

The Sixth Patriarch's Radically Inclusive, Unifying Method of Teaching Dharma

六祖大師兼容並蓄之教法

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One thing that distinguished the Sixth Patriarch from his contemporaries was his ability to teach anyone who came to him at any place, regardless of the conditions, and met them at the point where they most needed help to go forward in their cultivation. He taught many monastics from many distant regions who would later become great on their own rights, along with countless laypeople from all walks of life.

Many of those who became his disciples had already put a great deal of effort into their cultivation, but despite tremendous effort, something about their cultivation practice, before they met the Sixth Patriarch, was obstructing them from fully awakening and realizing bodhi. Recognizing that the Sixth Patriarch was one who was awakened and had the Dharma, they trusted him also to help them awaken to Bodhi. It was this dynamic that caused them to seek him as a teacher, knowing that he had already awoken to his fundamental nature, knowing that they were not there yet, and trusting that he could show them where they were off, and how they could realize the Way.

A patriarch becomes “a patriarch” in Buddhism primarily because they are awakened and able to transmit the Buddha’s teachings from their awakened minds. Thus, they pass on a cohesive system of teaching through a lineage that stretches back to Shakyamuni Buddha and carry on those teachings of the Buddha forward to the next generation of cultivators who want to



六祖大師與其同時代者的不同之處，在於他不論何處、當下環境、條件，都能化導人心，給予對機的教法，助其增長道業。來自各行各業慕名求法的在家弟子難以數計，許多遠道而來的僧眾弟子日後也成為一方之大成就者。

許多六祖大師的弟子，在修行上都非常精進；儘管下了很大功夫，在遇到六祖大師之前，依然無法證得菩提。他們知道六祖大師是一位覺者，是有法之人，相信六祖大師能幫助他們開悟。正是這種動力促使他們向他求教，因為他們知道六祖大師已明心見性，而自己功夫未到，相信他可以在菩提道上指點迷津。

awaken to the Way. Patriarchs are great cultivators who have not only realized the Way (become enlightened) but can help their students (often more than one) also realize the Way. They often spread the teachings of the Buddha under extremely difficult circumstances to a large number of people through a variety of expedient means over a large region.

Patriarchs are cultivators that have tremendous capacities for awakening themselves and others. In the case of the Sixth Patriarch, we know from the sutra that at the time of his passing, he had ten room-entering disciples that he mentioned by name that he encouraged “to spread the teachings as masters in new regions.”

Further, the sutra later states that “he taught the Dharma for thirty-seven years to benefit living beings. He passed on the Dharma to forty-three successors, while those who awakened to the Way and rose above the ordinary were beyond counting.”

The Sixth Patriarch was an amazingly effective teacher. As we read the sutra, we are reading how he taught his disciples to resolve their confusion and doubts and awaken. So what method did he use to teach his disciples? His disciples were of different ages, came from a variety of backgrounds, had varying levels of cultivation, and included male and female disciples, monastics and laypeople, officials, and ordinary people, even the emperor requested his teachings, how is it that he was able to teach such a variety of students? A fact that is made all the more remarkable because we know he was illiterate and from an unpopular region. It would be difficult at any time or place to teach such a diverse range of students, so how could he teach them all? And when he was teaching, how did he perceive the role of a teacher giving a teaching? How do we know the student received the teaching?

What is meant by teaching?

The Sixth Patriarch lays out his teaching method in “Chapter Ten — Final Instructions.” But before we examine that in detail, it’s useful to examine some of the Fifth Patriarch’s teachings in Huángméi (黃梅). Upon the occasion of the Sixth Patriarch’s awakening, as he’s retelling what occurred, Master Huìnéng (惠能) says, “The Master entrusted me with the Direct Teaching and gave me the robe and bowl.”

The Fifth Patriarch then says to him a short while later, “The Dharma is handed down mind to mind leading all to their own awakening and their liberation. From ancient times, all Buddhas only transmit the fundamental truth; the true intention is passed

在佛教，祖師之所以成為「祖師」，主要是因為他們已經識心見性，能傳承佛陀的教法。他們承襲自釋迦牟尼佛的法脈，將佛陀的教法傳給下一代想悟道的行者。祖師是偉大的修行者，他們不但自己明心見性（開悟），還能幫助他們的弟子（通常不只一人）悟道；並常在極度艱難的情況下，以各種善巧四處化導眾生。

歷代祖師都是自覺、覺他的大修行者。就六祖大師而言，我們從經文（六祖法寶壇經）中得知，六祖大師圓寂前，他召喚十位入室弟子，鼓勵他們要「各為一方師」（《六祖壇經·付囑品第十》第一段）

此外，經文最後也記載「說法利生。三十七載。嗣法四十三人。悟道超凡者。莫知其數。」（〈付囑品第十〉末段）

六祖大師是一位非常出色的導師。當我們閱讀經文，得以一窺他如何為弟子們解除疑惑，幫助他們悟道。六祖大師是以甚麼方式教導弟子呢？他的弟子背景大相逕庭，不僅年齡、背景、道行有所不同，有男有女、有出家眾、有在家眾、有官員、有百姓，甚至連皇帝也向他求教，他是如何教化這些學生呢？還有一件令人關注的事，我們知道六祖大師不識字，來自邊地。無論何時何地，面對如此多元的學生絕非易事，那麼他如何化導學生？在解惑時，他如何看待導師這個傳道的角色？如何知道學生是否受教？

何謂教學之道？

六祖大師在〈付囑品第十〉中闡述了他的教學方法。在深入探討之前，先分析黃梅五祖大師的教法

along more privately from master to master.”

The “Dharma” refers to the teachings of the Buddha. Interestingly, the transmission referred to that occurs is not a physical object specifically as in the case of the robe and bowl that was passed down from Bodhidharma through the Sixth Patriarch, but a mind-to-mind transmission that facilitates “their own awakening and liberation”. Shortly before this, the Fifth Patriarch was explaining (and also teaching) Master Shénxiù (神秀) why his verse did not demonstrate a clear understanding, and therefore did not merit the robe and bowl.

Master Hóngrěn (弘忍) says to Master Shénxiù, “Unsurpassed bodhi means that right at the moment of speaking, you are able to recognize your original mind and see that your fundamental nature is unborn and undying. Unsurpassed bodhi means you yourself see this naturally, at all times, and in every instance of thought: that the myriad dharmas are all of a piece and identical. And that what is true of one, is true of all. The myriad phenomena are naturally ‘thus’ as they are. And a mind that is this way accordingly, is the true reality. To see in this way is the essence of supreme Bodhi.”

So we learn from these early encounters with the Fifth Patriarch that the disciple qualified to continue the lineage is entrusted with the “Direct Teaching,” which comes when “Dharma is handed down mind-to-mind,” which leads (to the disciple’s) “own awakening and liberation.”

We also learn that “the fundamental truth comes directly from the Buddha” but is “passed along more privately from master to master.” Once the teacher facilitates the disciple’s awakening, and the disciple awakens and is liberated, then the teacher certifies it. The disciple also becomes a master, able to teach and carry on the teachings to the next generation. Later, after the Sixth Patriarch has left Huángméi and lived in exile alongside the hunters for many years, he introduces himself to Master Yīnzōng (印宗) asks Master Huìnéng to show the robe and bowl shortly before he shaves his head, Master Yīnzōng asks Huìnéng, “How exactly was Huángméi’s teaching transferred? I replied, “There was no transfer. We merely discussed seeing the nature.”

So the main thrust of the teaching is to get the disciple to wake up and see their own essential nature and realize liberation. By truly seeing the essential nature, the disciple realizes Bodhi, awakening. The essential nature has an infinite number of terms often used as synonyms; “Chinese uses ‘zì xìng’ (自性),

是有幫助的。六祖大師悟道之際，惠能大師描述當時的情況，說道：「便傳頓教。及衣鉢。」（五祖大師把頓教的法門和衣鉢，傳給六祖大師。）（〈行由品第一〉）

過了一會兒，五祖又對他說：「法則以心傳心。皆令自悟自證。自古佛佛惟傳本體。師師密付本心。」（法是以心傳心，自悟自證。自古以來，所有的佛，所傳的都是自性本體；師師相承的也是這個本心。）（〈行由品第一〉）

「法」是指佛陀的教法。有趣的是，這裏提到的傳承並不是像達摩祖師經由六祖大師承傳衣鉢這種實體的傳承，而是有助於「自悟自證」的以心印心之法。在此之前，五祖大師向神秀大師說明（也是教導）為何他的偈頌沒有明心見性，因此不能得到衣鉢。

弘忍大師告訴神秀大師：「無上菩提。須得言下識自本心。見自本性。不生不滅。於一切時中。念念自見。萬法無滯。一真一切真。萬境自如如。如如之心。即是真實。若如是見。即是無上菩提之自性也。」（〈行由品第一〉）

因此，我們從這些早期五祖對弟子的教化中得到線索，有資格承襲法脈的弟子，將被委以傳承「頓教」的重任，只有「以心印心」傳法，才能引導（弟子）「自悟自解」。

我們也知道「自古佛佛惟傳本體」，但「師師密付本心。」當導師幫助弟子開悟，弟子自悟自解，也要得到導師的印證，弟子方能為人師，傳法後人。六祖大師離開黃梅，在獵人堆裏沉潛多年。他向印宗大師自我介紹，印宗大師在剃度前請惠能出示衣鉢，印宗大師問惠能：「黃梅付囑。如何指授。」惠能答：「指授即無。惟論見性。」（〈行由品第一〉）

教法的目的是幫助弟子自悟自解，藉由識自本心，而證菩提。自性有許多的同義詞，請參照註腳9：中文以「自

‘běn xìng’ (本性), ‘zhēn xìng’ (真性), and just ‘xìng’ (性) interchangeably to mean the same thing. In a similar fashion, English uses ‘inherent nature’, ‘essential nature’, ‘original nature’, ‘fundamental nature’, or just ‘nature’, depending on the context.”

In addition to those terms in this text, one also sees: mind ground, original face, original mind, original source, and even buddha-nature; these are all referring to the same thing. When reading this text it’s important not to get confused as these terms are used interchangeably countless times, they are all discussing the same basic principle. They show up countless times. So why is the essential nature important?

According to the sutra, “Our own essential nature is able to contain the ‘ten thousand things.’ And goes on to state that this includes “the myriad dharmas, absolutely everything, are within the nature of all people.” So absolutely everything in existence that we can perceive comes from this essential nature— everything! Then the sutra goes on to state, “One’s own essential nature is Buddha; apart from this nature there is no other Buddha.” So based on what Huìnéng said to Master Yīnzōng, the entire crux of the teaching the Fifth Patriarch passed on was the ability to see the nature.

Now that we’ve established that the Sixth Patriarch “learned” or rather received from the Fifth Patriarch, what and how did the Sixth Patriarch teach his disciples? Let’s go directly to his teaching method, which he lays out very clearly in Chapter Ten as he is about to pass into Nirvana, and he is speaking to his ten closest room-entering disciples: Fǎhǎi (法海), Zhìchéng (志誠), Fǎdá (法達), Shénhuì (神會), Zhìcháng (智常), Zhìtōng (智通), Zhìchè (志徹), Zhìdào (志道), Fǎzhēn (法珍), and Fǎrú (法如). This list of names is likely given according to monastic seniority, with Dharma Master Fǎhǎi (法海) as the most senior of the monastic disciples, who also happens to be the narrator and compiler of the *Sixth Patriarch Sutra* itself. The Sixth Patriarch says to these ten disciples:

You are different from the others. After I pass away, you should each go and become a master in a different region. I will now teach you how to explain the Dharma without departing from its original source.

【Editor’s note: All quoted passages are from *The Sixth Patriarch’s Dharma Jewel Platform Sutra*. Buddhist Text Translation Society, 3 Sept. 2014.】

☞ To be continued

性」、「本性」、「真性」和「性」來表示同一件事。同樣地，英語也使用 inherent nature、essential nature、original nature、fundamental nature、nature 來表示自性這個詞，使用哪一個字則視前後文而定。（〈行由品第一〉）

在經文中，除了這些名詞以外，讀者還會看到：心地、本來面目、本心、本源，甚至佛性；這些都是指同一件事。閱讀經文時，重要的是不要被混淆，這些詞彙雖然不斷地交替使用，它們都在探討同一個道理。這些名詞反覆出現，究竟「自性」為何如此重要？

《六祖法寶壇經》上說：「何期自性能生萬法」並進一步說明，「一切萬法不離自性」。因此，我們能夠推論萬事萬物的存在，一定都是源於「自性」這個本質。經中又說：「本性是佛，離性無別佛。」（〈般若品第二〉）所以從惠能大師對印宗大師所說的話來看，五祖大師整個傳法的核心就是見性的能力。

我們已經確定六祖大師是「師法」或者「師承」五祖大師，那麼六祖大師又傳給弟子們甚麼呢？我們來研究他的教學方法。在第十品中非常清楚地陳述，六祖大師即將涅槃，他交代最親近的十位入室弟子：法海、志誠、法達、神會、智常、智通、志徹、志道、法珍和法如，這個名單很可能是按照僧眾資歷排列的，法海法師是最資深的弟子，他也是《六祖法寶壇經》的講述者和編纂者。

『汝等不同餘人，吾滅度後，各為一方師。吾今教汝說法，不失本宗』

（你們幾個和其他人不同，等我圓寂之後，你們應該各做一方的人天師表。我現在教你們一個弘法的方式，你們說法不能背離頓教法門的宗旨。）（〈付囑品第十〉）

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☞ 待續