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Location: Double Saltree Meditation Center

Teacher: Hao Liu

Topics:

1: Dharma Talk: Form arises from the mind — How Wholesome Thoughts Transform Destiny.

2: Buddhist Diet Health: Red Bean Paste Rice Dumplings (Sweet Zongzi)

3: Buddhist Diet Culinary: Red Bean Paste Rice Dumplings (Sweet Zongzi)

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: Form arises from the mind — How Wholesome Thoughts Transform Destiny.

Many people wish to change their destiny. Some seek wealth, some seek health, some desire harmonious relationships, and others hope for success in their careers. As a result, some turn to fortune-telling, others consult feng shui, and many search for various methods to improve their lives. However, Buddhism teaches that the true power to transform destiny does not lie outside ourselves—it lies within our own minds.

The Buddha taught:

“Mind precedes all phenomena; mind is their chief; they are mind-made.”

All wholesome and unwholesome results arise from our thoughts. A wholesome thought plants a wholesome cause; an unwholesome thought plants the seed of suffering. The circumstances of our lives are not accidents. They are the cumulative result of countless thoughts, words, and actions.

Therefore Buddhism teaches:

“Appearance arises from the mind, and circumstances change according to the mind.”

A person's appearance, character, blessings, and life experiences are all closely connected to the condition of the heart.

There is a well-known story from the time of the Buddha.

In the city of Sāvattḥī lived an elderly woman who was extremely poor. Her life was difficult, and she survived by begging. Often she struggled even to obtain enough food to sustain herself.

One day she heard that the Buddha had come to teach the Dharma in her area. Great joy arose in her heart.

She wished to make an offering to the Buddha, but she possessed almost nothing.

Finally, she gathered the small amount of lamp oil she had and offered it before the Buddha, lighting a single lamp.

That same evening, kings, ministers, and wealthy merchants also made offerings of countless lamps.

Late into the night, all the other lamps gradually went out.

Only the old woman's lamp continued to shine brightly.

The next morning, the disciples attempted to extinguish it, yet no matter what they did, the flame remained lit.

The Buddha explained:

“This lamp shines not because it contains more oil, but because the donor's wholesome intention is vast and boundless.”

The Buddha further taught that a person's blessings do not depend entirely on the amount of wealth they possess, but on the sincerity and purity of their motivation.

A rich person may donate great riches, yet if the offering is mixed with pride and desire for fame, its merit is limited.

A poor person may offer only a single lamp, but if the offering arises from a pure and compassionate heart, the merit is immeasurable.

From this story we can see that the transformation of destiny often begins with a single wholesome thought.

Many people feel that they lack the ability to do good deeds.

Yet in Buddhism, goodness does not necessarily require wealth.

A kind word is goodness.

A sincere smile is goodness.

Helping someone is goodness.

Showing patience and understanding is also goodness.

The Buddha taught that acts of goodness resemble grass growing in spring. Day by day the growth may not be visible, yet it steadily increases.

Wholesome thoughts are the same.

Today we treat someone kindly, and nothing seems to change.

Tomorrow we help another person, and still little seems different.

But after ten or twenty years, our lives may be completely transformed.

Another famous figure during the Buddha's time was Anāthapiṇḍika, known as the "Benefactor of the Orphans and the Poor."

Because of his generosity toward those in need, he was widely respected.

One day he heard the Buddha's teachings and was filled with great joy and faith. He resolved to support the Dharma.

In order to provide a place for the Buddha and the Sangha, he purchased a beautiful grove, covering the ground with gold coins.

This became the famous Jetavana Monastery, one of the most important places in Buddhist history.

Many people assumed that Anāthapiṇḍika became wealthy simply because of good fortune.

However, the Buddha explained that his wealth was the karmic result of generosity and virtuous deeds cultivated over many lifetimes.

Wholesome thoughts lead to wholesome actions.

Wholesome actions accumulate merit.

Merit shapes destiny.

This is the law of cause and effect.

Yet the power of wholesome thoughts extends far beyond material wealth.

Sometimes a single wholesome thought can change the entire direction of a person's life.

During the Buddha's time, there was a young man known for his quick temper. He constantly argued with others.

One day he approached the Buddha and deliberately insulted him.

Despite the abuse, the Buddha remained calm and serene.

After the young man finished, the Buddha asked:

“If someone offers a gift to another person, but that person refuses to accept it, to whom does the gift belong?”

The young man replied:

“It remains with the person who offered it.”

The Buddha then said:

“In the same way, I do not accept your anger and insults. Therefore they remain with you.”

The young man was stunned.

Never before had he encountered such wisdom and compassion.

At that very moment, feelings of remorse and respect arose in his heart.

Eventually he took refuge in the Buddha, practiced diligently, and completely transformed his life.

What changed him?

Not supernatural powers.

Not wealth.

But a single wholesome realization.

Because of that one awakened thought, his life turned toward the light.

Therefore Buddhism teaches that the greatest wealth is not money, but a wholesome heart.

The greatest blessing is not possessing, but giving.

The greatest transformation is not external, but internal.

Many of life's sufferings arise from unwholesome thoughts.

Jealousy brings pain.

Resentment brings distress.

Attachment to gain and loss brings anxiety.

Obsession with fame and status brings exhaustion.

Wholesome thoughts are the antidote.

When we learn gratitude, complaints diminish.

When we practice forgiveness, resentment fades.

When we cultivate generosity, greed decreases.

When we develop compassion, suffering lessens.

When the mind changes, life naturally changes.

The Buddha once taught:

“Just as a craftsman shapes a wheel, good and evil are fashioned by the mind.”

Life is like a vehicle.

The steering wheel is in our own hands.

Travel toward goodness, and the road becomes brighter.

Travel toward negativity, and darkness increases.

Many people wish for good luck tomorrow.

But Buddhism teaches:

Today's wholesome thought is tomorrow's good fortune.

Today's compassion is tomorrow's blessing.

Today's tolerance is tomorrow's harmonious relationships.

Today's generosity is tomorrow's abundance.

As the cause, so the effect.

As the intention, so the destiny.

Therefore spiritual practice is not mysterious.

Each day:

Reduce unwholesome thoughts and cultivate wholesome ones.

Complain less and be more grateful.

Be less selfish and more altruistic.

Judge less and be more understanding.

This is the most direct way to transform destiny.

An ancient teaching says:

“When both heart and destiny are good, prosperity lasts throughout life.

When destiny is good but the heart is not, blessings may become misfortune.

When the heart is good but destiny is difficult, misfortune can turn into blessing.

When both heart and destiny are poor, suffering inevitably follows.”

Ultimately, it is the heart that determines destiny.

Dear Dharma friends,

The Buddha has shown us a bright and noble path.

Rather than waiting for destiny to change, we can create our destiny.

Rather than relying on external conditions, we can purify our minds.

Rather than searching for luck, we can cultivate wholesome thoughts.

May we plant seeds of goodness, nurture them with compassion, and illuminate them with wisdom.

May we sow fields of merit and create wholesome affinities wherever we go.

May wholesome thoughts transform our destiny.

May compassion beautify our lives.

May wisdom illuminate our path ahead.

Let us conclude with these words:

When one wholesome thought arises,

Countless blessings naturally follow.

Practice compassion day after day,

And everywhere you will encounter the Buddha.

Amitabha Buddha!

2: Buddhist Diet Health: Red Bean Paste Rice Dumplings (Sweet Zongzi)

In traditional Chinese festivals, zongzi, the iconic food of the Dragon Boat Festival, carries profound cultural significance. Among its many varieties, red bean paste rice dumplings, made from glutinous rice and red beans, are regarded as a traditional delicacy in Buddhist vegetarian cuisine, valued for their nutrition, flavor, and health-promoting qualities.

Red bean paste rice dumplings are primarily made from glutinous rice and red beans, containing no meat or animal products and therefore aligning with Buddhist vegetarian principles. Though simple and humble in their preparation, they offer considerable nutritional value. Glutinous rice provides carbohydrates, protein, vitamins, and minerals that supply the body with energy. According to traditional Chinese dietary wisdom, glutinous rice is sweet and warming in nature, helping to replenish energy, strengthen the digestive system, and support stomach health. It is particularly suitable, when consumed in moderation, for individuals with weaker constitutions or sensitive digestion.

Red beans, the main ingredient of the filling, have long been regarded as a nourishing food. They are rich in plant-based protein, dietary fiber, iron, potassium, and other essential nutrients that help support overall health and digestive function. Modern nutrition science recognizes that the dietary fiber in red beans can promote satiety and support healthy digestion, while their mineral content contributes to maintaining the body's normal physiological functions. As a result, red bean paste rice dumplings are not only sweet and satisfying but also nutritionally beneficial.

From the perspective of Buddhist wellness, the purpose of eating extends beyond satisfying physical hunger. Food is also a means of cultivating balance, mindfulness, and inner harmony. Made from natural ingredients and prepared in a simple and wholesome manner, red bean paste rice dumplings embody the Buddhist values of contentment, gratitude, and mindful living. When food is enjoyed with a grateful heart, it nourishes not only the body but also the mind, fostering a sense of peace and fulfillment.

At the same time, Buddhist teachings on health emphasize moderation in eating. Although red bean paste rice dumplings are nutritious, glutinous rice is relatively dense and sticky, so excessive consumption is not recommended. Eating them in moderation, chewing thoroughly, and pairing them with tea, fruits, or vegetables can aid digestion and better support overall well-being.

3: Buddhist Diet Culinary: Red Bean Paste Rice Dumplings (Sweet Zongzi)



Ingredients:

- 1,000 g glutinous rice (sweet rice)
- 500 g red bean paste
- 20–30 bamboo leaves (or reed leaves)
- Cotton string or kitchen twine

Preparing the Glutinous Rice

- Soak the glutinous rice for 6–8 hours (refrigerate while soaking in hot weather).
- Drain well before use.

Preparing the Leaves

- Wash the leaves thoroughly.
- Boil them in water for about 5 minutes.
- Rinse with clean water.
- Pat dry and set aside.

Steps:

1. Prepare the Red Bean Paste Filling

To make homemade red bean paste:

Soak 300 g red beans overnight.

Cook until very soft.

Blend or mash into a smooth paste.

Stir-fry with 100–150 g sugar and 50 g vegetable oil until thickened.

Let cool and divide into portions of about 50 g each.

2. Wrap the Dumplings

Overlap two bamboo leaves.

Fold them into a cone shape.

Add a layer of glutinous rice.

Place one portion of red bean paste in the center.

Cover with another layer of rice, completely enclosing the filling.

Fold the leaves over to seal.

Tie securely with string.

Cooking Methods

Stovetop Method

Place the dumplings in a large pot.

Add enough water to fully cover them.

Bring to a boil over high heat.

Reduce to low heat and simmer for 2.5–3 hours.

Turn off the heat and let them rest in the pot for 30 minutes.

Pressure Cooker Method

Add enough water to cover the dumplings.

Cook under pressure for 40–50 minutes after reaching full pressure.

Allow the pressure to release naturally before opening.