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February 2013

SHINGI

Newsletter of the Tendai Buddhist Institute



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The Third Jewel

Jushoku's Meanderings

This month's winter retreat is titled 'Tendai as 21st Century Buddhism'. It will specifically examine Tendai practices and how they relate to philosophy and teachings of the Japanese Tendai tradition. I will not give away the details of the teachings that will take place during the week-end retreat. But I would like to discuss, now and in subsequent writings and teachings, how this fits into the larger subject of Buddhist Modernism. This is truly a

February Events Calendar



Weekly Meditation Services (WMS) are on Wednesday evenings. They begin at 6pm with a discussion or talk (see below for this month's discussion topics). At about 7pm there is a meditation service, followed at 8pm by a potluck supper. All of Wednesday evening's events are open to the public. There is no fee, and reservations are not required.

February Wednesday Meditations and Discussions

6 Skandha - the five aggregates or components which collectively constitute the human individual. This Buddhist concept is essential to better understanding the broader Buddhadharma. We will examine how this model cuts to the core of Buddhist teachings..

13 Shakyamuni Buddha's Parinirvana Day - Parinirvana is the final nirvana, which occurs upon the death of the body of someone who has attained complete awakening. We commemorate the day with our discussion of its meaning for each of us..

20 Is Meditation Enough? Read the very short excerpt in *Buddhadharma: The Practitioners Quarterly* online and then join the discussion. The link is to an excerpt of the article.
<http://www.thebuddhadharma.com/web-archive/2012/11/8/is-meditation-enough.html>

27 The Spectrum of Tradition and Modernism [on the Buddhist Path] - in a continuing series of dharma discussions on Buddhism in the Postmodern world. In this series we take a critical approach to how our practices are transforming and evolving in the contemporary world.

Other events in February:

meander. (cont.)



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VA](#)

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Springfield, MA](#)

[Nishi Sangha--
Albany, NY](#)

[Red Maple Sangha--
Renfrew, Ottawa,
Canada](#)

2 Sutra Class and Morning Service, 8:30 - 10:30 AM

- *Vajrachedika Prajnaparamita Sutra* (The Diamond Sutra). It is as one of the earliest Mahayana sutras and is considered by many scholars as foundational to subsequent Mahayana thought. Don't miss this informative and fun class. The book used for this class is *The Diamond Sutra: transforming the way we perceive the world*, by Mu Soeng; Wisdom Publications (2000).

8 - 10 Winter Retreat - Tendai as 21st Century Buddhism

The Tendai school is a coherent philosophy, set of practices, and disciplines that dates from 9th century Japan that may well be the model for Western Buddhism. This retreat will explore the many facets of Tendai and how they relate to your life.

Upcoming Events March

22-24 O-Higan Retreat - Mindfulness as a Verb

Notes:

Food Pantry at Jiunzan Tendai-ji - The need is much greater than the resources of the local food pantries, especially at this time of year. Please bring non-perishable food items to the Tendai Buddhist Institute on Wednesdays. We contribute these items to the Chatham Silent Food Pantry.

The Sangha needs people to volunteer to donate flowers for the upcoming year. Please sign up to be responsible to bring or pay for flowers for one month during 2013. The signup sheet is on the bulletin board in the kitchen. This is a wonderful way to share with your sangha.

We have established a Building Fund. We already have several thousand dollars donated to it. For those who contribute significant donations to this fund we are making available both scroll and framed calligraphy available as gifts. Each of these original shodo were donated to Tendai Buddhist Institute by the Japanese Tendai Calligraphy Association for this purpose. We will disclose more about the donations and gifts in a future Shingi.[Such a tease]



Meanderings (cont. from side bar at left)



McMahon identifies three main elements that have contributed to Buddhist Modernism; Western monotheism, rationalism and scientific naturalism and romantic expressivism [1]. This is very relevant and important to us outside of Asia. However, I don't think that we realize how this has affected Buddhists and society at large in



Asia.

To set the stage let's examine when Buddhism was first introduced to Europe and the Americas. There had been Buddhists immigrants and visitors to the West for many centuries before, but the beliefs and practices were not recognized as a discrete set of teachings, with an ancient history until the middle of the nineteenth century. European scholars asserted that Shakyamuni Buddha was African due to misinterpretations of his physical appearance until 1830. Orientalists had no idea of Buddhist origins in India because it had virtually disappeared in India. It wasn't until 1860 when Alexander Cunningham had identified Nalanda, Sravasti and Bodhgaya (as well as other important historic sites) [2]. These same sites had been ignored in India, they were over grown and desolate. It was a new Euro-American interest in this exotic religion that has led to their restoration.

In Asia, Buddhist origins and history were well known; however, Euro-American scholars were generally not interested in learning from Asian scholars. Paradoxically, colonialism led to a great rebirth of interest in Buddhist teachings as a reaction to being exposed to foreign Christian proselyting.

In Japan, in the mid-nineteenth century, Buddhism was persecuted by the new Meiji government. All Japanese Buddhist schools had to reformulate and re-imagine themselves. This was a painful process that still bears scars. Tendai was no exception; early 19th century Tendai looked very different from late 19th century Tendai. Tendai today has responded to the forces that have transpired in the last 150 years. The advantage that Tendai has is that it has a variety of practices, teachings and teachers that adapt to changes in the social landscape. It is better prepared than many other schools for the changes that are taking place in postmodern society.

This process mirrors basic Buddhist teachings. That is we recognize impermanence and the importance of self-reflection. By candidly examining Buddhist Modernism, we must be prepared to be challenged,

[1] McMahan, D.L. (2008) *The Making of Buddhist Modernism*. Oxford: New York; Oxford University Press.

[2] Morgan, J. and Walters, C. (2011) *Journeys on the Silk Road: A desert explorer, Buddha's secret library and the unearthing of the world's oldest printed book*. Guilford, CT.; Lyons Press.

Gassho . . . Monshin

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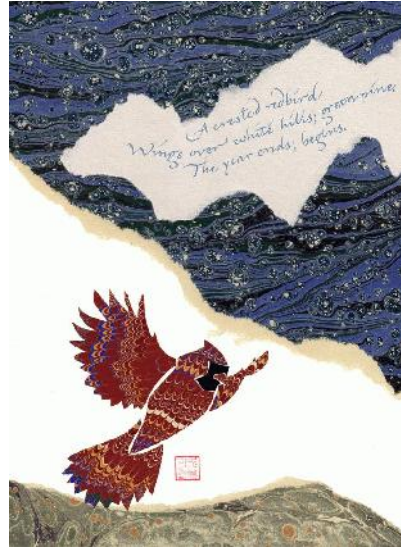
The Third Jewel--Where sangha members share ideas, poetry, and art to enrich everyone's Buddhist practice.

A Thought from Seiyo Erica Fay

Q: "What can you tell a young man looking for motivation in life itself?"

A: "So stop waiting for motivation and inspiration to come to you and start making your own. Learn a little more every day. Be of benefit to those around you".

The answer is quoted from Neil deGrasse Tyson, director of Astrophysics and the Hayden Planetarium, American Museum of Natural History.



I have found in teaching the basics of Buddhism that many people wonder where they are to start on the path. Where should they focus? The many numbered lists in Buddhism can leave one confused. Start where you will; the process is dynamic; it will lead you. For those who find a teacher who directs them, that may work well, but the most important act is to begin. Don't wait. Learn a little more every day and be of benefit to those around you.

Seiyo Erica Fay

Questions? Comments? Suggestions? Contact . . .

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