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Location: Double Saltree Meditation Center

Teacher: Hao Liu

Topics:

1: Dharma Talk: Desire with Boundaries — Freedom and Responsibility Through the Precept of Refraining from Sexual Misconduct

2: Buddhist Diet Health: Red Phoenix Greens

3: Buddhist Diet Culinary: Stir-Fried Red Phoenix Greens with Fresh Mushrooms and Sesame Oil

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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: Desire with Boundaries — Freedom and Responsibility Through the Precept of Refraining from Sexual Misconduct. Among all the desires in human life, sexual desire is one of the most complex. It is closely connected with the human body, emotions, family, responsibility, and dignity. Therefore, the Buddhist precept of "refraining from sexual misconduct" is not simply a slogan of abstinence, but a profound reminder concerning desire, relationships, and responsibility.

Buddhism does not deny human emotions, nor does it deny that people have a need for closeness with others. For laypeople, marriage, family, and normal emotional relationships are themselves important parts of worldly life. What the precept truly seeks to prevent is the violation, deception, abandonment of responsibility, and harm to others that may arise because of desire.

Desire itself is not frightening. What truly needs to be observed is whether, when desire arises, we still have the ability to make a choice.

When a person feels hungry, he wants to eat; when he feels cold, he seeks warmth; when he feels lonely, he hopes to have someone accompany him. These are all natural human needs. However, when natural needs have no boundaries, they can gradually transform into craving. Once desire changes from "needing" into "having to possess," and from "liking" into "being unable to lose," the human mind can easily begin to be controlled by it.

This is especially true of emotions. When a person develops feelings for someone, it is easy to regard his own wishes as extremely important while forgetting that the other person also possesses his or her own dignity, choices, and life. If a person considers only "what I want," without considering "whether the other person is willing," "whether this will hurt other people," or "whether I can bear the consequences," then what is called love can easily become possession.

What the Buddhist precepts emphasize here is precisely respect. Respect for the other person's wishes, respect for existing relationships, respect for the responsibilities one has undertaken, and respect for the causes and conditions behind a relationship. Truly mature love is not merely an intense feeling; it is the ability to take responsibility.

It is easy for a person to say, "I love you." What is truly difficult is to remain honest within a relationship, to maintain respect during conflict, to keep one's promises when temptation appears, and to remain willing to nurture a relationship even after the emotions have become calm and ordinary.

Therefore, the practice of refraining from sexual misconduct is not simply about suppressing desire. It is about learning not to allow desire to become the only measure by which we live our lives.

Modern society constantly stimulates human desire. Advertisements tell us that we should possess more, the media continually creates new consumer demands, and the internet has brought people closer together while also allowing all kinds of temptations to enter our lives at any moment. In the past, one might have needed to travel far to encounter certain things; now, it may take nothing more than opening a phone to see them. When desire can be stimulated at any moment, the real difficulty is not whether we have desires, but whether we have the ability to maintain a certain distance from them. When a person sees something he likes, he does not necessarily have to obtain it; when he meets someone he likes, he does not necessarily have to possess that person; when he encounters a new form of stimulation, he does not necessarily have to respond immediately. This is restraint.

Restraint is not a denial of life. Rather, it prevents life from being completely controlled by desire. In Buddhist practice, great emphasis is often placed on having few desires and knowing contentment. Contentment does not mean making a person want nothing; it means knowing when there is already enough. A person without contentment may possess a great deal and still constantly feel that something is missing; a person who knows contentment may live a simple life and yet possess inner peace. The greatest characteristic of desire is that after obtaining something, we still want to obtain more. Therefore, what the Buddhist precepts are actually protecting is the human mind.

Because many times, what truly causes people to suffer is not “failing to obtain something,” but “knowing clearly that one should not do something and yet still being unable to control oneself.” A person may destroy a relationship that has been carefully built over many years because of a momentary impulse, and may regret it for many years afterward. Another person may hurt his family for the sake of a brief moment of stimulation, only to discover that what was lost may never be recovered. Therefore, the precepts do not wait until desire has already produced consequences before reminding us. They remind us to stop at the moment when a choice appears.

When a person can remain clear-minded in the midst of desire, maintain respect within intimate relationships, and take responsibility when faced with choices, then he has truly understood the spirit of refraining from sexual misconduct. The precept is not meant to make life lose its warmth; rather, it prevents that warmth from becoming a flame. It gives love boundaries, freedom responsibility, desire proper measure, and allows people to find genuine peace through mutual respect. A person who understands restraint is not someone without desire, but someone who does not easily treat desire as a command. This is freedom within desire, and it is also one of the deeper forms of protection that the precepts offer to human beings.

2: Buddhist Diet Health: Red Phoenix Greens

Red Phoenix Greens, with their vibrant color and tender leaves, are a common leafy green in traditional vegetarian cuisine. They have a naturally fresh aroma and a delicate texture, and with simple cooking, they can be transformed into a refreshing and flavorful Buddhist vegetarian dish. Red Phoenix Greens are rich in dietary fiber, vitamins, minerals, and a variety of plant-based nutrients, making them suitable for a light and balanced everyday diet.

In Buddhist vegetarian cuisine, Red Phoenix Greens are valued for their natural and wholesome qualities and do not require elaborate seasoning. Combined with a small amount of ginger, fresh mushrooms, and toasted sesame oil, simple cooking helps preserve the vegetable’s natural color and flavor, reflecting the Buddhist dietary principles of “purity, simplicity, vegetarianism, and cleanliness.”

Nutritional Value of Red Phoenix Greens

Rich in Dietary Fiber

Red Phoenix Greens contain dietary fiber. Adequate intake of vegetables and dietary fiber can help maintain a healthy and balanced diet. Pairing Red Phoenix Greens with brown rice, whole grains, and soy-based foods can further enrich the variety of plant-based foods in a meal.

Contains a Variety of Vitamins and Minerals

Red Phoenix Greens contain nutrients such as vitamins and minerals. Their actual nutritional content can vary depending on the variety, growing conditions, and cooking methods. Therefore, including Red Phoenix Greens as one of several types of vegetables and rotating different vegetables regularly can help increase the nutritional diversity of the daily diet.

Contains Natural Plant-Based Nutrients

The deep green leaves of Red Phoenix Greens contain a variety of naturally occurring plant compounds. These nutrients found in plant-based foods are an important part of a balanced diet. Eating vegetables of different colors and varieties can provide a wider range of plant-based nutrients in the everyday diet.

A Light and Wholesome Vegetable Choice

Red Phoenix Greens are naturally low in calories and are well suited to cooking methods that use less oil and salt. Combined with fresh mushrooms, tofu, or other plant-based ingredients, they can create a refreshing vegetarian dish that is both satisfying and nourishing.

The Fragrant Combination of Red Phoenix Greens and Sesame Oil

Red Phoenix Greens have a naturally fresh flavor, while a small amount of toasted sesame oil and ginger adds a warm and delicate aroma. Sesame oil itself contains fat, so it is best used in moderation. It enhances the flavor while adding richness to this simple vegetable dish.

3: Buddhist Diet Culinary: Stir-Fried Red Phoenix Greens with Fresh Mushrooms and Sesame Oil



Ingredients:

300 g Red Phoenix Greens

100 g fresh shiitake mushrooms

100 g king oyster mushrooms

5–6 slices fresh ginger

1½ tablespoons toasted sesame oil

1 tablespoon soy sauce

A small amount of salt

A small amount of white pepper

2–3 tablespoons water

Steps:

1. Prepare the ingredients

Wash the Red Phoenix Greens and separate the leaves from the more tender stems. Slice the shiitake mushrooms and slice or tear the king oyster mushrooms into strips. Thinly slice the ginger.

2. Sauté the ginger

Add the toasted sesame oil to a pan and heat over low heat. Add the ginger slices and sauté slowly until fragrant. Avoid heating the sesame oil over high heat for too long, as it may become bitter or burnt.

3. Stir-fry the mushrooms

Add the shiitake and king oyster mushrooms. Stir-fry over medium heat for about 2–3 minutes, until the mushrooms become fragrant and lightly golden.

4. Add the Red Phoenix Greens stems

Add the thicker stems first and stir-fry for about 1 minute. Then add the Red Phoenix Greens leaves.

5. Season

Add the soy sauce, vegetarian oyster sauce, a small amount of salt, and white pepper. Add 2–3 tablespoons of water and stir-fry quickly.

6. Finish

Cook until the Red Phoenix Greens are tender and still bright in color, then turn off the heat. If using rice wine, add it at the end and stir-fry briefly until the alcohol aroma has evaporated.