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Location: Double Saltree Meditation Center

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Topics:

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1: Dharma Talk: The Story of Buddha's Nirvana

Hello everyone! Welcome to Double Saltree Meditation Center, I am Hao Liu! Today, I would like to share the Dharma Talk topic: The Story of Buddha's Nirvana. The Buddha's Nirvana marks the final chapter of his life and is a profound moment in Buddhist tradition. Nirvana, in the context of Buddhism, refers to the ultimate state of liberation and freedom from suffering (dukkha) and the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth (samsara). It is the end of all craving, attachment, and ignorance, leading to the cessation of suffering.

Sakyamuni Buddha's Final Journey

Sakyamuni Buddha, born as Siddhartha Gautama, spent his life teaching the path to enlightenment. He attained enlightenment under the Bodhi tree and spent the rest of his life sharing his insights with others. The event of his own Nirvana marks not just his death but the ultimate realization of the cessation of suffering.

At the age of 80, the Buddha was in the final stages of his life. According to the scriptures, he was traveling through the forests of northern India, accompanied by his disciples, when he became seriously ill. Despite his illness, he continued teaching and guiding his followers. He knew that his time was drawing to a close and that his physical death would mark the end of his earthly presence, but he would leave behind his teachings, the Dharma, to continue helping others reach Nirvana.

The Buddha's final meal is often described as having been offered by a blacksmith named Cunda. Some accounts suggest that the meal, which may have been contaminated or improperly prepared, caused a severe illness that led to the Buddha's imminent death. However, other interpretations suggest that the Buddha, being fully enlightened, accepted this meal with equanimity, demonstrating his detachment from physical discomfort and his focus on the spiritual path.

In his final moments, the Buddha delivered some of his most profound teachings to his disciples. He reminded them that he was not eternal in the physical sense, and that the true path to liberation lay within each individual.

After delivering his final teachings, the Buddha entered a state known as Parinirvana (complete Nirvana) while lying on his side between two trees in a grove near Kushinagar (modern-day Uttar Pradesh, India). Parinirvana refers to the final, absolute Nirvana that occurs after the death of an enlightened being. While a person can attain Nirvana during their lifetime through awakening, Parinirvana is the ultimate release from the cycle of samsara after death.

At the moment of his passing, the Buddha was said to have reached a state of perfect peace and freedom from all physical and mental afflictions. His body, now free of suffering, was cremated, and his relics (referred to as "relics of the Buddha," or "Buddha relics") were distributed to various communities, who enshrined them as sacred objects of reverence.

After his death, the Buddha's teachings were preserved by his followers, who gathered to compile and organize his discourses (sutras). His message of the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path, which leads to the cessation of suffering, continues to inspire millions of people worldwide.

The Buddha's death is seen not as a tragic event, but as the final release from the cycle of rebirth and suffering, a demonstration of the ultimate peace that comes with Nirvana. In Buddhist thought, the Buddha is not mourned in the conventional sense because his passing signifies the complete realization of his teachings, and his presence is seen as enduring through the Dharma and the community of practitioners (Sangha).

The story of Buddha's Nirvana is one of ultimate peace, the transcendence of suffering, and the realization that liberation from samsara is possible for all who follow the path. His death is not seen as an end but as the fulfillment of his mission, demonstrating the fruit of awakening and leaving behind a legacy that would endure for millennia, guiding countless people on the path to enlightenment.

2: Buddhist Diet Health: Taro

Taro is a popular food in many Buddhist cultures, particularly in East and Southeast Asia, where it is considered both nourishing and spiritually significant. In this context, taro (which can be either the root or the leaves) is appreciated not only for its health benefits but also for its connection to mindful eating, simplicity, and respect for nature.

Health Benefits of Taro in a Buddhist Diet:

1. Rich in Nutrients:

Complex Carbohydrates: Taro is a good source of complex carbohydrates, which provide a slow, steady release of energy. This can be particularly beneficial in a Buddhist diet, where balanced energy is important for maintaining focus during meditation or mindfulness practice.

Fiber: Taro is high in dietary fiber, which helps regulate digestion and supports overall gut health. In Buddhism, proper digestion and maintaining a light body are considered important for cultivating clarity of mind.

Vitamins and Minerals: Taro contains several essential nutrients, including vitamin C, vitamin A, potassium, iron, and magnesium. These nutrients contribute to strong immune function, healthy skin, and overall vitality.

2. Low in Fat and High in Antioxidants:

Low in Saturated Fat: Taro is naturally low in fat, particularly saturated fat, making it a heart-healthy choice that aligns with Buddhist principles of health and longevity.

Antioxidant Properties: Taro contains antioxidants like polyphenols and flavonoids, which help fight oxidative stress and reduce inflammation. In Buddhism, maintaining both physical and mental balance is seen as essential for spiritual practice, and antioxidants play a role in preserving overall health and vitality.

3. Supports Healthy Digestion:

The fiber in taro not only aids in digestion but also helps maintain a healthy balance of gut bacteria. A clean digestive system is viewed as crucial in many Buddhist traditions, where physical purity is often linked to mental clarity and calmness.

Some Buddhist traditions emphasize the importance of eating food that is easy to digest, as heavy or difficult-to-digest meals can lead to sluggishness or mental fog.

4. Gluten-Free and Hypoallergenic:

Taro is naturally gluten-free, which makes it an excellent option for individuals with gluten sensitivities or allergies. This is especially relevant for Buddhists who may choose a plant-based diet and need to avoid grains like wheat.

Taro is also less likely to cause allergic reactions compared to other root vegetables, making it a safe and versatile food for those with food sensitivities.

5. Promotes Mindfulness in Eating:

Eating taro can be a mindful practice, as its preparation and consumption encourage attention to the senses. Taro, when cooked, has a creamy texture and subtle flavor, which requires mindful chewing and savoring. In Buddhist traditions, mindfulness in eating is seen as an important practice to cultivate gratitude, awareness, and contentment.

Many Buddhist teachings emphasize eating with awareness of the food's origins, its nourishment, and the interconnectedness of all life. Taro, being a root vegetable, symbolizes the connection to the earth and the cycles of nature.

Taro in Buddhist Culture and Spirituality:

1. Symbolism of Taro:

Connection to the Earth: As a root vegetable, taro is deeply connected to the earth. In Buddhist symbolism, root vegetables can represent groundedness, stability, and nourishment. Just as the roots of a plant are essential to its growth, Buddhist teachings emphasize the importance of being rooted in the present moment and developing a stable mind.

Purity and Simplicity: Taro's simplicity and naturalness make it a fitting food choice in Buddhist cuisine, which often emphasizes the value of simplicity and non-attachment. The process of harvesting, preparing, and eating taro can be seen as a meditation on the impermanence of life and the cycle of birth and rebirth.

2. Taro in Buddhist Monasteries:

Taro is often a staple food in Buddhist monasteries and is prepared in various ways—boiled, steamed, mashed, or made into soups. Monks and nuns typically eat simple meals in line with the Buddhist precept of moderation and non-excess.

Offering to the Buddha: In some Buddhist traditions, taro may be offered to the Buddha during ceremonial practices. Such offerings are made with reverence and mindfulness, symbolizing the offering of one's best effort and appreciation for the nourishment that sustains life.

Taro is a nourishing, versatile food that fits well within a Buddhist-inspired diet. It provides a wealth of health benefits, from its high fiber and antioxidant content to its support for digestive health. Moreover, it aligns with the Buddhist principles of mindfulness, simplicity, and respect for nature. Whether in a savory soup or a sweet pudding, taro offers a wholesome, grounding food that supports both physical well-being and spiritual practice.

3: Buddhist Diet Culinary: Sweet and crispy taro



Ingredients:

- 1 medium-sized taro root
- 2 tablespoons sugar (adjust to taste)
- A pinch of salt
- 1/4 cup cornstarch or rice flour (for coating)
- Vegetable oil (for frying)
- Powdered sugar or cinnamon sugar (optional, for dusting)

Steps:

1. Prepare the Taro:

Peel the taro root carefully. Taro skin is rough and tough, so make sure to remove all of it.

Slice the taro into thin rounds (about 1/8 inch thick) or into thin strips if you prefer. The thinner the slices, the crispier they will become when fried.

2. Boil the Taro (Optional for Softness):

In a large pot, bring water to a boil. Add a pinch of salt and the taro slices.

Boil the taro for about 5-8 minutes, or until slightly tender but not fully cooked (you want them firm enough to hold their shape when fried).

Drain the taro slices and set them aside on a paper towel to absorb any excess water.

(Note: If you want a crispier, drier texture, you can skip the boiling step and fry the raw taro slices directly, but they may take longer to cook.)

3. Coat the Taro:

In a shallow bowl, mix cornstarch (or rice flour) with a pinch of salt. If you're making a sweet version, you can mix the sugar into this dry mixture as well.

Lightly dredge each slice of taro in the cornstarch mixture, ensuring they are evenly coated. Shake off any excess coating.

4. Fry the Taro:

Heat vegetable oil in a frying pan or wok over medium-high heat. You need enough oil to fully submerge the taro slices or to at least cover them halfway.

Once the oil is hot (you can test it by dropping a small piece of taro into the oil — if it sizzles immediately, the oil is ready), carefully add the coated taro slices in batches. Fry them for about 2-3 minutes on each side, or until golden brown and crispy.

Use a slotted spoon to remove the taro from the oil and place them on a paper towel to drain excess oil.

5. Prepare the Malted Taro Mixture:

Pour a little oil into the pot and put the sugar in, combine the taro and sugar. Stir everything together over medium heat until the mixture is heated through and the sugar dissolves.

6. Serve:

Pour the warm malted taro mixture into serving bowls.

You can serve it as is, or chill it in the refrigerator for a few hours if you prefer it cold.