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Location: Double Saltree Meditation Center

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Topics:

1: Dharma Talk: The Precepts Arise from the Mind — The Compassion and Wisdom of the Buddha Seen Through the Precepts

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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: The Precepts Arise from the Mind — The Compassion and Wisdom of the Buddha Seen Through the Precepts. The Buddha appeared in this world and taught the Dharma not with the intention of establishing a simple system of morality. Buddhism confronts a fundamental reality: sentient beings continually create afflictions because of greed, anger, and ignorance; because of these afflictions, they engage in various actions; and ultimately, both themselves and others are made to bear the consequences of suffering. A person's suffering rarely arises suddenly. Most suffering has a long chain of causes and conditions behind it. One unwholesome thought may become a harmful word; a harmful word may lead to an argument; and an argument may eventually create resentment that remains unresolved between people for many years. What the precepts seek to do is to give us the opportunity to stop before these causes and conditions continue to develop, allowing us to pause and see clearly what is happening within our own minds.

Therefore, the first meaning of the precepts is “to stop.” When we recognize that something will cause harm, we refrain from doing it. When we see that a thought is leading us toward danger, we gather and restrain the mind in time. This act of stopping is not passive or negative; it is a form of wisdom. Many people in the world believe that courage means daring to act and being willing to accept the consequences. Buddhism, however, teaches us that true strength sometimes comes precisely from the ability to stop. To stop ourselves from speaking harmful words when we are angry, to stop ourselves from grasping at an opportunity for selfish gain when it appears before us, and to stop ourselves from taking one more step into indulgence when desire becomes intense—this kind of restraint is not weakness. It is the beginning of a person's ability to master himself.

The precepts established by the Buddha are precisely intended to help his disciples develop this ability. For lay practitioners, the Five Precepts form a particularly important foundation of Buddhist practice: refraining from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, false speech, and intoxicants. Although these precepts appear to address different forms of conduct, they all share a common purpose: helping people reduce the harm they cause to themselves and to others. What the precepts prevent is not merely a particular outward action, but the continual expansion of the afflictions that lie behind that action.

For example, when a person harms another living being because of anger, it may appear outwardly to be nothing more than a single action. In reality, however, it reflects a state in which hatred and anger

within the mind have become powerful enough to control the person's behavior. If, at the very moment anger begins to arise, a person is able to recognize, "My mind is being driven by hatred and anger," then practice has already begun. The precepts do not wait until an event has already taken place before addressing it. Rather, they give a person the opportunity to turn back before the action occurs.

Likewise, when a person encounters something that does not belong to him and a desire to possess it arises in his mind, he may choose to refrain from taking it. If he gives up only because he fears the law or is afraid that someone might discover what he has done, then the restraint remains primarily external. But if he goes further and understands that another person's possessions are the result of that person's labor, and that taking them for himself would damage trust between people, and therefore chooses from within to respect another person's property, then the precept has already entered his own system of values and moral judgment.

Therefore, genuine observance of the precepts does not mean training oneself to become a person who is merely afraid of making mistakes. It means gradually becoming a person who does not wish to cause harm. The former depends upon external pressure; the latter depends upon inner awakening. A person who relies upon external pressure may behave carefully when others are watching and become careless when no one is present. But a person whose understanding has awakened knows, even when no one is watching, which actions should not be taken.

This is one of the most important meanings of the phrase, "The precepts arise from the mind." Although the precepts were taught by the Buddha and established within the Buddhist discipline, the power that enables them to remain alive over the long term must ultimately come from the practitioner's own heart and mind. If a person has no sincere aspiration within, even the most rigorous rules can become nothing more than external restraints. But if a person truly understands cause and effect, genuinely respects life, and sincerely wishes to reduce harm, then the precepts gradually become part of the way that person lives.

The precepts also have another meaning that is easily overlooked: protection. Imagine a person walking beside a river and seeing a railing along the path. At first, the railing may seem to restrict his freedom of movement. But when the path approaches a steep cliff, he begins to understand that the railing exists to protect him. Human life is much the same. Fame, wealth, desire, anger, and vanity can all become cliffs along the path of life. When a person is living in favorable circumstances, he may not feel the importance of the precepts. It is only when he encounters temptation that he discovers whether there is an inner boundary that he is unwilling to cross.

Buddhism teaches cause and effect not in order to create fear, but to help people understand that their actions do not simply disappear without consequences. One thought influences the next. A repeated action strengthens a particular habit. A habit, when maintained over a long period of time, gradually shapes a person's state of life. Someone who continually deceives others may eventually find that he can no longer even trust himself. Someone who continually indulges anger and resentment may find that his own mind becomes increasingly harsh and burdened. Someone who remains constantly immersed in desire may obtain many things and yet still fail to find peace and stability.

Therefore, the precepts are actually a means of changing the direction of our lives. They place an additional moment of awareness at the beginning of the chain of cause and effect. They allow an unwholesome thought that might otherwise continue to develop to be stopped before it creates greater harm.

The Buddhist teaching of “purifying one’s own mind” makes it clear that practice cannot remain forever at the level of outward behavior. Actions are manifestations of the mind, and the deeper issue ultimately remains within the mind itself. To say that “the precepts arise from the mind” does not mean that the precepts can be altered according to individual preferences. Rather, it means that the true vitality of the precepts comes from inner awakening. The Buddha points out the path for us, but each person must walk it for himself. The precepts tell us where we are likely to stumble, and they also show us which direction can reduce harm.

What the Buddha offers sentient beings is a path leading away from suffering. To observe the precepts is to learn the first essential lesson on that path: to know what should be stopped, to know what is worthy of protection, and, above all, to know where the mind should ultimately be directed.

2: Buddhist Diet Health: Almond

Almonds, with their delicate aroma and rich, satisfying texture, are a common nut in traditional vegetarian cuisine. Though small in size, almonds are rich in plant-based protein, dietary fiber, unsaturated fatty acids, vitamin E, and a variety of minerals, making them a natural ingredient that offers both flavor and nutritional value. Incorporating almonds into the daily diet in moderation can add texture and provide a variety of plant-based nutrients to light vegetarian meals.

In Buddhist Diet cuisine, almonds require no complicated preparation or heavy seasoning. They can be lightly roasted, ground, or paired with yam, grains, and fruit to bring out their natural nutty aroma. Using natural ingredients and enjoying them in moderation reflects the Buddhist principles of “purity, moderation, and gratitude for food.”

Nutritional Value of Almonds

Rich in Plant-Based Protein

Almonds contain plant-based protein and can serve as a supplementary source of protein in the daily diet. Pairing them with beans, whole grains, and other nuts can increase the variety of protein sources in a vegetarian diet.

Rich in Unsaturated Fatty Acids

Almonds contain a high proportion of unsaturated fatty acids, particularly monounsaturated fats. Using almonds in moderation as a replacement for snacks higher in saturated fat can be one way to incorporate more nuts into a balanced diet.

Rich in Vitamin E

Almonds are a good dietary source of vitamin E. Vitamin E has antioxidant properties and is an essential nutrient required for normal physiological functions in the human body. Including almonds as part of a balanced diet can help increase dietary vitamin E intake.

Contains Dietary Fiber

Almonds contain dietary fiber. Consuming nuts and other fiber-rich plant foods in moderation can contribute to a more balanced and diverse dietary pattern. Pairing almonds with fruits, vegetables, and whole grains can further diversify sources of dietary fiber.

Contains a Variety of Minerals

Almonds contain minerals such as magnesium, calcium, and phosphorus. These nutrients are involved in various normal physiological functions in the human body. Combining nuts, legumes, whole grains, and vegetables can help provide a wider range of minerals in a plant-based diet.

Almonds and Pure Vegetarian Cuisine

Buddhist vegetarian cuisine emphasizes purity, moderation, and gratitude for food. Though small, almonds contain a wealth of natural nutrients and can add aroma and depth to vegetarian dishes without requiring elaborate seasoning.

3: Buddhist Diet Culinary: Almond Yam Balls



Ingredients:

- 300 g yam
- 50 g almond flour
- 30 g sliced almonds
- 30–40 g glutinous rice flour
- 20–30 g granulated sugar, adjusted to taste
- 1–2 tablespoons coconut milk
- 1 tablespoon toasted white sesame seeds (optional)
- Desiccated coconut, as needed (optional)

Steps:

1. Prepare the yam

Peel and wash the yam, then cut it into small sections. It is recommended to wear gloves when handling raw yam to avoid skin irritation caused by the yam's natural sap.

2. Steam the yam

Place the yam in a steamer and steam over high heat for about 15–20 minutes, or until it can be easily pierced with a chopstick.

3. Make the yam mixture

While the yam is still warm, mash it into a smooth paste. Add the almond flour, glutinous rice flour, and sugar, then mix thoroughly. Depending on the moisture content of the yam, add 1–2 tablespoons of coconut milk and knead until you have a soft, non-sticky dough.

4. Shape the yam balls

Divide the yam dough into evenly sized portions and roll each portion into a smooth ball.

5. Coat with almonds

Roll each yam ball evenly in sliced almonds. Alternatively, crush some of the sliced almonds and mix them with white sesame seeds before coating the outside of the yam balls.

6. Steam or bake

Steamed version: Place the yam balls in a steamer and steam over medium heat for about 8–10 minutes.

Baked version: Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F) and bake for about 12–15 minutes, or until the almonds on the surface become lightly golden.

7. Cool and serve

Allow the yam balls to cool slightly before serving. For an extra coconut flavor, sprinkle a small amount of desiccated coconut on top.