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Teacher: Hao Liu

Topics:

1: Dharma Talk: Samādhi arises from the mind — The Buddhist Path from Distraction to Meditation

2: Buddhist Diet Health: Glutinous rice chili peppers

3: Buddhist Diet Culinary: Stir-Fried Dried Tofu with Fermented Black Beans and Glutinous rice chili peppers

Main content:

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: Samādhi arises from the mind — The Buddhist Path from Distraction to Meditation. In Buddhist practice, there is a particularly important word: "samādhi," or meditative concentration. What is meant by "samādhi" is not simply sitting still, nor does it mean having absolutely no thoughts in one's mind. Nor does it mean using some method to turn oneself into a person without thoughts or emotions. Fundamentally, Buddhist "samādhi" refers to the mind being settled, focused, and stable, no longer being arbitrarily carried away by external circumstances or internal delusive thoughts. Therefore, one sentence can summarize the basic spirit of Buddhist cultivation of samādhi: Stillness arises from the mind.

Why do we cultivate samādhi? Buddhism examines the nature of human afflictions very deeply. Although we encounter countless things in our daily lives, what causes us suffering is often not the events themselves, but the distinctions, attachments, and reactions that arise in our minds toward those events. The same words may leave one person completely unaffected, while causing another person to feel hurt for several days. Faced with the same situation, one person may remain calm, while another may repeatedly dwell on it and be unable to sleep at night. The external circumstances may be exactly the same, yet the responses of the mind can be entirely different. This shows that what truly troubles us is not necessarily the external world itself, but the mind's attachment to and pursuit of external objects. Buddhist cultivation of samādhi begins precisely here.

When many beginners hear the word "samādhi," they immediately think of sitting meditation and assume, "When I meditate, I must not think about anything." Then, once they sit down, whenever a thought arises, they desperately try to drive it away. Yet the more they try to have no thoughts, the more thoughts seem to arise. This is because we have misunderstood the cultivation of samādhi as "eliminating thoughts." In fact, at the initial stage of meditation, there is no requirement that delusive thoughts immediately disappear. The arising of thoughts is a natural condition of the ordinary mind. The key to practice is that when we notice a thought arising, we do not continue to follow it. Therefore, the first step in cultivating samādhi is not "having no delusive thoughts," but rather: When a thought arises, be aware of it; once aware, do not follow it. When a thought arises, we recognize it; after recognizing it, we do not continue to chase after it. By practicing this again and again, the mind gradually develops strength.

In the early Buddhist tradition, meditation has a very comprehensive system. For example, through mindfulness of breathing, or ānāpānasati, one gradually gathers and concentrates the mind. Through the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, one observes the body, feelings, mind, and phenomena, maintaining clear awareness of bodily and mental activities. From there, one may progress into deeper states of meditation. Among these teachings, śamatha and vipaśyanā are two particularly important aspects of Buddhist practice. "Śamatha," commonly translated as "calm abiding" or "cessation," emphasizes gradually settling the scattered mind. "Vipaśyanā," often translated as "insight," emphasizes observing bodily and mental phenomena as they truly are, including their impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and selflessness.

If one practices only śamatha without vipaśyanā, one may develop a strong power of concentration, yet still fail to truly understand the roots of affliction. If one practices only insight without sufficient stability of mind, one may easily be carried away by emotions, conceptual distinctions, and wandering thoughts. Therefore, Buddhist practice traditionally emphasizes that calm abiding and insight complement and support each other.

Some people believe that meditation means retreating into the mountains, withdrawing from society, and ignoring the affairs of the world. Yet from the perspective of Buddhist practice, genuine stability of mind must ultimately be tested in everyday life. Sitting quietly does not necessarily mean that one possesses true meditative stability. Genuine stability gradually manifests as the ability to remain composed when encountering circumstances. When others praise me, I do not need to become overly pleased or conceited; when others criticize me, I do not need to immediately fall into anger. This is how the cultivation of samādhi gradually enters daily life.

Buddhism speaks of walking, standing, sitting, and lying down, meaning that practice should not exist only in one particular posture. When walking, we know that we are walking; when eating, we know that we are eating; when speaking, we are aware of our tone; when angry, we know that anger is arising within us. As a person gradually becomes capable of being aware of the mind at all times, samādhi is no longer merely a state experienced during sitting meditation. It begins to become a capacity within life itself.

Buddhist cultivation of samādhi is precisely the process of moving from "being carried away by our thoughts" toward "being able to see and illuminate our own mind." True samādhi is not merely external stillness, but inner clarity. When the mind is scattered, countless circumstances appear chaotic; when the mind is settled, a single moment can become clear and lucid.

2: Buddhist Diet Health: Glutinous Rice Chili Peppers

Glutinous rice chili peppers, with their vibrant green color and crisp, tender texture, are a common type of pepper used in Taiwanese and Asian vegetarian cuisine. They are generally mild in heat and have a fresh, natural vegetable aroma, making them suitable for stir-frying, steaming, or pairing with tofu and mushrooms. They contain vitamin C, provitamin A, dietary fiber, and a variety of plant-based nutrients, making them a vegetable that adds color, texture, and nutritional value to a light vegetarian diet.

In Buddhist vegetarian cuisine, glutinous rice chili peppers are valued for their natural and refreshing qualities and do not require complicated seasoning to bring out their fresh vegetable flavor. Paired with dried tofu, fermented black beans, and other plant-based ingredients, and prepared with a simple quick stir-fry, they retain their vibrant green color and crisp texture while reflecting the Buddhist dietary principles of "purity, simplicity, vegetarianism, and cleanliness."

Nutritional Value of Glutinous Rice Chili Peppers

Rich in Vitamin C

Glutinous rice chili peppers contain vitamin C and are one plant-based source of this essential nutrient. Vitamin C has antioxidant properties and contributes to normal immune function, collagen formation, and iron absorption. Pairing glutinous rice chili peppers with other vegetables and fruits can add variety to the daily intake of vitamin C and other nutrients.

Contains Provitamin A

Green peppers contain carotenoids, some of which can be converted into vitamin A in the body. Vitamin A plays an important role in maintaining normal vision and supporting healthy skin and immune system function. Eating vegetables of different colors can increase the variety of plant-based nutrients in the diet.

Contains Dietary Fiber

Glutinous rice chili peppers contain dietary fiber. Consuming a variety of plant-based foods rich in dietary fiber, such as vegetables, legumes, and whole grains, can contribute to a balanced and diverse diet. When paired with dried tofu and other soy foods, they can provide both vegetables and plant-based protein in the same meal.

Low in Calories and Suitable for a Light Diet

Glutinous rice chili peppers are naturally low in calories and have a relatively high water content. Preparing them with a small amount of oil and quick stir-frying can preserve their crisp texture while limiting the amount of added fat. They are a practical vegetable choice for those who prefer a light and balanced diet.

Contains Natural Plant Compounds

Glutinous rice chili peppers contain natural plant compounds such as carotenoids and polyphenols. These plant-based compounds are an important part of vegetable nutrition. Including a variety of vegetables in different colors and types can increase the diversity of plant-based nutrients in the daily diet.

3: Buddhist Diet Culinary: Stir-Fried Dried Tofu with Fermented Black Beans and Glutinous Rice Chili Peppers



Ingredients:

200 g glutinous rice chili peppers (mild green chili peppers)

200 g dried tofu

1½ tablespoons fermented black beans

3–4 slices fresh ginger

1 tablespoon cooking oil

1 tablespoon soy sauce

½ teaspoon granulated sugar

2–3 tablespoons water

A small amount of white pepper

½ teaspoon sesame oil (optional)

Steps:

1. Prepare the ingredients

Wash the chili peppers and remove the stems. They can be left whole or cut diagonally into pieces. Slice the dried tofu into thin pieces or strips. Rinse the fermented black beans lightly and drain well. Slice the ginger into thin strips or slices.

2. Pan-fry the dried tofu

Heat a pan and add the cooking oil. Add the dried tofu and pan-fry over medium heat until lightly golden on both sides and slightly fragrant. Remove and set aside.

3. Sauté the fermented black beans and ginger

Using the same pan, add the ginger and fermented black beans. Sauté over low heat until fragrant.

4. Add the chili peppers

Turn the heat to high. Add the chili peppers and stir-fry quickly for about 2 minutes, keeping them bright green and slightly crisp.

5. Add the dried tofu and season

Return the pan-fried dried tofu to the pan. Add the soy sauce, vegetarian oyster sauce, sugar, white pepper, and water. Stir-fry quickly until everything is evenly coated.

6. Finish

Continue stir-frying for about 1–2 minutes, allowing the dried tofu to absorb the savory flavor of the fermented black beans. Once the sauce has slightly reduced, turn off the heat. Drizzle with a small amount of sesame oil if desired.