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Location: Double Saltree Meditation Center

Topics:

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Main content:

1: Dharma talk: Buddha said Twelve Nidanas

Welcome to Double Saltree Meditation Center, everyone! The Twelve Nidanas, also known as the Twelve Links of Dependent Origination, are a fundamental concept in Buddhism that explains the process of samsara (the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth) and the conditions that lead to suffering. The Twelve Nidanas illustrate how ignorance and craving create a chain of causation that perpetuates the cycle of existence. Understanding these links helps practitioners gain insight into the nature of suffering and the path to liberation (nirvana).

The Twelve Nidanas:

Avidya (Ignorance)

The root cause of suffering. Ignorance of the true nature of reality leads to misconceptions and a distorted view of self and existence.

Samskara (Formations/Volitional Actions)

The mental formations and intentions shaped by ignorance. These actions (karma) influence future rebirths and experiences.

Vijnana (Consciousness)

The moment of consciousness that arises as a result of mental formations. It is the awareness that connects one life to another.

Namarupa (Name and Form)

The combination of mind (nama) and body (rupa). This link represents the existence of a sentient being and the development of identity.

Sadayatana (Six Senses)

The development of the six sense bases: eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind. These sense organs allow for interaction with the external world.

Contact (Sparsha)

The interaction between the senses and external objects, leading to sensory experiences. This contact generates feelings or sensations.

Vedana (Feeling/Sensation)

The feelings that arise from contact, which can be pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral. These feelings play a crucial role in shaping desires and attachments.

Tanha (Craving)

The desire or craving that arises from feelings. Craving leads to attachment and is a major cause of suffering.

Upadana (Clinging/Grasping)

The intensified craving that leads to attachment. Clinging to desires, ideas, or beliefs solidifies the cycle of suffering.

Bhava (Becoming/Existence)

The process of becoming or existence that arises from clinging. This stage sets the conditions for rebirth in one of the six realms.

Jati (Birth)

The actual birth into a new existence, whether in human, animal, or other forms. This link represents the manifestation of a new life influenced by previous actions.

Jaramarana (Aging and Death)

The inevitable decay and death that follow birth. This link highlights the transient nature of existence and the suffering associated with aging and mortality.

Understanding the Twelve Nidanas

The Twelve Nidanas illustrate the interdependent nature of existence and the cycle of samsara. By recognizing how ignorance leads to craving and suffering, practitioners can work to break this cycle through insight, ethical conduct, and mindfulness.

Breaking the Cycle , The path to liberation involves:

Cultivating wisdom to dispel ignorance (avidya).

Engaging in wholesome actions (samskara) that foster positive karma.

Developing mindfulness and insight to understand the nature of reality and the impermanence of existence.

By addressing the roots of suffering and understanding the mechanisms of the Twelve Nidanas, practitioners can progress toward nirvana, ultimately breaking free from the cycle of samsara.

2: Buddhist Diet Health: Brown Sugar

Brown sugar is a type of sugar that retains some of the natural molasses found in sugarcane or sugar beet, giving it a distinct flavor and color. While it is often used in various culinary applications, its role in a Buddhist diet can be examined in terms of its health implications, ethical considerations, and overall balance in dietary practices.

Health Benefits of Brown Sugar in a Buddhist Diet

Less Processed

Brown sugar undergoes less processing compared to white sugar, which means it retains some minerals, such as calcium, potassium, iron, and magnesium. While the amounts are small, they can contribute to overall nutrient intake.

Mild Flavor

The rich, caramel-like flavor of brown sugar can enhance the taste of foods without requiring large quantities. This can help in reducing overall sugar intake while still satisfying sweet cravings.

Energy Source

Like all sugars, brown sugar provides a quick source of energy. This can be beneficial in moderation, especially for those needing a quick boost during physical activities or meditation practices.

Mindfulness in Eating

Using brown sugar encourages mindfulness in cooking and eating. The process of choosing less processed ingredients and being aware of sweetness can enhance the overall experience of meals.

Cultural and Culinary Use

In many Asian cuisines, brown sugar is a traditional sweetener used in various dishes, including desserts, sauces, and marinades. Incorporating brown sugar into these dishes allows for cultural expression and connection to food traditions.

In Buddhism, the emphasis is often placed on a balanced and wholesome diet. This means prioritizing whole, unprocessed foods and using sugar (including brown sugar) as an occasional addition rather than a staple ingredient.

Ethical Considerations

When selecting sugar products, consider the source and production practices. Choosing organic or sustainably produced brown sugar can align with the Buddhist principle of ahimsa (non-harm), promoting compassion for workers, animals, and the environment.

Alternatives

Brown sugar can be a flavorful and less processed sweetener that aligns with a Buddhist diet when used mindfully and in moderation. Its health benefits, along with cultural significance, make it a suitable choice for enhancing dishes while promoting a balanced and compassionate approach to eating. By being mindful of its use and considering ethical sourcing, individuals can incorporate brown sugar into their diets in a way that reflects their values and promotes overall well-being.

3: Buddhist Diet Culinary: Brown Sugar Steamed Bun



Ingredients:

For the Dough:

2 cups all-purpose flour (or bread flour)

1/2 cup warm water (about 110°F or 43°C)

1 tablespoon active dry yeast

2 tablespoons sugar

1 tablespoon vegetable oil

1/2 teaspoon salt

For the Filling:

1/2 cup brown sugar (packed)

2 tablespoons water

1 tablespoon vegetable oil

1 tablespoon cornstarch (optional, for thicker filling)

Steps:

1. Prepare the Dough:

Activate Yeast: In a small bowl, mix the warm water, sugar, and yeast. Let it sit for about 5–10 minutes until it becomes frothy.

Mix Ingredients: In a large mixing bowl, combine the flour and salt. Make a well in the center, then add the yeast mixture and vegetable oil.

Knead the Dough: Mix until a dough forms. Transfer to a floured surface and knead for about 8–10 minutes until smooth and elastic. If the dough is sticky, you can add a little more flour as needed.

Let it Rise: Place the kneaded dough in a lightly oiled bowl, cover it with a damp cloth, and let it rise in a warm place for about 1 hour or until it doubles in size.

2. Prepare the Filling:

Mix Filling Ingredients: In a small saucepan, combine brown sugar, water, vegetable oil. Cook over low heat, stirring until the sugar dissolves. If you want a thicker filling, add cornstarch dissolved in a little water, stirring until the mixture thickens. Remove from heat and let it cool.

3. Shape the Buns:

Divide Dough: Once the dough has risen, punch it down and transfer it to a floured surface. Divide the dough into 10–12 equal pieces (depending on your desired size).

Roll Out: Take each piece and roll it into a circle about 4 inches in diameter.

Add Filling: Place a small spoonful of the brown sugar filling in the center of each circle.

Seal the Buns: Gather the edges of the dough around the filling and pinch to seal, forming a bun. Make sure it is well-sealed to prevent the filling from leaking out during steaming.

4. Steam the Buns:

Prepare Steamer: Line a steamer basket with parchment paper to prevent sticking. Place the buns in the steamer, leaving some space between them to allow for expansion.

Second Rise: Cover the buns with a damp cloth and let them rise for another 15–20 minutes.

Steam: Bring water to a boil in a pot, then place the steamer over the pot. Steam the buns for about 15–20 minutes, or until they are puffed and cooked through.

5. Serve:

Once steamed, carefully remove the buns from the steamer. Allow them to cool slightly before serving.

Enjoy them warm!