

Summary and Key Points of 36th Lesson of Sixth Patriarch Platform Sutra

Summary

This lesson focuses on the **Single Conduct Samadhi** (一行三昧) as taught by the Sixth Patriarch, Hui Neng. He defines it as the **constant cultivation of maintaining a direct, straightforward, silent mind in all places**—whether walking, standing, sitting, or lying down. This is exactly the same as **heedfulness (appamāda)** taught by the Buddha.

The lesson strongly criticizes the mistaken notion that meditation is merely **sitting still without moving, suppressing thoughts, or seeking peaceful, calm states of mind**. Hui Neng and Bro. Teoh both emphasize that such practices turn one into a "statue" or "dead ashes and rotten wood." True meditation is not about sitting alone; it is about **developing wisdom to liberate the mind** in the midst of life itself.

A key point is the **mind that has no dwelling (心无所住)**—the mind that does not dwell on any perception, thought, or phenomenon. Dwelling occurs the moment you perceive something and get lost in it. The silent mind, by contrast, is just aware without dwelling.

The lesson also distinguishes between **thought-based meditation** (focusing, concentrating, noting, energy-field cultivation) which suppresses defilements temporarily, and **awareness-based meditation** (silent, choiceless awareness) which leads to direct seeing, wisdom, and the uprooting of defilements.

Bro. Teoh shares his own meditation journey, emphasizing that **life itself is the real meditation**. Daily mindfulness leading to heedfulness is the key to awakening. Formal meditation postures and methods are only **initial skilful means** to train the heedless mind; they are not meditation itself.

The lesson concludes with a detailed Q&A session covering the **nature of one's "karmic and spiritual nature"**, the **Second Noble Truth** (attachment as the cause of suffering), and practical advice on how to meditate with understanding—without suppression, control, or resistance.

Key Important Points

1. The Single Conduct Samadhi (一行三昧)

- Defined by Hui Neng as: **constant cultivation of maintaining a direct, straightforward, silent mind in all places.**
- Includes all four postures and all activities in between.
- This is equivalent to **heedfulness (appamāda)** as taught by the Buddha.
- As the *Vimalakirti Sutra* says: "**The straightforward mind is the Bodhimandala; the straightforward mind is the Pure Land.**"

2. Meditation Is Not About Sitting Only

- Sitting still without moving, suppressing thoughts, and seeking calmness turns you into a "**statue**" or "**dead ashes and rotten wood**".
- The real meditation is **in the midst of life itself**—when you can remain peaceful, silent, and unaffected by life situations.
- As the Zen masters say: "**We have enough Buddha statues here; we don't need another one.**"

3. The Mind That Has No Dwelling (心无所住)

- From the *Diamond Sutra*: "**One should produce a thought which is nowhere supported.**"
- **Dwelling** occurs the moment you perceive something and get lost in it—perception leads to dwelling.
- The **silent mind (sati)** is awareness before knowing. It does not dwell anywhere.
- The true meditative mind is **just aware, without dwelling, without grasping.**

4. The Mistake of Suppressing Thoughts

- Trying to stop thoughts is done by the **thought itself**—the controller is the controlled.
- Suppression and control are **not the path**; they are resistance.
- **With wisdom, there is no need to control or suppress**—thoughts are seen as condition-arising, impermanent, and not-self.
- Thought is neither good nor evil; it is the **user of thought** that matters. With wisdom, thought becomes a friend and serves you well.

5. Thought-Based Meditation vs. Awareness-Based Meditation

Thought-Based Meditation	Awareness-Based Meditation
Focuses, concentrates, notes	Silent, choiceless awareness
Develops energy fields, jhanas, nimittas	Develops direct seeing and wisdom
Suppresses defilements temporarily	Uproots defilements through wisdom
Conditioned state	Free mind
Cannot cope with life after retreat	Can cope with life in the midst of activity
Leads to attachment to calmness and peace	Leads to liberation and heedfulness

6. The Real Purpose of Meditation

- **Only truth and wisdom liberate the mind.** Nothing else.
- Meditation is not about seeking calmness, peacefulness, or fantastic experiences.
- It is about **insight into the three characteristics** (impermanence, suffering, non-self) and **uprooting delusion**.
- It is about **straightening views** and developing **right thought, right speech, right action, and right livelihood** (the Noble Eightfold Path).

7. Daily Mindfulness Is the Real Meditation

- Life itself is the real meditation. Life is our greatest teacher.
- **Daily mindfulness leading to heedfulness (appamāda)** is the key to awakening.
- Without daily mindfulness, formal meditation is of little use.
- As the Buddha said in Dhammapada verse 21: "**The heedless are as if dead.**"

8. The Two Types of Nature: Karmic and Spiritual

- **Karmic nature:** Summation of all karmic existences (countless births and deaths). Conditions rebirth.

- **Spiritual nature:** The true mind. When you meditate and silence the mind, you connect to your spiritual nature and inherit its perfections, wisdom, and virtues.
- The phrase "**this nature of mine**" in vows refers to both karmic and spiritual nature—covering all past, present, and future segmented lives.

9. The Second Noble Truth Is Attachment

- As shared by a student: **It is attachment and craving that lead to all suffering.**
- Seeing this clearly is the **beginning of wisdom.**
- Restlessness, inability to sleep, and mental agitation are all due to attachment and heedless thinking.

10. How to Meditate with Understanding

- **Do not suppress, control, or resist thoughts.** Let them be.
- **Do not try to know.** Just be aware.
- **Relax into every mind state that arises.** Maintain silence and awareness.
- **Allow the sankhara (mental activities) to arise and pass away** without following them.
- As J. Krishnamurti said: "**The very flowering of that thought process is the very ending of that thought process.**"
- When you stop feeding thoughts with energy through delusion, they slow down and cease on their own.

11. The Five Mental Hindrances and Spiritual Faculties

- Without stable **spiritual faculties** (faith, viriya, mindfulness, samadhi, wisdom), the **five mental hindrances** (sensual desire, ill-will, sloth and torpor, restlessness, doubt) arise.
- When you cultivate the spiritual faculties, the hindrances cease naturally.
- The mind then becomes **meditative on its own**—peaceful, still, and aware without effort.

12. The 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 arise and pass away without following it. Let it cease naturally.
4. **Trace the origination factor** (wisdom way) —see how it arose through sense contact, then straighten the view to retrospectively cease it.

13. The Danger of Claiming Enlightenment

- **True enlightened beings do not advertise themselves.**
- Those who claim to be enlightened are usually impostors.
- As Master Hsuan Hua said: "**When you become enlightened, you should not say that you are.**"
- The enlightened and unenlightened both can realize Buddhahood—it is just a question of time.
- **Do not hang out a false name.** If no one knows you, that is best.

14. The Cinca Incident and Karmic Retribution

- Even the Buddha had to endure false accusations due to past karmic actions.
- **Do not be gullible** by big names or bad news. Investigate for yourself.
- As the Buddha said: "**The incense, its fragrance will shine forth and spread far and wide.**"

15. Practical Advice for Daily Cultivation

- Maintain a **daily religious routine**:
 - Pay respects to the Triple Gem in the morning.
 - Meditate for 15–30 minutes.
 - Chant and radiate loving-kindness if needed.
 - Throughout the day, be mindful of all actions and movements.
 - Before sleep, meditate again.
- **Do not try to know.** Just maintain awareness.
- When you are in **sati leading to heedfulness, you are destined for enlightenment.**

16. The Awakening Experience (Shared by a Student)

- In deep sleep, the mind can "awakened" via insight.
- The body was perceived as **white foam, full of vibration**—with no concept of a solid body.
- When the mind tried to understand, the concept of body arose again.
- This is the **direct seeing via the true mind.**

- This is what meditation is all about—seeing how creation and solidity arise from perception.

17. The Two Types of Meditation Revisited

- **Samatha (concentration/energy field meditation):** Suppresses defilements; conditioned state; cannot cope with life.
- **Vipassana (insight/wisdom meditation):** Uproots defilements through understanding; free mind; can cope with life.
- The calmness and stillness that come from wisdom are **unconditioned** and **sustainable in daily life**.

18. The Lotus Flower Analogy

- The lotus grows from muddy water but rises above the filth to bloom.
- Similarly, the enlightened being lives in the conditioned world but is **not entangled by it**.
- This symbolizes the Mahayana ideal: **transcending duality while remaining in the world**.

19. Meditation Brings You Back to the Noble Eightfold Path

- If your meditation does not lead to:
 - Right view, Right thought (goodness, kindness, love, compassion)
 - Right speech, right action, right livelihood
 - Right mindfulness and right samadhi
- Then it is **not the meditation taught by the Buddha**.

20. Final Advice

- **Do not be gullible.** Do not just follow the crowd.
- **Investigate for yourself.** The truth will stand up to investigation.
- **Meditation is about developing wisdom to free your mind from delusion.**
- **When you have understanding, you no longer need to control or suppress anything.**
- **Thing is just the way it is. Accept it, and be at peace.**