

Summary and Key Points of 54th Lesson of Sixth Patriarch Platform Sutra

Summary

This lesson begins with a detailed discussion on the **relationship between Theravada and Mahayana traditions**. Bro. Teoh emphasizes that both traditions come from the same source—the Buddha's teaching (Dharma)—and that the divisions between them are created by **deluded human beings, not by the Buddha**. He encourages practitioners to **take the best from both traditions** and avoid unnecessary arguments and sectarianism.

The lesson then moves into the **Sutra proper**, focusing on **Fa Ta's remorse** after being reprimanded by the Sixth Patriarch for his egoistic behavior (bowing without his head touching the floor). Fa Ta had recited the *Lotus Sutra* 3,000 times but still did not understand its meaning. The Sixth Patriarch explains that **the doubts are not in the Sutra but in Fa Ta's own mind**. He then teaches the "**One Important Matter**" —the knowledge and vision of the Buddha.

A key teaching from Hui Neng is: "**If you can live among marks and yet be separated from it, then you will be confused by neither the internal nor the external.**" This is the essence of the lotus flower analogy—living in the conditioned world without being entangled by it.

The lesson also covers:

- The **Physics experiment analogy** (battery, switch, light bulb) to explain dependent origination and the nature of consciousness.
- The **Yamika Sutra** teaching: "In the seeing, there is only the seeing consciousness; there is no one to see."
- The importance of **daily mindfulness** and the **Noble Eightfold Path** as the foundation of true meditation.
- The difference between **consciousness and awareness**.
- The danger of becoming **gullible**—blindly following methods, techniques, or teachers without understanding.

The lesson concludes with practical advice on **how to develop the spiritual faculties**, overcome mental hindrances, and cultivate **heedfulness (appamāda)** as the path to enlightenment.

Key Important Points

1. Theravada and Mahayana: Two Sides of the Same Coin

- Both traditions come from the **same source**—the Buddha's Dharma.
- Divisions are created by **deluded human beings**, not by the Buddha.
- **Theravada** preserves the original teaching (Pāli chanting, essential Dharma) but may lack deeper interpretation.
- **Mahayana** expands on the teaching with profound Sutras (e.g., Heart Sutra, Diamond Sutra) but often neglects the foundation (Four Noble Truths, essential Dharma).
- **Take the best from both traditions**—do not argue or create division.
- As Bro. Teoh says: *"If you truly understand, there is no difference."*

2. The Sixth Patriarch's Reprimand of Fa Ta

- Fa Ta bowed without his head touching the floor, revealing **ego and pride**.
- He had recited the *Lotus Sutra* 3,000 times but still did not understand its meaning.
- The Sixth Patriarch said: *"Dharma penetration—the Dharma is extremely penetrating, but your mind does not penetrate it."*
- **The doubts are not in the Sutra; the doubts are in your own mind.**

3. The One Important Matter: Knowledge and Vision of the Buddha

- The entire Lotus Sutra is based on the causes and conditions of the Buddha's appearance in the world.
- The **One Important Matter** is the **knowledge and vision of the Buddha**.
- This is not something outside yourself—it is **your own mind, your own true nature**.

4. Living Among Marks Yet Separated from Marks

- Hui Neng's key teaching: *"If you can live among marks and yet be separated from it, then you will be confused by neither the internal nor the external."*
- **External** = sense objects (sights, sounds, smells, tastes, touches, thoughts).
- **Internal** = mental world (thoughts, emotions, views, opinions, chattering).
- This is the **lotus flower analogy**—living in the muddy pond (conditioned world) yet rising above it, untouched.

5. The Physics Experiment Analogy (Dependent Origination)

- **Battery** = mind (power source)
- **Switch** = contact
- **Light bulb** = consciousness (lights up upon contact)

- Upon contact, consciousness arises automatically—no **"seer," "hearer," or "knower" behind it.**
- As the Buddha taught in the **Yamika Sutra**: *"In the seeing, there is only the seeing consciousness; there is no one to see."*

6. The Knower Is an Illusion (Self-Delusion)

- The "knower" behind perception is **not real**—it is created by self-delusion (sakkāyadiṭṭhi).
- The egoic mind says, "I see, therefore I am"—but this is a mistake.
- **Without the eye, you cannot see. Without the mind, you cannot see. Without contact, you cannot see.**
- Seeing is **dependent-originating, condition-arising**—not created by a PERMANENT unchanging "being" or "soul."

7. Consciousness vs. Awareness

- **Consciousness** arises upon contact with sense objects. It is conditioned, impermanent, and not-self.
- **Awareness (sati)** is the silent, choiceless awareness before the knowing. It is not conditioned.
- Most people are **conscious of life but not aware of life**. They are lost in heedless thinking.
- To be aware is to be **silent, without thought**, fully present in the moment.

8. The Four Divisions of Enlightened Knowledge and Vision

1. **Opening** to the enlightened knowledge and vision (insight into phenomena)
2. **Demonstrating** the enlightened knowledge and vision (reflecting and contemplating to stabilize understanding)
3. **Awakening** to the enlightened knowledge and reality (true awakening)
4. **Entering** the enlightened knowledge and vision (ability to teach and share)

9. Heedfulness (Appamāda) Is the Path to Enlightenment

- As the Buddha said in Dhammapada Verse 21: *"The heedless are as if dead. Heedfulness is the path to the deathless."*
- **Heedfulness** = ever mindful, constantly meditative in daily life.
- To be heedful, you must develop the **five spiritual faculties** (faith, effort, mindfulness, concentration, wisdom).
- When spiritual faculties are stable, the **five mental hindrances** cease naturally.

10. The Three Phases of Dharma Cultivation

1. **Pariyatti (Learning):** 1st phase of Dharma cultivation: the learning of the dharma.
2. **Patipatti (Practice):** 2nd phase of Dharma: Putting the Dharma into practice (develop spiritual faculties, keep precepts, cultivate daily mindfulness).
3. **Pativedha (Penetration):** 3rd phase of Dharma: Living the noble life after awakening.

11. The Noble Eightfold Path as the Complete Cultivation

- **Right View (3 types):** Law of Karma, Law of Mind, Four Noble Truths.
- **Right Thought:** Love, compassion, kindness, generosity, gratitude, contentment (wholesome and virtuous thoughts).
- **Right Speech:** Avoid lying, divisive speech, harsh speech, idle chatter. Speak only kind, gentle, caring, wise and harmonious speeches.
- **Right Action:** Avoid killing, stealing, sexual misconduct. Act wisely following Noble 8-fold path to resolve all life issues or situations amicably.
- **Right Livelihood:** Avoid trades that harm and wrong living.
- **Right Efforts to constantly purify our mind (4 types):**
 1. Abandon unwholesome thoughts that have arisen.
 2. Prevent unwholesome thoughts from arising.
 3. Cultivate wholesome thoughts not yet arisen.
 4. Refine and perfect wholesome thoughts already arisen.
- **Right Mindfulness:** Four Foundations of Mindfulness.
- **Right Samadhi:** A free mind that is collected, unwavering mind.

12. The Danger of Becoming Gullible

- Many meditators blindly follow methods, techniques, and teachers **without understanding**.
- They think that by sitting, noting, focusing, or concentrating, they are meditating.
- **Without understanding the essential Dharma (mental hindrances, spiritual faculties, Four Noble Truths, etc), you are wasting your time.**
- **Do not be gullible.** Investigate for yourself. The truth will stand up to investigation.

13. "You Are Nothing and You Are Nobody"

- When you truly penetrate the Dharma, you realize: **"You are nothing and you are nobody."**
- This does not mean you cease to exist—it means the **"form and mind" was never you (not a permanent unchanging entity for you to cling onto)**.
- At the same time, you are **everything**—the oneness nature, the true nature, the source of all things.
- This is the **sudden understanding** of non-self (anattā) and emptiness (suññatā).

14. The Sixth Patriarch's Illiteracy and Wisdom

- Hui Neng was illiterate but could explain any Sutra when someone read it to him.
- **Understanding the teaching is not about understanding the words alone**—it is about understanding the true meaning.
- Words are concepts pointing toward the truth; they are not the truth itself.
- An awakened person can describe their understanding in their own words, not necessarily following the textbook.

15. The Analogy of Visiting KLCC (Twin Towers)

- If you have never been to KLCC, you can only describe what you read in books.
- If you have been there, you can describe your personal experience—and others who have been there will recognize that you have been there, even if your descriptions differ.
- Similarly, an awakened person can describe their realization in their own words, and other awakened beings will recognize the truth in their words.

16. The Buddha Did Not Create Theravada, Mahayana, or Vajrayana

- These divisions came **hundreds of years after the Buddha's passing**.
- The Buddha only taught the **Dharma**—the truth.
- Holding onto these labels and arguing about them is a sign of **delusion, not wisdom**.

17. The Fifth Patriarch's Question to Hui Neng

- *"You are a southerner, an illiterate, and yet you want to seek Buddhahood. Do you stand a chance?"*
- Hui Neng replied: *"In physical form, there are north and south. But as far as the nature is concerned, there is no difference. Everyone has that nature."*
- The Fifth Patriarch immediately knew that Hui Neng was gifted.

18. The J. Krishnamurti Quote: "The Searcher Is the Searched"

- You go everywhere searching for a teacher, an enlightened one, or enlightenment itself.
- But **the searcher is the searched**—your true nature is what you are searching for.
- Using the mundane mind (thought) to search for the true mind is like using a thief to catch a thief.

19. Practical Advice: Daily Mindfulness Starts at Home

- Start with activities you can control—at home, in familiar surroundings.
- Be mindful of every action: waking up, walking to the toilet, brushing teeth, showering, eating.
- **Body and mind as one**—no thought, just awareness.
- As the Buddha said: "*Standing—aware, walking—aware, bending, stretching, turning—aware.*"

20. The Nature of Thought and Mental Hindrances

- Thoughts arise due to **avijja (ignorance)** and **sakkāyadiṭṭhi (self-delusion)**.
- When you straighten your views, you have **less ignorance**—hence **less thought**.
- If you force thoughts to stop through concentration, that is **suppression**, not wisdom.
- **True meditation** is silent awareness, allowing thoughts to arise and pass away without feeding them.

21. The Flowering of Thought (J. Krishnamurti)

- "*The very flowering of that thought is the very ending of that thought.*"
- When you allow a thought to arise without feeding it with more thought energy, it will **flower fully and then wither away**.
- This is how mental activities cease naturally through non-resistance.

22. The Physics Experiment and the "Knower"

- The experiment shows that consciousness arises automatically upon contact—**no "knower" is needed**.
- The "knower" is an illusion created by **memory and self-delusion**.
- When you say "I see," the "I" is the egoic mind—not the true nature.

23. Four Ways to Abandon Unwholesome Thoughts (From the Sabbasava Sutta)

1. **Think of the opposite** wholesome thought (thought-based, temporary).
2. **Reflect on the consequences** of holding on to that wrong thought (thought-based, temporary).
3. **Just be aware** (meditative)—let the thought which arise and pass away cease naturally without following it or any doing.

4. **Trace the origination factor** (wisdom way)—see how it arose through sense contact leading to stirring of the mind, then straighten the view to retrospectively reverse it.

24. The Danger of Attaching to Emptiness

- Worldly people attach to **marks** (external phenomena) or attach to **emptiness** (concept of emptiness).
- **Emptiness is not a concept**—it is to be realized through awakening.
- Attaching to the concept of emptiness is just another form of attachment (dharma attachment).

25. The Importance of Contentment

- The Buddha said: "*Contentment is the highest wealth.*"
- Contentment comes from **wisdom**, not from lack of possessions.
- With wisdom, you can have wealth and use it wholesomely without attachment or craving.