

Date: 05/23/2026 05/24/2026

Location: Double Saltree Meditation Center

Teacher: Hao Liu

Topics:

1: Dharma Talk: Joy Born of Compassion — Finding Inner Peace Through Altruism.

2: Buddhist Diet Health: Hawthorn Berries

3: Buddhist Diet Culinary: Hawthorn Jelly (Shan Zha Gao)

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: Joy Born of Compassion — Finding Inner Peace Through Altruism. Most people in the world believe that happiness comes from self-satisfaction: gaining wealth brings joy, achieving status brings pride, and obtaining what one desires brings comfort. Yet such happiness depends on external conditions. When conditions change, that happiness fades. In this way, worldly joy is often fleeting—arising and passing, unstable and unreliable.

The teaching of the Buddha points to a very different path. True and lasting joy does not arise from “getting,” but from “giving”; not from self-centered pursuit, but from benefiting others.

The Buddha, Shakyamuni, spent his entire life teaching and guiding countless beings. From a life of royal privilege, he renounced comfort in search of truth. After attaining enlightenment, he did not remain in seclusion to enjoy personal liberation. Instead, out of great compassion, he returned to the world and taught tirelessly for over forty years.

He encountered reverence and devotion, but also doubt, criticism, and even hostility. Yet his mind remained steady, abiding in what is known as the joy of the Dharma—a deep, unshakable inner peace.

Why was this so?

Because his mind was free from attachment to a fixed sense of self. In its place was boundless compassion.

Attachment to the “self” gives rise to constant comparison: gain and loss, praise and blame, success and failure. From this come greed, anger, and delusion. The stronger the attachment, the more unstable one’s happiness becomes.

Having realized the truth of non-self, the Buddha no longer clung to “I” or “mine.” Without this fixation, there is no ground for conflict between self and others. From such understanding, compassion naturally arises—vast, impartial, and unconditional.

There is a well-known story:

A man once approached the Buddha and hurled insults at him. The Buddha remained calm and asked, “If someone offers a gift and it is not accepted, to whom does the gift belong?”

The man replied, “It belongs to the one who offered it.”

The Buddha said, “In the same way, your anger and insults are not accepted—they remain with you.”

This response reveals not only wisdom, but deep compassion.

Without compassion, anger would arise in the face of hostility. With compassion, there is understanding and forbearance. The Buddha did not retaliate, nor did he condemn. Instead, he gently guided the man toward self-reflection.

This is the power of compassion—it transforms conflict without force.

Another story tells of a feared bandit named Angulimala, who had been misled into believing that killing would lead to spiritual attainment. He caused great harm and spread terror wherever he went.

While others avoided him, the Buddha approached him directly.

As Angulimala chased after him with a weapon, he found—strangely—that he could not catch up, no matter how fast he ran. Exhausted, he shouted, “Stop, monk!”

The Buddha replied, “I have already stopped. It is you who have not stopped.”

The bandit was confused, and the Buddha explained: “I have stopped all harmful actions and abandoned hatred. But you continue on the path of violence—you have not yet stopped.”

These words struck deeply. Angulimala awakened to his actions, laid down his weapon, and eventually became a sincere practitioner who attained liberation.

Without compassion, such transformation would not have been possible. Responding to hatred with hatred only deepens suffering. Only compassion can redirect the heart toward awakening.

Thus, compassion benefits not only others, but also oneself. It dissolves anger, softens the heart, and brings about inner peace.

In Buddhist teaching, there are the Four Immeasurable Minds: loving-kindness, compassion, empathetic joy, and equanimity. Among them, empathetic joy refers to rejoicing in the happiness and success of others.

Ordinarily, people compare themselves with others: when others do better, jealousy arises; when others do worse, pride appears. Such a mindset leads to constant unrest.

But with empathetic joy, one celebrates others’ happiness as if it were one’s own. There is no competition, no grasping—only pure appreciation.

There is a story of a lay practitioner who lived modestly but regularly gave to others. Someone asked, “You are not wealthy—why do you give so much?”

He replied, “When I give, I expect nothing in return. My heart feels light and joyful—that joy is greater than what I could gain.”

This is called the joy of giving.

The joy does not come from the object given, but from letting go of attachment. When the heart opens, it becomes free. And in that freedom, joy naturally arises.

The Buddha taught that true giving is “threefold purity”: no attachment to the giver, the receiver, or the gift itself. When giving is free from ego and expectation, it becomes a practice that purifies the mind.

Similarly, even rejoicing in others’ good deeds generates great merit. This shows that what truly matters is not external action, but the inner state of the heart.

“Joy arises from the mind.”

If the mind is narrow, joy is limited and fragile. If the mind is vast, joy becomes abundant and enduring.

Compassion is the path to expanding the mind.

When we care for others, we are no longer confined to the small circle of “self.” When we act for the benefit of others, our inner capacity grows. Problems that once felt overwhelming begin to lose their weight.

It is like a drop of bitterness: in a small cup, it is unbearable; in a vast ocean, it is insignificant.

In daily life, compassion can be practiced in simple ways:

When others succeed, do not be jealous—rejoice with them.

When others suffer, do not turn away—offer care where you can.

Speak gently, avoiding harsh words.

Act sincerely, without harming others for personal gain.

Over time, the heart becomes less rigid and more open—soft, warm, and luminous.

This softness is not weakness, but strength. This clarity is not external brightness, but inner peace.

Gradually, one begins to experience a different kind of joy—one that does not depend on external conditions, one that does not rise and fall with gain or loss.

This is the joy born of compassion.

Therefore, if you seek true happiness, do not merely pursue external results. Cultivate the mind. And above all, cultivate compassion.

When compassion expands, the heart expands.

When the heart expands, joy naturally arises.

Thus it is said: Joy comes from the mind.

Let it grow through compassion—vast in scope, pure in nature, and boundless in its expression.

2: Buddhist Diet Health: Hawthorn Berries

In a Buddhist or temple-style diet, food is chosen for simplicity, balance, and its effect on both body and mind. Hawthorn berries fit well into this approach because they're light, plant-based, and traditionally valued for digestive support.

Hawthorn (shan zha) is commonly used in teas, desserts (like hawthorn jelly), and gentle herbal preparations. Its naturally sour taste makes it useful for balancing meals without relying on heavy seasonings.

1. Digestive Aid

In traditional East Asian dietary theory:

Hawthorn is known for helping digest rich or oily foods

It may reduce bloating and food stagnation

Often used after meals to support comfortable digestion

2. Light & Non-Greasy

Hawthorn:

Adds flavor without oil or heaviness

Helps keep meals feeling clean and light

3. Circulation & Vitality (Traditional View)

Traditionally, hawthorn is believed to:

Support blood circulation

Gently invigorate the body without overstimulation

4. Appetite Regulation

Its sourness can:

Stimulate appetite when it's low

Help prevent overeating by improving satiety after meals

3: Buddhist Diet Culinary: Hawthorn Jelly (Shan Zha Gao)



Ingredients:

500g hawthorn berries

150–200g rock sugar (adjust to taste)

Water (as needed)

A few drops of lemon juice (optional, for flavor and color)

Steps:

1. Prepare the hawthorn

Wash the hawthorn berries

Remove stems and seeds (cutting them in half makes this easier)

2. Cook until soft

Place the hawthorn in a pot

Add a small amount of water (just enough to cover)

Simmer over medium-low heat for 10–15 minutes, until soft

3. Make a puree

Blend the softened hawthorn into a smooth puree

Or press through a sieve for a finer texture

4. Cook down the mixture

Return the puree to the pot

Add rock sugar and cook over low heat

Stir constantly until thickened and no longer runny

5. Set the jelly

Pour into a container lined with parchment paper or lightly greased
Smooth the surface

6. Cool and cut

Let cool, then refrigerate for a few hours
Remove from the mold and cut into pieces