

Date: 06/22/2024 06/23/2024

Location: Double Saltree Meditation Center

Topics:

1: Dharma talk: The Reincarnation of Six Realms

2: Buddhist Diet Health: Perilla

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Main content:

1: Dharma talk: The Reincarnation of Six Realms

Welcome to Double Saltree Meditation Center, everyone! In Buddhist cosmology, the concept of reincarnation is closely tied to the Six Realms of Existence, which represent the different states of being into which a sentient being can be reborn. This framework illustrates the cycle of samsara—the continuous cycle of birth, death, and rebirth—driven by karma (the moral law of cause and effect). Each realm corresponds to different conditions and experiences based on the accumulated karma of an individual.

Here's an overview of the Six Realms:

1. The Realm of Gods (Deva Realm)

Characteristics: The Deva realm is a state of bliss, beauty, and happiness. Beings in this realm enjoy long lives filled with pleasure and abundance. However, their happiness is temporary, and they may become complacent or detached from spiritual pursuits.

Karma: This realm is attained through positive karma accumulated from virtuous actions, but beings in the Deva realm are still subject to rebirth in lower realms when their merit runs out.

2. The Realm of Demigods (Asura Realm)

Characteristics: The Asura realm is inhabited by beings who possess great power and abilities but are often envious of the Devas. They experience conflicts and jealousy, leading to a life marked by strife.

Karma: This realm is reached through a mix of good and bad karma. Asuras may engage in noble pursuits but are hindered by their greed and desire for power.

3. The Human Realm

Characteristics: The human realm is considered the most favorable for spiritual practice and awakening. Humans experience a balance of pleasure and suffering, allowing for growth and the opportunity to cultivate wisdom and compassion.

Karma: This realm is attained through a combination of good karma and previous experiences. It is viewed as a precious opportunity for enlightenment due to the capacity for self-awareness and moral choice.

4. The Animal Realm

Characteristics: The animal realm is characterized by ignorance, suffering, and a lack of moral awareness. Beings in this realm experience hardship and often live in fear or distress.

Karma: Rebirth in the animal realm results from negative karma, often due to past actions that reflect greed, ignorance, or cruelty.

5. The Realm of Hungry Ghosts (Preta Realm)

Characteristics: Hungry ghosts are depicted as beings with insatiable desires and needs, often suffering from hunger and thirst. They are tormented by cravings and unable to satisfy them, symbolizing the consequences of excessive attachment and desire.

Karma: This realm arises from negative karma, particularly stemming from selfishness, greed, and a lack of generosity.

6. The Hell Realm (Naraka Realm)

Characteristics: The Hell realm is characterized by intense suffering, pain, and torment. Beings in this realm endure severe punishment, which serves as a result of their negative actions in previous lives.

Karma: This realm is the result of particularly harmful actions, such as violence, hatred, and severe wrongdoing. However, it is not eternal; beings in hell can eventually be reborn into higher realms based on their karma.

The Six Realms illustrate the cycle of samsara, emphasizing the impermanent and conditioned nature of existence. Each realm reflects different aspects of the human experience and the consequences of karma. The ultimate goal in Buddhism is to escape this cycle through enlightenment (nirvana), where one transcends the realms of existence and achieves liberation from suffering.

The concept of the Six Realms serves as a teaching tool in Buddhism, encouraging practitioners to reflect on their actions and the nature of existence. By understanding the conditions that lead to rebirth in various realms, individuals can cultivate positive karma through ethical behavior, compassion, and mindfulness, ultimately working toward liberation from the cycle of samsara and the attainment of enlightenment.

2: Buddhist Diet Health: Perilla

Perilla, is a leafy herb commonly used in various Asian cuisines. It has a unique flavor profile and numerous health benefits, making it a valuable addition to a Buddhist diet. Here's an overview of the health benefits of perilla and its relevance in Buddhist dietary practices.

Health Benefits of Perilla in a Buddhist Diet

Nutrient-Rich

Perilla leaves are rich in essential nutrients, including vitamins A, C, and K, as well as minerals such as calcium, potassium, and iron. These nutrients are important for maintaining overall health and well-being.

Anti-Inflammatory Properties

Perilla contains compounds such as rosmarinic acid, which have anti-inflammatory effects. This can help reduce inflammation in the body, potentially lowering the risk of chronic diseases.

Rich in Antioxidants

The antioxidants present in perilla help combat oxidative stress, which can lead to cellular damage and various health issues. Antioxidants support overall health and may enhance longevity.

Supports Digestive Health

Perilla leaves can aid digestion and help alleviate gastrointestinal discomfort. The herb is known to have carminative properties, which can reduce bloating and gas.

Immune System Support

The presence of vitamins and antioxidants in perilla can help strengthen the immune system, making the body more resilient against infections and diseases.

Respiratory Health

Perilla has traditionally been used to alleviate respiratory issues, such as allergies and asthma. Its anti-inflammatory properties may help soothe the respiratory system.

Weight Management

Low in calories and high in fiber, perilla can be a great addition to meals for those looking to manage their weight. The fiber content promotes satiety, helping to control appetite.

Alignment with Non-Harm (Ahimsa)

As a plant-based herb, perilla aligns with the principle of ahimsa (non-harm) central to many Buddhist teachings. Consuming plants and herbs minimizes harm to animals and promotes a compassionate approach to eating.

Perilla is a flavorful and nutritious herb that aligns well with the principles of a Buddhist diet, emphasizing health, balance, and non-harm. Its rich nutrient profile, anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties, and versatility in cooking make it an excellent choice for those seeking to nourish their bodies while practicing mindfulness in their eating habits. By incorporating perilla into meals, practitioners can support their physical health and enhance their overall well-being in accordance with Buddhist teachings.

3: Buddhist Diet Culinary: Rice Balls with Perilla and Nori



Ingredients:

2 cups cooked short-grain rice (Japanese sushi rice or Korean rice)

1 tablespoon sesame oil

1/2 teaspoon salt (adjust to taste)

1/4 cup perilla leaves (shiso leaves), finely chopped (you can substitute with basil if not available)

1/4 cup pickled vegetables (optional, such as pickled plum or radish, for filling)

1 sheet of nori (seaweed), cut into strips or squares

Sesame seeds (optional, for garnish)

Steps:

1. Cook the Rice:

Cook the short-grain rice according to the package instructions. Ideally, let the rice cool to a slightly warm temperature after cooking, as it's easier to shape when it's not too hot.

2. Prepare the Mixture:

In a large bowl, combine the cooked rice, sesame oil, salt, and chopped perilla leaves. Mix gently but thoroughly so that the perilla is evenly distributed throughout the rice.

3. Shape the Rice Balls:

Wet your hands with water to prevent sticking. Take a handful of the rice mixture (about 1/4 cup) and form it into a triangle or ball shape. If desired, make a small indentation in the center and add a bit of pickled vegetable or filling, then mold the rice around it to seal.

4. Wrap with Nori:

If using nori strips, wrap them around the rice balls. If using squares, you can place a square of nori underneath the rice ball or serve it on the side.

5. Garnish (Optional):

Sprinkle sesame seeds on top of the rice balls for added texture and flavor.

6. Serve:

Enjoy the rice balls immediately or pack them for a picnic or lunch. They can be stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 2 days.