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Location: Double Saltree Meditation Center

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Topics:

1: Dharma Talk: Form arises from the mind — How the Buddha's Teachings Explain the Transformation of Character and Destiny.

2: Buddhist Diet Health: Snow Lemon

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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 the Buddha's Teachings Explain the Transformation of Character and Destiny.

People often say, "This person has a fortunate appearance," or "That person has a face marked by hardship." Many enjoy studying physiognomy, hoping to determine a person's destiny from their outward appearance. However, the Buddhist teaching that "appearance arises from the mind" is neither fatalism nor merely a theory of facial features. Rather, it teaches us that our appearance, temperament, destiny, and even life circumstances are deeply connected to the state of our mind.

The Buddha taught that all phenomena are created by the mind. The outer world reflects our inner world, and our appearance is likewise shaped by the habits and qualities cultivated within our hearts over time.

There is a story from the Buddha's time.

In the city of Sāvathī, there lived a woman named Uppalavaṇṇā (Lotus-Colored One). She was exceptionally graceful and dignified. Wherever she went, people naturally felt joy and respect upon seeing her.

One day, someone asked the Buddha:

"World-Honored One, why is she so beautiful and noble in appearance?"

The Buddha replied that in a previous life she had seen a neglected and damaged stupa. Filled with reverence and devotion, she offered flowers and incense and personally helped restore it. Because she continuously made offerings to the Triple Gem with a pure and sincere heart, she was reborn with a beautiful and dignified appearance.

From this story, we learn that beauty is not accidental. It is the result of wholesome thoughts and virtuous deeds accumulated over a long period of time.

On the other hand, if a person's heart is filled with jealousy, resentment, greed, and anger, even if they are attractive when young, the marks of these afflictions gradually become visible as the years pass.

If we observe carefully, we find that some people become kinder and more serene as they age, while others become increasingly harsh and bitter.

Why is this so?

Because our appearance changes according to our thoughts and mental habits.

Buddhist scriptures record that Devadatta became consumed by jealousy toward the Buddha. Though he had renounced worldly life, his constant competitiveness and resentment darkened his character. His appearance grew increasingly gloomy, and ultimately he fell into spiritual decline.

By contrast, Venerable Ānanda spent many years serving and accompanying the Buddha. Gentle, compassionate, and kind-hearted, he possessed a peaceful and radiant presence that inspired joy in all who met him.

The same human face can express entirely different qualities depending on the condition of the heart.

Therefore, Buddhism teaches that the mind is the master of appearance.

When a person consistently nurtures wholesome thoughts, their face naturally reflects peace and kindness. When a person is habitually angry and hostile, harshness gradually manifests in their expression.

Sometimes people ask:

“Venerable teacher, what if I am not good-looking?”

In truth, Buddhism is far more concerned with the appearance of the heart than the appearance of the face.

During the Buddha’s time there was a monk whose appearance was unattractive, and his body carried an unpleasant odor. Because of this, many people looked down on him.

One day he came before the Buddha seeking guidance.

The Buddha explained that in a previous life this monk had mocked others for being ugly, and therefore experienced the karmic result of unattractiveness in this life. Yet he had also been generous and supportive of the Dharma, which enabled him to encounter the Buddha’s teachings and enter monastic life.

Through this story, the Buddha taught that physical appearance is only one aspect of karmic results. What truly determines the future is the state of the mind in the present moment.

The past has already passed. The future has not yet arrived.

What matters most is the mind of this very moment.

Although we may not be able to change our appearance immediately, we can transform our minds immediately.

And when the mind changes, appearance follows.

The Buddha once encountered the notorious bandit Angulimāla.

He had killed many people and was feared throughout the land.

Yet when he met the Buddha, the Buddha did not reject him. Instead, he approached him with boundless compassion.

The Buddha said:

“I have stopped. When will you stop?”

Angulimāla did not understand.

The Buddha explained:

“I have stopped harming living beings and abandoned evil intentions. You have not yet stopped.”

These words deeply moved him.

Eventually Angulimāla renounced violence, became a monk, practiced diligently, and attained liberation.

Consider this carefully: if even a feared murderer could transform his destiny, why can we not transform our own bad habits and negative tendencies?

Many people complain that they have poor fortune, little merit, or difficult relationships.

Yet these problems often arise not from external circumstances but from conditions within the mind.

When the mind is narrow, one becomes overly concerned with personal gain and loss.

When compassion is lacking, relationships suffer.

When desires are excessive, troubles multiply.

When resentment runs deep, suffering follows.

If we begin by transforming the heart, our lives naturally begin to change.

The Buddha taught his disciples to cultivate the Four Immeasurables:

Loving-kindness (Mettā),

Compassion (Karūṇā),

Sympathetic Joy (Muditā),

and Equanimity (Upekkhā).

Loving-kindness brings happiness to others.

Compassion relieves suffering.

Sympathetic joy rejoices in the success of others.

Equanimity lets go of attachment and discrimination.

A person who cultivates loving-kindness develops a gentle and warm gaze.

A person who cultivates sympathetic joy radiates brightness and positivity.

A person who cultivates equanimity displays calmness and freedom.

These qualities cannot be created by cosmetics or external decoration. They are the natural expression of inner cultivation.

An ancient Buddhist saying states:

“If there is a good heart but no favorable appearance, appearance will gradually follow the heart. If there is a favorable appearance but no goodness within, the appearance will eventually fade away.”

In other words, even if one’s present conditions are not ideal, a virtuous mind will gradually improve both appearance and destiny. Conversely, even if one possesses beauty and blessings now, they will eventually disappear if the heart becomes corrupt.

Therefore, Buddhism emphasizes changing ourselves rather than changing others.

To change the world, begin by changing the mind.

To change destiny, begin by changing our thoughts.

To transform appearance, begin by cultivating compassion.

Dear Dharma friends, when we chant sutras, recite the Buddha’s name, and pay homage to the Buddha, we do not merely seek safety and blessings. More importantly, we seek to purify our hearts.

When greed decreases and compassion increases;

when complaints decrease and gratitude increases;

when selfish calculations decrease and tolerance increases;

our faces naturally become more peaceful, and our lives become more blessed.

Let us conclude with this reflection inspired by the Buddha’s teachings:

When the mind is good, speech becomes good.

When speech is good, actions become good.

When actions are good, destiny becomes good.

When destiny is good, appearance becomes good.

May we all begin with cultivating the mind, filling our hearts with wisdom and compassion, and bringing the truth of “appearance arises from the mind” into our daily lives.

Amitabha Buddha.

2: Buddhist Diet Health: Snow Lemon

Lime: A Refreshing and Nutritious Ingredient in Buddhist Vegetarian Cuisine

Lime is the fruit of a citrus plant, recognized for its small size, vibrant green skin, pale green to yellowish flesh, abundant juice, and fresh, aromatic fragrance. Compared with yellow lemons, limes generally offer a brighter acidity and a more intense citrus aroma, making them a popular ingredient throughout Southeast Asia, South Asia, the Middle East, and contemporary health-conscious cuisine.

In Buddhist vegetarian cooking, monastery cuisine, and modern wellness-oriented diets, lime is highly valued for its natural purity and refreshing character. It not only enhances the flavor of dishes but also provides a variety of beneficial nutrients, making it both a culinary ingredient and a valuable component of a balanced diet.

Nutritional Profile of Lime

Despite its small size, lime contains an impressive range of naturally occurring nutrients. On average, every 100 grams of fresh lime flesh contains:

Nutrient, Approximate Amount

Energy 30 kcal

Vitamin C 25–35 mg

Carbohydrates 10 g

Dietary Fiber 2–3 g

Potassium 100+ mg

Calcium 30 mg

Magnesium 6 mg

Citric Acid Rich Source

Flavonoids Rich Source

Key Characteristics

Lime is known for being:

Low in fat

Low in calories

Cholesterol-free

High in water content

Rich in natural antioxidants

The Benefits of Citric Acid and Natural Organic Acids

One of lime's most distinctive characteristics is its abundance of natural organic acids, including:

Citric acid

Malic acid

Tartaric acid

These compounds are responsible for lime's bright, refreshing tartness and contribute to several beneficial effects when consumed as part of a balanced diet.

Stimulates Saliva Production

The natural acidity of lime activates the taste receptors and encourages saliva secretion. This can enhance the perception of flavor and help prepare the digestive system for food intake.

Promotes Appetite

The refreshing aroma and tangy taste of lime can help stimulate the appetite, particularly during hot weather when people may experience reduced interest in eating.

Supports Digestive Function

Organic acids encourage the secretion of digestive juices, helping the body process and absorb food more efficiently. For this reason, lime is often used in light appetizers, salads, and refreshing summer dishes.

3: Buddhist Diet Culinary: Snow Lemon Bamboo Shoots



Ingredients:

300 g fresh bamboo shoots

1 lemon

15 g sugar

3 g salt

1–2 bird's eye chilies (optional)

A small amount of cilantro (optional)

Ice cubes (for chilling)

Steps:**1. Prepare the Bamboo Shoots**

Peel and wash the fresh bamboo shoots.

Cut them into thin strips.

Bring a pot of water to a boil and add a pinch of salt.

Blanch the bamboo shoots for 3–5 minutes to remove any bitterness.

Transfer them immediately to ice water and soak for 5 minutes to keep them crisp.

2. Make the Lemon Dressing

Wash the lemon thoroughly.

Squeeze the juice from half of the lemon and slice the remaining half into thin rounds.

In a bowl, combine:

Lemon juice

Sugar

Salt

Stir until the sugar is mostly dissolved.

3. Toss the Salad

Drain the chilled bamboo shoots well.

Pour the lemon dressing over the shoots.

Add the lemon slices and chopped chilies.

Toss thoroughly to combine.

4. Chill and Marinate

Refrigerate for 20–30 minutes to allow the bamboo shoots to absorb the lemon flavor.