



Monthly Bulletin

Tendai-shu New York Betsuin

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## Jushoku's Meanderings

RECENTLY I was having a conversation with a Sangha member. He asked me exactly what merit means. I had to stop and think about how to answer this in a western context. From an Asian perspective it is mre or less obvious and doesn't need much explanation.

Merit is a feature common to most forms of the Buddhist Path in Asia. Providing food to itinerant monks in Southeast Asia is a common practice. Laypeople throughout Asia, bring food, incense, flowers and other items to the temples, presenting them as offerings. These are all considered a means of accumulating merit. Giving a donation to a temple or other worthy institution, as well as giving money to an impoverished person is a traditional way of gathering merit. For people who grew up in the west this may seem strange. I don't know, perhaps it seems to people rather like buying dispensations.

The notion of merit comes from a worldview in which karma and rebirth are an integral part of one's life. It also comes from a perspective in which the 'self' is not autonomous, but an incorporated component that thinks of family, village, and other social relations as a part of 'self'. This worldview is affirmed by the agricultural cycle. A cycle of observing the natural world, in which we till the land, sow the seeds, tend the plants, harvest the crop, benefit from our labors, and begin the cycle all over again next season. This is a bit like karma, and of course rebirth. If we don't till the soil properly, sow the seeds at the right time or the right depth, etc. then the result of our efforts will be less than satisfactory. On the other hand, if we paid close attention to what we were doing we will have a great crop in the fall. It also demonstrates that the individual herself is not likely to be successful without the labor of others. There is of course the more orthodox notion of karma and rebirth in which each intention and action in our lives results in negative or positive future effects in this and future lives. Merit is one of those actions.

If we view merit from a cynical perspective, a perspective that thinks in terms of judgments from a jealous God, or the purchase of dispensations, its meaning is lost. Also, if we view practice as limited to meditation or chanting, etc. we disregard practices that are just as valid and meaningful, but do not fit our preconceived notions. To many Asians, the accumulation of merit is not merely a way to try to gain a positive outcome in future lives, it is also a practice. First the act of giving in and of itself is a practice; it is the first Paramita, Dana or generosity. Then there are acts that go along with the giving. If we give incense or candles for instance, as we light the incense, flowers or candles we start by reflecting a few moments and say to ourselves, "May the fragrance, beauty, or light permeate the Three Worlds and bring me closer to awakening." At the same time we should give with our heart, not out some ego attachment. In the event we are giving a donation or giving of our time we can construct a similar phrase which accompanies the action. Don't just place the envelope in the donation box, or send off a check to a relief organization, dedicate the act and allow yourself a few minutes of reflection.

There are so many sacred moments that attend the seeming mundane actions. Open your eyes with your heart / mind and experience the joy of moment to moment living. Merit is just one of those ways we can do this. Experience gratitude, practice mindfulness and be joyful.



# Jiunzan Tendaiji and Mahasangha

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## April Events

### ❖ Sutra Class

7 Sutra Class, 8:30–10:30 a.m., *Lotus Sutra* Chapter 14, “Ease in Practice”. Each month we examine one chapter from the *Lotus Sutra*. I suggest a practice to go along with this class, even if one does not attend the class. We start by hand writing the chapter for the month. This is followed by reading the chapter before the class. To further increase one’s insight I recommend that at least once a week for the month the practitioner incorporate the chapter into one’s practice by contemplating and or chanting the chapter. Try this for several months, and endeavor to attend the class.

### ❖ Meditation Meetings

**Every Wednesday 6 p.m., discussion, Meditation Service and pot luck dinner**

4 Shakyamuni Buddha

11 The Medicine Buddha and Modern Life

18 Is Anger Ever Justified

25 Pure Land Iconography

### ❖ Other Events

15 Mahasangha Sunday, starting at 10 a.m. Discussion on “The *Lotus Sutra* as a Practice,” followed by a Mediation Service and

we finish with pot-luck lunch.

17 The Sidney and Beatrice Albert Interfaith Lectureship. Presenting Dr. S. Rashid Naim. The title of his lecture is “Living with Others: Islam and Muslims in Multi-Religious Societies.” At the College of St. Rose, Hubbard Interfaith Sanctuary, 959 Madison Avenue, Albany, NY., 7:00 p.m. Dr. Rashid has taught at Oxford University in the UK, University of California at Santa Cruz, and Union College. He currently teaches at Georgia State University

### ❖ Announcements

**Coming in June** Place on your calendar, Saturday, June 2, Calligraphy Workshop. Seven Tendai monks will be visiting us from Japan to conduct a one-day kanji and Sanskrit calligraphy workshop. The people who are offering this workshop are traveling from Japan just for this event. In addition to the instruction and demonstrations, they will also be bringing with them calligraphy from the former and current Tendai Zasu. There will be more about this event in next month’s *Shingi*. We may have to pre-register people because of space limitations. This should be a very special event.

Schedule updates and future events can be seen at [www.tendai.org](http://www.tendai.org).

Please send your submissions for the May *Shingi* by April 15..



Monshin led Sangha members in sutra chanting during the March O-Higan retreat at Jiunzan Tendai-ji.

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# Nishi Sangha

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❖ *Meditation Service and Dharma Discussion every Tuesday, 6 p.m., Friends' Meeting House, Madison Avenue, Albany, NY*

## April Events

3 Commit to Sit: *Tricycle's* 28-Day Meditation Challenge

- 10 When is Buddha No Longer Buddha? – A Discussion
- 17 Attend lecture by Dr. S. Rashid Naim at the Hubbard Interfaith Sanctuary
- 24 Dependent Origination

# Nyoirin-An (Ekayana Tendai Sangha)

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❖ *Meditation Service every second and fourth Thursday of the month, Nyoirin-An meditation room in Naubeim near Frankfurt, Germany.*

## April Events

- 12 *Kshitigarbha-Sutra*, Part I
- 26 *Kshitigarbha-Sutra*, Part II

The text is available at <http://www.prajna.nl/teksten/onderricht/soetras/kshitigarbha.htm>

# Danish Lotus Sangha

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❖ *Meditation Service, every Thursday, 9:30–10:30 a.m.*  
*Meditation Service and discussion, every Tuesday, 7:30–9:30 p.m.*

## April Events

More information is available at [www.lotus-sangha.dk](http://www.lotus-sangha.dk)

# Higashi Sangha

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❖ *Meditation Service and Dharma Discussion every Monday, 6:30 p.m., South Berkshire Friends Meeting House, State Rd., Great Barrington, MA*

## April Events

- 2 Duality and Non-Duality
  - 9 Ancestral Spirit
  - 16 Buddhism and the Media
  - 23 The Three Poisons
  - 30 Bali, Land of Happiness – Led by Jurek Zamoyski
- ❖ Higashi members Karen Noel and Jurek Zamoyski have joined the South Berkshire Interfaith team in serving meals at Breaking Bread Kitchen in Great Barrington, Ma. The Interfaith team rotates with other civic and business groups to feed the hungry every Thursday night, but Karen and Jurek felt compelled to serve much more frequently and now join other groups to help out as well.
- ❖ Sansho Tamarack Garlow's radio spot, "*The Diamond Path*", on community radio WBCR in Great Barrington is also podcast on the internet. It is a show that offers Buddhist perspectives on every-

day life with the emphasis on compassion and community service. If any sangha member has an outreach program, knows of a significant event they would like publicized or would like to be a guest please contact Sansho. In addition to reaching the greater Barrington area through the FM station the podcast has been downloaded off the internet over 12,000 times worldwide since the end of September.

❖ *The Clergy Corner*, a weekly column in the Great Barrington newspaper *The Berkshire Record*, ran a large article outlining the Department of Peace. Sansho's submission was the first time the DoP campaign has been in print in this area. Sansho was also interviewed for a front-page article in the *Berkshire Eagle* (Pittsfield, Ma) that was also published last month.

❖ Erica Fay's mother, Dorolyn Marie Lines (Jensen/Stauter), passed away Thursday, March 8 in Albuquerque, NM. She died in peace with Jenny and Erica by her side.

We are planning a gathering to celebrate her life to be held in Denver in mid to late June.

The Sangha offers Erica, her mother and her family our thoughts and prayers

# Washington Tendai Sangha

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❖ *Meditation Service and Dharma Discussion every Sunday, 7:30–10 a.m., Cherrydale Volunteer Fire Department, 3900 Lee Highway in Arlington, VA. News and event updates are available at the sangha web site [washingtontendai.org](http://washingtontendai.org).*



# April 2007

Tendai Buddhist Institute

Tendai-shu New York Betsuin and Karuna Tendai Dharma Center [www.tendai.org](http://www.tendai.org)



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	
1	2 <i>Full Moon</i>	3	4	5	6	7	
8 Washington Tendai Sangha Meditation Service	9 Higashi Sangha Meditation Service	10 Nishi Sangha Meditation Service Danish Lotus Sangha Meditation Service <i>Last Quarter</i>	11 Jiunzan Tendaiji Meditation Service	12 Nyoirin-An Meditation Service Danish Lotus Sangha Meditation Service <i>Yakushi Nyorai Day</i>	13	14 Jiunzan Tendaiji Morning Service and Sutra Class	
15 Washington Tendai Sangha Meditation Service	16 Higashi Sangha Meditation Service	17 Nishi Sangha Meditation Service Danish Lotus Sangha Meditation Service <i>New Moon</i>	18 Jiunzan Tendaiji Meditation Service	19 Danish Lotus Sangha Meditation Service	20	21	
22 Washington Tendai Sangha Meditation Service	23 Higashi Sangha Meditation Service	24 Nishi Sangha Meditation Service Danish Lotus Sangha Meditation Service <i>First Quarter</i>	25 Jiunzan Tendaiji Meditation Service	26 Nyoirin-An Meditation Service Danish Lotus Sangha Meditation Service	27	28	
29 Washington Tendai Sangha Meditation Service	30 Higashi Sangha Meditation Service					<p><i>Sangha members discuss the Six Paramitas at Mahasangha Sunday in March.</i></p>	

Jiunzan Tendaiji Higashi Tendai Sangha Nishi Tendai Sangha Danish Lotus Sangha Nyoirin-An  
Washington Tendai Sangha