

Date: 04/05/2025 04/06/2025

Location: Double Saltree Meditation Center

Teacher: Hao Liu

Topics:

1: Dharma Talk: The Heart Sutra

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1: Dharma Talk: The Heart Sutra

Hello everyone! Welcome to Double Saltree Meditation Center, I am Hao Liu! Today, I would like to share the Dharma Talk topic: The Heart Sutra. The Heart Sutra is one of the most well-known and revered scriptures in Mahāyāna Buddhism. It is a concise yet profound exposition of the essence of wisdom (prajñā), distilling the teachings of emptiness (śūnyatā) from the vast Prajñāpāramitā literature.

The Heart Sutra teaches that all phenomena, including the five aggregates (form, sensation, perception, mental formations, and consciousness), are empty of inherent existence. This realization helps practitioners transcend attachment, leading to liberation from suffering.

The Heart Sutra declares that by fully understanding emptiness, one becomes free from obstructions of the mind, fear, and all delusions. This insight leads to inner peace and unshakable clarity.

The Heart Sutra is recited and studied in Zen, Chan, Tibetan, and other Buddhist traditions worldwide. Its concise yet powerful teaching makes it accessible for both monastics and lay practitioners.

The original text of The Heart Sutra is as follows:

WHEN THE BODHISATTVA AVALOKITESVARA, WAS COURSING IN THE DEEP PRAJNA PARAMITA, HE PERCEIVED THAT ALL FIVE SKANDHAS ARE EMPTY, THUS HE OVERCAME ALL ILLS AND SUFFERING.

O, SARIPUTRA, FORM DOES NOT DIFFER FROM VOIDNESS, AND VOIDNESS DOES NOT DIFFER FROM FORM. FORM IS VOIDNESS AND VOIDNESS IS FORM; THE SAME IS TRUE FOR FEELING, CONCEPTION, VOLITION AND CONSCIOUSNESS.

SARIPUTRA, THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE VOIDNESS OF ALL DHARMAS ARE NON-ARISING, NON-CEASING, NON-DEFILED, NON-PURE, NON-INCREASING, NON-DECREASING.

THEREFORE , IN THE VOID THERE IS NO FORM, FEELING, CONCEPTION, VOLITION OR CONSCIOUSNESS; NO EYE, EAR, NOSE, TONGUE, BODY OR MIND; NO FORM, SOUND, SMELL, TASTE, TOUCH, MIND-OBJECT, OR EYE REALM, UNTIL WE COME TO NO REALM OF CONSCIOUSNESS.

NO IGNORANCE AND ALSO NO ENDING OF IGNORANCE, UNTIL WE COME TO NO OLD AGE AND DEATH, AND NO ENDING OF OLD AGE AND DEATH. ALSO, THERE IS NO TRUTH OF SUFFERING, OF THE CAUSE OF SUFFERING, OF THE CESSATION OF SUFFERING, NOR OF THE PATH.

THERE IS NO WISDOM, AND THERE IS NO ATTAINMENT WHATSOEVER. BECAUSE THERE IS NOTHING TO BE ATTAINED, THE BODHISATTVA , RELYING ON PRAJNA PARAMITA, HAS NO OBSTRUCTION IN HIS MIND. BECAUSE THERE IS NO OBSTRUCTION, HE HAS NO FEAR. AND, THUS, HE PASSES FAR BEYOND CONFUSED IMAGINATION AND REACHES ULTIMATE NIRVANA.

THE BUDDHAS OF THE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE, ALSO RELYING ON THE PRAJNA PARAMITA, HAVE ATTAINED SUPREME ENLIGHTENMENT.

THEREFORE, THE PRAJNA PARAMITA IS THE GREAT MAGIC SPELL, THE GREAT SPELL OF ILLUMINATION, THE UTMOST SPELL, THE SUPREME SPELL, WHICH CAN TRULY PROTECT ONE FROM ALL SUFFERING WITHOUT FAIL.

HENCE, HE UTTERED THE SPELL OF PRAJNA PARAMITA, SAYING, “GATE, GATE, PARAGATE, PARASAMGATE, BODHI, SVAHA!”

2: Buddhist Diet Health: Purple Sweet Potato

In the Buddhist diet, food is not only nourishment but also a means to cultivate mindfulness and compassion. The purple sweet potato (*Ipomoea batatas*) is a revered ingredient, valued for its nutritional benefits, healing properties, and vibrant energy that supports both the body and mind.

Health Benefits of Purple Sweet Potato

1. Rich in Antioxidants & Supports Longevity

The deep purple color of this sweet potato comes from anthocyanins, powerful antioxidants that help protect cells from damage, reduce inflammation, and promote longevity—aligning with the Buddhist principle of preserving health through natural foods.

2. Nourishes the Digestive System

Purple sweet potatoes are rich in dietary fiber, which aids digestion, prevents constipation, and promotes gut health. In the Buddhist diet, easily digestible and gentle foods are preferred to support meditation and overall well-being.

3. Strengthens Immunity

Packed with vitamins A, C, and B-complex, as well as iron and potassium, purple sweet potatoes help boost the immune system, keeping the body resilient and in balance.

4. Provides Sustainable Energy

Buddhist practitioners, especially monks and nuns who follow a plant-based diet, benefit from slow-releasing carbohydrates in purple sweet potatoes, which provide steady energy without blood sugar spikes. This makes it an ideal food for long meditation sessions and daily activities.

5. Supports a Peaceful Mind & Emotional Balance

In traditional wisdom, purple-hued foods are believed to calm the mind and enhance spiritual awareness. The magnesium and tryptophan in purple sweet potatoes promote relaxation, reducing stress and anxiety—helping practitioners maintain clarity and inner peace.

In Buddhist cultures, purple sweet potatoes symbolize humility, nourishment, and gratitude. Their earthy, grounding energy aligns with Buddhist values of simplicity, sustainability, and respect for nature's gifts.

3: Buddhist Diet Culinary: Purple Sweet Potato Mochi Cake



Ingredients:

1 cup mashed purple sweet potato (about 1 medium sweet potato)

1 ½ cups glutinous rice flour (Mochiko)

½ cup coconut milk (or whole milk)

½ cup sugar (adjust to taste)

¼ cup unsalted butter (melted) or coconut oil

1 tsp vanilla extract

1 tsp baking powder

¼ tsp salt

Optional Toppings:

Toasted sesame seeds

Shredded coconut

Powdered sugar

Steps:**1. Preheat Oven:**

Preheat your oven to 350°F (175°C). Grease an 8x8-inch baking pan or line it with parchment paper.

2. Prepare the Sweet Potato:

Peel and steam (or bake) the purple sweet potato until soft. Mash it smoothly and let it cool.

3. Mix the Wet Ingredients:

In a mixing bowl, whisk together mashed sweet potato, sugar, vanilla extract, melted butter, and coconut milk until smooth.

4. Incorporate Dry Ingredients:

Sift in the glutinous rice flour, baking powder, and salt. Mix until you get a smooth batter (it will be thick and sticky).

5. Bake:

Pour the batter into the prepared baking pan. Smooth the top with a spatula. Bake for 40–45 minutes or until the edges turn golden brown and a toothpick inserted comes out clean.

6. Cool & Slice:

Let the mochi cake cool in the pan for about 15 minutes before slicing. The texture will be slightly crisp on the edges and chewy inside.

7. Serve & Enjoy:

Sprinkle with toasted sesame seeds or shredded coconut for extra flavor. Serve warm or at room temperature with tea or coffee.