

# Summary and Key Points of 3<sup>rd</sup> Lesson of Sixth Patriarch Platform Sutra

## Summary

This lesson begins with Bro. Teoh sharing a real-life case of a woman suffering from severe depression, fear, and anxiety due to workplace and relationship issues. He uses this case to illustrate how heedless thinking, panic, and emotional negativity arise from a lack of mindfulness and understanding. He then contrasts this with the **power of mindfulness (sati)** and the importance of a **silent, aware mind** in resolving life's problems.

The lesson then critiques a newspaper article on mindfulness, pointing out its inaccuracies and contradictions—particularly the mistaken idea that mindfulness can be "practiced" or "forced." Bro. Teoh clarifies that **mindfulness cannot be practiced; it must be understood**. When the mind is silent without thought, awareness naturally arises.

The lesson then returns to the *Platform Sutra*, recounting the history of the **First to Fifth Patriarchs**—Bodhidharma, Hui Ke, Seng Can, Dao Xin, and Hong Ren. Their lives were marked by extreme hardship, persecution, and even violent deaths, yet they remained unafraid because they understood that the "form and mind" is not the true self. Their stories illustrate the principles of **enduring suffering, non-fear of death, great patience, and direct transmission of the mind-seal**.

The lesson concludes with the famous story of **Bodhidharma and the parrot** (escaping the cage by playing dead), which symbolizes **escaping the cage of samsara by "playing dead" to the ego and its conditioned thoughts**.

---

## Key Important Points

### 1. The Nature of Mindfulness (Sati)

- **Mindfulness cannot be practiced or forced.** It is not something you "do."
- **Mindfulness must be understood.** When you understand, it naturally arises.
- **The moment you are silent without thought, you are already aware.** You don't need to "try" to be mindful.
- Trying to be mindful is itself a thought activity, which prevents mindfulness.

- **True mindfulness is a naturally relaxed state of awareness**, without interpretation, judgment, reaction, or trying to know.

## 2. The Danger of Heedless Thinking

- Spending too much time planning, problem-solving, or thinking negative thoughts is **draining** one's life force energy **and stressful**.
- It creates fear, worry, anxiety, sorrow, and lamentation—all rooted in **delusion (moha)**.
- These negative mental states are negative **energy fields** that condition negative karma and make you miserable.
- **Thought projections create fear**. Fear arises when things don't go your way and you lack understanding.
- **The more you think about a problem, the worse it becomes**—you end up forming a "cocoon of wrong thoughts."

## 3. The Red-Hot Iron Ball Analogy

- If a wrong thought is tormenting you like a red-hot iron ball, **why are you still holding onto it?**
- The solution is to **put it down**. Don't hold, don't lament, don't cry.
- **Calm yourself down** and develop clarity of mind to understanding what's happening. Only then can you act wisely.

## 4. Mindfulness and Daily Life

- **Develop daily mindfulness with understanding**, then stabilize it.
- Start with daily routines at home, then extend to driving, working, shopping, and all activities.
- **Formal meditation is of little use** if you cannot bring mindfulness into daily life. One must be mindful (heedful) while in the midst of life.
- The real meditation is **Sati Sampajañña**—mindfulness with clear comprehension of all actions and movements in the present moment.

## 5. The Art of Listening

- **Listen with an open mind**—without prejudice, without filtering, without judging.
- **Do not think while listening**. Thinking means you are no longer listening.
- Just listen attentively. Understanding will come naturally.
- If you cannot understand, just let it pass and listen again.

- Contemplation and reflection can be done **after** the sharing, not during.

## 6. "Make the Familiar New Again"

- Daily routines often become mechanical and heedless due to habitual tendencies.
- **Be attentive in every moment**—even familiar actions should be done with fresh awareness.
- When you are silent and attentive, **you see things as they are, without words or concepts.**
- This is **pure perception**—seeing without labeling, comparing, or interpreting.
- Comparison comes from memory. When you are aware of this, you are still mindful.

## 7. The Flipping of the Hand Analogy (Bodhi and Affliction)

- Open hand → flipped hand → open hand. **Bodhi (enlightenment) and affliction are just that quick.**
- The moment you understand, suffering ends. As long as you don't understand, suffering continues.
- **Bodhi is affliction, and affliction is Bodhi**—they are not different in their essential nature.
- This understanding arises **without words**, through direct seeing.

## 8. The Parrot in the Cage (Escaping Samsara)

- The parrot was trapped in a cage. Bodhidharma taught it to **play dead**—stretch out legs, close eyes, and wait.
- The owner opened the cage, and the parrot flew away.
- **We are trapped in the cage of samsara** (birth and death, conditioned existence).
- To escape, you must **"play dead" to the ego, to conditioned thoughts, to the false self.**
- **True freedom** is freedom from birth and death—not just doing whatever you want.

## 9. The First Five Patriarchs: Enduring Hardship

<b>Patriarch</b>	<b>Key Teaching / Life Event</b>
<b>1st Patriarch: Bodhidharma</b>	Poisoned six times; swallowed his teeth to prevent drought; transmitted mind-seal to Hui Ke.
<b>2nd Patriarch: Hui Ke (Shen Kuang)</b>	Cut off his arm to prove sincerity; searched for his mind and found it nowhere; was executed but bled white (yang realm).
<b>3rd Patriarch: Seng Can</b>	Had leprosy; said "in our true minds, where is the difference?"; entered Nirvana hanging from a tree.
<b>4th Patriarch: Tao Xin</b>	Sat in Dhyana for 60 years without lying down; not afraid of death; entered Nirvana in full lotus; body did not decay.
<b>5th Patriarch: Hong Ren</b>	Eight feet tall; endured bullying without reacting; recited Shurangama Mantra; transmitted Dharma to Hui Neng.

## 10. The Mind-Seal Transmission

- Bodhidharma transmitted the Dharma door of **"using the mind to seal the mind."**
- This points **straight to the mind to see the nature and realize Buddhahood.**
- It bypasses the mundane thinking mind entirely.
- **True Dharma is beyond thought.** If you use thoughts to understand it, you are chasing your own shadow.

## 11. "Find Your Mind"

- When Hui Ke asked Bodhidharma to "quiet his mind," Bodhidharma said: **"Find your mind and show it to me."**
- Hui Ke searched everywhere—inside, outside, in sense organs, in light, in conditions, in between, in non-attachment.
- He finally said: **"I can't find my mind! It is nowhere to be found."**
- Bodhidharma replied: **"That is how well I have quieted your mind."**
- Hui Ke understood the transmission at that moment.

## 12. The White Yang Realm (白陽世界)

- When a sage enters the white yang realm, **their blood turns white** because the body has transformed completely into yang, with no yin.
- Hui Ke was executed, but instead of blood, a **milky white liquid** flowed out.
- This indicates a state **without outflows (āsava)** and without ignorance.

### 13. Great Anger as Wisdom

- Hui Ke had great anger, but it was not petty anger like that of ordinary people.
- **His anger was wisdom**—great patience, great courage, great knowledge, and great wisdom.
- Because of this, his body became yang.

### 14. The Third Patriarch's Insight

- Seng Can had a loathsome, leprous body. He asked: "**I am a sick man, and you are a high master. But in our true minds, where is the difference?**"
- This reflects the same wisdom as Hui Neng's statement: "Physically there is northerner and southerner, but in one's true nature, there is no northerner and no southerner."

### 15. The Fourth Patriarch: Not Afraid of Death

- When the Emperor threatened to cut off his head, Tao Xin calmly waited and said: "**If in this life my head gets to see the Emperor, that will be great glory.**"
- He then laughed and said: "**Now you know that there is still a person in the world who does not fear death.**"

### 16. Key Lessons from the Patriarchs

- **Patriarchs are not afraid of suffering, life, or death.**
- They make no distinctions between life and death.
- They know that **affliction is just Bodhi** and **birth and death is Nirvana.**
- If you fear death, you cannot even be a patriarch's disciple.

### 17. The Buddha Dharma Arises from Difficulty

- All the Patriarchs endured extreme hardship, persecution, and violent opposition.
- **The more difficult the cultivation, the better**—it opens your wisdom.

- **Endure suffering**—this is part of the path.

## 18. The Purpose of the Robe and Bowl Transmission

- Bodhidharma transmitted the robe and bowl to certify that the disciple had received the Dharma Seal.
- This was because Chinese people at that time were prone to lying about their attainments.
- **The 5th Patriarch stopped the transmission of the robe and bowl after the 6th Patriarch.**

## 19. Misconceptions About Mindfulness (From the Newspaper Article)

Mistake	Correction
"Practice mindfulness"	Mindfulness cannot be practiced; it must be understood.
"Focus on your breath"	Just be aware of the breath without thought—not focusing.
"Think about their meaning"	Don't think; just listen attentively.
"Deliberately chew"	Just chew to experience taste consciousness without thought.
"Practice every day"	Be mindful most of the time, not just in formal practice.

## 20. The Four Basic Bodhisattva Vows (Implicit)

1. To liberate the 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).