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Location: Double Saltree Meditation Center

Teacher: Hao Liu

Topics:

1: Dharma Talk: Letting Go of Attachment — Realizing Joy through Dependent Origination.

2: Buddhist Diet Health: Smoked Plums (wu mei)

3: Buddhist Diet Culinary: Lotus Root Stuffed with Sticky Rice & Smoked Plums

Main content:

1: Dharma Talk:

Hello everyone! Welcome to Double Saltree Meditation Center, I am Hao Liu! Today, I would like to share the Dharma Talk topic: Letting Go of Attachment — Realizing Joy through Dependent Origination. Though the theme appears simple, it points directly to the heart of the Dharma. Without understanding the harm of attachment, practice cannot enter the right path. Without seeing the truth of dependent origination, liberation remains distant. Only by seeing through attachment via insight into dependent origination, and by experiencing release through letting go, can we truly realize that joy arises from the mind.

From where does suffering arise? The Buddha taught that its root lies in attachment—attachment to a self, to what is “mine,” and to all phenomena we try to grasp or control. Because of attachment, there is clinging; because of clinging, there is loss; because of loss, there is suffering. Thus the cycle continues without end.

After his enlightenment, Shakyamuni Buddha frequently taught the principle of dependent origination: “When this exists, that arises; when this ceases, that ceases.” All phenomena arise due to causes and conditions. Nothing exists independently, permanently, or unchangingly.

If this is so, then everything we cling to—status, relationships, possessions, even thoughts and identity—is but a temporary convergence of conditions. Yet beings, not understanding this truth, grasp at illusion as though it were permanent, and thus give rise to endless affliction.

Let us reflect carefully: is this not our own experience?

We cling to others’ opinions of us, and feel disturbed at the slightest criticism.

We cling to relationships, and feel fear when they change.

We cling to what we possess, and suffer deeply when it is lost.

These sufferings do not come from external circumstances themselves, but from the mind’s grasping.

The Buddha once compared attachment to holding a burning coal, mistaking it for something valuable. Though it causes pain, one refuses to let go. So it is with attachment.

There was once a monk who practiced diligently but remained troubled by conflict with others. He complained, “They belittle me, insult me, and speak ill of me.” The Buddha asked, “If you do not accept what they say, how can it harm you?” The monk fell silent.

This reveals a crucial point: suffering is not imposed by others—it is taken up by oneself.

If the mind does not grasp, external conditions cannot disturb it.

If the mind does not cling, phenomena cannot bind it.

To “let go of attachment” does not mean to reject the world, but to no longer be bound by it.

But how do we let go? We must begin with understanding.

If we do not see the illusory nature of things, forcing ourselves to let go becomes suppression.

If we truly see their nature, letting go happens naturally.

Thus the Buddha taught us to contemplate dependent origination:

See how all things arise due to conditions;

see how all things pass away when conditions change.

Nothing can be held onto forever;

nothing can be fully controlled.

There is a well-known story: a woman who lost her child was overwhelmed with grief and begged the Buddha to bring the child back to life. The Buddha told her to find a household where no one had ever died and bring back mustard seeds. She searched everywhere but found none. Through this, she realized the universality of death. Her mind shifted—from attachment to understanding, from sorrow to acceptance.

This is “realizing joy through dependent origination.”

When she clung to the belief, “My child should not have died,” her suffering was unbearable.

When she understood that all beings are subject to death, her heart gradually released its grip.

After letting go, sorrow may remain, but despair dissolves. Memory remains, but without bondage. In that transformation, a quiet joy begins to arise.

Another teaching speaks of a man struck by a poisoned arrow who insists on knowing who shot it and what it was made of before accepting treatment. The Buddha used this to illustrate how people cling to unnecessary questions instead of addressing suffering directly.

Attachment often keeps us from liberation in the present moment.

We cling to “Why did this happen to me?” instead of asking “How should I respond?”

We cling to how things should be, instead of accepting how they are.

With a shift in perspective, a new freedom emerges.

Letting go is not loss—it is liberation.

It is not passivity—it is clarity.

It is not emptiness—it is spaciousness.

In the Dharma, this is called relinquishment. When we relinquish, the mind becomes light and at ease. Within that ease, joy naturally arises.

This joy is not dependent on external conditions. It arises from the openness of the heart.

When attachment lessens, the mind becomes like space—able to hold all things.

When attachment dissolves, the mind becomes like a mirror—reflecting clearly, yet unstained.

This is the joy of inner realization.

One may ask: if letting go brings such freedom, why is it so difficult?

Because habitual tendencies run deep. For countless lifetimes, we have been conditioned to grasp and identify—“this is mine,” “this is me.” To transform this habit requires steady practice.

We may begin in three ways:

First, contemplate impermanence.

All conditions are constantly changing. Joy does not last, but neither does pain. Seeing this weakens our grip.

Second, contemplate non-self.

The body is not the self; thoughts are not the self; emotions are not the self. All arise due to causes and conditions. With this insight, attachment loosens.

Third, cultivate mindfulness.

When thoughts arise, observe them without following them. Over time, the mind separates from its habitual patterns, and clinging fades.

Further, we may practice generosity.

Giving is a powerful antidote to attachment. Giving material things reduces attachment to possessions; sharing the Dharma reduces attachment to views; offering fearlessness reduces attachment to self-protection.

Each act of sincere giving is an act of letting go. Each act of letting go is a step toward freedom.

Over time, the mind becomes lighter.

There was once a lay practitioner of modest means who lived simply but radiated peace. When asked why, he said, “What I let go of is small; what I gain is great—the freedom of the heart.”

Indeed, what we release is not a loss. What we cling to becomes our burden.

Consider: if your hands are already full, you cannot receive anything more. But if they are empty, you are free to receive or release as you wish.

So it is with the mind.

When the mind is full of attachments, there is no room for joy.

When the mind is unburdened, joy flows naturally.

Thus, “joy arises from the mind,” and its condition is a mind free from clinging.

Even in his final days, the Buddha faced death with perfect calm. When asked if he feared it, he remained serene. Why? Because he had relinquished all attachments and was no longer bound by birth and death.

This is the ultimate joy—beyond gain and loss, beyond life and death.

Though we may not yet reach such a state, we can proceed step by step:

Let go of small attachments, such as fleeting emotions;

let go of deeper attachments, such as judgments and identity;

eventually, let go of the root attachment—the sense of self.

With each step, the mind becomes lighter and more at peace.

Gradually, we discover:

Many of our troubles were unnecessary;

many of our struggles can be released;

and the joy we sought was always within.

It was merely obscured by attachment.

Like clouds covering the sun—the sun has never ceased to shine. When the clouds disperse, light appears naturally.

So too with joy.

In summary:

Dependent origination reveals the true nature of reality;

seeing clearly, attachment loosens;

as attachment loosens, the mind becomes free;

and in that freedom, joy naturally arises.

This joy does not need to be created or pursued. It is the natural expression of the awakened mind.

May we follow the teachings of the Buddha, contemplate dependent origination, and gradually release attachment. In daily life, may we practice letting go, discovering ease within release, and joy within ease.

One day, when we can face gain and loss without disturbance, and meet change without confusion,
that calm clarity and quiet freedom

will be the truest realization that joy arises from within.

—A joy without form, yet undeniably real;

independent of conditions, yet present in every moment.

May we encourage one another and walk this path together.

2: Buddhist Diet Health: Smoked Plums (wu mei)

In a Buddhist or temple-style diet, foods are often evaluated not only for physical health but also for how they influence internal balance and mental clarity. Smoked plums (wu mei) are a traditional ingredient that fits quite naturally into this framework.

Smoked plums are made from unripe plums that are smoked and dried, giving them a distinctly sour, slightly smoky taste. They're commonly used in herbal drinks (like sour plum tea) and light, plant-based dishes.

1. Astringent & Digestive Support

In traditional East Asian dietary theory:

Wu mei is considered astringent, helping to stabilize digestion

It may help with mild diarrhea or digestive imbalance

Its sourness can stimulate appetite gently

2. Balancing Heat & Thirst

Smoked plums are often used to:

Relieve internal “heat” (a traditional concept)

Quench thirst and promote fluid balance

3. Gentle Detox & Lightness

In a plant-based Buddhist diet:

Wu mei adds strong flavor without heaviness

It allows dishes to remain simple yet satisfying

4. Flavor Without Stimulation

Provides a bold taste (sour/smoky)

Without being overly stimulating or pungent

So it can enhance food while still maintaining dietary discipline.

3: Buddhist Diet Culinary: Lotus Root Stuffed with Sticky Rice & Smoked Plums



Ingredients:

2 lotus roots (choose ones with large, intact holes)

100g glutinous (sticky) rice

6–8 smoked plums

Rock sugar (to taste)

Brown sugar (to taste, for color and flavor)

Water (enough to cover)

(Optional: red dates, osmanthus flowers)

Steps:

1. Prepare the rice

Soak the glutinous rice for 2–4 hours, then drain.

Prepare the lotus root

Peel and wash the lotus root

Cut off a small “lid” from one end

Stuff the soaked rice into the holes, using chopsticks to gently press it in

2. Seal

Place the cut “lid” back on and secure it with toothpicks if needed.

3. Cook

Put the stuffed lotus root into a pot

Add smoked plums, rock sugar, brown sugar, and enough water to

4. cover

Bring to a boil, then simmer on low heat for 1.5–2 hours

5. Soak for flavor

Turn off the heat and let the lotus root sit in the liquid for several hours or overnight to absorb more flavor.

6. Slice & serve

Remove, slice into pieces, and drizzle with the cooking syrup.