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Location: Double Saltree Meditation Center

Teacher: Hao Liu

Topics:

1: Dharma Talk: Virtue Arises from the Heart — True Cultivation Is Guarding Your Heart When No One Is Watching.

2: Buddhist Diet Health: Green Papaya

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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 — True Cultivation Is Guarding Your Heart When No One Is Watching.

A person's virtue is not something that exists only when others can see it. Rather, it is when, even when no one is watching, one can still guard one's own heart. This is true cultivation. In front of others, it is easy for us to behave well. When someone is beside us, we are polite; when someone is supervising us, we are diligent; when others can see us, we do good deeds; when we receive praise, we are also willing to appear humble. But what about when no one is watching? What about when no one knows? What about when no one is supervising us? Will we still uphold our principles? This is the true test of a person's virtue.

Why does Buddhism place such great importance on “precepts”? Because the precepts are not merely meant to let others see that we are good people. Above all, the precepts help us guard our hearts even when we are alone and no one is watching. The Dhammapada contains a very important teaching: “Do not underestimate even a small evil, thinking it will cause no harm; just as water drops, though tiny, can gradually fill a large vessel.” This means that we should not take small wrongdoings lightly or think that a small mistake will have no consequences. Just as a drop of water may be very small, over time it can fill a vessel. The same is true of goodness. Do not think, “It’s okay if I tell one lie today.” “It’s okay if I take a little advantage today.” “It’s okay if I say something malicious today.” “It’s okay if I lose my temper once today.”

A small thought, if repeated again and again, will become a habit. When a habit is repeatedly acted upon, it will shape one's character. As character continues to take shape, it will influence a person's life. This is why Buddhism places great importance on “慎独”—being mindful and cautious when alone. To practice means that even when a person is alone, they can still be careful with their thoughts and actions. This is actually very close to the Buddhist practice of “right mindfulness.”

Every one of our thoughts affects our own mind. Every choice between good and evil shapes our life. After the Buddha attained enlightenment, he used many different methods to teach his disciples to observe their body, speech, and mind. Because Buddhism is not merely about teaching us “where we will go after death.” More importantly, it teaches us: how to be an awakened and mindful person in this very moment. The Saṃyukta Āgama contains many teachings on causation, good and evil, the body,

and the mind. The Buddha repeatedly taught his disciples to observe the body, feelings, mind, and phenomena, and to know them as they truly are. Why should we “know things as they truly are”? Because many times, we do not truly understand ourselves.

We say with our mouths that we are compassionate, yet when our interests are involved, we immediately become calculating. We say that we can let go, yet one sentence from another person can make us angry for three days. We say that we do not care about other people's opinions, yet when someone criticizes us, we still cannot sleep. This does not mean that we are bad. Rather, it shows that: cultivation is the continual process of knowing ourselves. Recognize our greed. Recognize our anger. Recognize our ignorance. Recognize our arrogance. Recognize our jealousy. Recognize our fear. After recognizing them, do not blame yourself. Instead, slowly transform them.

In Buddhism, “repentance” does not mean falling into self-blame every day. Rather, it means that after seeing our mistakes, we are willing to change. A person who truly possesses virtue is not someone who has never made a mistake. Rather, it is someone who: after making a mistake, is willing to admit it; after hurting others, is willing to apologize; and after realizing that they were wrong, is willing to change. This is true virtue.

Among the Buddha's disciples, many came from very different backgrounds. Some were born into noble families, while others came from humble circumstances; some had once been arrogant, while others had been filled with afflictions; some had even committed serious wrongs in the past. Yet after entering the Buddhist path, they continually transformed themselves through cultivation. This shows that: the past does not completely determine a person's future. As long as we are willing to turn back, we can begin at any time. So, dear Dharma friends, do not think, because you have made mistakes in the past, “A person like me is not worthy of learning Buddhism.” Quite the opposite. Precisely because we have afflictions, we need the Dharma. Precisely because we make mistakes, we need repentance. Precisely because we are prone to anger, we need to cultivate loving-kindness and compassion. Precisely because we cannot let go, we need to learn wisdom. A temple does not welcome only those who are “already good.” A temple truly welcomes those who are: willing to change.

Buddhism is not merely a mirror that allows us to see where we are lacking. Buddhism is more like a lamp. It allows us to see the path, and it also shows us how to walk it. Therefore, when we say “virtue arises from the heart,” the most important point is this: always watch over and care for this heart of ours.

When no one is watching, I still do not deceive others. When no one is supervising me, I still work diligently. When no one knows, I still do not take advantage of others. When no one praises me, I am still willing to help others. When no one thanks me, I am still willing to be a kind person. At this point, our goodness is no longer something we do for others to see. It has already become a quality of our life. This is “virtue.” True virtue does not need to be loudly proclaimed. Just like a tree, a tree does not need to tell people every day, “I am a tree, and I am giving you shade.” When summer comes, people will naturally seek shelter beneath it. A truly virtuous person is the same. They do not need to tell everyone every day that they are kind. After spending enough time with them, others will naturally feel their sincerity and kindness. Therefore, when we learn Buddhism, let us have less need to prove ourselves and put more effort into changing ourselves. Let us make fewer demands of others and place more demands upon ourselves. Let us criticize others less and reflect upon ourselves more. Let us spend less time asking, “Why don't others change?” and more time asking, “What more can I change?” When we are able to live this way, there will be fewer conflicts in the family, less resentment at work, and greater harmony in our relationships with others. Finally, I would like to offer everyone one very important thought:

“Cultivation is not about performing before the Buddha for the Buddha to see. It is about allowing the Dharma to become our actions in everyday life.”

“With the Buddha in our hearts, goodness in our eyes, virtue in our speech, and restraint in our actions.”

This is virtue. This is cultivation. And this is also the deepest meaning of “virtue arises from the heart.”

Amitabha Buddha!

2: Buddhist Diet Health: Green papaya

Green papaya is a popular natural ingredient in vegetarian cuisine, appreciated for its refreshing texture, rich plant-based nutrients, and versatility in cooking. From a wellness perspective, green papaya represents the simplicity, purity, and wisdom of returning to natural foods.

Green papaya contains dietary fiber, vitamin C, plant nutrients, and natural enzymes. When enjoyed as part of a balanced diet, it may provide several nutritional benefits:

Supports digestive health: Green papaya contains natural papain enzymes, which help break down proteins in food and may support comfortable digestion when combined with a balanced diet.

Provides antioxidant support: The vitamin C and various plant compounds in green papaya help support the body’s natural defense against free radicals.

Promotes a light and balanced diet: Low in calories and rich in water and fiber, green papaya is an excellent choice for refreshing vegetarian meals and healthy eating.

Supports skin nourishment: Its vitamins and plant-based nutrients contribute to overall nutritional support for healthy-looking skin.

Adds variety to vegetarian meals: Green papaya can be enjoyed raw in salads, cooked in soups, stewed, or paired with nuts and herbs, bringing more flavor and diversity to plant-based cuisine.

In vegetarian traditions, green papaya is more than just an ingredient—it reflects the philosophy of eating simply, living naturally, and nourishing the body with wholesome foods.

3: Buddhist Diet Culinary: Olive Oil Marinated Green Papaya Salad



Ingredients:

1 green papaya (about 500g)
½ carrot (shredded, optional)
Fresh cilantro (coriander), chopped (optional)
Fresh mint leaves (optional)
Crushed peanuts or sesame seeds (optional)
1 chili pepper, thinly sliced (adjust to taste)
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
2 tablespoons lemon juice or lime juice
1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar (optional)
1 teaspoon honey or maple syrup (optional)
Sea salt, to taste
A pinch of black pepper

Steps:**1. Prepare the green papaya**

Peel and remove the seeds from the green papaya, then shred it into thin strips. Mix with a little salt and let it sit for about 10 minutes to release excess moisture. Rinse and gently squeeze dry.

2. Prepare the vegetables and herbs

Combine the shredded papaya with carrot, cilantro, mint, and chili slices.

3. Make the olive oil dressing

Mix olive oil, lemon or lime juice, apple cider vinegar, honey (or maple syrup), salt, black pepper until well combined.

4. Mix and chill

Pour the dressing over the papaya mixture and toss well. Refrigerate for 15–30 minutes to allow the flavors to blend.

5. Serve

Sprinkle with crushed peanuts or sesame seeds before serving for extra aroma and texture.