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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: Protecting the Truth — The Precept of Refraining from False Speech. The easiest thing to build and the easiest thing to lose between people is trust. When wealth is lost, it can be earned again; when something is damaged, it can be purchased again; but once a person's reputation and credibility have been continually consumed over time, a deep crack will appear in the relationship between people. Among the Five Precepts of Buddhism, "refraining from false speech" appears on the surface to regulate language, but when examined more deeply, it is actually about protecting the most fundamental trust between people.

Why do people lie? Sometimes it is to gain benefits, sometimes to escape responsibility, sometimes because they are afraid of being blamed, sometimes to protect their own pride, and sometimes simply because lying has already become a habit. The emergence of a lie may appear to be nothing more than a sentence spoken by the mouth, but in reality, it reveals that the mind is facing some kind of fear, craving, or vanity. Therefore, learning to refrain from false speech does not first mean training oneself to "be unable to say anything"; rather, it means learning to observe why one wants to speak.

Some people speak because they are afraid that others will look down on them, and therefore they constantly exaggerate their abilities. Some people, in order to obtain benefits, describe facts in ways that are more favorable to themselves. After making a mistake, some people's first reaction is not to take responsibility, but to search for excuses. There are also people who want to gain a sense of presence among others, and therefore make things that never happened sound extremely fascinating.

Behind these words, there is often a "self." I do not want to lose face. I do not want to take responsibility. I want to obtain something. I hope that others will recognize me. Therefore, what truly needs to be observed in false speech is not merely the language itself, but the attachment to the self behind that language.

Buddhism emphasizes truthfulness, but this does not mean that a person should say whatever comes to mind without any restraint. Truly wholesome speech requires us to consider truth, timing, manner, and the extent to which the other person is able to bear what is being said. Some people believe that they are very straightforward because they say whatever they think, and they consider this to be "not hypocritical." But if a so-called truth is spoken merely to humiliate another person, then although it may contain facts, it may not necessarily possess wisdom. Therefore, observing the precept of

refraining from false speech does not mean making language rigid; rather, it means allowing our speech to become increasingly pure.

Before a sentence leaves our mouths, we can first pause for a moment within our minds: Is this a fact? Why do I want to say it? Is it appropriate to say it now? What is my purpose? If I say it, will it cause unnecessary harm to another person? Such a pause is extremely important.

The speed of human communication has become increasingly fast in modern life. Telephone calls, messages, and social media allow people to send a sentence to many others within just a few seconds. In the past, a sentence might have affected only a few people nearby; today, an unverified piece of information can quickly spread to hundreds or even thousands of people. As the influence of language has expanded, the importance of speaking carefully has increased accordingly.

The Buddhist practice concerning language does not only involve "refraining from false speech." Among the Ten Wholesome Deeds, there are also teachings on refraining from divisive speech, harsh speech, and frivolous speech. From this, we can see that purity of speech is not judged only by the single standard of whether something is true or false. Even if a sentence is true, if it is deliberately used to sow discord between people, it may still cause harm; even if a sentence does not directly deceive another person, if it is filled with insults and malice, it will still leave suffering behind; and if a person is constantly immersed in meaningless speech, the mind can easily become increasingly scattered. Therefore, genuine cultivation of speech means allowing the mouth to become a mirror of the cultivation of the heart.

Speaking more does not mean possessing more wisdom. Sometimes, being able to remain silent when one should be silent is a form of maturity. Especially when another person is emotionally agitated, immediately arguing back may not solve the problem. Many family conflicts are not caused by how serious the matter itself is, but because both sides want to prove that they are right at the moment when they are most angry. One sentence follows another, and in the end, neither person has truly heard the other. Refraining from false speech also means being willing to admit, "I do not know."

This is something that many people find very difficult to do. In order to maintain their image, people easily pretend that they understand everything. But Buddhist Dharma teaches wisdom, and the first step may precisely be acknowledging one's own ignorance. A person who dares to say, "I do not know," instead leaves room for himself to learn.

Likewise, when a person makes a mistake and is able to say, "I was wrong," this is also a very rare and valuable form of practice. Many times, it is not that we do not know that we are wrong; rather, we simply do not want to admit it. Because once we admit it, it seems that we have lost face. But in reality, a person who is able to acknowledge a mistake is the one who truly begins to possess the ability to change. False speech has another, deeper danger: it gradually changes the person who tells the lie.

When a person tells a lie for the first time, there may still be uneasiness in the heart; the second time, there may still be some hesitation; but after lying for a long time, it becomes increasingly natural. In the end, the person may no longer feel that he is deceiving others, and may even begin to believe the story he has woven himself. This is the reverse effect of language upon the mind. We think that we are using language, but in reality, language is also shaping us.

A person who speaks harsh words for a long time will gradually develop a coarser heart; a person who continually speaks words filled with resentment will become increasingly gloomy within; a person who habitually speaks falsehoods will gradually lose his sensitivity to what is true. Conversely, if a person

becomes accustomed to speaking honestly, gently, and constructively, his inner mind will gradually become more stable. Therefore, refraining from false speech is not an isolated precept; in reality, it is protecting our own mind.

An honest person does not need to remember how many versions of a story he has told in the past, does not need to fear that one day his words will contradict one another, and does not need to continually search for new lies to cover up old ones. Truth may sometimes be embarrassing, but it often brings a sense of lightness. Especially in intimate relationships, truth is even more important.

If spouses conceal important facts from each other for a long time, the relationship may appear peaceful on the surface, while trust is actually disappearing little by little. If parents are accustomed to using deception to solve problems with their children, the children will also learn this way of dealing with problems. If friends always say words that merely please the other person, they may hear pleasant words from each other, but they may no longer hear each other's true feelings. Therefore, protecting truth means protecting relationships. But truth does not mean hurting others.

The Buddhist cultivation of speech requires wisdom. We should not use "Everything I said is true" as a reason to hurt another person. Some words may be true, but they can be expressed in a gentler way; some matters may need to be pointed out, but an appropriate time can be chosen; some opinions may be important, but they do not necessarily need to be forcibly expressed when the other person is at their most vulnerable.

A truly cultivated person is neither someone who always says what others like to hear nor someone who always says every truth as he sees it. Rather, such a person knows when something should be said, how it should be said, and why it should be said. Words arise from the mind, and therefore language can most clearly reveal a person's inner cultivation.

When there is greed in the mind, speech tends to flatter; when there is anger in the mind, speech tends to attack; when there is arrogance in the mind, speech tends to boast; when there is compassion in the mind, speech naturally leaves room for others; when there is wisdom in the mind, speech understands restraint and knows its proper measure. Therefore, the ultimate purpose of practicing the precept of refraining from false speech is to help us rediscover and understand our own minds.

Buddhism teaches refraining from false speech not merely to require people to become "honest people"; it is also helping us become people who are truthful, responsible, careful, and compassionate.

When a person no longer needs to use lies to prove himself, no longer needs exaggeration to gain respect, and no longer needs to put others down in order to elevate himself, his language begins to become truly free. At this point, the precept is no longer merely about "not telling lies." It becomes a profound reverence for truth. And a person who reveres truth will gradually have a mind that becomes increasingly clear.

2: Buddhist Diet Health: Tofu pudding

Tofu pudding, delicate, silky, light, and soothing, is a simple yet nutritious traditional soy-based vegetarian food. Made primarily from soybeans, it is not only soft and tender in texture, but also retains the rich plant-based nutrients naturally found in soybeans, making it suitable for a light and balanced everyday diet.

In Buddhist Diet cuisine, tofu pudding is characterized by its simplicity and lightness. It does not rely on heavy seasoning to bring out its natural soy aroma. Paired with a small amount of natural ingredients such as coconut milk, sago pearls, sesame seeds, or seasonal fruit, it adds variety to the texture and flavor while reflecting the principles of vegetarian cuisine: “purity, simplicity, and moderation.”

Nutritional Value of Tofu Pudding

High-Quality Plant-Based Protein

Soybeans are an important source of plant-based protein. With its soft and delicate texture, tofu pudding is an easy way to incorporate plant-based protein into the daily diet, especially for those who wish to increase their intake of plant-based foods.

Contains Soy Isoflavones

Soybeans naturally contain soy isoflavones and other plant compounds. Including soy foods as part of a balanced diet can help increase the variety of plant-based foods in the daily diet.

Contains Calcium — Depending on the Preparation Method

The calcium content of tofu pudding varies depending on the type of coagulant and the preparation method used. Tofu pudding made with calcium-containing coagulants can generally provide a good source of calcium. When purchasing prepared tofu pudding, check the nutrition label for specific information.

Relatively Moderate in Fat

Tofu pudding itself has a naturally mild flavor and can be paired with fruit, a small amount of nuts, or whole grains without requiring heavy use of oil or rich seasonings, making it suitable for creating a light and balanced vegetarian dish.

Buddhist vegetarian cuisine emphasizes purity, moderation, and gratitude for food. Tofu pudding requires no complicated preparation. With the natural aroma of soybeans as its foundation and wholesome natural ingredients as its companions, it allows food to return to its simple and authentic flavor.

3: Buddhist Diet Culinary: Coconut Sago Tofu Pudding



Ingredients:

1 package silken tofu (about 350–400 g / 12–14 oz)

50 g sago pearls

200 ml coconut milk

150 ml milk

30–40 g granulated sugar

100 ml water

Diced mango, sweet red beans, or coconut jelly, optional

A small pinch of salt, optional

Steps:

1. Cook the sago

Bring a generous amount of water to a boil.

Add the sago pearls and cook over medium heat for about 10–12 minutes, stirring occasionally.

When the sago is mostly translucent with only a small white center remaining, turn off the heat.

Cover and let it sit for 5–8 minutes, or until the sago becomes completely transparent.

Drain and rinse immediately under cold water. Set aside.

2. Make the coconut milk mixture

Add the coconut milk, milk, water, and sugar to a saucepan.

Heat over low heat until the sugar has completely dissolved. Do not bring it to a boil.

Let it cool, then refrigerate until chilled.

3. Prepare the tofu pudding

Gently spoon the silken tofu into serving bowls to create soft, irregular pieces.

The tofu can be served directly without cooking.

4. Assemble

Place the tofu pudding in each bowl.

Add the cooked sago pearls.

Pour the chilled coconut milk mixture over the top.

Garnish with diced mango, sweet red beans, or coconut jelly, if desired.

5. Chill and serve

Refrigerate for about 30 minutes before serving for the best flavor and texture.