then 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.

Offerings and an empty reputation are the ninth.

Elevating oneself and belittling others is the tenth.

Such a company of armies as these

May vanquish those 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 a bodhisattva may not yet be 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.

2. THE NEED TO REFRAIN FROM SEVERING THE FETTERS COMPLETELY

Then again, a bodhisattva ought to cultivate patience with respect to the afflictions but ought not to cut off the fetters. Why? If he cuts off

the fetters, that which he loses is extensive indeed. He thus falls into the path of the arhat. This would be indistinguishable from ruining his roots in the Bodhisattva Path]. He therefore merely deflects the fetters while not severing them completely. It is on account of his cultivation of patience that he then refrains from following along with the influence of the fetters.

3. HOW BODHISATTVAS AVOID INFLUENCE BY FETTERS

Question: How is it that when the fetters are not yet cut off, one remains able to refrain from following along with them?

Response: It is on account of right thought that, although one is still subject to afflictions, one is remains able to refrain from following along with them.

Additionally, because one reflects and contemplates the marks of emptiness and impermanence, even though one may possess marvelous and fine objects of the five desires, one still does not respond to them by giving rise to any of the fetters.

This is similar to the case of the king who discovered one of his officials had committed an offense and then kept it hidden so that others wouldn't become aware of it. The King told him, "Bring me a plump sheep free of any fat. If you are unable to find one, you will be subjected to punishment."

That great official was particularly intelligent. He proceeded to tie up a big sheep and feed it liberally with both grass and grain. Three times each day, he frightened it with a wolf. Although the sheep was able to grow plump, it still did not have any fat. He then brought the sheep before the King.

The King ordered someone to slaughter it and found that it was plump but had no fat. The King asked, "How were you able to bring this about?" He replied by relating the above circumstances. The bodhisattva is just like this. He sees the wolf of impermanence, suffering, and emptiness. This causes the fat of the fetters to melt away while the flesh of his merit grows plump.

Then again, because the bodhisattva's merit and resultant karmic blessings are incalculably extensive, his mind remains pliant, the fetters are but scant, and it is easy for him to cultivate patience.

This circumstance [of refraining from completely cutting off the fetters] is also comparable to that of the Lion King who roars in the forest. When a person encounters it, if he bows down before it and prays for mercy, then it may let him go. But the tiger, leopard, and lesser beasts would be unable to act in such a fashion. Why?

Because the Lion King is a noble animal which possesses intelligence and discrimination. The tiger and leopard are base beasts which do not know to make such distinctions.

This situation is also like that of defeated soldiers who, if they are overcome by the forces of a great general, will be allowed to live. If they encounter lesser soldiers, however, they are bound to be put to death.

Moreover, the bodhisattva employs his power of wisdom to contemplate hatred as freighted with all manner of evil and to contemplate patience as possessing all sorts of meritorious qualities. Realizing this, he thereby becomes able to maintain patience with the fetters.

Furthermore, the mind of the bodhisattva possesses a power of wisdom whereby he is capable of cutting off the fetters. But, for the sake of beings, he nonetheless abides for a long time in the world, realizing that the fetters are just like insurgent thieves. He therefore maintains patience towards them while refraining from following along with them. The bodhisattva thereby ties up the thieves of the fetters and so does not allow them to run rampant as he proceeds to engage in the cultivation of merit. This is analogous to those situations wherein there may be insurgents which, for a particular reason, one refrains from executing. One instead confines them securely in a single place and then devotes himself to doing his own work.

Then again, because the bodhisattva possesses a reality-based awareness of the marks of all dharmas, he does not take the fetters to be inherently evil and does not take merit to be inherently marvelous. Therefore he does not nurture any hatred for the fetters nor does he cherish any particular affection for merit. Relying on account of the power of this wisdom, he is able to cultivate patience. This is as described in a verse:

The bodhisattva cuts off and eliminates all which is not good.
Even down to the most subtle, he destroys it, leaving no residue.
The blessings from his greatly meritorious qualities are countless.
In the works that he carries on, none are not completed.

On account of the power of the bodhisattva's great wisdom,
Even in the midst of the fetters, he is invulnerable to torment.
He is thereby able to be aware of the marks of all dharmas.
Birth, death, and nirvāṇa are a unity devoid of duality.

For all sorts of reasons such as these, although one has not yet gained realization of the Path, one is nonetheless able to maintain patience in the midst of affliction-related dharmas. It is this which constitutes “patience with respect to dharmas.”

F. ANALYSIS AND REFUTATION ACCORDING TO NUMERICAL CATEGORIES

Additionally, with respect to all dharmas, the bodhisattva knows them to be characterized by singularity and knows them to be non-dual. Because all dharmas have the character of being perceptible by consciousness, they may be said to be of a singular nature. Where “the eye consciousness is conscious of forms,” and so forth [with the ear, nose, tongue, and body consciousnesses being conscious of sounds, smells, tastes, and tangibles] on up to the case of “the mind consciousness is conscious of dharmas,” these are all instances of dharmas having the character of being subject to awareness on the part of consciousness. They are all therefore said to be of a singular nature.

Then again, it is because all dharmas have the character of knowability that they may be said to be of a single nature. [For example], the dharma knowledge of suffering (*duḥkhe dharmajñāna*) and the consecutive knowledge of suffering (*duḥkhe 'nvayajñāna*) know the truth of suffering. The dharma knowledge of accumulation (*samudaye dharmajñāna*) and the consecutive knowledge of suffering (*samudaye 'nvayajñāna*) know the truth of accumulation. The dharma knowledge of cessation (*nirodhe dharmajñāna*) and the consecutive knowledge of cessation (*nirodhe 'nvayajñāna*) know the truth of cessation. The dharma knowledge of the Path (*mārga dharmajñāna*) and the consecutive knowledge of the Path (*mārga 'nvayajñāna*) know the truth of the Path.

And so, too, worldly knowledge characterized by goodness may know suffering, accumulation, cessation, the Path, space, and the cessation not based on comprehension (*apratisamṅkhyānirodha*). It is on account of this characteristic of knowability that dharmas are said to be of a singular nature.

Then again, it is on account of the fact that all dharmas are subject to being taken as objective conditions that they are said to be of a singular nature. Eye consciousness as well as dharmas associated with eye consciousness take forms as objective conditions. Ear consciousness, nose consciousness, tongue consciousness and body consciousness are the same in this respect. The mind consciousness and dharmas associated with mind consciousness take the eye

faculty, take [visual] forms, and take eye consciousness as objective conditions, and so forth until we come to their also taking even the [intellectual] mind faculty, dharmas as objects of mind, and mind consciousness as objective conditions. Thus it is also on account of this characteristic of being subject to being taken as objective conditions that all dharmas are said to be singular entities.

Yet again, there are those who say that each one of all dharmas is singular in nature, and that “duality” is based on there being a second singular entity in addition to the first. [Similarly, they say] that it is three singular entities taken together which constitute a trinity, and so forth like this until we come to [their stating that] a thousand myriads is simply a case of that many singular entities being taken together and artificially referred to as “a thousand myriads.”

Then again, [it might be said that], because there exists a particular aspect common to all dharmas [taken as a group], one speaks of them as “one.” It is because they are characterized by “oneness” that are referred to as “one.” All phenomena may be referred to as “dharmas.” Because they are characterized by being dharmas, they are said to be “one.”

In this same fashion, there are an incalculable number of approaches to [the comprehension of] singularity. When one thus refutes the concept of a differentiating characteristic while still not becoming attached to the concept of singularity, this qualifies as “patience with respect to dharmas.”

Then again, the bodhisattva may contemplate everything as being dual. In what way are they dual? Duality refers to the characteristic of having a subject and an object. Because this circumstance is characterized by the presence of a subject and object, it is not the case that the subject has the character of being the object and it is not the case that the object has the character of being the subject.

Yet again, it is also because all dharmas may be characterized by existence or nonexistence that they may be seen as dual. [Other examples of duality-based conceptions are]: empty and non-empty, eternal and non-eternal, self and non-self, form and non-form, perceptible and non-perceptible, opposable and non-opposable, outflow and non-outflow, conditioned and unconditioned, mind dharma and non-mind dharma, dharmas belonging to the mind and dharmas not belonging to the mind, and dharmas associated with the mind and dharmas not associated with the mind. There are an incalculable number of access points to [the comprehension

of] duality. When one refutes the concept of singularity while still not becoming attached to the concept of duality, this qualifies as “patience with respect to dharmas.”

Then again, the bodhisattva may contemplate all dharmas as having the nature of triplicity. In what way are they characterized by triplicity? [Examples of triplicity-based conceptions include]: inferior, middling, and superior; good, not good, and neutral; existent, nonexistent, and neither-existent-nor-nonexistent; severance through comprehension of the truths, severance through meditative skill, and non-severance; still being in training, being beyond training, and being neither still in training nor beyond training; and retributational, non-retributational and neither retributational [nor non-retributational]. In this same fashion there are an incalculable number of access points to [the comprehension of] triplicity.

When one refutes the concept of singularity but still does not become attached to the concept of difference, this qualifies as “patience with respect to dharmas.”

G. ADDITIONAL FACTORS IN THE BODHISATTVA’S DHARMA PATIENCE

1. THE BODHISATTVA’S FAITH IN THE THREE-FOLD IMPRINT OF DHARMAS

Furthermore, although the bodhisattva has not yet gained realization of the path beyond outflow-impurities and has not yet cut off the fetters, he is nonetheless able to maintain faith in the non-outflow Dharma of the Āryas and faith in the three-fold imprint of dharmas. The first of these is that all dharmas which are the product of composite conditions are all equally imprinted by the characteristic of being impermanent. The second is that all dharmas are imprinted by the characteristic of being non-self. The third is that they are imprinted by the genuine dharma of nirvāṇa.

These are such as the Worthies and Āryas who have gained the Path naturally realize and naturally know. Although the bodhisattva has not yet gained realization of the Path, he is nonetheless able to relate to these with faith and acceptance. This qualifies as “patience with respect to dharmas.”

2. THE BODHISATTVA’S PATIENCE WITH THE FOURTEEN DIFFICULT QUESTIONS

Furthermore, with respect to the unanswered dharmas associated with the fourteen difficult questions such as permanence, impermanence, and so forth, one finds no obstacle to investigating them but still does not lose the Middle Way.²³ When one is able to have patience with these dharmas, this constitutes “patience with respect to dharmas.”

3. THE BHIKSHU IMPATIENT WITH THE FOURTEEN DIFFICULT QUESTIONS (STORY)

A related case is that of the bhikshu who contemplated and investigated 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 provide answers 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 in relation to 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 it and would then be unable to gain liberation from birth, aging, sickness, and death.

"This is analogous to a man who has been shot by a poisoned 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 made as well as what animal's horns were used in its construction. Additionally, I wish to know where the poison was produced and what type it is. After I have completely understood all sorts of other related matters I shall then give my permission for you to extract the arrow and apply medications.'"

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

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

The Buddha said, "You are just like this. You have been shot by the arrow of erroneous views which has been smeared with the poison of craving. It has now 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.

4. THE BODHISATTVA'S TRANSCENDENCE OF FOURTEEN DIFFICULT QUESTIONS

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 qualifies as possessing patience with respect to dharmas.

5. THE BODHISATTVA'S ELOQUENCE, FAITH, AND FREEDOM FROM DOUBTS

Moreover, the Dharma of the Buddha is extremely profound, pure, subtle and marvelous. [The bodhisattva] is able to broadly expound all sorts of accesses to Dharma of incalculable scope. He is able to single-mindedly believe in and accept them without doubts or regrets. This qualifies as having patience with respect to dharmas.

6. THE BODHISATTVA'S DEEP UNDERSTANDING OF THE NATURE OF DHARMAS

As stated by the Buddha, although all dharmas are empty, they are still not cut off and are not destroyed. Although all dharmas are produced of a continuity of causes and conditions, still, they are not eternal. Although all dharmas are devoid of any spiritual soul, still, there is no diminishment of retribution for either offenses or blessings.

In each single thought moment, all personal dharmas and all of one's faculties and manifestations of intelligence are brought to destruction. This goes on without cease such that they are not carried forward even to the next thought-moment (*kṣaṇa*). They are continually being newly produced and destroyed again and yet there is no loss of the karmic causes and conditions carried forth through an incalculable number of lifetimes.

Among all of the aggregates, sense realms and sense bases, everything is empty of inherent existence and devoid of a spiritual soul and yet beings *do* circulate about throughout the five destinies, undergoing cyclic birth and death. Even though one may not yet have gained the Buddha Path, one is still able to believe and is still able to accept without doubts and without regrets all sorts of such extremely profound, subtle and marvelous dharmas. This qualifies as possessing patience with respect to dharmas.

7. BODHISATTVA MOTIVATION'S RELATIONSHIP TO PATIENCE

Then again, the arhats and pratyekabuddhas fear and abhor cyclic birth and death and so seek an early entry into nirvāṇa. The bodhisattva has not yet gained buddhahood and so he desires to seek after all-knowledge, desires to act out of pity for beings, and desires to utterly understand, distinguish, and realize the true character of dharmas. When one is able to maintain patience even in the midst of all these endeavors, this qualifies as patience with respect to dharmas.

H. EXTENDED DISCUSSION ON THE TRUE NATURE OF DHARMAS

1. ON THE ULTIMATE REALITY ASPECT OF DHARMAS

Question: How does proceed with contemplating in accordance with reality the true character of dharmas (*dharmatā*)?

Response: One contemplates and knows [the true character of] dharmas as free of any flaw, and as invulnerable to refutation or [dialectical] ruination. This corresponds to their true character.

2. REFUTATION OF THE ULTIMACY OF THE TETRALEMMA

Question: All discourse can be responded to, can be refuted, and can be demolished. How can you claim that whatsoever cannot be refuted or demolished corresponds to the true character of dharmas?

Response: This is because dharmas cannot be the object of refutation. In the Dharma of the Buddha, one goes beyond the path of all discourse. The very basis of the mind's actions is itself extinguished.

[Dharmas] are eternally neither produced nor destroyed and are characterized by being like *nirvāṇa*.

How is this so? If the marks of dharmas actually existed, then it should not be that they could become nonexistent. If any dharma was formerly existent but now is nonexistent, then this amounts to an extinction through severance (i.e. annihilationism).

Additionally, it should not be the case either that any dharma is eternal. Why? If it were eternal, then there could be no karmic punishments or blessings in reward and nothing therein would be subject to being injured or killed. Neither could one bestow life. There would be no benefit from spiritual cultivation nor would there be either bondage or liberation. If this were the case, then the world would be *nirvāṇa*. On account of reasons such as these, it should not be the case that any dharma qualifies as eternal either.

Then again, if any dharma was impermanent, then this would be an extinction through severance whereby there could be no karmic punishments, no blessings in reward, and neither increase nor decrease. The causes and conditions of meritorious karma and resultant rewards would also be lost. On account of reasons such as these, it should not be the case that any dharmas qualify as impermanent either.

Question: You claim that, within the Dharma of the Buddha, permanence is not a reality and impermanence is unreal as well. This is not the case. Why? Within the Dharma of the Buddha, permanence is a reality and impermanence is a reality as well. As for that which is permanent, it includes extinction due to comprehension (*pratisamkhyā-nirodha*), extinction not due to comprehension (*apratisamkhyā-nirodha*), and also empty space. Because they are not produced, do not abide, and are not destroyed, they are characterized by permanence.

As for impermanence, the five aggregates are characterized by impermanence because they are produced, do abide, and are then destroyed. Why then do you claim that both permanence and impermanence are not realities?

Response: The Āryas engage in two types of speech: The first is discourse characterized by skillful means. The second is direct discourse. As for the skillful means, they are set forth for the sake of individual persons and on account of particular causes and conditions. As for that which is set forth for the sake of individual persons, it is explained for the sake of particular beings that this entity

is permanent, whereas that one is impermanent. This is as was explained in the discussion of the counteractive *siddhānta*'s [doctrinal perspective] (*prātipākṣika siddhānta*).²⁴

If one speaks of impermanence, it is out of a desire to extricate beings from their attachment to the pleasures of the three realms. The Buddha deliberated, "What might be employed to influence beings to leave behind desire?" Consequently he set forth the dharma of impermanence. This is as explained in a verse:

If one contemplates the dharma of non-production,
One succeeds in transcending dharmas which are produced.
If one contemplates unconditioned dharmas,
One succeeds in transcending whatsoever is conditioned.

Why is it that rebirth in cyclic existence is defined as a mere conjunction of causes and conditions? It is impermanent, possesses no inherent existence of its own, and belongs to the sphere of causes and conditions. It is characterized by being subject to aging, sickness, and death, is characterized by being deceptive, and is characterized by being subject to destruction. This is [the character] of rebirth in cyclic existence. It is therefore a conditioned dharma. This accords with the explanation presented in the counteractive *siddhānta* [doctrinal perspective].

Being "both permanent and impermanent" also fails to correspond to the true character [of dharmas]. This is because both fallacies are inherent therein. If one claims that dharmas are "neither permanent nor impermanent," this is just the dialectics of foolishness. How is this so? If one claims of some quality that it is "neither existent..." then this refutes it by indicating its non-existence. And if one claims of some quality that it is "nor nonexistent..." then this refutes it by pointing out its existence. If one has refuted both of these matters, then what dharmas remain to be discussed?

Question: In the Buddha Dharma's [tenet of everything] being characterized by constantly being empty of inherent existence, there is this concept of being "neither existent nor nonexistent." Emptiness is employed to get rid of [attachment to] existence. The emptiness of emptiness blocks off [attachment to] nonexistence.²⁵ This amounts to positing [that a dharma is] "neither existent nor nonexistent." Why then do you say that this is just "the dialectics of foolishness"?

Response: The true character [of dharmas as understood] in the Buddha's Dharma involves both non-acceptance [of the ultimate

reality of any characteristic] and non-attachment [to the existence of any characteristic]. It is because your “neither-existence-nor-nonexistence” is a position characterized by both acceptance and attachment that it amounts to the dialectics of foolishness.

If one makes a claim in favor of “neither-existence-nor-nonexistence,” this posits a view of something which can be described and refuted. It thereby constitutes a basis for the generation of ideation and a basis for disputation. The Dharma of the Buddha is not of this sort. Although it is the case that, on account of certain causes and conditions, one does indeed set forth this concept of “neither-existence-nor-nonexistence,” in doing so, one does not become attached thereto. If one does not become attached to it, then it does not become an issue vulnerable to destruction and refutation.

No matter whether in one’s treatment of dharmas one speaks [of the world and the self] as being bounded or as being boundless, or as being both bounded and boundless, or as being neither bounded nor boundless, no matter whether one speaks of there being a continuing on after death, of there not being a continuing on after death, of there both being and not being a continuing on after death, or of there being neither a continuing on nor a not continuing on after death, and no matter whether one speaks of the body as identical with a spiritual soul or as different from a spiritual soul, they are all just like this. None of these concepts correspond to reality.

3. FREEDOM FROM VIEWS AS A QUALIFICATION FOR DHARMA PATIENCE

When one contemplates the dharmas of the sixty-two views and recognizes that none of them correspond to reality—when one does away with all of them in this manner while still having such faith in the Buddha Dharma’s characteristics of being pure and indestructible that one’s mind is not regretful and is not turned away—this qualifies as patience with respect to dharmas.

4. THE ERRONEOUSNESS OF EXTREME VIEWS

Then again, as for the two extremes of existence and nonexistence, if one’s contemplations are focused on the time when dharmas arise and the time when they dwell, these constitute characteristic indicators of a view clinging to the concept of existence. If one’s contemplations focus on the time when dharmas grow old or when they undergo destruction, then these constitute the characteristic indicators of a view which clings to the concept of nonexistence.

The beings of the three realms mostly cling to the characteristic features of these two views. These two kinds of dharmas are false

and deceptive and do not correspond to reality. If in reality a given characteristic actually possesses existence, then it should not be the case that it could become nonexistent. Why? If something now becomes nonexistent which previously was existent, this falls into the domain of the annihilationist view. If one adopts an annihilationist stance, then this is an erroneous position.

5. THE ROLE OF NAMING IN IMPUTING EXISTENCE TO DHARMAS

Moreover, it is on account of a naming-based unification that one imputes existence to dharmas. It is on account of this that dharmas produced by nominal unification cannot finally be gotten at.

Question: Although dharmas which are the product of this name-based unification cannot finally be gotten at, [is it not the case that] one does still have this naming and the corresponding unification?

Response: If there is no dharma [corresponding to this artificial name-based unification], by whose action of naming could there be such unification? In such a case, the naming itself would be nonexistent as well.

Again, if dharmas actually existed, it should not be the case that one knows of their existence solely through the mind's consciousness. If it is simply on account of the mind's consciousness that one comprehends their existence, this does not in itself qualify them as possessing a [genuine] existence.

Take for example the earth's characteristic of solidity. It is on account of the body's faculty of touch and the awareness on the part of the body's tactile consciousness that it is supposed to exist. If there were no bodily faculty of touch and no awareness on the part of the body's tactile consciousness, then there could be no characteristic feature of solidity.

6. MUTABILITY OF CHARACTERISTICS AS A SIGNIFIER OF UNREALITY

Question: Whether or not there is a knowing awareness produced through the body's faculty of touch and the body's tactile consciousness, [is it not the case that] the earth element nonetheless remains eternally characterized by solidity?

Response: It may be that one already knows for himself that there exists the characteristic of solidity. Or else it may be that, having heard it from someone else, one knows there exists a characteristic of solidity. If one did not previously know it for himself and had not previously heard of it from someone else, then there would be no [basis for imputing the existence of a] characteristic of solidity.

Moreover, if it were the case that earth was eternally characterized by solidity, it should not be the case that it could relinquish its characteristic. Take for example congealed curds, wax, honey or the pitch from trees. When they melt they lose their characteristic of solidity and so fall within the characteristic of liquidity. Gold, silver, copper, iron, and so forth are also like this. As another example, take water which is characterized by liquidity. If it becomes cold, it may then transform so that it becomes characterized by solidity. There are all sorts of other examples such as these wherein in every case the characteristic features are relinquished.

Additionally, dialecticians are able to cause that which exists to become nonexistent and are able to cause that which is nonexistent to become existent. The Worthies, the Āryas, and those who sit in dhyāna meditation are able to cause earth to become water and water to become earth. All other sorts of dharmas such as these can be transformed. This is as discussed in the treatment of the ten universal bases (*kr̥tsnāyatana*).

7. THE AFFLICTION-BASED NATURE OF EXISTENCE-AFFIRMING VIEWS

Furthermore, this view which holds to the validity of "existence" is produced on account of greed, hatred, stupidity, the fetters, and disputation. If something is held to exist which is produced on these bases of greed, hatred, and so forth, this does not qualify as the Dharma of the Buddha. Why is this the case? This is because the characteristic features of the Dharma of the Buddha are goodness and purity. Hence such doctrinal positions do not correspond to reality.

8. UNREALITY OF BOTH FORM AND FORMLESS DHARMAS

Also, all dharmas are subsumed within two categories: form dharmas and formless dharmas. Form dharmas may be analyzed down to the tiniest particles and thus may be so destroyed through dispersion that nothing remains. This is just as explained in the chapters on Dāna Pāramitā wherein we set forth a refutation of the existence of material objects given as gifts.

As for formless dharmas, [they cannot be said to exist] because they are not known by the five basic sense faculties. Also, because the observation on the part of the intellectual mind faculty occurs even as it undergoes arising, dwelling, and destruction, one knows that thought itself is divided into parts. Because thoughts are divided into parts, they are therefore impermanent. Because they are impermanent, they are therefore empty of any inherent

existence. Because they are empty of any inherent existence, they do not qualify as “existent.”

9. THE UNREALITY OF PRODUCTION AND EXTINCTION

There are sixty “instants” which transpire during a single finger snap. During each one of those instants, thought undergoes a production and an extinction. It is on account of the continuity occurring among these production events that one develops an awareness of whether one is dealing with a greed-related thought, a hate-related thought, a delusion-related thought, a faith-filled thought, or a thought characterized by purity, wisdom, or dhyāna absorption.

The practitioner contemplates the production and extinction of thought as being like flowing water or the flame of a lamp. This constitutes entry into the gateway of the wisdom of emptiness. How is this so? If it were in fact the case that any given thought was produced at one moment and then only destroyed during another subsequent moment, this thought should be possessed of permanence. How could this be so? It is because no destruction whatsoever took place during this extremely brief prior moment. If it were the case that no destruction took place during that single moment, it should be the case that there should never be any [subsequent] destruction either.

Then again, the Buddha stated that conditioned dharmas possess the three characteristic features [of production, dwelling, and extinction]. If during the most extremely brief moment there was production but no destruction, this would have to be an unconditioned dharma.

On the other hand, if it were the case that during the most extremely brief moment a thought was produced, dwelt and was then extinguished, how could one claim that production occurred first and extinction occurred later rather than [the alternative proposition where] extinction might occur first, followed by production?

Alternately, if it were the case that first there was the thought and afterwards there was the production, then the thought would not be dependent upon its production. Why? Because there would previously already be the existence of the thought. If, on the other hand, the production already existed previously, then production would have nothing which it subsequently produced.

Additionally, the natures of production and extinction are mutually opposed. When there is production, then there ought not to

be extinction. When there is extinction, then there ought not to be production. For these reasons, simultaneousness in this cannot be shown to be the case. But neither can a difference in time be shown to be the case either.

10. CONSEQUENCE: ALL DHARMA CATEGORIES ARE REALIZED AS NONEXISTENT

This then just amounts to the nonexistence of production. If there is no production, then there is no dwelling or extinction either. If there is no production, dwelling, or extinction, then there are no dharmas belonging to the mind. If there are no dharmas belonging to the mind (*caitasikadharmā*), then there are no [formative factor dharmas] not associated with the mind (*cittaviprayuktasamskāradharmā*). If all formative factor dharmas (*samskāradharmā*), form dharmas (*rūpadharmā*), and formless dharmas (*arupadharmā*) are nonexistent, then unconditioned dharmas (*asamskṛtadharmā*) must also be nonexistent. Why? It is on account of the conditioned (*samskṛta*) that one has the unconditioned (*asamskṛta*). If there are no conditioned [dharmas], then there are no unconditioned [dharmas] either.²⁶

11. REFUTATION OF ETERNALLY-EXISTENT DHARMAS

Additionally, it is on account of observing that created dharmas are impermanent that one comes to know dharmas which are not created to be eternally existent. This being the case, when one now observes that created dharmas are existent dharmas, one should realize that dharmas which are not created are nonexistent dharmas. It is on account of this that no eternal dharma can be found.

Furthermore, in their discussions of “eternally-existent” dharmas, non-Buddhists (*tīrthika*) and disciples of the Buddha have those which they hold in common and those over which they differ. Those which they hold in common are empty space (*ākāśa*) and nirvāṇa. The non-Buddhists have a “soul” (*ātman*), time, direction, extremely minute particles (*paramāṇu*), and “the primordial source” (*tamas*). These are categories over which they differ.

Additionally, there are disciples of the Buddha who claim that cessation not achieved through comprehension (*apratisamṅkhyā-nirodha*) is eternal and who further claim that the dharmas involving the extinguishing of causes and conditions are eternally-abiding whereas dharmas which are the product of causes and conditions are impermanent.

As for the dharmas which are considered eternally-abiding by proponents of the *Mahāyāna*, we have the nature of dharmas (*dharmatā*),²⁷ suchness (*tathatā*), ultimate reality (*bhūtakoti*), and all

sorts of other [synonymous] concepts that are held to be eternally-abiding dharmas. As for empty space and *nirvāṇa*, they are as discussed previously in the section in praise of the bodhisattvas. The “soul” (*ātman*) as well as time, direction and the most minute particles are also as discussed previously. It is for these reasons that one should refrain from claiming that any dharma actually exists.

12. REDUCTIO AD ABSURDUM REFUTATION OF “NONEXISTENCE” CLAIMS

As for the nonexistence of dharmas, it is of two sorts. The first is eternal nonexistence. The second is nonexistence achieved through severance [of a prior existence]. In a case where something previously existent now becomes nonexistent or something now existent later becomes nonexistent, this is extinction through severance.

If this were actually the case, then this involves the nonexistence of any associated causes and conditions. If there were no associated causes and conditions, then it ought to be the case that all things should be able to come forth from any single thing and it should also be the case that no thing could come forth from any other things.

This would also be the case for future existences. If there were a severance of the causes and conditions associated with karmic punishments and blessings, then there should no longer exist any of the differences involved in poverty versus wealth or nobility versus baseness. Neither could there be any falling into the wretched destinies or, in particular, an animal-realm rebirth.

If one claims that there is such a thing as eternal nonexistence, then there would be no suffering, no accumulation, no cessation, and no Path. If there were none of these four truths, then there could be no Dharma Jewel. If there were no Dharma Jewel, then there could be no path of the Eight stations of the Worthies and the Āryas. If there were no Dharma jewel and also no Sangha Jewel, then there could be no Buddha Jewel, either. If this were actually the case, then one would thereby achieve the destruction of the Three Jewels.

13. NON-ULTIMACY OF EMPTINESS CLAIMS

Furthermore, if all dharmas were actually empty, then there would be no karmic offenses or blessings, nor would there be one’s father and mother, nor would there be any of the world’s ceremonial observances or laws, nor would there be any good or any evil. In that case then, good and bad would possess the same entryway and right and wrong would be of the same strand. All things would be

just as nonexistent as the things seen in a dream. If one claims that all [dharmas] are actually nonexistent, such a claim is possessed of these faults. Who would believe this statement?

If one states that it is on account of inverted views that one sees things as existing, then when one sees a single person, why does one not see two or three since in reality they do not exist and are only seen on account of inverted views?

14. SIX ADDITIONAL BASES OF "PATIENCE WITH RESPECT TO DHARMAS"

a. REALIZATION OF THE ULTIMATE REALITY ASPECT OF THE MIDDLE WAY

If one does not fall into these views [which insist on the reality] of existence or nonexistence, one may gain realization of the ultimate reality aspect of the Middle Way. How does one know what is real? It is as known and proclaimed by all of the Ganges' sands number of buddhas and bodhisattvas of the past, as known and proclaimed by all of the Ganges' sands number of buddhas and bodhisattvas of the future, and as known and proclaimed by the Ganges' sands number of buddhas and bodhisattvas of the present. Because one's mind of faith is great, one does not have doubts and one does not have regrets. Because the power of one's faith is great, one is able to uphold [their Dharma] and is able to accept it. This is what is known as "patience with respect to dharmas."

b. MEDITATION'S ROLE FATHOMING OF THE TRUE CHARACTER OF DHARMAS

Additionally, through the power of dhyāna absorption, one's mind becomes so pliant and pure that, when one hears of the true character of dharmas, this resonates with one's own mind and one integrates that realization. One grasps it through faith, deeply enters into it, and has no doubts and no regrets. Why? Doubts and regrets are dharmas bound to the desire realm. Because they are coarse and unwholesome, they do not enter into a pliant mind. This is what is meant by "patience with respect to dharmas."

c. ACQUIESCENCE IN UNFINDABILITY OF DHARMAS

Moreover, on account of the power of wisdom, one subjects all dharmas to the scrutiny of all sorts of contemplations and finds that there is not a single dharma which can be gotten at. One is able to have patience with this dharma and is able to accept it without having doubts or regrets. This is what is known as "patience with respect to dharmas."

d. REALIZATION OF ĀRYA WISDOM DESTROYS DELUSION'S POISON

Additionally, the bodhisattva considers, "It is on account of the poison of ignorance that common people transform [through inverted

views] the characteristics of all dharmas, imagining the impermanent to be permanent, imagining that which is suffering to be blissful, imagining that which is non-self to embody a self, holding the opinion that [dharmas] empty of inherent existence possess a reality, taking that which is nonexistent to be existent, and taking that which is existent to be being nonexistent. In a manner such as this they transform the characteristics of all sorts of dharmas.”

He gains the genuine wisdom of the Āryas and destroys the poison of ignorance. He realizes the true character of dharmas. He gains the wisdom cognizing that which is impermanent, empty, and not self. He gets rid of [the poison of ignorance] and retains no attachment to it. It is by virtue of his ability to course in patience with respect to these dharmas that he qualifies as possessing “patience with respect to dharmas.”

e. CONTEMPLATION OF DHARMAS AS ETERNALLY EMPTY

Furthermore, he contemplates all dharmas as having been eternally empty from their origin on up to the present and as remaining empty in the present era as well. He is able to have faith with respect to this dharma and is able to accept it. This constitutes “patience with respect to dharmas.”

Question: If [one were to hold that] they were eternally empty from their origin on up to the present and are empty in the present era as well, this would be an egregious error. How can you speak of it as “patience with respect to dharmas?”

Response: If in contemplating all dharmas as being ultimately empty one seizes upon this characteristic and one’s mind becomes attached this *does* constitute an egregious error. However, if in contemplating emptiness one does not become attached and does not bring forth erroneous views, this *does* constitute “patience with respect to dharmas.” This is as explained in a verse:

The nature of dharmas is that they are eternally empty,
And yet the mind still does not attach to emptiness.
If one is able to maintain patience with such dharmas,
This is the characteristic sign of the Buddha Path’s beginning.

f. NON-RETREAT FROM REALITY; IMPERTURBABILITY; UNIVERSAL BENEFIT

Through all sorts of concepts such as these one enters the gateway to wisdom. When one is able to contemplate in accordance with reality the true character of dharmas while one’s mind does not retreat from it, does not have regrets, does not stray off along the

course of the contemplations, and still does not have anything about which it is distressed—if one is also able to succeed in benefiting oneself while benefiting others as well—this is what is referred to as “patience with respect to dharmas.”

I. CONCLUDING STATEMENT ON PATIENCE WITH RESPECT TO DHARMAS

This patience with respect to dharmas has three bases by which its practice qualifies as pure: One does not perceive the existence of any dharma of patience itself. One does not perceive the existence of one’s own person. One does not perceive the existence of a person who is scolding and subjecting one to insult.

Additionally, one refrains from frivolous dialectical discourse regarding any of the dharmas. It is at this time that one’s practice qualifies as the pure practice of “patience with respect to dharmas.” It is with regard to these very factors that it is said that the bodhisattva who abides in the *prajñāpāramitā* (the perfection of wisdom) is able to completely perfect *kṣānti pāramitā* (the perfection of patience). This is because [his mind] does not move and does not retreat.

What precisely is meant by “does not move and does not retreat”? Hatefulness does not arise. One does not utter any harsh words. One’s body does not inflict any harm. One’s mind remains free of doubts. The bodhisattva knows in accordance with reality the true character [of dharmas as beheld by] the *prajñāpāramitā* (the perfection of wisdom). He does not engender any perception of the existence of any dharma. This because his mind remains free of anything to which it is attached.

Consequently, even if a person comes along and curses him, even if someone subjects him to extremely toxic poison, and even if someone kills or injures him, he nonetheless remains able to have patience with it all. It is for this reason that it is said that one who abides in the *prajñāpāramitā* (the perfection of wisdom) is able to completely perfect *kṣānti pāramitā* (the perfection of patience).