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Location: Double Saltree Meditation Center

Topics:

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Main content:

1: Dharma talk: Universally Dedicating

Welcome to Double Saltree Meditation Center, everyone! Universally dedicating is a concept in Buddhist practice that refers to the act of dedicating the merit or positive energy accumulated from good deeds, practices, or virtuous actions for the benefit of all sentient beings. This act of dedication is a selfless and compassionate gesture that transcends individual concerns and aims to spread goodness universally. It is especially prominent in Mahayana Buddhism, where the Bodhisattva ideal emphasizes working for the enlightenment and well-being of all sentient beings.

Meaning of Universally Dedicating

Dedicating Merit: In Buddhist practice, merit (or punya) is earned through virtuous actions, meditation, chanting, or ethical behavior. Universal dedication means transferring the merit of these actions to all sentient beings, rather than keeping it for one's own benefit. The intention is that all beings may experience happiness, wisdom, and ultimately enlightenment.

Interconnectedness of All Beings: Universal dedication recognizes the interconnectedness of all life. According to Buddhist teachings, all beings are connected in a vast web of cause and effect. By dedicating merit universally, a practitioner acknowledges that their personal well-being is tied to the well-being of others, and that true happiness and peace are collective, not individual.

Bodhisattva Vow: In Mahayana Buddhism, the act of universally dedicating merit is closely associated with the Bodhisattva vow—the aspiration to attain enlightenment not only for oneself but for the benefit of all sentient beings. A Bodhisattva works tirelessly over countless lifetimes to liberate others from suffering, and universal dedication is part of this practice.

How to Practice Universal Dedication

After Meditation or Prayer: After completing a meditation session, chanting, or any virtuous act, Buddhists often recite a dedication of merit. The words are usually something like:

"By this merit, may all beings attain enlightenment and be free from suffering. May peace and happiness spread to all corners of the world."

This dedication serves as a closing to the practice and sends the accumulated positive energy outward.

During Acts of Generosity (Dāna): When performing acts of generosity (dāna), such as offering food to monks, giving to charity, or helping someone in need, Buddhists may mentally or verbally dedicate the merit to others. This ensures that the act is performed with a pure intention and benefits others beyond the immediate recipient.

In Daily Life: Universal dedication is not limited to formal practice. Even in everyday activities—like working, cooking, or taking care of family—one can mentally dedicate the positive energy generated by these actions to the welfare of all beings. It turns daily life into a spiritual practice.

Dedication in Buddhist Rituals

Puja and Ceremonies: In Buddhist rituals, such as puja (offering rituals), the dedication of merit is a common element. After making offerings, chanting, or performing rituals, monks or laypeople often recite a dedication of merit to ensure the benefit extends to all beings, including those who have passed away or those in difficult circumstances.

Universally dedicating merit is a profound practice that reflects the core Buddhist values of compassion, generosity, and interconnectedness. It transforms personal spiritual practice into a collective offering, with the aspiration that all sentient beings may find peace, happiness, and enlightenment. By dedicating merit universally, practitioners work to uplift not only themselves but also the entire world, embodying the path of the Bodhisattva who seeks the liberation of all beings.

2: Buddhist Diet Health: Chinese Toon

Chinese toon (*Toona sinensis*), also known as Chinese mahogany, is a popular plant in Asian cuisine and traditional medicine. The young leaves and shoots of the tree are used as a vegetable in many dishes, particularly in Chinese cuisine. It is valued not only for its unique flavor but also for its various health benefits, making it a great addition to a Buddhist diet focused on simplicity, balance, and nourishment.

Nutritional and Health Benefits of Chinese Toon

Rich in Antioxidants:

Chinese toon is packed with antioxidants, such as flavonoids, which help neutralize free radicals in the body. This reduces oxidative stress and inflammation, helping to prevent chronic diseases, including heart disease and cancer.

Anti-inflammatory Properties:

The leaves of Chinese toon contain compounds that have anti-inflammatory effects. Consuming it may help reduce inflammation in the body, contributing to overall health and well-being, which is essential for maintaining balance in a Buddhist diet.

High in Vitamins and Minerals:

Chinese toon is a good source of vitamin C, which is important for immune function, skin health, and collagen production.

It also provides vitamin A, which supports eye health and skin regeneration, and calcium, which is important for bone health.

Supports Digestive Health:

Being high in fiber, Chinese toon aids digestion and promotes regular bowel movements. A diet rich in fiber also helps maintain a healthy gut microbiome, which is important for overall wellness.

May Have Antimicrobial Properties:

Some studies suggest that extracts from Chinese toon may have antimicrobial effects, which can help protect the body against infections. In traditional Chinese medicine, it is often used to treat digestive issues, including diarrhea.

The Buddhist diet emphasizes simple, wholesome foods that nourish the body without overwhelming the senses. Chinese toon, with its unique but mild flavor, adds nutritional value to dishes without being overly stimulating. Its light, yet nourishing qualities make it a suitable ingredient for a balanced and mindful diet.

In Buddhist and related sattvic (pure) diets, foods that are fresh, light, and easy to digest are favored for promoting clarity of mind and physical health. Chinese toon, particularly when eaten fresh or lightly cooked, fits this profile.

Its subtle flavor and freshness are thought to help create a calm and peaceful mental state, which is ideal for meditation and mindfulness.

3: Buddhist Diet Culinary: Fried Rice with Chinese Toon and Cabbage



Ingredients:

- 2 cups cooked rice (preferably cold, leftover rice works best)
- 1 cup Chinese toon leaves (chopped)
- 1 cup cabbage (shredded)
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil (or sesame oil)
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce (or tamari for gluten-free)
- 1 teaspoon sesame oil (for flavoring)
- Salt and pepper to taste

Steps:

1. Prepare the Ingredients

Cook the Rice: If you don't have leftover rice, cook fresh rice and allow it to cool slightly before stir-frying. Cold rice is best as it prevents clumping during cooking.

Chinese Toon: Wash and chop the Chinese toon leaves into small pieces.

Cabbage: Shred the cabbage thinly.

2. Sauté the Aromatics

Heat 1-2 tablespoons of vegetable oil in a large pan or wok over medium heat.

3. Stir-Fry the Vegetables

Add the shredded cabbage to the pan and stir-fry for 3-4 minutes, until it softens slightly but still retains some crunch.

4. Add Chinese Toon and Rice

Add the chopped Chinese toon leaves and stir-fry for another 1-2 minutes until the leaves wilt slightly.

Add the cooked rice to the pan, breaking up any clumps with a spatula or spoon. Stir-fry everything together for 3-4 minutes until the rice is heated through and slightly crispy.

5. Season and Serve

Drizzle the soy sauce (or tamari) over the rice and toss everything to combine evenly.

Add salt and pepper to taste, then drizzle sesame oil over the top for added flavor.

Stir-fry for another minute to allow the flavors to meld together.

6. Garnish and Serve

Remove the fried rice from heat and transfer it to a serving dish.