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Location: Double Saltree Meditation Center

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Topics:

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1: Dharma Talk: Kushinagar - Attained Mahaparnirvana

Hello everyone! Welcome to Double Saltree Meditation Center, I am Hao Liu! Today, I would like to share the Dharma Talk topic: Kushinagar - Attained Mahaparnirvana. Kushinagar is an important Buddhist pilgrimage site located in the northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. It is best known as the place where Lord Buddha is said to have attained parinirvana (final nirvana) after his death. The town holds great historical and spiritual significance for Buddhists worldwide.

According to Buddhist tradition, Buddha entered Mahaparinirvana at the age of 80 in Kushinagar, after giving his last teachings to his disciples. He laid down in a reclining position between two sal trees, symbolizing his peaceful passing. It is believed that Buddha attained full enlightenment and ultimate freedom from all suffering at this moment.

The Mahaparinirvana Temple in Kushinagar is built around the place where Buddha is said to have passed away. Within this temple lies the famous reclining Buddha statue, which depicts the Buddha in his final moments, resting on his right side, with his face turned to the right, symbolizing his peaceful transition into Nirvana.

The reclining Buddha statue in the Mahaparinirvana Temple is one of the most iconic images of Buddhism. The statue, measuring about 6 meters in length, is crafted in red sandstone and depicts the Buddha in a serene and relaxed position, indicating his passing from the world of suffering to the eternal bliss of Nirvana.

Auspicious Event in Buddhist History: Mahaparinirvana signifies the end of Buddha's earthly existence and the complete cessation of his physical form. It marks his achievement of the final goal of Buddhism—freedom from samsara. For Buddhists, this event is celebrated as the ultimate realization of the Buddha's teachings on impermanence and liberation.

There are several monuments in Kushinagar associated with Buddha's death and cremation. The Ramabhar Stupa, located a little distance from the Mahaparinirvana Temple, marks the place where

Buddha was cremated after his passing. This stupa, which was constructed by Emperor Ashoka, holds significant importance in the Buddhist tradition.

Buddha's final passing serves as a profound reminder of the impermanent nature of life. His death teaches that all things are subject to change and decay, and attachment to the material world leads to suffering.

Buddha's last words, as recorded in various Buddhist texts, emphasize compassion, wisdom, and the importance of striving for self-realization. One of his famous sayings just before his death was: "Be a lamp unto yourselves. Work out your own salvation with diligence." Mahaparinirvana is the ultimate liberation from suffering. In entering this state, the Buddha transcended all worldly pains, desires, and attachments, achieving the highest state of bliss and peace.

Kushinagar remains one of the most significant pilgrimage destinations for Buddhists worldwide, who come to pay respects to Buddha's final resting place. The town continues to attract pilgrims, scholars, and spiritual seekers, all of whom visit the Mahaparinirvana Temple, meditate, and reflect upon the Buddha's teachings in the serene surroundings.

2: Buddhist Diet Health: Lettuce

Lettuce, like many other vegetables, is often included in Buddhist diets for its lightness, nutritional benefits, and alignment with Buddhist principles of health and wellness. The Buddhist diet typically focuses on plant-based foods, emphasizing simplicity, compassion, and mindfulness in eating. Lettuce, in this context, fits well due to its health benefits and versatility.

Lettuce in Buddhist Diet and Health:

Light and Cooling Nature:

Lettuce is considered a cooling food in many traditional Eastern diets, including those in Buddhist practices. It has a refreshing quality, which can help balance heat in the body, especially in warmer climates or during hot weather.

Cooling foods are often favored in Buddhist dietary practices because they help maintain balance and harmony within the body and mind. These foods are thought to calm excess energy, reduce inflammation, and promote overall peace and balance.

Digestive Benefits:

Lettuce is high in water content (around 95%), which aids in hydration and supports digestion. It is also rich in fiber, which helps maintain regular bowel movements and supports gut health.

The simplicity of lettuce makes it easy on the digestive system, which is particularly important in Buddhist teachings that emphasize mindfulness and a gentle approach to eating.

Low Calorie and High Nutrients:

Lettuce is low in calories but packed with essential vitamins and minerals, such as vitamins A, C, K, and several B vitamins, along with minerals like potassium and folate.

These nutrients support immune function, skin health, bone health, and general vitality, which are essential for maintaining well-being on a Buddhist path that emphasizes mindfulness, longevity, and compassion toward oneself.

Balance and Moderation:

In the Buddhist diet, moderation is key. Lettuce, being a light and easy-to-digest vegetable, is often eaten as part of balanced meals that include other vegetables, grains, legumes, and plant-based proteins.

Detoxification and Cleansing:

Lettuce contains chlorophyll, which is believed to help in the body's detoxification process. In Buddhist traditions, eating purifying foods helps maintain both physical and spiritual cleanliness.

The diuretic properties of lettuce, combined with its high water content, can help flush out toxins and keep the kidneys and liver healthy, supporting overall well-being.

Lettuce is a great addition to a Buddhist diet due to its simplicity, health benefits, and alignment with the values of balance, moderation, and mindfulness. It can be easily incorporated into a variety of meals while providing hydration, essential nutrients, and digestive support. By consuming fresh, plant-based foods like lettuce, individuals can maintain a healthy body and mind, which are essential components of Buddhist practice.

3: Buddhist Diet Culinary: Mushroom and vegetable hotpot



Ingredients:

For the broth:

6 cups vegetable broth (or mushroom broth for extra flavor)

1 tbsp soy sauce (or tamari for gluten-free)

1 tbsp miso paste (white or red)

1-2 tsp sesame oil (for flavor)
1-2 slices of ginger, smashed
1-2 dried shiitake mushrooms (optional, for extra umami)

For the hot pot:

1 cup shiitake mushrooms, sliced
1 cup enoki mushrooms (or any other mushroom variety)
1 medium carrot, julienned or thinly sliced
1 zucchini, sliced into half-moons
1 cup baby bok choy (or any leafy green like spinach or napa cabbage)
1 cup baby corn (or regular corn cut into bite-sized pieces)
1 cup tofu (optional), cubed (or use tempeh for more protein)
1/2 cup dried wood ear mushrooms (optional, soaked)
1/2 cup shiitake mushroom caps (optional, for added texture)

Steps:

1. In a large pot, combine the vegetable broth, soy sauce, miso paste, sesame oil, ginger and dried shiitake mushrooms (if using).

Bring the broth to a simmer over medium heat and cook for about 10-15 minutes, allowing the flavors to meld together. Taste and adjust with extra soy sauce or miso paste as needed.

Once ready, remove the ginger. If you want a cleaner broth, you can strain it, but leaving the ingredients in adds extra flavor.

2. Prepare the ingredients for the hot pot:

While the broth is simmering, prep your vegetables and mushrooms. Slice the mushrooms, carrots, zucchini, and baby corn. Cut the tofu into cubes if using, and rinse any leafy greens like bok choy. If you're using dried wood ear mushrooms, soak them in warm water for about 20 minutes and then slice them thinly.

3. Assemble the hot pot:

Arrange all the vegetables, mushrooms, and tofu (if using) on a large platter or separate bowls. This allows everyone to pick what they want to add to the hot pot.

4. Cooking the hot pot:

Once the broth is ready, bring it to a gentle simmer and transfer it to a portable hot pot or a large shallow pot at the table.

Begin adding the ingredients to the broth, starting with the denser vegetables like carrots, baby corn, and harder mushrooms like shiitake. Let them cook for 3-4 minutes before adding the softer ingredients like zucchini, bok choy, and enoki mushrooms.

Tofu can also be added to cook and warm through.

5. Serving:

Let everyone dip their ingredients into the broth until they're cooked to their desired tenderness. If you're using noodles, cook them separately in another pot and add them to the hot pot when you're ready to serve.

Once everything is cooked, you can garnish the hot pot with fresh cilantro drizzle a bit of sesame oil or chili oil for extra flavor.