

46th Lesson of the Sixth Patriarch's Platform Sutra



(Based on a **direct transcript** from the **recording** of the
46th Lesson of the Sixth Patriarch's Platform Sutra class
[dated 14.05.2017]

Conducted by Bro. Teoh at Wu Pin Chin Seah,
No. 4, Jalan 11/8, Petaling Jaya, Selangor)

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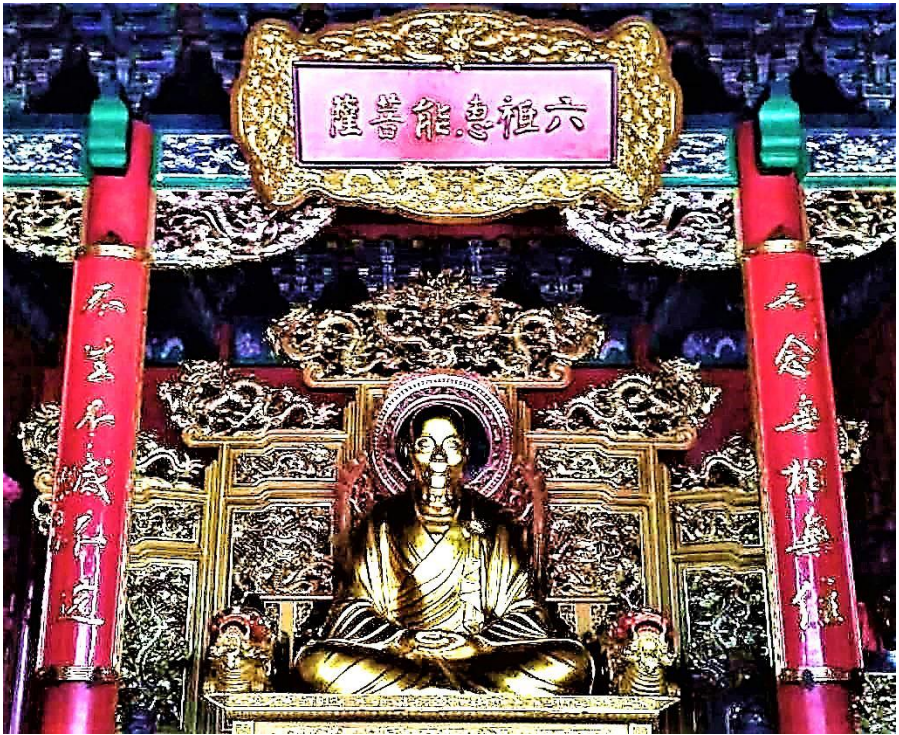
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Dated: 31.08.2017



Sixth Patriarch Hui Neng Bodhisattva

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Contents

1. Preface	1
2. Acknowledgement.....	2
3. 46 th Lesson Sixth Patriarch’s Platform Sutra dated 14 th May 2017	3
3.1. Pūjā	3
3.2. Dharma Sharing By Bro. Teoh.....	4
3.2.1. Chapter VI Repentance and Reform (page 236).....	5
3.2.2. Meditation Reporting and Q&A.....	46
3.3. Closing.....	71

(Biodata of Bro. Teoh Kian Koon)

Bro. Teoh graduated from University of Malaya in Civil Engineering in 1979. He has been a *spiritual practitioner cum ‘Meditator’ since 1971*. Since his retirement in 2001 from his **Engineering career**, he has been **sharing his understanding and experiences** with those who are *keen in their search for true happiness, peace and liberation from birth and death and all mental suffering so that they can be more virtuous, nobler and wiser human beings*. He gives **Dharma talks** and holds *meditation classes & retreats* and weekly **Dharma classes** at various *meditation centers, Buddhist society* and places that invite him.

For more details of *Bro. Teoh’s dharma activities* and his *Kalyāṇamittaship grouping* please login to his dharma website at: <http://broteoh.com>

1. Preface

It is Brother Teoh's **sincere** wish that Dharma friends, spiritual practitioners, seekers of truth, and cultivators will be able **to make use** of the enclosed dharma **transcript notes** to develop a **better understanding** of the Buddha **Dharma as taught** by the Buddha so that they may **progress along the path of dharma** to become more **virtuous, nobler** and **wiser** human beings that can be a **blessing** to all of humanity and the world.

As these notes were mostly **compiled** based on a **direct transcript** from the recording of the **46th** lesson of the **Sixth Patriarch's Platform Sutra** class (dated 14.5.2017); the text is aligned as closely as possible to the **colloquial speech** in the talk. **However some editorial amendments have been made** to the **text without detracting** from the **essence** of the talk. With this, it is hoped that readers can **adjust** themselves accordingly to **better understand** its **true meaning** and **intent**. A **good** way to do this is **to listen** to the recordings **first before** reading the transcript notes.

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2. Acknowledgement

It is the donors' **sincere intention** that these *dharma transcript notes* be **given free** to those who are **interested** and have the **affinity** to receive them. I would like to *take this opportunity to thank* and **rejoice** in the **generosity** and **wholesomeness** of all those **Dharma friends** or **Kalyāṇamittas** who have **donated** and **helped out** in the **transcription, typing, typesetting, formatting, proof reading, etc.** to make this **free distribution** of **dharma dāna** possible.

Special thanks should be accorded to **Sister SK Hoong** (Hoong Suet Kun) who has taken the **initiative** to volunteer to develop the **draft transcript** for my **subsequent editing** thereby enabling this **dharma transcript book** to be printed.

By the **power of all these wholesomeness**, may all beings be **well and happy, free** from all mental and physical sufferings and dangers and may there be **love, peace and joy** - deep **within** their hearts. And may it also **pave the way** for there to be **causes and conditions** for all dharma friends who have **donated or helped out** in one way or another to realize their **good and noble wishes/aspirations** soonest possible.

With Metta always,
Brother Teoh Kian Koon
(Dated: 31.8.2017)

3. 46th Lesson Sixth Patriarch's Platform Sutra dated 14th May 2017

A very good afternoon brothers and sisters in the Dharma. Today is 14th May 2017, a Sunday at Wu Pin Chin Seah Vihāra and we will be having our **46th lesson** of the **6th Patriarch Platform Sutra class**. Before we start as usual we shall do our puja. Compose your mind, develop the *saddhā* (faith), the *vīriya* and *mindfully* we shall **commence** the *puja chanting*.

3.1. Pūjā

We shall pay **our respects** first before we start the *pre-pūjā chanting*:

Nā Mó Bě'n Shī Shì Jiā Móu Ní Fó (南无本师释迦牟尼佛) (3x)

Nā Mó Guān Shì Yīn Pú Sà (南无观世音菩萨) (3x)

Nā Mó Fó Púsà (3x) (南无佛菩萨) (3x)

Salutation to Lord Buddha:-

Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammāsambuddhassa **(3X)**

Taking of the Three Refuges:-

Buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi, Dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi,
Saṅghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi

Dutiyampi Buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi, Dutiyampi Dhammaṃ
saraṇaṃ gacchāmi, Dutiyampi Saṅghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi

Tatīyampi Buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi, Tatīyampi Dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi, Tatīyampi Saṅghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi

Renewing of the Five Precepts:-

Pānātipātā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi;
Adinnādānā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi;
Kāmesu micchācārā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi;
Musāvādā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi;
Surā-meraya-majja-pamā-daṭṭhānā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi

Sādhu! Sādhu! Sādhu! (Rejoicing)

Now let us pay respect **mindfully** to the Triple Gems to end the pre-pūjā:

Buddhaṃ pujemi; Dhammaṃ pujemi; Saṅghaṃ pujemi.

3.2. Dharma Sharing By Bro. Teoh

You all can be seated. Please turn to **page 1** of the text on **Verse for Opening a Sutra**:

*The unsurpassed, profound, and wonderful Dharma,
Is difficult to encounter in hundreds of millions of eons,
I now see and hear it, receive and uphold it,
And I vow to fathom the Tathāgata's true meaning*

Please turn to page 236 and we will continue from there.

3.2.1. Chapter VI Repentance and Reform (page 236)

Sutra (page 236):

*“Good Knowing Advisors, now that you have made **the four all-encompassing vows**, I will transmit the **precepts of the triple refuge** that has **no mark**. Good Knowing Advisors, take refuge with the enlightened, the honoured, and the doubly complete. Take refuge with the right, the honoured that is apart from desire. Take refuge with the pure and the honoured among the multitudes.”*

This is the sutra part. Then let us go into the commentary by Master Hsuan Hua.

Commentary:

*Take refuge with the **Buddha**; the Buddha is enlightened.*

Enlightenment is simply the Buddha. The Buddha is nothing but enlightenment.

The Buddha is “doubly complete” because he has perfected both blessings and wisdom.

That’s why we always contemplate on the **9 great virtues** of the Buddha. These 9 great virtues symbolize what Buddha is all about. He is **not only enlightened**, he is **fully enlightened** and because of that, he has these *two very unique perfections* which we call the doubly perfect - meaning he is perfect in both wisdom and virtue. So you can relate to the Buddha as a **very unique being** who is supposed to be the **wisest** and **most virtuous** living being ever to be

born. This **doubly perfect** means he has completed the training to develop **wisdom** and **virtue** and he has reached the *pinnacle* of both. That's why he is called the *doubly perfect*.

Commentary:

*Take **refuge** with the **Dharma** which is "right" and proper. **Do not take** refuge with **deviant teachings, heavenly demons, or heterodox** religions. Take refuge with the **genuine** Buddha Dharma which is the "honoured that is apart from desire." Everyone has **sexual desire** and it actually **kills** people. Why don't we realize Buddha hood? It is **because of desire, greed, hatred and stupidity** which accompany it. We study the Buddha Dharma in order to get rid of desire and cut off love. The **absence of lust** is the honoured that is apart from desire.*

So this is Hsuan Hua's commentary. *Then the third one is:*

Commentary:

*Take **refuge** with the **Sangha**; the Sangha is pure and its members are called "pure fields of merit." True, genuine cultivators should maintain the precept against handling money. Without money, you are pure; with money you are dirty.*

This again is Hsuan Hua's interpretation because according to him, he thinks '**without** money, you are **pure**; **with** money you are **dirty**.' When one doesn't have the understanding one will think that way. This precept is introduced to prevent the monks from becoming greedy. The precept is – *not to touch* money. But they have to

understand the *deep meaning behind it*. The Buddha said, one has *to abstain* from **touching money** otherwise **temptations** can arise.

During the early days, in the 8 precepts; if you may recall, the Buddha said you have to abstain from taking solid food after the allowable time, which is mid-day at the place where you are and you are *to abstain* from all those dancing, singing, sleeping on high and comfortable bed etc. All these you have to understand - they are **precepts** laid out for those who are **still under training**. If you are *under training*, you **need to observe these** precepts. Otherwise it **can lead to downfall**. This is to **prevent sensual indulgence, desire, lust and craving**. Otherwise *sensual indulgence* and *craving* can arise due to *delusion*. All these have been laid down as *pātimokkha* or monks' precepts for **training purpose** only.

But when it comes to money you **cannot blame money** or **technology** for all those **downfall** or **vices** that happen. It is the **user of money** and **technology** that is *more important*. If the **user has wisdom** and **understanding**, then they **can touch** money and *money becomes beautiful and useful* for it **serves its purpose**; it's the same for technology.

In one of the sutras if you may recall, there was an incident when Venerable Ananda came and talked to the Buddha and said, "We have somebody here and his teacher taught him this teaching which is very good." Do you remember? That particular person came and told Ananda, "My teacher teaches: *see no evil, hear no evil and speak no evil*. Then *by virtue of that, you will become virtuous; you will become wise and enlightened*". The Buddha **reprimanded**

Venerable Ananda saying, “Foolish one. When did I teach you such dharma? You are supposed to see, hear, communicate and yet there is **no evil arising**. That is the teaching; **not to suppress and avoid all these** because your desire, your delusion and your greed are still there.”

*So if you don't develop **wisdom** to confront them via **understanding**, to see their **impermanent universal characteristics leading to suffering, non-self and empty nature**, you **cannot free** your mind, you cannot **liberate**. Hence all these precepts are laid down to **prevent downfall initially** because you **have not** developed the **understanding as yet**.*

It is just like the first *five precepts* where you have to develop the **understanding** via **right view** with **regards** to the *law of karma*. Then you will know that the **law of karma** is so *powerful* because we are *born of our karma, heir to our karma, conditioned and supported by our karma and we are what we are because of our karma*. Knowing this - i.e. all of our life is **almost 100%** due to our **karma** because we are **born of our karma, heir to our karma, conditioned and supported by it** and **we are what we are because of it**. So what must we do? We *have to **take care** of our karma, right?* (**Note:** only the *form and mind* is subject to karma.) Then how do you take care of karma? You *have to avoid all evil, do good and purify the mind following the advice of all Buddha. How to avoid all evil?* The Buddha recommended that you **keep your precepts**. But you *have to investigate* into why the Buddha said you must keep the precepts. *Why must you abstain from all those things? If you don't abstain, it will **lead to karmic negativity**.* Then you have to check, who are the

people who violate karma? They are **evil people** with the **evil roots of greed, hatred and delusion**. Then you will understand why you *have to abstain*, why you *have to maintain the precepts*. As we *cultivate with this understanding*, we can avoid a lot of **potential karmic negativities** or **causes** for karmic negativities **to arise**. That's the reason why the Buddha said all cultivations have to start with *Sīla*. The *three steps* or approaches that you need to take to cultivate the teachings are: **Sīla, Samadhi** and **Paññā**.

Sīla is **morality or precepts** and **Samadhi** is the **trained mind** which is **collected and unwavering**. This *mind is very stable*, collected and unwavering. With your mind in Samadhi you will have the **ability to see things as they are**, then **wisdom will arise** and this is the one *that can liberate the mind via understanding*. When you *have understanding*, you will awaken. That's how you cultivate.

So the **purpose of precepts** or the monks' rules which is the *pātimokkha* is to **develop** the *training* of the mind so that you **don't have so much karmic negativities**. And when you are **without karmic negativities**, you stand a **better chance** because they are the conditions for you to cultivate. If you break your precepts, if you don't have these **training rules to train you**, you will keep on **creating** karmic negativities. So without *Sīla*, it is **very difficult** for the mind to enter *Samadhi*. It's *very difficult to train* your mind to develop the meditation. You will know why isn't it? If you break your precepts, you will have a lot of mental hindrances. You will have a lot of karmic negativities that will bring about *situations that will make you less peaceful*.

Also **without** *morality* you **cannot** develop the *goodness*, the *wholesomeness* and the *merits*. And without the *merits*, the *wholesomeness*, you cannot have the **good conditions** to allow you to come and *train your mind, to meditate*. So that is the reason why precepts were introduced *initially* for you **to avoid all evils** so that you can *have better conditions to train your mind*. Your mind will have *less karmic negativities*, less fear, worries, anxieties, sorrow, lamentation and karmic fruition; then you will have a more **peaceful mind** with **less restlessness**, less **agitation** and fewer **mental hindrances**. After you have the *mindfulness* you will have the **ability to avoid** evil, then you can start to develop the **other aspects of goodness** via the **4 right efforts**.

The first right effort is to **abandon** the **wrong thought, action and speech** that have **arisen**. That *is to* do away with all **action, speech and thought** that have the *evil roots* of **greed, hatred and delusion**. Then when you have the **wisdom** and **understanding developed**, you can **prevent** them from arising. This is the **first stage** of *cultivation* where you *need to make sure* from now onwards; you will **not introduce** any more *karmic negativity* into your life conditions so that you will have the **good conditions** to allow only the **good karma** from **your past** to arise because by doing so, you have **set the base** for **goodness or virtue** to arise.

But if you **don't keep** your precept or *Sīla*, it's very difficult to develop *Samadhi*, the **second stage** of *cultivation*. That's the reason why the Buddha emphasized a lot on *Sīla* or morality. This is the virtue that you need to enable you to walk the path of *dharma*, to train your mind, to arise the causes and conditions through your

mental aspirations. You can invoke the merits for causes and conditions **to avoid** *the foolish* and **meet up** the *wise* so that *enlightenment in the here and the now can be realized as soon as possible*. Then you can *invoke the power of truth*. Without *Sīla*, all these will not be possible. Therefore *sīla* is very important.

In the commentary by Master Hsuan Hua, he didn't explain this deeper meaning. They are just like ordinary people who will advise you **not to touch money** because they believe the precept has a good reason for it. But they don't understand that this precept is *only needed* during the **initial phase of training** because *before you have the wisdom* and the **understanding** and before **Samadhi** kicks in, you **cannot stabilize** your mind, to *have the clarity to see things as they are*, to **insight** into phenomena and to realize their universal **characteristics thereby** giving rise to the wisdom. You still cannot deal with defilements as yet because the **mundane mind** is **still deluded and egoistic**.

The teaching is staged out into *Sīla*, *Samadhi* and *Paññā* for you to understand. That's the reason why when you are **under training**, you have **to observe** your precepts. You **cannot** play the fool with them. You *have to uphold them*. But the moment you **have Samadhi** that **leads to the awakening** and **understanding**, then the *'form and mind'* which is the **user of thought** and the **user of money** and **technology becomes wise**; that user **has wisdom** and **understanding**. Then **thought** becomes *right thought* and **money becomes wholesome** and **technology** can be *put to good use*. Then precept is **no longer applicable** to such people because these precepts are only for people who are **still under training**. That's

why in the teaching; there is *such a thing as beyond training*; *sekha* and *asekha*. *Sekha* are those still under training. *Asekha* are those beyond training. When you are **beyond training**, then you *will come to understand* that **these training rules** are *put in place for those who are still undergoing* the **training** because they *haven't yet developed the wisdom*.

It's similar to **traffic lights**; why does the government introduce traffic lights? Of course everybody knows that it **is to regulate traffic**. So their purpose and intent is to regulate traffic. What happens if the traffic light is **no longer functioning**, like when there is a **short circuit** or something is wrong and it is no longer performing that function? If you are **rigid about rules**, what will you do? You see the red light and you say, "No, red light means stop, you cannot go" and then you wait. You wait until the people at the back honk at you because it's not serving its purpose anymore. If it is **not serving** its purpose anymore; you **must not be gullible**, you must **not be rigid**. You must not just say 'because the Buddha said so' hence you cannot do this and you cannot do that. The Buddha never said you cannot do, the Buddha said **you undertake the training rule** to abstain from doing it. You have to understand why you have to abstain? It's because it will lead to evil and downfall. That's why you cannot do it. Then the **abstinence from money** is the same. There is a big difference between the **abstinence** from touching money and the first 5 precepts. Even though the precept says you have *to abstain* from accepting or touching money, it does not mean that when you touch money you have **committed negativity of karma**. This is because it is not like the first precept - when you kill or harm, you have violated the precepts. But if you

use the **money negatively** then only you have **violated the karmic law**, do you understand? The precept on money is needed **when one is under training** because the moment they **touch or accept money before** they have the **Samadhi** and the **wisdom** they can be **tempted** to use it out of **greed** and **delusion** leading to **negativity** of karma.

Similarly, when you understand this, you will understand why the precepts are phrased in such a way. You will always see the last few words, '*veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi*'. That means 'I undertake the training rule **to abstain** from doing something'. So that is the reason why I always emphasize to you all that the **dharma is to be cultivated with understanding**. **Meditation** is to be *done with understanding*. Why do you take the precepts? Why do you take the refuge? Why do you do the puja? All these **need understanding** and when you understand, you *will do it well*, via *doing it with understanding*. Even **meditation** is the same. So when you *read the commentary*, you have to understand. They didn't explain the last part. They go by the book, which is the precept. The commentary said: '*Without money, you are pure. With money you are dirty*'. Do you agree with that sentence? Cannot be, isn't it? **Without** wisdom, even **without** money, you are **still not pure**. How can they say without money, you are pure? If they word it differently, then maybe it's more meaningful. Without money, **chances are** you **will not become greedy** because you don't have the chance to own the money. Then you will not think of **stealing or misappropriating** the money. That is the meaning. If they don't allow you to touch money, it means it's done out of *love and compassion* for you because **before** you develop the *understanding*

and the *wisdom*, it is **advisable** that you *don't touch* it. It will lead to downfall. In a way it's like drugs, do you understand? You touch them but if you don't take them, you are still ok. But chances are, if you own them or you are given, you will try it. Then through your delusion, your craving and desire, you will get yourself into trouble, you can **get addicted**. So that part is not taught. But I haven't read the rest of the commentary so I don't know whether it will be explained later or not.

Master Hui Neng's meaning is different. You read the sutra. He only talks about **taking refuge** with the **Triple Gem, the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha**. But in Master Hsuan Hua's commentary he said: *'Take refuge with the Sangha; the Sangha is pure and its members are called "pure fields of merit", which is true. True genuine cultivators should maintain the precepts, which are also true because the precepts include - against handling money. But the next sentence you have to be careful, 'Without money you are pure, with money you are dirty.'* Ah, that one, you have **to contemplate** and you **will understand what I mean**. This statement is **no longer true**. It assumes that if you are with money, you will **use it negatively**. That is because that person is **deluded**. Whether with money or without money, that person is deluded. To say that without money you are pure, there is no such thing. Ok, we shall go on.

Commentary:

Members of the Sangha who truly wish to cultivate should stay away from money.

They should add in the word, **'initially'** stay away from money.
On the other hand, without money you cannot nourish the Way, you cannot cultivate.

*Although you need money, you **should not be attached** to it.*

Ah, this part is correct; you should **not be attached** to it.

. and depend on its source, thinking all day, "Who has several million in the bank?

I'll go and beg from him. Then I can build a temple or a school or perhaps print an edition of the Tripitaka as a meritorious activity." That's just profit seeking.

You are just seeking for merits and all those things.

*While in Manchuria there was a short period during which **money and I parted company.***

*I never touched money for a good reason. Living in the temple where I lived when I left home were forty or fifty bhikshus, but sometimes as few as ten. When I first arrived at the temple, the abbot was out **begging** and none of the bhikshus knew me. "I know the abbot," I said, and they welcomed me.*

The word **'begging'** is not appropriate, it should be **'out for alms round'**.

After leaving home, I practised austerities, but not the ones you practise.

You type, translate Sutras, and meditate, but in the big rural temple where I live was a lot of outside work to be done. Sweeping the courtyard alone took an hour.

My first job was to clean the toilets, which weren't flush toilets, but pit toilets, and every day the waste had to be removed because the cultivators did not want to smell the odour.

They gave this work to me because I had just left home and had not yet cut off my attachment to smells. I did it every day and didn't mind too much.

This was referring to Master Hsuan Hua's early days' situation that he had to go through.

I got up at two in the morning to prepare the hall for services.

When it snowed I swept the walkways so that they were clear at four when everyone else got up. When the abbot returned and saw me he said, "So you have come!"

"Yes," I said, "I have." After I had formally left home, he called a meeting, wishing to elect me as manager, a position second only to the abbot.

Is the *manager* called 当家 (dāngjiā), the person who manages everything on behalf of the abbot? I think so, right?

When the abbot retires, the manager or 当家 (dāngjiā), becomes the new abbot. So everyone objected. "He has just left home," they said. "How can he possibly be manager?"

"Very well," said the abbot. "Let's go before the image of Wei Tou Bodhisattva and draw Names.".....

Do you all know who Wei Tou is? He is a **Dharma protector**, Wéi Tuó Púsà (韦陀菩萨).

...Oddly enough, they drew three times and my name came up each time.

*No one said a word because I had been elected by **Wei Tou Bodhisattva** himself.*

Later, when the abbot wanted to make me an administrator, I said, "All right, but I will not touch money. Other people must handle and count it. That was my condition."

So **administrator** is the 当家, not the manager as I had thought earlier on. As a monk, you should have this **kind of understanding** because the **rules** are meant to **train you**. In the **Theravada tradition** the monk will have a **kappiya** to manage *all the offerings and money on his behalf*. But if you have in the past, been **deceiving** people, **cheating** people or as *kappiya* you are **not honest**, then when you become a monk, you will have *kappiya* who will in turn **cheat on you, not honest** to you and all these are possible. Let us continue.

Commentary:

Unusual things happened while I held this precept.

Whenever I went to the train station I would sit and wait for someone who knew me to come and offer to buy me a ticket. If no one came I just waited, but strangely enough whenever I went to the station someone will come forward to buy me a ticket.

If you don't handle money, you are pure. If you keep even one cent, you are unclean.

Take refuge with the Sangha, which occupies the purest, highest, and most venerable Position "the honoured among the multitudes."

So this is Master Hsuan Hua's commentary. This is how he did it, which is very good. There is one part, which I need to explain to you. In the Theravada tradition when the Buddha started this *pindapata* (going for alms round) *tradition*, he did it with a *very important understanding*. There must be a **synergy** between the *lay community* who offer and the *receiver of the alms*. That's the reason why monks who **go forth** *must have this understanding too*. To be a monk, **technically**, you have to be **worthy** of *offering* or must have a **lot of virtues**. You have to have a lot of *pāramī* (perfections) from the past. If you **believe in your virtues**, in your **pāramī**, then you **can keep the precepts well** just like what Master Hsuan Hua went through because those *pāramī* will come to fruition. Then *whenever you need anything*, you will be able to receive it because this is your *pāramī* which you have cultivated before. That's why during the Buddha's time, whenever they want to go to a remote place which is very cold, chances are you won't be offered warm clothing and food. The Buddha knew hence he said you take along this disciple because he has got a lot of *pāramī*. He had **donated** and **offered a lot of warm clothing** in the past before. So even when they are there at a remote place, there will be people there to offer them warm clothing.

Then the others are food and shelter. So you must have those

pāramī. If you keep to that understanding which is the right view and you have the **faith** in your cultivation then you will be alright. Just like what happened to Ajahn Jagaro; he has been a monk of many years and he told me there were only 2 occasions where he was not able to get food and during those 2 occasions, he did not eat. The rest of the occasions, he would surely receive offerings from the lay community.

If you have **those understanding** and your *pāramī* is there and you follow the **advice** of the Buddha, which is to keep the *pātimokkha* *accordingly* then you will do well. That's why they always advise the forest monk or the *dhutaṅga* monk, to live nearby a village where you can go for *pindapata*. It should not be too far and too near because by the time you go out and come back and have your meal, you should do it before noon. Sometimes they have to leave early if it is a bit far. Then they have **to endure** the *harsh terrain, conditions* and *climate* so that they can come back before noon to eat their meal. Then only they can have time to cultivate. As they go for *pindapata*, they **also cultivate mindfulness** (daily **mindfulness**) and all those other training. These are the *pātimokkha* or monks' **training rules and precepts** that the Buddha introduced for monks to train. If you can keep to the monk's precepts, the *pātimokkha* which has 227 rules, it will train you **very well** in developing **mindfulness** - for you have to be **mindful** of so many things under the *pātimokkha*; do you understand? Then when you can be mindful over all these things, *your mindfulness will become very stable or become a part of you*. Everything that you come to experience, or encounter or come into contact, you **have to reflect** and **contemplate mindfully**. *Is this allowable? Am I worthy of the*

food? Am I keeping the *pātimokkha*? Did I **violate** any part of the *pātimokkha*? All these are *training rules*.

You have to be **constantly aware** and *with that type of training* you will **definitely** become *enlightened*. Like the Buddha said, “**Heedfulness is the path to the deathless; the heedful never dies whereas the heedless are as if dead.**” So the moment you decide **to renounce** the world whether as a monk or **not** as a monk - you have **already determined** to **train** yourself to be **mindful** and **heedful** because **renunciation is inwardly**. Then you are **destined** for enlightenment because according to the Buddha *the heedful never dies* and *Heedfulness is the path to the deathless* - the Buddha’s teaching is very clear. This is the reason why you have **to determine and aspire to cultivate** and **develop all these training; to develop** the *5 spiritual faculties* and the *essential dharma* leading to the **understanding** and **constantly work on the cultivation starting** with *Sīla*, then *Samadhi* and *Panna* which is **essentially** the cultivation of the **noble 8-fold path**. Then within the noble 8-fold path, all the **essential practices** are there; the *four foundation of mindfulness*, which include *Ānāpānasati*, *mindfulness of the 4 postures*, the *daily mindfulness* etc.

Cultivate the **right views** leading to **right thought, right speech, right action** and **right livelihood**. Then develop the **4 right efforts to constantly purify** and **improve on yourself**. Then right *Sati* and *Samadhi* will follow. That’s how the cultivation can become **beautiful** and you **can perfect it**. These are the **essential understandings** that are **not taught**. So this is the part I want you **to pay attention to**. I have added it in because this is the

understanding that I came to realize but is ***not mentioned by others.*** Now we will move on to the next part of the sutra, page 238.

Do you have any questions? You can raise your hand and I will pass the mike to you so that we can discuss it further. Since there is no question we shall move on. This is the sutra part.

Sutra (page 238):

*‘From this day forward, we call enlightenment our master and will never again take refuge with **deviant** demons or **outside** religions. We constantly enlighten ourselves by means of the Triple Jewel of our own self-nature.’*

*“Good Knowing Advisors, I exhort you all to **take refuge** with the **Triple Jewel** of your **own nature**: the Buddha, which is enlightenment, the Dharma, which is right(teaching), and the Sangha, which is pure.*

The Buddha, the Dharma and Sangha, they are the Triple Gem. What are gemstones? They are the **most precious** among the precious stones. So when you **take refuge** with the Triple Gem it means these are really precious Gems the **most precious** among the **precious stones**. That’s why they are called **gemstones**. The reason why they are so precious is because you **can only find** the **teaching** within the Triple Gem.

Take for example the first gem, which is the **Buddha** himself. Who is the Buddha? Is it the image? If it is not the image, then *who is the Buddha?* Of course you can tell me he is **not only enlightened** but also **fully** enlightened. He is the **embodiment** of his **perfection**

of **wisdom** and **virtue**. That's what the Buddha is. Those qualities, nobody can take away from him. Even by destroying his image, by abusing his name, the Buddha is never affected because that is not him. That image or rūpa is for you to **recall** to mind the 9 **great virtues** of the Buddha. That's why they are **objects** of *veneration*. They are not the Buddha. This understanding is very important. If you have this understanding, you can cultivate correctly. With this understanding your mind is different. You are not gullible like other people. You will not become **affected** or **afflicted** when someone does something to the image and you will not go and say, "*How can this guy be so disrespectful?*" Like what they called the Banyan people of Afghanistan when they destroyed the Buddha images using modern weapons. Many Buddhists around the world got **very agitated** and **very unhappy**. They said they (the Banyans) never respect our Buddha and all those things with all the big hue and cry.

Luckily when I saw the comments, at that time, on the Internet, I **wrote a very simple explanation** and after that **all quieted down**. Before that, the emails came non-stop and some people were getting very **emotional** and **unhappy** with what the Banyans were doing. Everybody was giving their very unhappy views. Then I said, "*That is the **image** and **not** the **Buddha**. The Buddha is the **embodiment** of his **perfection** of virtues and wisdom.*" And you have to understand that only the **spiritual nature** with its **perfection of wisdom and virtue is the Buddha**, not the image. The Buddha took the **wisdom path** and taught the **4 Noble Truths** which is the **essence** of his teaching.

He is the Buddha, a fully enlightened one and because of that he will

have the teaching. That's why you must **take refuge in the Buddha** because the Buddha is the **embodiment** of his **9 great virtues**, resulting from his **perfection** of *all virtues and wisdom*. Then the **Dharma** is the teaching that the Buddha proclaimed or brought forward to the world after he became the *Samma Sambuddha*. That one can really awaken you, that is the reason why it is a **true refuge**.

Then the **Sangha** are the **enlightened disciples** of the Buddha who have **already realized** the truth. That's why they will also *have the teaching* and this is **true refuge**. If you take refuge in them then you are safe because the Buddha under the *Dhammapada* verse said, "*There is no other refuge safe outside of the Triple Gem*". Only in the Triple Gems is there **refuge safe** because only in them you can find the teaching, the *4 Noble Truths*. And these *4 Noble Truths* can **liberate** your *mind* and *awaken you*. That's the reason why you have to take refuge in them. So this is a **very profound understanding**. And this part we will have to read through it because the sutra did mention this. The commentary part, we will go through afterwards and see what it says. We will now continue from page 239.

Sutra (page 239):

*"When your mind takes refuge with enlightenment, **deviant confusion** does not arise. Desire decreases, so that you know **contentment** and are able to keep away from **wealth** and from the **opposite sex**. That is called the honoured, the doubly complete. When your own mind takes refuge with what is right, there are **no deviant** views in any of our thoughts. Because*

*there are no deviant views, there is **no self, others**, arrogance, greed, love, or attachment. That is called the honoured that is apart from desire.*

When your own mind takes refuge with the pure, your self-nature is not stained by attachment to any state of defilement, desire or love. That is called the honoured among the multitudes.”

So this is the explanation of the sutra regarding the **Triple Gem**. We shall move on.

Commentary:

To lessen desire, it is not enough to be a vegetarian and to read Sutras. You must cut off all sexual desire:

If one does not cast out thoughts of lust, One will never escape the dust.

So this is Master Hsuan Hua’s explanation through his commentary. The first part is very interesting and meaningful. To lessen desire, it is **not enough** to be *just a vegetarian* and *just read sutra*. This part I think you can understand. If you claim to be a vegetarian, this is **outward form dharma**. It does not mean that if you are a vegetarian, you *are more **compassionate***. Do you know why? You can claim you are a vegetarian but if you **have not developed** the *cultivation as yet*, what difference does it make? You can claim to be a vegetarian but you have **not cultivated** the dharma and the teaching which means you are **still deluded**. So how can there be **love and compassion?** Love and compassion come from cultivation. If you cultivate until you understand, then **automatically**, you go

vegetarian – that is good because that is **based on understanding**. But if you **only hear** people say, “Hey, you better become a vegetarian for it will make you more compassionate and pure”. Then through believing, you do it *without **cultivating the understanding*** via **mindfulness** leading to the **heedfulness**; *this has not much meaning*.

What happens is that you *never get to see* your **self-delusion**, your *own evil roots*. Without cultivating the mind, *wisdom cannot arise*. You will still be what you are, meaning a *puthujjana and still deluded*. So *outward **form dharma** cultivation* or what they call *outward form level cultivation does not give understanding* for you have not moved on to cultivate the **mind dharma**. You *have not developed the **training of the mind** to develop **Samadhi** to awaken to the truth*. So the first part is useful. As per what Master Hsuan Hua had shared – ‘*to lessen desire* it is **not enough** to be just a *vegetarian and to read sutras*. You **must cut off all desire**.’ Here he also emphasized on *sexual desire* because he believed *people find it very difficult to cut off sexual desire* but the correct explanation should be - *you should cut off all craving, all desire and all attachment* in whatever form.

It’s just like what I have explained before; if there is good food, if there is condition for you to have it, you **can have it as long as** you **don’t get attached** and you **don’t develop craving** and the desire for it when there is **no condition to have it**. That understanding is very important. That’s why there must be **understanding behind contentment**. *Attachment and craving* have the **deep rooted evil root of greed** behind. When there is **no condition** for you to have,

yet you want it, then it becomes a **craving, a desire**. Then it will make you *miserable*. It afflicts you because there is a *very strong craving* to get what you want.

When you understand that **there is condition** for things to arise, then use it. Just like this form and mind, if the condition arises for you to be born into a wealthy family, to receive all these because of your *pāramī*, then use it. Rejoice in it. Also **thank** your good karma. But don't be **deluded** by it. **Don't cling** and be **attached to it**. Don't be miserable when this thing is no longer around when you don't have the condition to have them. This **non-greed** is very important. That understanding of it will **not make** you *rigid, gullible* and *deluded*. Otherwise you will become the **other extreme** like what I explain before.

If you have become enlightened, you **must not have craving or desire, right?** Have you heard of this before? There is **nothing wrong with the statement** of, 'you must not have craving, you must not have desire.' But they **interpret it differently**. To them, ***eating good food*** is a type of **craving**. ***Sleeping on nice bed*** is **craving**. But when you are **under training** you are *supposed to abstain* from *enjoying* or *indulging* in all those things because when you are **under training**, you **don't have** the *understanding yet*. *So it's better for you to abstain*. But when you have the understanding already, it's different.

When there is condition to have it, then have it but ***you must use it with understanding***. If you have the condition, (the good karma that manifests this condition) for you to have it then you can have it.

Just like during the time of the Buddha, he was invited to the palace by the king and the rich people to their home and do you think they offered him simple food? No, *they offered him very good food* and he *still partook*, but he **did not overeat**. He did not develop the **craving** for it. He **did not compare** that with those simple foods he received from people when he went for *pindapata* or alms round. So that is the *understanding behind* the teaching, **not to be attached, not to have craving or desire**.

When there is condition for things to arise, if you have the condition to receive it and to have it, then you can have it. Or you can give it out to help other people just like what my teacher did. He received a lot of offerings and I saw it happening. *Here he receives, there he gives*. Then sometimes he used to tell us, he said, “Mr. Teoh, sometimes, we have to be sensitive. If people offer, then immediately you give, they may not be happy.” See, he had the understanding. That’s why he passed them to his *kappia* first. Then later on, he would just give it to someone else. It’s because I think people complained to him before. They said, “Aiyoh, how can Phra Ajahn do this? I purposely go and buy all these good food and I offered it to him but instead he just gave it away, just like that. I should have saved my money instead.” If you have these thoughts it means you don’t understand. The *moment you have offered* and you have done it **sincerely**, it’s already a **meritorious action**. After you have offered, what they want to do with the offering is up to them. **Instead of rejoicing, you get unhappy**. See, you are **still attached** to your offering. Already offered yet you became unhappy. So what type of cultivation are you practicing? It’s just like you go for retreat, you cultivate very seriously. The

moment you are out of the retreat, your *old anger, hatred, envy, jealousy, greed and craving* start to manifest again. Then it **defeats the purpose** of that *so-called retreat or meditation training*, right?

Sometimes, they may go on a spiritual trip (or a pilgrimage) and when they come back, they are supposed to have developed some form of **spiritual understanding** and cultivation. But the moment they are back, they **go back to their old way**. Then there is **no meaning behind** all you do while **on such trips** because **you are not really cultivating**. You are just thinking about the *merits* you can get while going on such spiritual trips. The *desire for merits* is a **craving** with the *greed behind*. So behind all these actions of yours is the *evil root* of greed; greed for merits. But if you **understand** that the *principle* of cultivation is to develop the *spiritual faculty of faith* so that when you are on such trips, **your faith** (or *saddhā*) can be **strengthened**, leading to the *vīriya* (or **spiritual zeal**) for you to plant the **seed of Bodhi** which is **most important** then you will progress because after that you can **make the aspirations** to walk the *Bodhisattva way*. And diligently, day in and day out, **renew your vows** until **they become a part of you**, until you **fully understand**; and *that is real cultivation*. Just like the monks who had renounced; they undertake the *training rules to abstain* from all those things and keep the 227 monk's precepts. All these things, if you do them accordingly, *you will become ever mindful*. You will be **destined** for *enlightenment*. Cultivation is about **cultivating the heart with understanding**; **constantly purifying, renewing your understanding, your faith, your virtue, your saddhā, vīriya and sati** then **stabilize** it until it becomes **Samadhi**. Then via the **direct seeing** awaken to the **truth** which is wisdom.

When these *spiritual faculties* are **so stable** until they become **balas or unshakeable**, then they will become a part of your nature. Then you will become very different. Your meditation and cultivation will also become *completely different*. You are already **heedful throughout the day naturally** and **meditation has become part of your nature**. You *don't need to train* anymore because the **spiritual faculties will ensure** that you will have the **meditative mind** in **every moment and every instant**. That's the power of these spiritual faculties. That's why within the *37 factors of enlightenment*, the spiritual faculties are repeated. It occupies 10 out of the 37 and they are very important for progress. The *spiritual faculties will allow you to understand spiritual teaching*, will allow you to **overcome** the *5 mental hindrances*, and will make you *mindful, heedful* on its own. The **meditative mind will just manifest** like that, **no need to train, no need to do anything**. Whatever posture you are in, you are always in the meditative state. That is **real cultivation, okay?** *Now we shall move on.*

We will go through the commentary. The first part we have covered.

Commentary:

Unless you rid yourself of sexual desire ... - Should use just the word 'desire' instead of sexual desire' as it's more encompassing.you will never get out of the Triple World: the world of desire, the world of form, and the formless world.

Do you understand the meaning of these triple worlds? Yes, sensual

world, the form world and the formless world. They are your *kama loka*, *rūpa loka* and *arupa loka*. They call it the 3 worlds. The first one is world of desire or the sensual realm which is *kama loka*. Then there is the world of form which is *rūpa loka* and *Loka* is world. Finally we have the *arupa loka* which is the formless world.

....**“Contentment”** means not being greedy.

This word is very important. You must have *contentment*. If you are **contented** with life and you are **contented** with the way things are or whatever that arise then you are **at peace** because to have **contentment** is to have **wisdom**. For according to the Buddha, **contentment** is the highest **wealth**. When you *no longer need anything* else, it means you are already **wealthy**. That’s the reason why *contentment* is the highest *wealth*. **Contentment is wisdom**. Without wisdom, you cannot be contented. You will always have **craving** and **desire**. We will read on.

“Contentment” means not being greedy. Dying of poverty, dying of starvation, no matter what’s the difficulty, you are never greedy.

This part is very meaningful. When you are in this world, going through life, you will experience many things. If you don’t take care of karma, what will happen to you? Just like those who are born in less fortunate conditions, such as war zones, famine areas or under developed areas where there is not enough food, proper shelter, proper medication etc. What will happen? You have heard of people starving to death because of under-nourishment, going

through malnutrition. These are the people who are **not so fortunate** because of their **karma** *born of their past actions*. They don't have the merits and the *dana pāramī*. That's why they cannot receive any food while going through such harsh situations and they have **no choice**. You have to understand what hunger is, what famine is? All these people, sometimes they have to go without food for days. Sometimes water is also difficult to find because they are born in desert area, dry area.

We should **count our own blessings** and **develop contentment**. Because of our good karma, we are born with such favourable conditions, in such beautiful places and locations. When you look at our country, Malaysia it is considered a very blessed country; a land of abundance with a lot of opportunities *but there are still people* who are very poor and miserable. They are the ones who live **below poverty line** and it's not to say that these people don't receive aids but sometimes because of karma, they *don't have the conditions* to receive them - **not until** when *people highlight* their conditions. Only after the newspaper, the press, the media or whatsapp highlight them, do they receive aids and help or something can be done. Malaysia is considered a blessed country, blessed with lots of wealth, resources, hardworking and talented people. So we should have this **contentment** and **count our blessings** and develop the **joy** when compared to those who are **less fortunate**. We are already blessed. We not only have all those basic needs of life, like food and shelter, etc. We also have our *parents to raise us and provide for us*. We have *good conditions for education*. And when we grew up and become **financially successful**, we have *good family units, good children and good relationship with people and our loved ones*. You

cannot take all these for granted because these come about *because of your **good karmic inheritance and conditions***; from the way you understand life and the way you have lived your life basing on that understanding.

This life you can have all these blessing is because in the previous *sāsana* you have also developed a lot of **wholesomeness and goodness** just like in this life. The question to ponder is what will happen when the *sāsana* is no more? Have you all contemplated and reflected into this matter? What will happen? That's why you have to have this clear understanding to make the **appropriate affirmation**. With this condition, you should bring forth the **deep clear understanding** and **resolve** to **vow** and make the **aspiration** so that **life after life** whenever you come (whether there is *sāsana* or no *sāsana*), your nature will come with the **bodhi mind planted**, with the *bodhi seed planted* and **properly nurtured** with **understanding**. It will just manifest. Then you will know what to do. You will never **get lost** again and you **will never** have to go through **the cycle of ups and downs**, the *karmic cycle*. Then **your progress** will be *all the way up based on right view and right understanding*; based on all the **beautiful conditions** that you have planted. Then even without the Buddha *sāsana*, you will know how to come, how to cultivate and develop all these. Then when the next *sāsana* arise, your *pāramī* will bring forth the causes and conditions for you to manifest as **beautiful beings** to *take across other beings*, just like what happens when other great beings take you across.

Unless you have this understanding and determination to do all these, your **future cannot be secured**. Chances are during the dark

ages (dharma-ending ages), your **karmic nature** may fall again, then this cycle of ups and down will continue for very long. Then you will have to wait till the next *sāsana* - provided this *sāsana* you have done something. But for most of you, most likely you all may have your **past cultivation** and this *sāsana's window can help* you all achieve quite a lot of wholesomeness and good progress. What I want to advise is '**don't waste this window** of opportunity.' Make your determination now so that in future whether there is *sāsana* or no *sāsana*, your **nature is beautiful**. And **this is what my nature wants to share with the beings** of this **civilization** so that you can have this **understanding** and you can **become beautiful too**. Okay, we shall continue.

"Separate from wealth and beauty." Do you see how clearly it says that you should not covet wealth, or the opposite sex, or fame?

This is Master Hsuan Hua's explanation. He said 'separate from wealth and beauty' means don't get involved. Maybe as a monk, yes but if you live a life of a layperson, you have to understand that the world is still the world. What they call **wealth or money is not evil**. Even beauty and good food, you can experience it. You can live life to the fullest **to experience the pristine beauty and wonders of life**. You can have them all **if you have the understanding and the condition**. You don't have to separate from it. It's just like money – it is **not the source of all evil**. Technology is also **not** the source of all evil. All these are part of nature's condition and evolution. That's why the Heart Sutra said that when you realize **true emptiness**, life can **become wonderful**, life can become

meaningful and beautiful and all these are possible. So what you have read here is Master Hsuan Hua's own commentary because his advice is based on his own understanding. We shall read on:

.....That is to be doubly complete, perfect in blessings and wisdom.

His focus is on **cultivation** which is *very good* but that part 'to separate from all things', it's just the initial stage *when you are under training*. But the moment you have awakened, you can transcend **duality** and you will **not be deceived** by it, **not be deluded** by it. Then you **can live in the world, like the lotus above the muddy lotus pond**. It stands above but it is **still connected** to the pond. That's why it can rise *above and beyond*. It will **not be deceived or deluded by it** nor attach or cling on to it anymore. But the world is still the world. Condition arising dharma still exists within the condition world. That's why **you must have the wisdom of both sides**. Then *you can live life beautifully*.

We have this 'form and mind', which is subject to karma. This 'form and mind' of yours which is within the **conditioned** world *is connected* to your **nature**. If you **have connected** and **liberated** your **mind via meditation** it means you have *developed the wisdom* and chances are you have developed it via your past cultivation and inheritance. Then when you come, with this understanding and the vows, it will connect you to **your nature pretty fast**. Then this wisdom will unfold and when this wisdom is connected to the 'form and mind', it is **no longer deluded** and **deceived**. Then the **user of this form and mind becomes beautiful**.

That's how you can understand life. That's how it will enable you **to live life to the fullest** and that is the **true dharma** - not to be one-sided, not to just avoid all these things. **Avoiding evil** is correct. **Money**, as I had said is *not evil*. Wealth is **not evil**. It's only evil when the *user of it is evil*. So that part you have to understand. Avoiding all evil means avoiding all evil actions but not the thing you call money and wealth. There is no definition of it as evil because **it depends on the user**, just like the 'form and mind'. How can you say all 'form and mind' are deluded? If the wisdom is *connected to it*, then the '**form and mind**' is **enlightened** but *it's not you*. That's why you will know how to use it, for the good of the many and to be a blessing to all. You cannot just by a stroke of a pen say all 'form and mind' are deluded. There is no such thing. Like our Sister Keat Hoon at our recent Cameron Highlands retreat said, "Isn't it human nature to be deluded?" When I heard her said that, I understand because she was approaching it from a **layperson's view-point**. It's nothing to do with human nature; it's a **human condition**. When there is *avijjā* (ignorance) you will become like that but to her it's like human nature, or second nature. No! That's why, there is such a thing as an enlightened 'form and mind', an enlightened being. We shall go on.

Commentary:

"States of defilement" here refers to all social and political situations. You should not be moulded by the society, but rather transform it. Teach living beings; do not be taught by them.

This one is true when you have the wisdom, when you are already enlightened. But when you are also deluded and you teach human beings, you will get yourself into trouble.

Once, when I noticed that one of my students had been talking on the phone for over an hour, I asked her what she was doing. "I'm trying to convert my boyfriend to Buddhism," she said.

Wow, this one is a very good answer, a very classical one. Then Master Hsuan Hua replied.

"Really? What is he now?" "He's a Catholic," she said.

"Be careful and make sure he doesn't convert you." I said. "His belief in Catholicism is firm.

Take care that he doesn't take you across!"

Sure enough, not long afterward she ran off. Now what she believes, whether she saved others or was saved by them, is unknown.

So this is just Master Hsuan Hua's example.

The non-defilement of the self-nature is called "the honoured among the multitudes." Living beings are all defiled. If you wish to be an exceptional individual, you must leave desire behind. To separate yourself from desire is to be a great hero and true student of the Buddha dharma. Unless you correct your faults, what little Buddha dharma you do know is useless.

Correcting your faults is **constantly acknowledging** your **delusion**,

your **evil roots of greed, hatred and delusion**. Okay, we have finished the commentary part. Do you have any questions? Is there anything that you would like me to clarify? We can stop here for today at page 240. Today's session is quite easy to understand. It's just about **refuge taking** and about **cultivation** and all those related things. The only thing you **have to pay attention to** is the **finer points of cultivation**. Just raise your hand if you have any questions? Yes, Sister Mindy?

Sister Mindy: Brother Teoh, my question is not related to today's teaching. Actually I was listening to your dharma recording. In one of your talks on consciousness (the conscious and the sub-conscious mind) - do we need to know that at our current level of cultivation?

Bro. Teoh: Later on in your cultivation you will go through a transformation stage where your **mindfulness** or *awareness* will become **so stable** that you can have that *state of awareness* within your *nature* that is **able to be aware** of your *subconscious and unconscious mind states even while you are sleeping*. If you can do that you are already **very good**; you would have **progressed very far** in your **cultivation**. But don't worry about that because this ability is **not** the **normal** training for **normal** people. To reach that ability, you must have *a very unique and very profound and deep past cultivation*. Then *only can you have such ability*. Then during this life when you come, you will **connect** to your **true nature** and **inherit** your **past cultivation early** thus *enabling you* to have such ability **after stabilizing** your understanding. Then your **mundane mind** will **collapse** and your **true nature will shine forth**. Then your **ability to be aware becomes very stable and very natural**. Only

those types of beings can be aware of the subconscious and the unconscious creations from moment to moment.

But for normal living being, maybe you ***can maintain some form of mindfulness and understanding too***. You can recall or recollect what you go through while you are asleep. You may not have the ***ability to be aware inside*** and you ***cannot follow*** your *subconscious release* (via dream states etc.) because you don't have the ***stability of the true mind*** to go inside. But you can recall through memory. As you go through the ***dream state***, the ***subconscious is released*** and you can recall some of them. Then you will come to understand why this type of dream arises? Why not other type of dreams? Sometimes the images that come out ***don't seem to be connected*** at all. Then very fast it transforms, transforms and transforms. You will come to know and to understand that these are the ***subconscious releases*** and some of the ***unconscious releases because of attachment***. When you reach the stage whereby you get very little of all these *subconscious and the unconscious releases*, it will become more and more clear to you because by then ***your sleep and all those releases*** will become ***like very fine and very light***. It's like you don't really have any *movement inside* but then once a while you can still go into the ***unconscious*** or the ***subconscious mind states***. Then within that there are these releases and you will see them arising as dream states because you have some form of memory when they arise. When they arise and you reflect back, you will come to know what they are. Then you will be able to check and come to realize that they are due to your ***attachment in daily life***. These are the ***subtle attachments*** that are still there. Not rooted out as yet.

When this subtle one also goes, then finally it will be like **normal again, like nothing inside**. Then *everything is like very still, nothing and no movement at all*. It's just like the calm sea, no wave, nothing. Then as you **go deeper into your cultivation**, you will start **to experience the stillness, the silence**. It's like in the deeper part of the ocean or the deeper part of the lake where the surface wave or, even the *very calm surface waves also no more* because these **surface waves** even though **relatively calm and mild**, still have their movements. But as you go deeper there is no movement at all, no activity at all. So stability of mindfulness, awareness and the **true mind** is more or less the same. When the **superficial mind** is no more (especially after the **mundane mind has collapsed**), then all these *gross images and mind states will cease*. Then even in **your daily life, there is no more of this mundane mind creating mental activities and thinking** - absolutely nothing. It's just the **clear nature shining forth**. All these, *you will come to experience them*, as you go through the cultivation. It may take some time, so don't worry. As it happens, as it transforms, **your nature will know, your 'form and mind' will also know**. Okay, *Sadhu* for the very good question. Let us rejoice. *Sadhu! Sadhu! Sadhu!* (Note: She was listening to an earlier recording hence the question.)

Last Thursday's talk was also very good because there were two new people and I explained the **5 mental hindrances** and the **5 spiritual faculties** differently (via a different approach). Then somebody asked a question and I answered her with a question: "Do you know the differences between – 'you are **conscious of life but you are not aware of life**'? "

Human beings are conscious of life but they are **not aware** within the moment, hence they are **not aware of life**. To be **conscious and to be aware** are **2 totally different things**. The moment you wake up, you are *already conscious*, right? You are **conscious** of your environment, your body etc. You are conscious of many things but **you are not aware within**. You are **conscious with heedless thinking**. You are usually **too busy thinking, planning** and most of the *times*, **worrying about life** so much so, you **never really live life**. You are **never with the moment, with silence inner awareness to experience** the *reality of the moment*; the **great pristine, beauty and wonders of life** within the *moment*. Your **mind just cannot be quiet, cannot be silent**. The *moment you wake up*, you **start to think**, you **start to recall** what you are supposed to do. Sometimes, **your tactile consciousness and other types of sense door consciousness** will **trigger off** the mental activity and thinking. And most of the time, you are **not aware** at all. To **cultivate is** to be **heedful, - constantly meditative and ever mindful**. That's why this **mindfulness has to be very stable. Not until you can develop that stability of mindfulness, you have yet to develop the real meditation**.

All those **formal meditation** you do - whether while in *a retreat or at any meditation way places*, they are mostly just **conditioned mind states** that **make you calm, make you more peaceful, let you experience** some **fantastic meditative** mind states or *manifestations of mind*. Most people don't even get to experience that. Most people in fact *experience a lot of pain*, a lot of what you call **mental suffering**. It's like **a torture** to them. They **force themselves to sit**

through all the discomfort, pain and numbness, the itchiness and the restlessness of mind; with all the mental hindrances. Yet they dare not tell people. Sometimes they try not to even move. Even when they want to release the gas or fart, they are **also very embarrassed** and **scared**. *All these are happening because they don't know **what meditation is?*** They think everybody sits, so they must also sit. Everybody doesn't talk, doesn't move, **they must also not talk and not move.** But inside the mind, **psychologically** there are a *lot of negativities, a lot of unhappiness, and a lot of suffering.*

Then sometimes you force yourself to sit through or you go into concentration or one-pointedness of mind via methods and techniques, then you *will experience some form of peace and calmness.* Then the *pain seems to go off for a while.* Then you **thought you have progressed,** you thought you were *very good* and you tried to talk about it, "Wah, I experienced the formless mind because my body is missing; I cannot feel my body." Let's say you get to experience all these, so what? **Does it give you any understanding or wisdom?** Does it *allow you to see your defilements to understand the essential dharma? Have you transformed?* Chances are you do not have any of these. Even the **enlightenment factor** is also not there, the **right view** is also not there. *What meditation is, you also don't understand.* You *don't even know what sati is?* You also don't understand the spiritual faculties. All these you also don't understand and yet you said you meditate. That's why if you do all these **without understanding,** you **become gullible** and **it's very difficult for you to progress.** That's the reason why I have been emphasizing and sharing with you all for the **past few months** - the **importance of having a clear**

understanding of what is the meditation as taught by the Buddha?
You ***have to listen*** to it ***attentively*** and ***then write it out*** so that you are more ***focus*** when it comes to developing the ***meditation*** with ***understanding***. Then you ***make sure you understand all these*** and ***put them into practice*** with ***understanding***.

Phase one of the ***dharma cultivation*** is just ***to understand*** the teaching via ***Pariyatti***, which is the ***learning of the teaching***. Then when ***you have developed*** the ***clear understanding***, you ***put it into practice***. That is phase two, ***Paṭipatti***. Unless you understand it very clearly, it's very difficult for you to put into practice. Then you will not know or understand ***what you are doing in the name of meditation*** because you have ***become gullible*** and you ***think by doing*** all these ***is meditation*** – i.e. by going to retreat, sit there, don't move or do the noting, walking, sitting and bowing, etc.

As long as you ***don't have clear understanding***, ***technically***, you are ***actually wasting*** your ***time*** because the ***real cultivation*** when you do with ***proper understanding***, will lead to ***very fast progress***. You will understand it ***very beautifully*** and you will have ***a lot of joy*** and when your ***5 spiritual faculties*** had ***stabilized***, you will come to understand that the ***whole of meditation*** is not what you think, it is completely different, - leading you to the ***daily mindfulness cultivation***. When you start to see ***all those things clearly*** and ***awaken to the characteristics of nature***, then you will come to a ***clear understanding*** that ***all these are not what the books say or what people tell you earlier on***.

It is through ***your own self-cultivation, self-realization*** that brings

forth the **understanding** and that is the **real cultivation**; which is just to develop the **silent mind**, which is the **meditative mind in sati or awareness leading to the Samadhi to insight into phenomena (Vipassanā insight) via the cultivation of the four foundations of mindfulness**. You have to go through and experience them all. Only then can you **understand the nature** of the **true mind**, the **meditative mind**, and how **meditation using this true mind can translate into wisdom and awakening** via the **direct seeing**. This is the **summary part** of the cultivation and hopefully with this understanding, more and more **kalyāṇamittas can develop the cultivation** with **clear understanding**.

You all have *improved a lot* in the actual sense of the word. But in the **spiritual sense** of the word, **true progress** demands **deeper understanding** which is beyond just the **superficial essential dharma understanding**. You all *may see the importance of this teaching* and **the danger of not cultivating according to this understanding** but the **difficult part** is to put into practice, all those **essential dharma** like the **4 right efforts**, the **4 foundations of mindfulness**, the **training of the mind to develop the 5 spiritual faculties** until they become **very stable**, until you are **mindful most of the time throughout the day is the difficult part**. The moment you start to do that, you will **progress very fast** and you will *become very different*.

Even the **noble 8-fold path cultivation** will become different. You will start to **reflect** and **contemplate** via the **first turning** and the **second turning** of the first path factor, which is **right view** (the three types of right views). After that you put them into practice. Then all

the essential dharma will **become very clear** and **meaningful** to you.

Then with the **initial understanding** of the teaching of **what constitutes evil**, **how to avoid evil**, and **how to develop the mindfulness to be aware of evil**, you can then *reflect and contemplate deeper* into what actually *constitutes evil*, especially the **subtle evil** that you are **unable to see** before this via the **direct seeing** and how your **5 mental aggregates of 'form and mind'** actually arise and pass away following the **Law of Dependent Origination**. That is **true meditation**. That is the one you need to go in and develop. That understanding, no one can teach you. Just like what the Buddha said, 'he can only show you the way and **you have to walk the path yourself**.'

You have to cultivate yourself. You have to realize and awaken yourself. Then the 3rd right effort, is to cultivate the **right thought, right speech, right action** which are still not in you. Develop the **understanding** of *what constitutes right thought, right speech and right action*. Then how you can arise that **right effort** to do it so that it can **become a living reality – part of your character and personality**; so that *when you live life*, when you **communicate** with people, when you *arise your thoughts*, when you **develop pure actions** in life, you **have this understanding** and you have the **embodiment** of all these understandings then your right effort to cultivate them can really **materialize** until they *become a part of your nature*, until *automatically* you become like that. You are **incapable of evil**, and then *everything you do is with understanding, wisdom, wholesomeness, virtue, contentment and respect*. All these have become your **second nature**. These are the virtues that you

have developed and you understand that it is **not worthwhile** to violate all these nature's laws. Then finally the 4th and last right effort is **to refine upon and perfect** what you have already **developed**. That is the perfection of virtues, leading finally to the perfection of the 10 *pāramitās* to become a *sammā Sambuddha*. That one, even *bodhisattvas* also have to do, do for very long because you have **to refine upon and perfect them**. Like *dana pāramī*, you have to perfect it. Then you need wisdom to perfect it, the 3 stages. Then you need to perfect the *pāramitā* of *mettā* or love, then that of *vīriya* and the rest like *khanti* (patience), *adhiṭṭhāna* (self-determination or affirmation) and so forth.

There are a lot more you can develop *when you have taken* the ***Bodhisattva's vow***. The **4 basic vows of the Bodhisattva** can help you perfect all these things. You will have the **contentment** and all the other virtues. The first vow is to enable you to develop *love and compassion*. The second vow is to help you develop **renunciation** and **contentment**. Your *ability to endure and severe all suffering* means you have *renunciation and contentment*. To have *renunciation* is to have *wisdom*. To have *contentment* is to have wisdom. Then after that, the 3rd basic vow leads to the perfection of wisdom via realizing and penetrating all dharma. After that, your cultivation will become very different. Then the 4th basic vow can be **fulfilled via** your ability **to renounce samsara** at the 4th stage of the *Bodhi* mind development or Bodhisattva hood training. Then when you have perfected the 4th stage, you will realize the 5th stage, which is the **consummate stage**, which means you have **perfected the 10 pāramitās**. Then Buddha hood can be realized which means you can have the same nature as the other *sammā Sambuddha*. We

will stop here and you can have your **30 minutes** of meditation.

{Ting! X3...} Okay, for those who still want to meditate, you can continue. For those who have enough, you may slowly and mindfully come out of the meditation. Try to maintain *whatever inner peace, inner calmness and inner mindfulness* that you have developed for as long as you can. These are the mind states that you have trained. You **need to use these trained mind** states which are your spiritual faculties, especially *sati* (mindfulness), to cultivate *your daily mindfulness*. To be able to be in this state of awareness via the **silent mind** in *sati* **throughout the day** most of the time (whenever *you are awake*) is a **very important aspect** of the **daily mindfulness** training.

3.2.2. Meditation Reporting and Q&A

Now we will have the meditation reporting session. You can raise your hand to ask any meditation question or report your meditation and I will help you to develop the understanding.

Sister Mindy: Brother Teoh, I understand that during my daily practice, I just need to silent my mind.

Brother Teoh: Yes, just **relax**; maintain **silence** then just **aware** and let whatever happens arises. The **awareness** will understand.

Sister Mindy: How can I contemplate more on the 12 links of the law of dependent origination?

Brother Teoh: You should come out of the formal meditation then only you do the contemplation. You don't contemplate during the meditation. When you are doing the meditation, if you try to contemplate, you will cause the thought to arise. This is where a lot of cultivators fail to understand. When you are meditating, you just relax and maintain silence. Unless you can develop the **stability of silence** until it is *so stable and clear* - such that when something happens, you can reflect on it and contemplate on it to develop the understanding. But while you are in the **formal meditation**, *don't do it*. When you do it, *you are not in the meditative state* anymore because that is the **active mode** of contemplation. That one you should only do when you are **out of the formal** meditation.

Let's say you go for a walking meditation; just **relax** and be in **silent awareness**. Then you stop somewhere, like while in the Cameron Highlands retreat; you can either walk down towards the staircase or go out to the *monastery's vicinity*. You can also walk up to the hilltop or any place that **is quiet** and you *can just look at nature*. Then whatever that arises from your nature, just reflect and contemplate. If you want to go through the 4 noble truths; the first noble truth, the first turning, you contemplate and reflect. Then sometimes you can also **sit on a bench** somewhere **quiet**, and during that time you *can silent your mind and just contemplate*. When you **contemplate**, *you just throw the inquiry out* - whatever you want to understand like the first noble truth of *dukkha*. Why did the Buddha say birth, old age, sickness and death are suffering? Separation from love ones, prized possessions and all the things we hold on to dearly is suffering? To be with people whom we don't

like is suffering? When we can't get what we want, when things don't go our way, when our expectations in life are not met, also lead to suffering. Then in short, the *final summary, etc.* - *all these you can reflect and contemplate.*

It depends on which one you choose, like birth. Why did the Buddha say birth is suffering? Then you can recall to mind, via *mindfully recollecting* what the birth process is like? You cannot recall your own birth because you were too young. Then as a mother you can recall how you gave birth to your child. Then before you gave birth, what other things you experienced during the conceiving and confinement stages? Then as you reflect and contemplate, these reflection and contemplation will give rise to an understanding. They call this the ***recollection phase.***

As you recollect, you mindfully go through the birth process. Then all of a sudden, you can recall during that time, you had a lot of pain, morning sickness, vomiting and other side effects of pregnancy. Then sometimes, you have to see the doctor, you have to go for follow-up. As the pregnancy develops, as the baby or the foetus grows, it starts to kick you and give you a lot of other discomfort. Your movement becomes affected as the baby grows, as your womb develops and expands, etc. You recollect all the stages leading to the birth itself. Whatever you can recollect via memory, can help you develop the understanding. Then suddenly you will understand: 'no wonder the Buddha said that birth is suffering because there is so much suffering that comes with birth.'

After the baby is born, the baby will experience old age, sickness and death and this will lead to suffering. This is the reality; this is the dharma. Then as the baby is born, there is attachment to it: the mother, the parents, the grandparents, and those who have relationship with the child. Then if anything were to happen to the child, the parents and their loved ones will worry for them, and that **is attachment leading to suffering**. Then when there are **complications** during **birth**, it will **lead to more suffering**. All these, **you will start to understand**, then you will reflect **deeper** and **further** on why the Buddha said 'this suffering is to be understood under the **second turning of the first noble truth**.' The **1st turning** of the first noble truth is just the **proclamation of truth** by the Buddha then the **2nd turning inquiry** should be **why the Buddha said - birth is suffering?** If you have gone through these reflection and contemplation, you will understand why. If you **don't reflect** and **contemplate** you **cannot understand** the birth process, how it brings about suffering. Then **why suffering is to be understood**, you have to **inquire deeply**; why the Buddha said that. If you don't understand what suffering is, it means **when you are caught in suffering you still don't know that is suffering** because you **cannot** see the **attachment**. You cannot see how the outcome of birth leads to all these sufferings. As you **reflect and contemplate** via the **second turning**, you will develop the **understanding to confirm what the Buddha said is very true**. **Birth is indeed suffering** because birth is part of the human condition for the physical form goes the way of nature. You will then come to understand another reality: that these birth, old age, sickness and death are the realities of life and existence. And each and every living being has to **experience** and **confront** all these realities when the time comes, if you live long

enough. If you have the conditions to confront them and if you confront them **without wisdom**, you will **attach**, you will **cling**, you will **grasp**, and you will *develop the suffering: fear, worry and anxiety* and then you will understand **how the mind gets itself entangled**.

The cause of suffering is attachment, clinging, grasping, thinking that this child really belongs to you, the *atta* (ego) etc. In reality it's only a form and mind like yours. The form goes the way of nature and is made up of the 4 elements. The 4 elements are the physical element called **Pathavi** (or solidity, the hardness and the softness of the form) then the wind element, **Vāyo**, (like our breath, our pulse of life, and whatever vibration that is within our body); then you have the heat element, which is **Tejo**. Then you have the water element **Apo**. Then you realize that these 4 elements are part of nature and their states will fluctuate and they are interchangeable.

When you have excessive heat, you will have fever and you will have problems. When you have too little heat, you will be affected by the weather condition, the external factor because of the climate. When the weather is very cold, very chilly, it will cause your temperature to drop and you will feel the instability within that element. This will lead to suffering in the form and the consciousness that is trapped inside will experience all these. Then without the consciousness, without attachment, you will realize that the elements just go the way of nature.

That's why when you cultivate *kayanupassana's last category of practice* which is the **9 stages of cemetery decomposition** - when

the form is devoid of consciousness or when the consciousness has come out then this body's 4 elements (which *go the way of nature*), it will *decay*. Then there is no more feeling, no more perception, no more activity of mind or mental states and no more consciousness. That's why you **cannot feel anymore**. There is **no suffering** because there is no more mind to develop the **attachment** and the **suffering**. You will understand without the mind, there is nothing. Then you move onto the understanding of the mind. You can then check: Is **feeling** really me? Are **perceptions** really me? Are the **mental states** of mind, *mental activities* or whatever **saṅkhāra** that arise really me? Because when they arise and pass away did you die; this nature never dies, so how can they be you? They arise and pass away because they are *conditioned arising dharma* hence **impermanent** and *not you*.

If you *attach and cling* to **feelings**, to **perception**, to **mental state**, **views**, **opinions** and your **conditioning**, *you will suffer*. Even when you are attached to *consciousness* you will also suffer. Then you will come to realize that the final summary as proclaimed by the Buddha is so true. *It's attachment that conditions suffering*. So this part is on **contemplation**. Then you can move into the other realities of the 1st Noble Truth, the second noble truth, third noble truth, and the fourth noble truth. Again you can go for the first turning, second turning, which is the **contemplation** and the third turning, which is the **meditation** because when you really meditate, the wisdom that arises is *bhāvanā-maya panna*; wisdom borne of *bhāvanā*, which is the **meditative training** or the **meditation** itself. It doesn't involve the thought or any contemplation. It's just the **silent mind** that is **aware**. *It will awaken to the universal*

characteristics of all phenomena. That's why you must be aware of the 4 foundations of mindfulness. The first foundation is *kāyānupassanā* where you first train your mind in **ānāpānasati** to develop **sati** then after that you are ready to move on to cultivate the mindfulness of the 4 bodily postures followed by the *mindfulness of all your movements in the present moment* and that is the **daily mindfulness** or **mindfulness and clear comprehension cultivation**. When you develop this, you are *cultivating the third turning*. You will **insight** into phenomena, the 3 *universal characteristics of impermanence, suffering state and non-self or empty nature*.

When you have that **initial understanding**, then you will start to have an understanding of why Buddha said that the **5 aggregates of form and mind are impermanent** leading to suffering. Hence, **non-self, empty, not me!** That is the *beginning of the cultivation of no mark, no mark of a self. If you don't even exist, how can others exist? That's why no mark of others, no mark of your loved ones and all those things. Then there is no reality, no mark of a life. Everything is dependent originating; condition arising and just a causal phenomena - a phenomenal world of consciousness: mind-made are they, hence no reality.* Then when this **understanding** deepens as you **silent your mind to awaken** to their *universal characteristics* you will become different. After that you can reflect and contemplate until your understanding becomes very clear and stable. Then in the *midst of your daily life*, as you *continue to be silent, aware and mindful*; all of a sudden one day, you will come upon **an insight** that will allow you to understand **deeply and clearly** the 3 universal characteristics. That is all of a sudden, you will

awaken to these 3 universal characteristics because everything is just the way it is.

All phenomena be they **physical, mental** or **nature's phenomena, exhibit these characteristics**. Then you will start to understand that **truth is everywhere - in the midst of life and nature, the universal characteristics of impermanence, suffering and non-self or empty nature characteristics are everywhere**. This is the **truth, the reality** - which is **everywhere in the midst of life and nature**. **Why can't you see? For those who see, the enlightened ones, they always see**. Ah, that is the **final awakening** leading to **liberation of mind from all bondage**.

When you have that **understanding** after the awakening, it means your **mindfulness is already very stable**. Then in the midst of life and nature, the characteristics of nature are everywhere, **so clear, so vivid, and so beautiful**. And that will allow you to further develop the **contemplative wisdom** until this **understanding** becomes **very stable**. Then there is **no more doubt**. That's how **you liberate your mind**. When there is **no more doubt**, you would have **at least** cleared the **first stage of sainthood**, which means **the first 3 fetters** that **bind living beings to this world are already severed**. There are a total of 10 fetters.

The first one is **self-delusion**. The second is **rites and rituals**; you **won't believe** in all these anymore because you have **understood** that there is **no permanent unchanging entity** within the form and mind that we can call, **"this is 'me', this is 'I', and therefore all these can be mine"**. Then even if people were to tell you, "After you die,

you will become what and what....” You will know that there is **no such thing** because this is only a ‘*form and mind*’, hence **not me** and **no reality**. This form and mind is **never me** because there is no more **self-delusion**. You won’t **believe in rites and rituals** and you will not be **gullible anymore**. The third **fetter** is your **faith in the teaching, the Triple Gem, the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha**; it will become **unshakeable** because by then the understanding is already so clear. **Nature’s laws, the existential law** and all of the **5 universal orders** will also become very clear to you. That’s why you will have **no more doubt and your faith will be unshakeable**.

And you will come to understand that *the Triple Gem with the teachings of the 4 Noble Truths* is the **secret of life**. You will understand them; you will have **no more doubt** in this teaching because **it’s all about truth, the 4 Noble Truths**. These 4 Noble Truths is a **universal truth** because the *moment you understand them, you can become enlightened*. It’s like the secret of life. When you **understand the secret of life, you know how to live life**, and then you are **not deluded or deceived** by the *form and mind* anymore because you know this is **not you** but only a *karmically conditioned form and mind* or ‘vehicle and tool’ for you to come to this existential world.

Likewise, all other living beings are the same. For *everything is dependent originating, conditioned arising and a causal phenomenon*. All these will become **very clear** to you. So when you meditate during *formal meditation, don’t contemplate* but when you **come out of it**, you can contemplate. Sometimes, like I said, if within that silent formal meditation, all of a sudden something

happen, then you can decide to come out of it to reflect and contemplate on it. If that is the case, even while in the **meditative state**, you can **also reflect and contemplate** provided you *can do it mindfully*, then no problem. But you have to be **very clear** about the **conscious decision** that you have made and you can be mindful of what you are doing. If you decide to contemplate, then you are not meditating; you reflect and contemplate to develop a deeper understanding of what has happened. But the *things you want to contemplate* must be from the **4 Noble Truths** because contemplation is about the 2nd turning of the **first, second, third or fourth** noble truth. These are the cultivation processes. So don't worry.

When you are in the **formal meditation**, just **relax**, be **silent** and maintain **awareness** of body and mind. *Formal meditation is to train the heedless thinking mind until it is very quiet to realize the silent mind*, then to make it **very stable**. Then when you come out of it, all these movements, your mindfulness, your awareness is like **magnified**. The slightest movement is like **magnified** into a very big movement. Even the **subtle breathing** will become **very clear** to you. When your mindfulness has become very stable and when it has become a part of you, it means your mind has **entered sati**, your mind is **already in sati**. This **stability of mindfulness** donates that your 3rd **spiritual faculty of sati** has been stabilized and established. And when the mind is in *sati*, *even when you come out of the formal meditation, that mind is always aware* of all the *movements and activities*. It's **very clear**. Then all these movements will be like magnified. Even when you sit, the **subtle breathing** and **movements** are like magnified. You are **very calm, peaceful** and **very still**

because your *passaddhi* (*tranquillity of mind*) is already established and always there.

As you come out of the meditation and go into life, you will come to **realize** that every moment of hearing you are in *sati*. Every contact, the moment of smell, taste, tactile you are **very mindful** and always in *sati*. Then every moment of seeing, the mind is in *sati*. That's why you **can see things as they are**. The **specific phenomena awareness** and the **spacious awareness without a center**, has become a part of your nature because of that stability of mindfulness. When your mind is in *sati*, everything you do in life you are **aware**. So **you don't** have to learn to be aware. You only need to train until it is **very stable** and *until that stability has become part of your nature*, which means *mindfulness has been developed and stabilized until your mind has entered sati*.

When your mind enters *sati*, technically, you no longer **need an object of meditation**. You don't need to train this mind anymore because this mind is **already trained**. It's just like playing badminton, or learning cooking or running, swimming or any game you are good at; if you have trained until you are **so skilful**, you **don't need** to train anymore because it has already become **a part of you** and you just *know how to execute it* and it's always **spontaneous, without** thought. It has become **so graceful, so easy**, just like the case of badminton; you will know how to return the shot naturally. The only thing lacking is whether you have the stamina to do it or not. But with mindfulness it doesn't need that much stamina. *The moment you are silent without thought you are already mindful*. And mindfulness when developed continuously

will become power. It has the ability to *develop wisdom and understanding*. And mindfulness will develop a very *strong mind state* that is *very different* because *this mind is just aware*. It can ***insight into phenomena*** and ***understand*** many things. It *can see things as they are*. It can give rise to wisdom.

Mindfulness by itself has nothing inside there. It's just an *awareness state* that arises when the **mundane mind** doesn't stir, when there is **no interference** from the **thought process**. So all these, as you go through **your cultivation**, you **will start to understand**. But to understand until that ***stability where you can share and teach*** is **not easy**. It will take a while. So don't worry. Initially, after you **have connected** and **awakened**, it's like *you still don't know anything*. Then you may *try to remember what you have understood*. But don't do that, don't try to remember anything. The moment you are awakened, the ***understanding is already there, connected*** to the form and mind. It **won't disappear** unless the form and mind die. When it's there, every time you encounter something, the ***understanding will manifest***. It will know what to do. It's ***not knowledge anymore***. It's **not** from **memory**. It just understands by itself. Okay? *Sadhu* to you for arising such good conditions for me ***to share all these rather beautiful teaching***. Does anybody else want to report your meditation so that I can advise you on how to develop it further? Where is Brother Chin How? Has he gone back? He texted me a question from ***Sister Sandra Chan*** of Singapore and Sandra would like her question answered in the class.

Sister Sandra: Bro. Teoh, I have challenges like everyone else. I still have a lot of *āsava* and *saṅkhāra*. Your book, "Knowing and seeing"

has helped to point out the way for me to overcome them. The mundane mind is **very active** especially in my **workplace** and **during meetings**. When the *mind is silent it can see the 3 characteristics of nature*.

Brother Teoh: She quoted what I said, “All is impermanent. More importantly is to take care of karma at all times.” Then she said, “It’s easy to say but to cultivate there are challenges.” See this is what I mean. You **may think you know** but *cultivation is different*.

Phase 1 of dharma is **Pariyatti** which is the **understanding** of the **essential teaching**. After you have understood the teaching, you **must put it into practice** under phase 2 of dharma which is **Paṭipatti**. You know you have to avoid evil and do good but how to avoid all evil? You have to **keep the precepts**. *Are you doing it? How to keep the precepts?* You must understand **what constitutes** precepts? *Why do you keep these precepts? Then what constitutes evil?* Those **who violates** the precepts they have the **evil roots**. That’s why you have to *reflect on them and when you understand them*, then only you **can go deep into the understanding of the essential dharma** of what constitutes evil, the 3 evil roots etc. You have to expand on it. Then only can you **develop the mindfulness** to do it. All these **need understanding** and **cultivation** and *cultivation or meditation needs to be done with understanding*. I came to realize, a lot of cultivators never go into (or reflect and contemplate on) all these. So Sandra knew these are challenges. Then she continued.

Sister Sandra: I am tasked to manage a staff who **has not** been performing in his job. My management wants me to axe him but it

is very difficult for me to do so. I have given tasks for the staff to do but he failed to do so. He still goes back to his old ways even though he has been put on **performance improvement** programme.

Brother Teoh: Sandra just mentioned all these. She didn't ask specific questions. From the way she asked, I think what she wanted is some advice on *how to deal with the staff* she is supposed to take action on it.

You see, **meditation** is to **train your mind**, to develop the *ability to meditate* and to **awaken** to the **truth** so that **you can realize the requisite wisdom and understanding** to know *who you are, what you are* and to *allow you to have the understanding to understand the secret of life, the 4 noble truths*. And then from there you will know how to live life and *this is what meditation is all about*. This is what the *dharma* is all about. Without those understanding, **it is very difficult** for you to *understand life and to live life; to apply what you have understood, to help you understand life, to help you overcome* all of **life sufferings** and **problems**. So what she has brought up is a **typical life problem** - one of the *challenges that she is facing in the office*. How do you approach all these? Via the **dharma way** is very important. That's why she **herself realizes** that when you develop the meditation, when you are silent, you can **insight** into the 3 universal characteristics of nature, then you will come to understand that these are the things you have to do but her challenges are that she doesn't know how to go into it. So this is where her problem is.

If you **cannot penetrate** the dharma, it's **very difficult** for you to **apply** the dharma. It's like the chicken and egg story. Before you have the dharma, you still have to go through life, you still have problems and every time you have problems, what do you do, like her case? Of course, **to seek advice** is *very important* but seeking advice is like meditation. You don't go and ask what must I do, do you understand? If you do that, **you will never learn** because you have not developed the understanding and cultivation as yet. So what people advise you is based on their understanding and cultivation. Then you will ask, 'so in my case, what must I do?'

After putting this particular staff that has problems, in that **performance improvement programme**, he still has not changed and the management puts pressure on him to axe him. This is a very normal or common problem of society, right? But **if you have** the **dharma** you will know what to do and that's the reason why I have to make the assumption and ask, 'if you have the dharma, how will you act in such a situation?' How would you deal with such a situation? You can act in the *mundane way* via getting angry. You want me to axe and you can say, 'I will axe him, via giving him a 'love letter' and finish with it!' But is that the way to act? If that is not the way to act, then how should you act?

Comment from a kalyāṇamitta: Identify the problem with the staff, whether there is weakness in his skill and attitude.

Brother Teoh: Yes, you can do that and that is analysis, do you understand? The **mundane approach** is to analyze. Let's say you *analyze*, based on what? - based on your **views and opinions** of him.

You are *not going to solve the problem* because *it's based on your views and opinions*. Then you *come out with an idea*. This guy **must change** just like what Sandra did. But he continued to behave *the way he is* and he **has not changed**. Then she said he has a problem. If you **perceive** him with **negativity**, then it becomes a problem. Can you see this? The management wants you to axe him; they have already come to a conclusion. But you want to be fair to him. You try to give him a chance but the management is not going to give him a chance so you **try your approach** via telling him 'you cannot do like that, you have to change for the better and you have to do it like this, or like that'. And all these are **mundane** approaches.

When **you have the dharma** you **don't do things that** way anymore. That's why you have to act **differently**. You have to act according to the **noble 8-fold path** with **understanding** and your *approach will be different*. **Every condition is different. Everyone is different.** I cannot advise you on how to act. You yourself have **to reflect** and **contemplate on the teachings** and use your own **understanding** to assess the 'form and mind'. He is just the way he is. There are causes and conditions behind, and many other things involved, **could be karmic too**. That's why it's not a straightforward thing. There are *a lot of possibilities involved*. That's why without that wisdom and understanding, you cannot act.

What she is trying to do is, to use the mundane mind to analyze, then through her views and opinions, she comes out with a solution or she may follow the company's procedure and take action against this person. This is one of the *probable approaches* which **normal living being** will do or which society will do. But **when you have the**

dharma it's totally different and I cannot be specific here because there are not enough details. I don't have enough information about that person and you cannot ask me question like before, "So Bro. Teoh, what must I do?" It's like meditation, after I had explained the dharma part, then you asked me, "So, what must I do?"

You don't want to investigate yourself and you ***don't even want to understand*** what I had **taught** you – this will make ***you gullible***, do you understand? Then if I were to give you an answer and you take my answer as what you perceive then I will become ***equally gullible***. You may say, "Ya, Brother Teoh said not to care about him or just tell him off via giving him a warning, etc." There is no meaning, right? This is something I cannot teach you because it's the wisdom part where you have to develop your own understanding. You can approach it from the dharma way, like I used to explain. The Noble 8-fold path will lead to the end of all suffering so I act with Noble 8-fold path, then I will not suffer. So what is Noble 8-fold path? I am ***not acting from memory***. I am ***not acting from my conditioning***. I am ***not trying to analyze anything***. *He is just the way he is. These are the things that have happened already.* So based on ***right views***, there are *causes and conditions behind*, it's mainly karmic. So it's not about helping this person anymore ***unless there is condition to help***. Then ***let him learn the dharma, advise him to ask for forgiveness***, etc. and change following Noble 8-fold path. But this thing is not happening because this person that is involved in this karmic thing does not understand dharma and you are just a staff working there.

With this Noble 8-fold path, you have to act with the understanding that he is what he is and because of karmic conditioning, he becomes like that. So what I have to do is to arise the right thought. I have to have **sympathy, love** and **compassion**. Then I have to talk to this person. I have **to be sincere** and *explain to this person via saying*: “I have a duty to explain all these to you. Otherwise, the company is going to take action against you.” So this is the **dharma part**. This dharma part you must know how to express it via the **right speech**, the **right action**, the **right way** to attend to this thing and the **right thought** that you have to arise, meaning the love, the compassion and the understanding that I had explained just now. This can be one of the ways but it depends on that person. If that person has karmic negativity and is not listening, then there is not much point because you are just wasting your time. Then you have to approach it **differently** but it depends on his condition then. **If he is willing to listen**, because *you had said it in such a way* (following the right speech, right action and right thought), he will feel better. Just like how I started just now. You have to call him in a very friendly manner. Then explain to him this is a company that he is working in, and he has done something that is against the company Acts, rules or policies. **Maybe** he came to office late, or whatever job that was given to him, he didn’t even try his best, etc. I don’t know what the problem is, so I cannot be specific. I **can only teach** you *how to apply the dharma*.

So applying the dharma is **very simple**, approach him with right speech, right action and right thought and explain to him very nicely what’s happening because it is going to affect his future; his job is at stake, they may want to dismiss him if he continues his way, if he

does not make an effort to change, if he doesn't recognize that what he has done is not in accordance with the company rules and principles. If he **tries to argue** with you, then you have to explain to him, it's not about **right or wrong** anymore. It's not about you arguing with me anymore because I am tasked to review and explain to you what you have done and what the company is going to do to you. That's it, finished. How you take it, is **your decision** because it involves you, your life, your career, your job, etc. So if you can explain to people *in a very nice and easy to understand manner*, then it's like you are **not taking action** against him, you are **not biased** against him and you are **not angry** with him. You still treat him as your staff, like any other staff but because there is a condition involved, the company wants to take action and axe him. So you have to **approach it with understanding** so that there is **no karmic negativity**. You **don't get angry**; you **don't have selfish intention** behind what you do. You are **not emotional**. So **greed, hatred and delusion** are not there. You have the **embodiment of the Noble 8-fold path**. You have the **right speech** leading to **right thought and right action**. **That is true action.**

After you have **applied** the Dharma action with understanding, you can then advise him as follow, *"They are willing to give you a chance. That's why they put you on this **performance** programme. So if you **can prove** yourself to be **otherwise**, then there is **a possibility** that they will retain your service and give you a chance. Otherwise, there is nothing much we can do because this is a **company policy**."*

Always remember that if that person has *karmic negativity* **to argue** and **quarrel** with you, you have to *maintain* your understanding and

composure, i.e. no more emotional negativity, no more wrong speech, wrong thought and wrong action. Just have to understand him and feel for him and talk to him in a very nice way via saying, “Yes I understand your condition is pretty difficult. You have a dilemma but you are not the only one affected. There are others who have to go through the same review. Only those who are willing to change can be given a second chance. Those who are not willing to change, the company has to take action and you may have to go. If you are not happy, you can go for arbitration or you can report to the industrial court and file for unfair dismissal. All these are your rights.”

You have to advise them this way so that **they know their rights**, and they know you have been **sincere**; you have been **helpful** and you **have no selfish interest**. You are *not causing him fear*. If you don't know how to approach him, if you just give him a 'love' letter and then tell him off. Or if when he approaches you, and you just **get angry** and speak your mind; it's not going to help. It will only create *more misunderstanding and problems*.

Life is just the way it is. *People are different. Conditions are different* but when you have the **dharma**, you **will know how to act**. So what I have shared with you is just the **dharma part**, the **understanding part** but if you have **not cultivated** or **developed the training**, you **cannot arise** that type of *right thought, right speech, right action* or the *right understanding* via right view. It's **very difficult** to apply the **dharma** when you yourself have **not developed** the **understanding**, especially so if you have **not cultivated** it. Of

course you can try. That's why you have to start the cultivation by actually trying it out.

After you have heard what I had explained, you can start your cultivation but what is more important is **unless** you have developed *the cultivation* you **cannot attend to** and **help solve these problems**. You will also come to understand what I meant by *everyone is different* because *conditions are always different*. Just like **meditation**, you must understand what meditation is for you to have the ability to just **meditate with understanding**. Of course, *you can ask for guidance*. You can *report your meditation* so that I can advise you but you have to start the **cultivation process**. **As you do** and *encounter problems*, you can ask, then I can advise you. **But if you have not even done it**, you just **listen to theory** then you ask a lot of questions and you are not interested in developing the understanding yourself via doing the actual cultivation, *then no amount of questions can help you* because every time people explain to you, you are **not listening**. You are trying to use your **own knowledge to understand** it or **to counter it** and **to argue**. You **can continue to repeat** all those things. It's not going **to free you** but if you are **willing to learn** and **listen attentively to understand the message** and **put it into practice** and **cultivate it**, then you will develop the understanding. You will transform and progress.

These are *more useful* and *more tangible advice*. So hopefully with this you can develop **clearer understanding** to put in the hard work to develop the **cultivation yourself**. Just like meditation, *if you understand what meditation is, you can put it to practice*. If you *understand life, you will know how to live life*. Then you can deal

with all these, which are *normal life situations* or *problems*. For these are the *realities of life and existence*. These are career related, realities. Career means involving your job, your work, your livelihood, etc.

We will stop here. *It's better for you all to write down your questions if you have any.* You can ask but **make sure** you **have done some cultivation** before asking. Otherwise you can just report your meditation and *I can guide you* as to where you have gone wrong; I can also explain to you why when you do this so called meditation **without** understanding, you are being **gullible** and **actually wasting** your time.

Unfortunately and unknowingly, a lot of meditators just do all *these noting, labelling, verbalizing, focusing and concentrating, etc.* in the **name of meditation** thinking that **they are meditating** because they have **never really understood the teaching** and the *message of the Buddha - especially on what is the meditation as taught by the Buddha?* If you don't understand what is the meditation as taught by the Buddha, you **cannot start** and you **cannot put into practice**. You **need understanding** to develop this type of meditation. As I **have explained many times** before you should inquire - **why are you not peaceful?** You have **to understand** the **essential dharma**; the **5 mental hindrances** and the **5 spiritual faculties**, then from there: the **right view** and the rest. Then you put them into **proper structured flow charts** by writing them down for you to go through it, reflect on it until it is **very clear** then only can you put into practice **efficiently**.

If you need to train the mind, then train it. If your **spiritual faculties** are still not there then develop them. You must have a clear focus and understanding of the teaching so that you know what to do while meditating. Then as you do the meditation according to understanding, you will progress. Don't be influenced by what people say. Like, "Oh, they meditate that way and I must follow them." If you do that it means you are being gullible and you don't understand. You think their meditation is more superior. But what is that meditation? It's just one of the methods and techniques; the *usual noting and verbalizing* type of **thought based meditation**. That is not meditation at all because **methods and techniques**, as you already know **never define** the meditation. All these doing will create more delusion because the thoughts are rather active and yet you can still become gullible. People may tell you, "If you use this technique or method to meditate you **can progress very fast** because that person who has taught this type of meditation is an *enlightened person*." Then you lose your focus of what is meditation. You are more interested in what people tell you and you become gullible. Then you may say, "Oh, I think I must give it a try." Then everything you try like good food, initially you find it interesting but after a while, what happens. When it is repeated, it's no longer special. It's no longer good to you anymore. That's why you develop the same problem over and over again because you are chasing after method, technique, teacher and meditation and you meditate without understanding. This is not what the Buddha taught. What the Buddha taught are the **essential dharmas**. If you have understood the *essential dharmas* then you **can relate** to all these teachings that people have said to you.

They don't understand. If they understand, they won't teach that way. It's as simple as that. So this part you really need **to develop your own understanding**. Understand it clearly; make sure you write it down. If you can write it down and express it very clearly based on what has been taught then you can apply it by putting it into practice via phase 2 of the dharma which is **paṭipatti**. After *pariyatti (phase 1 of the dharma)*, you go on to the cultivation which is **Paṭipatti**. Then you will progress very fast. You will be amazed at how fast you progress and how fast you can understand the teaching. What you do now is **completely different** from what other people do because you **no longer rely** on those *traditional methods, techniques* and so called ***gullible thought-based teaching to meditate***.

You just do what you have to do **base on your understanding** of the *essential dharma*. If you *need to train the heedless thinking mind, then train it via any skilful means that you are familiar with*. After that, use it (the trained mind) to **meditate** because these are the **spiritual faculties** that you have developed. The **most important spiritual faculty** is **sati**. You have to **stabilize it**. For *saddhā, and vīriya*, you have **to contemplate** to develop them whereas, *for sati* you have to do the **daily mindfulness** and the **bowing** etc. to *establish and stabilize it*. After you have developed some form of stability of *sati* in your daily life, then you have **to stabilize it** in the **formal meditation**. That's why you do the lying down and formal sitting meditation. Just **relax, silent** and **aware**, let whatever *arise to just arise*. Do not try to **resist or suppress or control** them. If you find your legs are **hurting** you when age catches up, then sit on a chair, a couch or just lie down. Then develop the posture that you **are most comfortable** with to meditate. If you are using

Ānāpānasati (mindfulness of the in and out breathe) to **stabilize your sati** then you have to relax into it and let it develop until it is very stable. This stabilizing of sati is very important. You have to stabilize it until the **breathing becomes very subtle**. Until the **object of meditation** which is the breath becomes so **quiet** and **so subtle** like **there is no more movement**. This is the **mind entering passaddhi**. When you have reached this stage of tranquillity of mind, stillness of mind, the **silent mind** will arise, then don't do anything. Just **silent everything and relax** into it, while **maintaining the awareness within**. Then the **mind will finally enter sati**. That is the mind that can **be mindful** in the *midst of life*. *That is the mind that can develop the daily mindfulness*.

You are supposed to develop the meditation with *all these understanding* and *not to do all the other thought based things* like **noting, verbalizing, focusing, concentrating, chasing after nimitta, Jhānas, nana** etc. thus **deviating**. Even the mantra chanting is the same; it is just for you *to develop the faith (saddhā), vīriya* and the **sati or mindfulness**. After **the sati has stabilized** and become *passaddhi*, **technically the object of meditation is no longer required** and you *don't have to hold on to it anymore* then you just **silent your mind** and **don't do anything**. You chant until that **chanting** and the **awareness become one**. Until **no one** is chanting. The chanting can manifest by itself through your **subconscious and unconscious mind states**. Then your **mindfulness** and **awareness** is just with it. That will **stabilize your mindfulness**. Doing it is just like doing the **lying down meditation** to *stabilize* your awareness. Then throughout the day you will have this, “**阿弥陀佛 (Amítófó), 阿弥陀佛,.....**” chanting arising - But it is not you chanting. It's the **awareness** that is **aware of the chanting**. The chanting will come

out by itself. Then you have **to inquire** *who is chanting the Buddha's name*, 谁在念佛 (shuí zài niàn fó)? In fact there is **nobody** chanting.

The Buddha is in your heart, 佛在心头 (fó zài xīn tóu); it's *within* your **true mind**. Only the **awareness is aware** of the chanting and there is nobody chanting. You will come **to realize** that - **it's exactly** what the Buddha teaches. So this **true mind** is **to be realized**. This **clarity has** to be **very stable**. Then only can you be **mindful in the midst of life itself**. That's the **daily mindfulness** leading to the **real meditation**; the **beginning** of the **real satipaṭṭhāna practices**. If you **cannot do** that and **need to rely** on **formal sitting** to have *some form of good meditative experiences* and **stability of mindfulness** then you can **forget** about doing **it right**. If you don't believe, you can try it out. You can repeat this for many lives yet it's **not going to transform** you **unless** you *have cultivated in your past life before*. Then you will know how **to release the concentration energy** and **go back to the daily mindfulness practices**. End of the day it is the **daily mindfulness** practices and **nothing else**. If you cannot be **heedful in the midst of life** via daily mindfulness then you don't stand a chance because according to dhammapada verse 21 of the Buddha, 'The heedless are as if dead.'

3.3. Closing

Now you can **rejoice, Sadhu! Sadhu! Sadhu!**

We will do the sharing and transference of merits. After that you can pay respects to all the **great beings** and **worthy ones**, **then we end**.

