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Location: International Buddha Dharma Society for Cosmic Law

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Topics:

Part 1: Dharma talk: Is there a true self?

Part 2: Buddhist Diet and Regimen: The tips of regimen at the Beginning of Summer

Part 3. Weekly Buddhist Cuisine Menu: Eggplant Salad

Main content:

Part 1: Dharma talk: Is there a true self?

- The Polemic Challenge of Sachakya (Part I)

On one occasion, the Buddha travelled to the Vaishali, the capital of the Vajji kingdom of the Vajjis clan and stayed at the nearby Mahavana Vihāra.

At that time, the son of a disciple of the Jain Nirvana, Sachakya, was also living in Vajji.

Full of theory and eloquence, Sachakya was highly respected by many people of that time.

In front of the people of Vajji, he made these bold words:

I do not expect any sramanas, brahman, or even their leaders, teachers, or even those who claim to be fully enlightened, will not be defeated and shaken by my discourse. Even an unconscious pillar will also be defeated and shocked by my discourse.

Early that day, Sachakya met the venerable Assaji, who had come to beg for food. He asked him:

"Master Assaji! What did Sramana Gautama teach his disciples?"

"Aaggika brahman! The Blessed One always teaches us that when we observe the aggregates of form, feeling, perception, mental formation and consciousness, each of them is impermanent and non-self."

"Assaji! How could Sramana Gautama teach like this? Either you have misheard, or Sramana Gautama has a wrong and evil view. I will find a time to see Sramana Gautama and discuss it with him face to face.

So, Sachakya announced in public at the assembly hall of the Vajji that he would go and argue with the Buddha, and if the Buddha's claim was the same as Assaji said, he would defeat the Buddha.

Trying to defend the Buddha? This sensational news naturally caused a lot of discussions among the people of Vajji, and they curiously followed Sachakya to the Buddha's residence to watch.

After saluting the Buddha, Sachakya questioned the Buddha and said:

"Master Gautama! I have heard that you often teach your disciples that the aggregates of form, feeling, perception, mental formation and consciousness are impermanent and non-self. Is that true?"

"Aaggika brahman! That's true."

"Master Gautama! I would like to refute this by giving an analogy. For example, any seed or plant has to depend on the soil to grow, and so does man. Humans have to regard form as 'true self', or regard feeling, perception, mental formation and consciousness as the 'true self' to rely on the 'true self' to produce good and evil."

"Aaggika brahman! You're saying that formation is 'true self', or saying that the feeling, perception, mental formation and consciousness are the 'true self'?"

"Yes, Master Gautama! That's what everybody thinks."

"Aaggika brahman! I only want you to talk about your opinion. Why do you bring up everyone's opinion?"

"All right, Gautama Buddha! Just to make my point, I'm sure the formation is the 'true self, and the feeling, perception, mental formation and consciousness are the 'true self'.

"Aaggika brahman! Please tell me exactly what you know. For example, is the king of a country free to exercise his sovereignty within his territory, as King Pasenadi does in the Kosala kingdom?"

"Yes, Master Gautama!"

"Aaggika brahman! When you say that 'formation is the subject of true self', this 'true self' should be like the king of a country that can exercise sovereign power. However, can this 'formation' change at will to become this way and not that?"

Sachakya kept silent, knowing that this key answer would be the same as disintegrating his own argument. Still, it would be very embarrassing to admit defeat in front of so many people, so he didn't dare to admit it. Even though the Buddha repeatedly asked him, he still kept silent.

At that moment, a powerful yaksha with a vajra could no longer stand it and said to Sachakya in the air:

"Aaggika brahman! The Blessed One has asked you three times. Why don't you answer him? If you don't, I'll smash your head with my vajra."

Sachakya was frightened and quickly answered the Buddha truthfully, saying:

"No, Master Gautama!"

"Aaggika brahman! Think it carefully. Please note that your answer is inconsistent with your previous claim that 'formation is the true self; the feeling, perception, mental formation and consciousness are the true self'! Let me ask you again, is the formation permanent? Or impermanent?"

"Impermanence, Master Gautama!"

"Is the impermanent suffering? Or pleasure?"

"It is suffering, Master Gautama!"

"Those impermanent and suffering are all changeable dharmas. Among these changing dharmas, does a person who has broad learning and follows a holy path think that there is a 'true self', or that 'it belongs to the true self', or that 'there is a true self in it', or that 'it is included in the true self', or that 'this is mine', or that 'This is me', or that 'this is my true self'?"

"No, Master Gautama!"

"Then, would you?"

"Neither will I, Master Gautama!"

"Aaggika brahman! In terms of the formation, feeling, perception, mental formation and consciousness, if you cannot be free from greed, desire, thought, love, and craving. Once these aggregates change, will sorrow and suffering arise?"

"Yes, Master Gautama!"

"Aaggika brahman! It is like a person carrying on a lot of suffering, who is always with the suffering together, neither ceasing nor giving up, and who certainly will never be happy."

"Aaggika brahman! I sought to find the truth in your arguments, but I could not find it anywhere. It is as if a man went to the mountains searching for hard heartwood but only found a banana trunk. Peer the trunk off layer by layer until the end; there is nothing inside. No hard heartwood can be found. Your argument is just like the banana tree that is pleasant to the eye but of no use. Haven't you boast that you can argue with everyone and make him tremble and sweat? Look! You are even drenched in sweat and dripping to the ground while I have no sweat flowing on me."

At this point, Sachakya could only sit there in shame, chagrin, head bowed, and speechlessness, enduring the sarcasm and ridicule from the clan of the Vajji. To save himself from the embarrassment of continued ridicule, Sachakya hurriedly asked the Buddha to enlighten him. The Buddha once again gave a teaching on "no-self" to the masses.

Finally, Sachakya deeply repented to the Buddha for his thoughtless, reckless, and ill-intentioned challenge to the argument and asked to be able to offer food and drink to the Buddha on the next day, to which the Buddha acquiesced.

Part 2: Buddhist Diet and Regimen: The tips of regimen at the Beginning of Summer

Today is the first day of summer.

Nourishing the Yang is to nourish the heart at the Beginning of Summer. Adjust the breath, calm the temper, take a nap regularly, often eat ginger, do aerobics, and have porridge for dinner to promote the flow of Qi and blood.

The focus of the regimen at the Beginning of Summer lies in nourishing Yang and the mind. Eat more food that can promote Yang Qi, such as onions, ginger, etc. Dinner is appropriate to eat porridge and beans to nourish the stomach and engender liquid. Eat more fresh vegetables and fruits. Mix with coarse grains appropriately.

Key points of regimen

- Daily life keeping in good health

After the Beginning of Summer, people should adapt to climate change. Every night go to bed later than in spring to accommodate the lack of Yin Qi and get up early to comply with the fullness of Yang Qi.

- Dietetic regimen

After the Beginning of Summer, eating ginger can relieve fatigue, anorexia, insomnia and other symptoms brought by the heat. At the same time, it can also appetise the spleen and prevent abdominal cold and cold.

Eat porridge for dinner

Have some porridge at dinner to help produce saliva and slake thirst and protect the spleen and stomach, so it can be said to kill two birds with one stone. In addition, after the summer, you should have the right amount of beans to supplement protein. Eat more fruits and vegetables to supplement vitamins and have some coarse grains to balance nutrition and promote digestion.

- Exercise regimen

Do more slow-paced aerobic exercise

After the Beginning of Summer, people should choose slow-paced aerobic exercises such as walking, jogging and Tai Chi. As the temperature rises, people tend to sweat, and if people do strenuous exercise at this time, it is easy to cause water shortage.

- Meridians regimen

People should focus on nourishing the heart at the solar term of the Beginning of Summer. Because the heart of the human body works in concert with the summer among the four seasons, in summer, the human's heart Yang is the most prosperous with the most vital function, so people in spring and summer should turn to comply with the changes in the weather and focus on the heart nourishment.

- Emotion regimen

The weather gets hot after the Beginning of Summer. In particular, people should pay attention to keeping in good health and strive to do "refrain from anger and impetuosity" to develop a state of calm and relaxed mind facing urgent and trouble matters.

In short, after the Beginning of Summer, we should maintain a clear and relaxed mood, not be overjoyed and sad, so that the Qi is smooth and flow.

Part 3. Weekly Buddhist Cuisine Menu: Eggplant Salad



Ingredients:

4 purple eggplants, 3 stalks of coriander, small pieces of ginger, salt, a large spoon of vinegar, two tablespoons of sesame oil

Steps:

1. Wash and steam the eggplants. Be careful, do not steam too long. Otherwise, the colour will not be good. Use chopsticks gently to poke the eggplants until they can be poked through.
2. Cool the steamed eggplants. After that, hand-torn into shreds.
3. Chop the ginger and coriander into minces.
4. Mix the chopped coriander and ginger well with some salt, vinegar, and sesame oil. Add the sauce to the eggplant shreds.