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1: Dharma Talk: The Growth of Chan Buddhism in China

Hello everyone! Welcome to Double Saltree Meditation Center, I am Hao Liu! Today, I would like to share the Dharma Talk topic: The Growth of Chan Buddhism in China.

The inheritance of Zen Buddhism (Chan Buddhism in China) from Bodhidharma to Huineng marks one of the most critical and transformative periods in the development of the tradition. Bodhidharma, the legendary Indian monk credited with bringing Chan to China in the 6th century, and Huineng, the sixth and last of the traditional Chan patriarchs, represent two pivotal figures who shaped the core teachings of Zen/Chan. Their teachings on direct experience, meditation, and the realization of emptiness profoundly impacted the evolution of Zen, laying the groundwork for both the Chan tradition in China and the development of Zen Buddhism in Japan.

Let's explore the inheritance of Zen Buddhism from Bodhidharma to Huineng. Bodhidharma's arrival in China marks the beginning of Chan Buddhism. His key teachings emphasized meditation (dhyāna) and direct experience, bypassing the reliance on scriptures, rituals, and doctrinal analysis. Bodhidharma is famous for his mind-to-mind transmission of the Dharma, a teaching method that emphasized direct insight rather than theoretical knowledge.

Bodhidharma's teaching was transmitted to Huike, his most famous disciple, who continued the work of spreading Chan practice and dhyāna in China. Known for his deep devotion to Bodhidharma's teachings, Huike received the Dharma transmission directly from Bodhidharma and is said to have been the first to pass down the Chan lineage. One famous story of Huike's devotion is when he cut off his own arm as an offering of his sincerity to Bodhidharma.

Sengcan (the 3rd Patriarch): Sengcan's writings, particularly the "Xinxin Ming" (Verses on the Faith-Mind), emphasize non-duality and the essential nature of emptiness. Sengcan's teachings were pivotal in shaping the practice of non-attachment and non-conceptual meditation, core principles in Chan.

Daoxin and Hongren (4th and 5th Patriarchs): The 4th and 5th Patriarchs continued the development of the gradual enlightenment approach while also maintaining the emphasis on meditation. However, it was during the leadership of Hongren (the 5th Patriarch) that a critical shift would take place.

The transition from gradual enlightenment to sudden enlightenment in Chan Buddhism is most famously marked by Huineng (638–713), the 6th Patriarch of Chan. Huineng's teachings represent a profound shift in Chan thought and practice, and his influence is one of the main reasons Chan became the dominant school of Chinese Buddhism.

Huineng's teachings, which came to be known as the Sudden Enlightenment school of Chan, dramatically shifted the focus of Chan practice. Unlike the gradual enlightenment approach, which suggested that enlightenment was a slow process involving deep meditation and cultivation over time, Huineng emphasized that awakening could occur at any moment, regardless of one's past actions or state of mind.

Huineng taught that all beings have the Buddha-nature within them and that true enlightenment is realized when one understands that the mind is inherently empty of attachment. He emphasized the importance of recognizing the mind's inherent nature and the non-duality of all things. Huineng's teachings put forward the idea that awakening does not rely on intellectual study or rituals but rather on direct experience. He encouraged practitioners to meditate on the mind itself and to transcend dualistic thinking.

The inheritance of Zen Buddhism in China, from Bodhidharma to Huineng, reflects a deepening and evolving understanding of meditation, enlightenment, and the nature of the mind. Bodhidharma's direct transmission of the Dharma and his emphasis on meditation as the path to awakening laid the groundwork for Chan Buddhism. Over time, figures like Huike, Sengcan, and Hongren further developed the teachings, culminating in Huineng's sudden enlightenment approach, which radically shifted the course of Chan Buddhism.

2: Buddhist Diet Health: Choy Sum

Choy Sum, also known as Chinese mustard greens, is a popular leafy vegetable in Chinese cuisine and is widely appreciated in many Buddhist and vegetarian diets for its nutritional benefits, mild flavor, and versatility. It is often used in stir-fries, soups, and dishes like boiled choy sum, making it a common vegetable in Buddhist vegetarian meals.

Choy Sum is considered both a healthy and wholesome food in Buddhist cuisine, especially due to its nourishing properties and its connection to the practice of mindful eating. Let's explore the health benefits of choy sum and how it fits into a Buddhist diet.

1. Rich in Nutrients

Choy Sum is loaded with important nutrients that contribute to overall health:

Vitamins and Minerals: It is an excellent source of vitamin C, vitamin A, and vitamin K. These vitamins are important for immune function, vision, and bone health, making it a good choice for maintaining general well-being.

Calcium: Choy sum is also rich in calcium, which is essential for bone health and is particularly important in a plant-based Buddhist diet where dairy is often avoided.

Iron: It contains iron, a vital mineral needed for the production of hemoglobin in the blood, which helps prevent anemia. This is crucial for vegetarians, as plant-based sources of iron are often not as easily absorbed as animal sources.

Folate: This leafy green is also rich in folate, which is important for cell function and tissue growth, and is particularly beneficial for pregnant women.

2. High in Antioxidants

Choy sum contains antioxidants, including beta-carotene and flavonoids, which help protect the body from harmful free radicals. The consumption of antioxidant-rich vegetables like choy sum supports detoxification, reduces inflammation, and promotes overall longevity—principles that align with the Buddhist concept of maintaining balance and health in the body and mind.

3. Low in Calories and High in Fiber

Choy sum is low in calories and high in fiber, making it an excellent food for those seeking to maintain or lose weight in a healthy way. The fiber content also promotes digestive health, ensuring smooth digestion and preventing constipation.

Buddhist Diet: The Buddhist diet often emphasizes simplicity, mindfulness, and moderation. Vegetables like choy sum, which are low in calories but high in essential nutrients, are ideal for those who practice a simple, plant-based diet. The high fiber content also aids in mindfulness around eating, as it promotes satiety and helps control appetite in a natural, wholesome way.

4. Anti-inflammatory Properties

Many green leafy vegetables, including choy sum, have anti-inflammatory properties due to the presence of vitamin K, omega-3 fatty acids, and other phytonutrients. Chronic inflammation is believed to be a root cause of many diseases, and reducing inflammation through diet is in line with Buddhist principles of maintaining harmony in both body and mind.

5. Support for Detoxification

The diuretic properties of choy sum can help the body eliminate toxins through urine. A diet high in water-rich vegetables like choy sum supports the body's natural detoxification processes, which is in alignment with Buddhist views on purification of the body and mind.

3: Buddhist Diet Culinary: Boiled Choy Sum



Ingredients:

- 1 bunch of Choy Sum (Chinese mustard greens)
- 2 cups of water
- 1 tablespoon of vegetable oil (or sesame oil for added flavor)
- Salt, to taste
- Soy sauce (optional, for drizzling)
- A few drops of sesame oil (optional)
- Ginger (optional, if you like a little extra zing)

Steps:

Prepare the Choy Sum:

Rinse the choy sum thoroughly to remove any dirt or grit. Trim the ends of the stems if they're tough or fibrous.

Cut the choy sum into 3-4 inch pieces, or leave them whole if the stems are tender.

Boil the Greens:

In a large pot, bring water to a boil.

Add a pinch of salt to the water (this helps to retain the color and flavor of the greens).

Once the water is boiling, add the choy sum. Cook for about 2-4 minutes or until the greens are tender but still vibrant and bright green. You want to avoid overcooking them.

Test by poking a stem with a fork; it should be tender but not mushy.

Drain the Greens:

Once cooked, drain the choy sum in a colander or gently scoop them out with tongs. If you want to preserve the green color, you can briefly rinse them with cold water or plunge them into an ice bath to stop the cooking process.

Season the Greens:

Heat vegetable oil (or sesame oil) in a small pan over medium heat. If using sauté it until fragrant, about 30 seconds.

Pour the oil over the boiled choy sum. For a more authentic flavor, you can drizzle some soy sauce and a few drops of sesame oil over the greens as well.

Serve:

Serve immediately as a side dish with your favorite main course, like rice or stir-fry. You can also garnish with a little extra sesame oil or some finely chopped ginger or chili for a kick.