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Location: Double Saltree Meditation Center

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Topics:

1: Dharma Talk: Virtue Arises from the Heart — A Heart of Gratitude Is the Greatest Blessing and Virtue

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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: Virtue Arises from the Heart — A Heart of Gratitude Is the Greatest Blessing and Virtue.

“Virtue arises from the heart; a heart of gratitude is the greatest blessing and virtue.” In this life, we often feel that the things we receive are simply what we are entitled to. Children think it is only natural for their parents to care for them; parents think it is only natural for their children to be filial; husbands and wives think it is only natural for their partners to contribute to the family; employees think it is only natural for the company to pay them a salary; and every day, when we are able to eat, drink, breathe, walk, and even sit here peacefully listening to the Buddha Dharma, we often feel that there is nothing particularly special about these things. But Buddhism teaches us that there is nothing in this world that is obtained out of nowhere. Everything we have today is supported by countless causes and conditions.

Behind a bowl of rice, there are farmers who cultivate the fields, people who sow the seeds, people who irrigate the crops, people who harvest them, people who transport them, people who process them, and people who cook them. Behind the clothes we wear are the efforts of countless people. Behind the houses we live in is the sweat of construction workers. Behind the peaceful lives we enjoy today are also countless people who protect and safeguard us. Therefore, Buddhism speaks of “dependent origination.” All phenomena arise through causes and conditions. None of us can live completely independently of other beings. Since our lives are constantly receiving help from others, gratitude should not merely be a polite expression; it should become a way of life.

When the Buddha was in this world, He placed great importance on knowing kindness and repaying kindness. Buddhist scriptures repeatedly emphasize gratitude toward parents, teachers and elders, and all sentient beings. In particular, Buddhism holds parents in the highest regard. Scriptures such as the Sutra on the Filial Son emphasize the importance of caring for one’s parents, knowing their kindness, and repaying their kindness. This is because when a person comes into this world, the first thing we receive is life from our parents. Parents may not be perfect. Our parents may have little education, they may be stubborn in character, and the ways in which they express their love may not always meet our expectations.

But we should understand that simply giving us life is already a profound karmic connection. Many people do not understand this when they are young. As children, we think our parents are annoying:

“Why do you have to keep controlling me every day?” After growing up and leaving home, we realize that the people in this world who most often care whether we are cold or hungry are usually still our parents. When we were young, we thought our parents’ constant reminders were annoying; later, we come to understand that some of those reminders may simply have been their way of expressing concern. By the time we finally understand, some people may no longer have the opportunity to hear their parents’ voices again. This is why Buddhism speaks of “impermanence.” Impermanence is not a teaching meant to frighten us. Impermanence reminds us: cherish the people who are before you and the connections you have with them.

The Buddha once told His disciples that life is short and that life is impermanent. On one occasion, the Buddha asked His disciples, “How long is a human life?” One disciple answered, “Several decades.” The Buddha said, “You have not yet truly understood impermanence.” Another disciple said, “A human life lasts for one year.” The Buddha still said, “You have not yet truly understood.” Someone said, “A human life lasts for several months.” The Buddha still shook His head. Finally, one disciple said, “Life exists only between one breath and the next.” The Buddha praised him, saying, “Well said. You truly understand impermanence.”

What does this story tell us? It is not meant to make us fear death, but to teach us to cherish the present moment. Because we never know when we will meet again. Therefore, while our parents are still with us, say one more warm word to them. While husband and wife are still together, show a little more understanding. While our friends are still by our side, cherish them a little more. While our children are still willing to talk with us, listen to them for a few more moments. All of these are forms of cultivation.

Buddhism speaks of “blessings.” True blessings are not merely the numbers in a bank account, nor are they simply houses and cars. Being able to eat one’s fill and sleep peacefully, having someone willing to understand us, having someone willing to trust us, having a family in which we can find peace and stability, and having a tranquil mind—these are all blessings. Where do blessings come from?

Buddhism teaches the law of cause and effect. What causes we planted in the past make us more likely to encounter certain results in the present; what causes we continue to plant today will likewise produce corresponding results in the future. Therefore, if we hope to have blessings in the future, we must plant the seeds of blessings today. And gratitude is a very important seed of blessing.

Why? Because a grateful person is less likely to be arrogant. They know that their success does not come entirely from themselves. A grateful person is less likely to complain. They know that they have already received a great deal of help. A grateful person is more willing to help others, because they know that they too have once been helped by others. Therefore, gratitude gives rise to gratitude, and kindness gives rise to kindness. This is what it means to say, “Virtue arises from the heart.”

If our hearts are filled with complaints, even when we possess a great deal, we will still feel that it is not enough. If our hearts are filled with gratitude, even if life is not materially abundant, we can still feel warmth. Therefore, what truly changes our lives is not only our external circumstances, but the heart with which we view those circumstances.

The Diamond Sutra says, “All conditioned phenomena are like dreams and illusions.” Many of the external things to which we cling will change. Wealth will change; careers will change; appearances will change; the body will change; and relationships with others will also change. What can truly accompany us throughout our lives is the character and inner qualities we continually cultivate. If we can cultivate compassion, kindness, tolerance, integrity, and gratitude, these are the true treasures that belong to us.

Therefore, we say: “Virtue arises from the heart, and blessings are accumulated through goodness.” May we, too, become people worthy of the gratitude of others.

Amitabha Buddha!

2: Buddhist Diet Health: Basil

Thai basil, also known as basil, is an aromatic herb valued in vegetarian cuisine for both its distinctive fragrance and potential wellness benefits. In plant-based cooking, it is more than just a seasoning—it represents the idea of using natural ingredients to nourish both the body and mind.

With its bright green leaves and rich aroma, Thai basil contains various plant compounds, essential oils, vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants. Traditionally, it has been appreciated as a beneficial herb that may help to:

Support antioxidant protection: Thai basil contains natural plant compounds that help the body combat free radicals and maintain overall health.

Aid digestion and comfort the stomach: Its aromatic properties can stimulate appetite and contribute to a more pleasant digestive experience after meals.

Provide a refreshing balance: The unique fragrance of Thai basil adds a fresh quality to light vegetarian dishes, enhancing the enjoyment of simple foods.

Promote relaxation and well-being: Aromatic herbs are often associated with calming effects, and the scent of Thai basil can create a sense of comfort and enjoyment.

Add plant-based nutrition: As a green herb, Thai basil contributes additional plant nutrients to a balanced vegetarian diet.

In vegetarian cuisine, Thai basil is not merely a garnish—it reflects the philosophy of nourishing the body through wholesome, natural foods. Whether paired with tofu, bean curd, mushrooms, or vegetables, a handful of Thai basil can transform a simple dish with layers of flavor and aroma.

3: Buddhist Diet Culinary: Basil Black Bean Curd



Ingredients:

6–8 pieces of black bean curd (cut into cubes or slices)

A large handful of Thai basil (or Taiwanese basil / “nine-story pagoda” basil)

3 slices of ginger (julienned, optional)

1–2 chili peppers (sliced, adjust to taste)

2 tablespoons soy sauce

1 tablespoon rice wine

1 teaspoon sugar

A pinch of white pepper

A small drizzle of sesame oil

Steps:

1. Prepare the bean curd

Cut the black bean curd into pieces and pat dry with paper towels. For a milder flavor, blanch it in hot water for about 1 minute to remove any bean smell.

2. Pan-fry the bean curd

Heat a little oil in a pan. Fry the bean curd over medium-low heat until the surface turns golden and slightly crispy. This enhances the bean aroma and texture.

3. Sauté the aromatics

Add minced ginger, and chili peppers. Stir-fry until fragrant.

4. Season and stir-fry

Add soy sauce, rice wine, sugar, and a little white pepper. Stir well so the bean curd absorbs the sauce.

5. Add basil and finish

Add the basil leaves at the end and stir-fry quickly over high heat for 10–20 seconds. Drizzle with a little sesame oil before serving.