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Location: Double Saltree Meditation Center

Topics:

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Main content:

1: Dharma talk: Accurately seeing the mundane world

Welcome to Double Saltree Meditation Center, everyone! In Buddhism, accurately seeing the mundane world means perceiving reality as it truly is, free from the distortions of ignorance, attachment, and delusion. This concept is closely related to the Buddha's teachings on wisdom (prajna), particularly the understanding of the Three Marks of Existence—impermanence (anicca), suffering (dukkha), and non-self (anatta)—and the ability to see beyond appearances and illusions that typically cloud human perception.

Key Aspects of Accurately Seeing the Mundane World

Impermanence (Anicca)

Everything in the world is subject to change. Nothing remains static, and all phenomena—whether material objects, thoughts, or emotions—are in a constant state of flux. To accurately see the world means understanding this fundamental truth of impermanence. This awareness helps prevent attachment, as we realize that nothing can be held onto permanently.

Suffering (Dukkha)

The mundane world is inherently unsatisfactory. The pursuit of pleasure, security, or permanence in worldly things inevitably leads to frustration, because no experience or possession can provide lasting fulfillment. Seeing the world accurately involves recognizing that even pleasurable experiences are tinged with suffering due to their fleeting nature and the craving they generate.

Non-Self (Anatta)

One of the most profound insights in Buddhism is that there is no permanent, unchanging self or soul. What we experience as "self" is a collection of ever-changing physical and mental processes (the Five Skandhas). Accurately seeing the mundane world involves recognizing that clinging to a fixed identity or ego leads to suffering, and that true freedom comes from understanding the absence of a permanent self.

Perception and Reality in Buddhism

In our ordinary experience, the world appears solid, enduring, and filled with individual entities that we identify with. However, from the Buddhist perspective, this is a misunderstanding born out of ignorance (avidya). Our perception of the world is shaped by mental formations (samskara), conditioned responses, and deeply ingrained habits that obscure the true nature of reality.

The Mundane and Ultimate Truths

Buddhism distinguishes between mundane truth (samvriti-satya) and ultimate truth (paramartha-satya): Mundane Truth refers to the way things appear in our everyday experience. We see ourselves and others as separate, lasting entities, and we engage in the world based on those assumptions.

Ultimate Truth is the deeper reality that everything is interconnected, impermanent, and devoid of an inherent self. Accurately seeing the mundane world involves piercing through the mundane truth to understand ultimate truth.

Mindfulness and Wisdom

To develop the ability to accurately see the mundane world, Buddhists cultivate mindfulness (sati) and wisdom (prajna) through meditation and ethical living: Mindfulness helps practitioners observe reality moment by moment without judgment, allowing them to experience life directly rather than through the filter of preconceived notions, desires, or aversions.

Wisdom is the deep understanding of the nature of reality that comes through insight into impermanence, suffering, and non-self.

The Role of Meditation

Meditation practices, such as Vipassana (insight meditation), are designed to help practitioners see the world clearly. In meditation, one observes the mind and body as they truly are, noticing the arising and passing of thoughts, emotions, and sensations. This leads to direct insight into the transient, conditioned, and selfless nature of all phenomena, thereby dissolving ignorance and promoting liberation.

Overcoming Delusion

Accurately seeing the mundane world also involves overcoming various delusions (moha) that cloud our judgment:

Craving (Tanha) and aversion (Dosa) are two major forces that distort how we perceive reality, leading us to chase after pleasurable experiences and avoid discomfort.

By recognizing these delusions, practitioners learn to respond to situations with equanimity, seeing things as they truly are, rather than through the lens of desire or fear.

Applying Insight in Daily Life

To accurately see the mundane world is not limited to formal meditation practice. It is a way of engaging with everyday life.

This involves: Mindful Observation: Paying close attention to the transient nature of daily experiences, whether they are pleasurable, painful, or neutral.

Non-Attachment: Recognizing the impermanent nature of all things and reducing attachment to material objects, relationships, or even one's own identity.

Compassion: Seeing the world clearly allows one to act with greater compassion, as it becomes easier to understand the suffering of others and the conditions that lead to it.

Accurately seeing the mundane world in Buddhism means penetrating beyond superficial appearances to understand the true nature of reality. This involves recognizing the impermanence of all things, understanding the pervasive nature of suffering, and seeing through the illusion of a permanent self. Through mindfulness, meditation, and wisdom, practitioners can cultivate this clear vision, leading to liberation from the cycle of samsara and the attainment of nirvana.

2: Buddhist Diet Health: Dumplings

In the context of Buddhist diet and health, dumplings can be a nutritious and wholesome part of a balanced diet when prepared in alignment with Buddhist principles. A traditional Buddhist diet typically follows a vegetarian or vegan approach, emphasizing plant-based foods that are prepared mindfully, without causing harm to living beings. Here's how dumplings fit into a Buddhist diet:

1. Plant-Based Ingredients

Buddhist teachings promote ahimsa (non-violence) and compassion towards all living beings. As a result, many Buddhists, particularly in Mahayana traditions, adhere to a vegetarian or vegan diet. In this regard, dumplings made with vegetable fillings such as cabbage, mushrooms, tofu, and other plant-based ingredients are ideal.

Health benefits of plant-based dumplings include:

Rich in fiber: Vegetables provide dietary fiber, which aids in digestion and supports gut health.

Packed with vitamins and minerals: Ingredients like cabbage, carrots, and mushrooms are rich in vitamins (A, C, K) and minerals (iron, calcium).

Low in cholesterol: Plant-based dumplings contain no animal products, which makes them naturally low in cholesterol and saturated fats.

2. Nutrient-Dense and Balanced

Dumplings can be part of a balanced meal when filled with a variety of vegetables, legumes, or tofu.

These fillings offer a combination of:

Protein: From tofu, edamame, or legumes, which are excellent sources of plant-based protein.

Healthy fats: Using sesame oil or adding seeds like black sesame to the filling provides healthy unsaturated fats.

Carbohydrates: The dumpling wrappers are made from wheat flour, offering a source of energy through carbohydrates. Whole wheat flour can be used for a more nutritious option, providing more fiber and nutrients.

3. Steamed Dumplings for Health

From a health perspective, steamed dumplings are preferable to fried versions because steaming preserves nutrients and avoids added fats from frying. Steaming is also a gentler cooking method, aligning with the principle of mindful eating, which is an important aspect of Buddhist dietary practices.

They provide enough sustenance without being too heavy.

Vegetable dumplings are a perfect example of how Buddhist dietary principles can meet nutritional needs while promoting non-violence, compassion, and mindfulness. When prepared with wholesome, plant-based ingredients and cooked using healthy methods like steaming, dumplings can contribute to a balanced, nourishing diet that aligns with Buddhist values of health and well-being.

3: Buddhist Diet Culinary: Vegetable Dumplings



Ingredients:

For the Dumpling Dough:

2 cups all-purpose flour

3/4 cup warm water

Pinch of salt (optional)

For the Filling:

1 cup cabbage, finely shredded

1/2 cup carrots, grated

1/2 cup mushrooms, finely chopped (shiitake or button mushrooms work well)

1/2 cup tofu, crumbled (optional for added protein)

1 tablespoon fresh ginger, minced

1 tablespoon soy sauce or tamari (for a gluten-free option)

1 tablespoon sesame oil

1/2 teaspoon white pepper (optional)

Salt to taste

Steps:

1. Make the Dough:

In a large bowl, combine the flour and a pinch of salt (if using). Gradually add the warm water while stirring with chopsticks or a spoon until the dough starts to come together.

Transfer the dough to a floured surface and knead for about 5–7 minutes until it becomes smooth and elastic.

Cover the dough with a damp cloth and let it rest for about 30 minutes.

2. Prepare the Filling:

In a large skillet or wok, heat the sesame oil over medium heat.

Add the ginger, and sauté until fragrant (about 1 minute).

Add the cabbage, carrots, mushrooms, and tofu (if using). Stir-fry the vegetables for 3–4 minutes until softened.

Add the soy sauce and white pepper, and stir to combine. Taste and adjust seasoning with salt if needed.

Remove the mixture from heat and allow it to cool slightly.

3. Assemble the Dumplings:

After the dough has rested, divide it into small pieces, about the size of a walnut.

Roll each piece into a small ball, then flatten it with a rolling pin to form a thin, round wrapper (about 3 inches in diameter).

Place about 1 tablespoon of the vegetable filling in the center of each wrapper.

Fold the wrapper in half over the filling, pressing the edges together to seal. You can pleat the edges for a decorative touch or simply press them down.

4. Cooking Options:

Steaming Method:

Place the dumplings in a bamboo steamer or any steamer basket lined with parchment paper or cabbage leaves (to prevent sticking).

Steam the dumplings for 10–12 minutes until the wrappers are tender and translucent.

5. Pan-Frying Method (Potstickers):

Heat 1 tablespoon of oil in a non-stick skillet over medium heat. Place the dumplings in the skillet and cook for 2–3 minutes until the bottoms are golden brown.

Add 1/4 cup water to the skillet and cover with a lid. Allow the dumplings to steam for an additional 4–5 minutes until the water evaporates and the dumplings are cooked through.

6. Make the Dipping Sauce:

In a small bowl, whisk together soy sauce, rice vinegar, sesame oil, and chili flakes (if using).