

Summary and Key Points of 2nd Lesson of Sixth Patriarch Platform Sutra

Summary

In this lesson, Bro. Teoh explains that **all sutras are merely guides** pointing toward the truth, not the truth itself. Using analogies such as the finger pointing to the moon and the raft used to cross a river, he emphasizes that **clinging to the teachings or accumulating knowledge becomes an obstacle** to awakening. The lesson contrasts the gradual, effort-based approach of Master Shen Hsiu (polishing the mirror) with the direct, non-clinging wisdom of the Sixth Patriarch, Hui Neng.

A central teaching is that **accumulation of memories and experiences conditions the mind** toward duality, fear, grasping, and suffering. True understanding arises not from memory or conceptual thought, but from **direct seeing with a silent, aware mind** free from clinging.

The lesson also highlights that **education and intellectual knowledge are not prerequisites for awakening**; sincerity, faith, perseverance, and an open mind are far more important. The nature of great beings (e.g., Guan Yin Bodhisattva, the Sixth Patriarch) can manifest when conditions are ripe, and such manifestations are not to be dismissed with a closed, skeptical mind.

Finally, Bro. Teoh emphasizes the **importance of listening with an open mind**—without prejudice or filtering—before investigating a teaching. The practical criterion given by the Buddha to the Kalamas is: **does this teaching harm me or others?** If not, it is worth investigating. The lesson concludes with the first two Dhammapada verses, showing how a heedful mind leads to happiness and a heedless mind leads to suffering.

Key Important Points

1. Sutras Are Only Guides

- All sutras are **guides for cultivation**, not the truth or enlightenment itself.
- They are like a **finger pointing to the moon** or a **raft used to cross a river**. Once you cross, you do not carry the raft with you.

- Clinging to the sutras or accumulating Dharma knowledge becomes an **obstruction** to awakening.

2. The Danger of Accumulation (Mahayana's Second Noble Truth)

- The Mahayana tradition describes the **cause of suffering as "accumulation"** (of memories, experiences, views, and opinions).
- Accumulation creates **duality** (pleasant/unpleasant, good/bad, favorable/unfavorable), which conditions fear, craving, attachment, and suffering.
- Memory is for practical use, not for storing psychological fear, emotional negativity, or scars of memory.

3. The Two Approaches to Cultivation

Master Shen Hsiu (Gradual)	Master Hui Neng (Sudden/Direct)
"Polish the mirror bright"	"Originally there is no tree"
Clings to wholesomeness, purity, and virtue	No clinging, no duality
Busy rejecting defilements	Direct seeing of true nature
Still caught in duality	Mind that has no dwelling

4. The Mind That Has No Dwelling

- Awakening comes from **producing the mind that is nowhere supported** (from the Diamond Sutra).
- This means **not allowing the mind to dwell or cling** to any thought, object, or state.
- Enlightenment has **nothing to do with memory** or the accumulation of past knowledge.

5. Direct Seeing vs. Conceptual Understanding

- **Direct seeing (nāṇa dassana)** sees things as they are, without words, labeling, conditioning, interpretation, or mental reaction.
- Conceptual understanding through thought and memory is **not true wisdom**; it is still within duality.

6. Open Mind vs. Closed Mind (Filtering)

- **Listen with an open mind**—without prejudice, views, or opinions—before investigating a teaching.
- **Do not filter while listening**; filtering is judging, commenting, and reacting, which prevents true listening.
- The Buddha's advice to the Kalamas: investigate whether a teaching **harms you or harms others**. If it does not, you have nothing to lose **then** follow it.

7. The Art of Listening

- True listening means **not expressing opinions or judgments** while the teaching is being given.
- After listening and understanding, you may **investigate and test** the teaching in real life.
- If it stands up to investigation and brings benefit without harm, you can adopt it.

8. Education Is Not Required for Awakening

- The Sixth Patriarch, Hui Neng, was an **illiterate peasant** who nevertheless became a great master.
- **Sincerity, faith, perseverance, and an open mind** are far more important than formal education.
- Too much knowledge can become a **stumbling block** if it feeds the ego and closes the mind.

9. The Nature of Great Beings Can Manifest

- When conditions and affinities are ripe, the **nature of enlightened beings** (e.g., Guan Yin Bodhisattva, the Sixth Patriarch) can manifest.
- These are **not the physical persons** but their nature **ever** radiating to support true cultivators of the way.

- Do not dismiss such manifestations with a closed, skeptical mind; doing so creates **karmic obstruction**.

10. The First Two Dhammapada Verses 1 and 2

Mind is the forerunner of all things, mind is chief when mind arise all things arise:

- **Verse 1:** Therefore when one acts with a heedless mind (untrained, unmindful) the evil roots of greed, hatred, and delusion arise. Suffering follows such a being like a wheel follows the hoof of an ox.
- **Verse 2:** Therefore when one acts with a heedful mind (trained, mindful) it prevents evil roots from arising. Happiness follows such a being like a shadow that never leaves.

11. The Three Phases of Dharma Cultivation

1. **Pariyatti (Learning):** Developing understanding through hearing and reading. Still at the knowledge level.
2. **Patipatti (Practice):** Putting the understanding into practice in daily life.
3. **Pativedha (Penetration):** Direct seeing and awakening; realization of the truth.

12. Precepts (Sila) as Foundation

- Precepts are the **source of happiness, spiritual wealth, and peacefulness of mind**.
- Without precepts, it is very difficult to develop samādhi and wisdom.
- Keeping precepts reduces fear, worry, anxiety, and suffering, allowing the mind to become peaceful and clear.

13. Mindfulness (Sati) Is Most Important

- Without mindfulness, you cannot see your mental intentions or identify the evil roots.
- Without mindfulness, you are **heedless**—and the Buddha said the heedless are as if spiritually dead.

- A mind with stable mindfulness naturally develops samādhi (collectedness, unwavering) and clarity.

14. Enduring Suffering

- The Buddha Dharma **arises from difficulty**. Do not fear suffering.
- Some defilements must be **endured**; some must be restrained.
- The more difficult the cultivation, the better—it opens your wisdom.

15. The Four Basic Bodhisattva Vows (Implicit in the Teaching)

1. To liberate limitless living beings (love and compassion).
2. To endure and sever all suffering (renunciation).
3. To cultivate and perfect all wisdom (perfection of wisdom).
4. To perfect the Buddha's path (becomes automatic when wisdom is perfected).

16. The Sixth Patriarch's Unique Status

- The *Platform Sutra* is the **only sutra in the Chinese Tripitaka** that was not spoken by the Buddha but by a Chinese **Zen** master (Hui Neng).
- It is therefore a **direct teaching from China**, not a translation from Indian languages.

17. The Turtle Analogy

- A turtle carries the Tripitaka on its back. Unenlightened beings laugh at the turtle for holding onto the scriptures.
- The turtle laughs back because **the sutras are only guides**, not the truth. The deluded beings do not understand this.

18. The Patriarchship Lineage

- 1st Patriarch: Sakyamuni Buddha
- 28th Patriarch: Bodhidharma (also 1st Patriarch of China)
- 29th: 2nd Patriarch of China (Hui Ke)
- 30th: 3rd Patriarch (Seng Can)
- 31st: 4th Patriarch (Dao Xin)
- 32nd: 5th Patriarch (Hong Ren)

- 33rd: 6th Patriarch (Hui Neng)

19. The Unsurpassed, Profound Dharma

- The opening verse:
*"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."*
- This teaching is **very rare and not easy to come by**.

20. No Right, No Wrong in Dharma Sharing

- Dharma discussion should be done with **mutual respect and understanding**, not as a competition of right and wrong.
- Sharing is about **benefiting all**, not defending one's teacher, method, or belief system.
- What is "right" is relative; the ultimate truth is beyond right and wrong.