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Location: Double Saltree Meditation Center

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Topics:

1: Dharma Talk: A Single Thought of Compassion — Understanding Life Through the Precept of Not Killing

2: Buddhist Diet Health: Soybean Sprouts

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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: A Single Thought of Compassion — Understanding Life Through the Precept of Not Killing. Among the Five Precepts of Buddhism, the first is the precept of refraining from killing. When people first hear this teaching, they may understand it simply as a prohibition against taking life. Yet if we understand it only as a rule telling us what not to do, we have not yet reached the deeper meaning contained within it. Buddhism places the precept of not killing first because the way we regard life determines how we regard the world. It reveals whether our minds are moving toward compassion or toward indifference.

Buddhist compassion is not weakness. In Buddhist thought, loving-kindness is the wish that beings may experience happiness, while compassion is the wish that beings may be free from suffering. A person who truly develops compassion gradually realizes that he is not the only being in this world whose existence matters. Our own suffering deserves attention, but so does the suffering of others. We fear death, and other living beings also fear death. We seek security, and other beings also seek safety and peace.

When we begin to see the world in this way, “not killing” becomes more than a precept. It becomes a way of understanding life. We live in a world where it is easy to judge things according to their usefulness. We tend to value people who benefit us and overlook those who do not. We may even look at other living beings primarily in terms of whether they satisfy our needs. The Buddhist teaching of non-killing challenges this attitude. It reminds us that the value of life cannot be determined solely by whether that life is useful to us.

A small insect may offer us no benefit. A stray animal may never repay the kindness we show it. Yet when we see a living being in distress and choose not to cause unnecessary harm, something changes—not only for that creature, but also within ourselves. In that moment, we step beyond the narrow boundaries of self-interest. We begin to recognize that another life also has its own desire to live. This is often how compassion begins.

It does not always require dramatic acts of generosity. Sometimes compassion begins when we notice an injured creature instead of walking past without concern. Sometimes it begins when we see another person suffering and choose not to blame them immediately. Sometimes it is simply the willingness to

consider another person's situation before making a judgment. Every time we make room in our minds for another being, our inner world becomes a little wider.

The precept of not killing also invites us to examine anger. Many acts of violence do not appear suddenly. They develop from resentment, hatred, and the desire for revenge. When anger becomes deep enough, a person may begin to see another human being merely as an "enemy" rather than as a living being who also experiences fear, pain, aging, and loss.

Once another person has been completely reduced to an object, harming them becomes easier. Buddhist compassion works precisely at this point. It does not mean that we must approve of every action or tolerate injustice. It does not mean that we cannot protect ourselves or establish boundaries. Rather, it reminds us that even when we must oppose harmful behavior, hatred does not need to become the master of our minds. This distinction is important.

We can oppose an action without hating a human being. We can protect ourselves without taking pleasure in cruelty. We can refuse to accept harm without allowing anger to expand endlessly. Compassion does not mean having no boundaries. It means retaining respect for life even while boundaries are necessary.

Stories of Buddhist practitioners often emphasize compassion because compassion changes the way we perceive the world. Without compassion, we see "other people." With compassion, we begin to see "sentient beings." The change may seem like a difference in language, but in reality it represents a profound expansion of the mind.

When the mind is centered entirely on the self, the world becomes very narrow. When someone else receives praise, we may feel that something has been taken from us. When someone else succeeds, jealousy may arise. When another person gains something, we may instinctively compare it with what we possess.

But when compassion begins to grow, another person's happiness no longer automatically feels like our loss. The larger the heart becomes, the more capable it is of making room for different people and different forms of life. Thus, the practice of not killing cultivates not only non-harm, but respect.

Respect for life also means respecting the natural conditions through which life exists. Human beings, animals, plants, and the natural environment all participate in a vast network of causes and conditions. Modern life often makes it easy to forget this. We enjoy the convenience of cities and technology while overlooking how deeply dependent our lives remain upon clean water, healthy ecosystems, soil, air, food, and the labor of countless other beings.

The Buddhist understanding of interdependence reminds us that nothing exists entirely by itself. The life we experience today depends upon countless conditions that we did not create alone. Food comes from the earth and from the labor of farmers. Clothing comes through the work of many people. Clean air and water depend upon an environment that extends far beyond our individual lives. As this understanding deepens, respect for life becomes more than kindness toward a particular animal. It becomes reverence for the web of life itself.

Compassion also transforms our relationships with other human beings. A person who practices compassion gradually becomes less eager to divide people into simple categories of "good" and "bad."

This does not mean excusing harmful behavior. It means recognizing that human actions arise from complicated conditions, experiences, fears, and habits. Understanding these conditions allows us to respond with greater clarity and less hatred.

When parents face a child who has made a serious mistake, anger alone may produce fear. If the parents can correct the behavior while still recognizing the child's vulnerability, discipline may become an opportunity for growth. When a person at work makes a mistake, humiliation may create defensiveness, while clear correction combined with dignity may make genuine improvement more possible. Compassion is therefore not merely a beautiful word. It is a way of responding to life. It asks a simple question: "How can unnecessary suffering be reduced?" That question can change many things.

Buddhism's teaching of non-killing also encourages reflection upon death. We fear death because life is precious to us. Precisely because life is precious, we should learn to respect it in others. When we recognize that our own life will eventually face aging, illness, and death, our attitude toward other beings can become softer.

We will all grow old.
We will all become vulnerable.
We will all experience loss.
We will all face separation.
For this reason, life is worthy of kindness.

Often, people do not harm others because they have never heard of compassion. They harm because they have forgotten how similar they are to those they hurt. We all have moments of weakness. We all experience fear. We all need understanding at certain points in our lives.

The practice of not killing therefore points toward a deeper awakening to life. It moves us from asking, "What can I gain?" toward asking, "What suffering can I prevent?" It moves us from asking whether another being is useful to us toward recognizing that the life itself has value. It moves us from asking why we should help someone toward understanding that when we have the ability to reduce suffering, we may choose to do so.

When compassion genuinely arises within the mind, our words, actions, and way of living begin to change naturally. We no longer see the world simply as something existing for our own use. We begin to understand that we, too, are among all living beings. Our lives deserve care, and the lives of others deserve care as well. This is the deeper practice of not killing.

The highest expression of the precept is not merely being afraid to harm life. It is reaching a point where the heart cannot bear to cause unnecessary harm. When that unwillingness to harm arises naturally, the precept acquires warmth. When compassion becomes part of our character, we begin to understand why Buddhism places the precept of non-killing at the beginning of the Five Precepts. A single thought of compassion can change the way a person sees the entire world.

2: Buddhist Diet Health: Soybean Sprouts

A plate of seemingly ordinary soybean sprouts can also become a light and nutritious Buddhist vegetarian dish. Soybean sprouts are produced by germinating soybeans. During the germination process, the nutritional composition of the beans changes, while their firm texture becomes tender and crisp. With their fresh and delicate flavor, soybean sprouts do not require heavy seasoning, making them particularly suitable for clean, simple, and low-oil vegetarian cooking.

From a nutritional perspective, soybean sprouts provide a good amount of protein and dietary fiber, while also containing a variety of nutrients such as folate, vitamin C, vitamin K, potassium, and magnesium. Compared with dried soybeans, soybean sprouts contain considerably more water and are relatively low in calories. They can therefore serve as an everyday vegetable while also helping to enrich the nutritional structure of a vegetarian diet. For people whose diets are primarily plant-based, soybean sprouts are especially suitable as a nutritional addition that bridges the qualities of legumes and vegetables.

During the germination of soybeans, a series of physiological changes takes place. Some of the nutrients originally stored in the beans are broken down and transformed, while certain vitamins and other plant compounds in the sprouts also change throughout the germination process. In particular, vitamin C increases after soybeans germinate. Therefore, from a nutritional perspective, soybean sprouts are not simply “soybeans that have grown longer,” but rather a food with its own distinctive nutritional characteristics resulting from the germination process.

Soybean sprouts also contain dietary fiber. Although dietary fiber cannot be completely digested and absorbed by the human body, it is an important component of a healthy diet. Adequate dietary fiber intake helps support normal digestive function and can increase feelings of fullness. Therefore, incorporating soybean sprouts into daily meals together with other vegetables, whole grains, and soy-based foods can create a more diverse and balanced dietary pattern.

From a wellness perspective, one of the greatest advantages of soybean sprouts is that they are light, relatively low in calories, nutritious, and easy to combine with other ingredients. They can be simply stir-fried, added to soups, or combined with glass noodles, tofu, mushrooms, and other ingredients to create vegetarian dishes. Using less oil and salt during cooking can help preserve the crisp and refreshing texture of soybean sprouts while also fitting well with the principles of a light and balanced modern diet.

Another aspect of the wellness value of soybean sprouts is that they can be easily incorporated into everyday meals. For people who need to manage their overall calorie intake, soybean sprouts can increase the volume of vegetables in a meal. For those following a predominantly plant-based diet, soybean sprouts can be combined with tofu, dried tofu, mushrooms, leafy green vegetables, and other plant foods, allowing the body to obtain a wider variety of nutrients from different foods.

3: Buddhist Diet Culinary: Stir-Fried Soybean Sprouts with Glass Noodles



Ingredients:

Soybean sprouts: 300 g

Sweet potato glass noodles: 150 g

Fresh ginger: 10 g

Vegetable oil: 25 g

Light soy sauce: 15 g

Dark soy sauce: 5 g

Salt: 3 g

White pepper: a small amount

Boiling water: as needed

Steps:

1. Soak the glass noodles

Soak the sweet potato glass noodles in warm water until softened, but do not over-soak them. Drain well and set aside.

2. Prepare the soybean sprouts

Wash the soybean sprouts thoroughly and drain well. Slice the ginger into thin strips.

3. Sauté the ginger

Heat a wok or skillet and add the vegetable oil. Add the sliced ginger and stir-fry over medium heat until fragrant.

4. Stir-fry the soybean sprouts

Add the soybean sprouts and stir-fry over high heat for about 2–3 minutes, until they begin to soften and release their aroma.

5. Add the glass noodles

Add the softened glass noodles. Pour in the light soy sauce, dark soy sauce, and a small amount of white pepper. Stir-fry quickly until the noodles are evenly coated and colored.

6. Simmer briefly

Add about 50–80 ml of boiling water. Stir well, cover, and simmer over low heat for about 2 minutes, allowing the glass noodles to absorb the flavor of the soybean sprouts and seasonings.

7. Season and serve

Remove the lid, add the salt, and stir-fry over high heat until most of the liquid has evaporated. When the glass noodles are glossy and the soybean sprouts remain slightly crisp, remove from the heat and serve.