

Meanderings:

AMONG the 48 minor precepts which an ordained Tendai Buddhist should observe, is an admonition to not prefer the study of non-Buddhist texts and teachings about the Buddha-Dharma. As many Buddhist teachers have pointed out, we can understand this precept not as an absolute prohibition, but simply as a caution against straying too far away from the Dharma. Consequently, I have from time to time allowed myself to explore the sacred texts of other faith traditions, in the spirit of ecumenicalism. While reading in the *Analects of Confucius* recently, I encountered a simple verse in the eleventh chapter, which I think is full of meaning: “Confucius said, ‘Yan Hui is not much help to me. He never questions what I have to say.’”

For me, this short verse about questioning the teacher, itself raises important questions. What is the proper attitude of a student of the Dharma? Does it mean, as Confucius would seem to suggest, that we should question everything our teacher lays before us? What role should reverence and loyalty play in the student-teacher relationship? How do we respond to our own doubts? In short— what is the healthiest and most beneficial relationship, between a Dharma student and teacher?

Here in the Washington Tendai Sangha, one of our Sangha members recently asked me some difficult questions about the human failings of some Dharma teachers, citing the example of the late Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, the Tibetan teacher who died at the young age of 49 of cirrhosis from alcohol abuse. In fairness to Trungpa Rinpoche, I pointed out that he gave back his clerical vows in 1968, which released him from the precepts against alcohol and sexuality. Even so, the question was perfectly valid—some Dharma teachers are indeed visibly flawed people, just as Trungpa Rinpoche, one of the most renowned Dharma teachers of our time, was also a flawed human.

Monshin Sensei has said, many times, that the essence of Buddhism is compassion. But how can we be truly compassionate, if we are unforgiving of the humanity of our teachers, when we happen to notice their faults? Is that Buddhism—rejecting all flawed messengers? Since all of us are also flawed people, doesn't that perspective imply that no one is truly qualified to teach the Dharma? Surely, that cannot be the case.

Spiritual teachers who inflexibly preach one thing, but who live and behave in another way, are guilty of hypocrisy. We all know of examples of this kind of “teacher” from the news. Eventually the inexorable law of karma reveals their hypocrisy, and ruins their credibility. But no one ever makes spiritual progress, if they concern themselves principally with the behavior of others, and not themselves. A good Buddhist should care more about refining their own character, than searching out the flaws of others. Should we dare question our teachers, as Confucius suggests? Of course, absolutely—but don't make that an excuse to be an obstructionist either, which is selfish and lacks compassion. When we question the teacher, make it an honest question—seeking to understand, without being an obstructionist, or to show off our own understanding. Remember that the honest question is also a service to the teacher, because it helps him or her clarify their own understanding of weighty matters, as they mentally search through the maze of complexity for the right response. I believe that this is what Confucius meant, when he suggested that students who questioned his teachings, were of real use to him.

It's not easy to be a good student of the Dharma.

(continued on page 2)

Jiunzan Tendaiji and Mahasangha

September Events

❖ Meditation Meetings

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

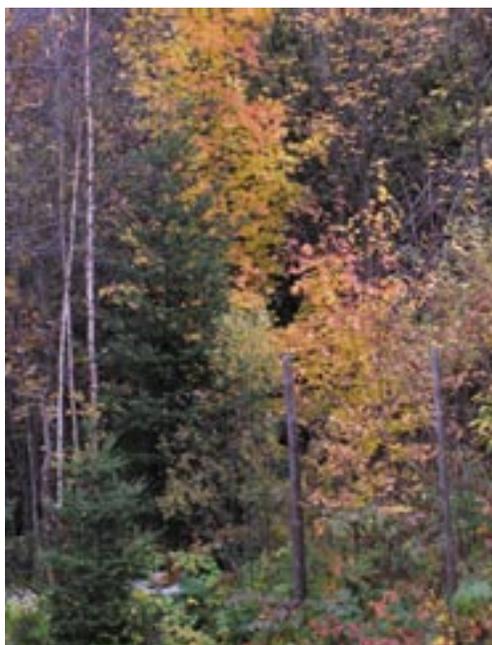
- 5 The Buddhist Self: Lost and Found
- 12 The Healing Buddha, led by Shumon
- 19 O-Higan and Segaki
- 26 Purposeful Living

❖ Class

8 **Family as Buddhist Practice**, 9 a.m. Two readings are available for this lively discussion led by Shingaku Henderson. The articles, *Practice of the Hearth* and *Jodo-shin Teachings for Young People*, are available from your Sangha leaders. Due to copyright issues we cannot place these materials on the internet.

❖ Coming Events in October

October 6 **Calligraphy Exhibit Opening Reception**
1–5 p.m. All are invited—please join us. We will have the magnificent calligraphy exhibit open every Saturday and Sunday from 1–4 p.m. through October.



October 27 **Tendai Buddhist Institute Kaihogyo**, one-day retreat, 7 a.m.–4 p.m. A *kaihogyo* is a type of walking meditation on the back roads of Canaan, NY. This practice is based on the Mt. Hiei *kaihogyo* which is part of the spiritual practice of every priest who trains at Enryaku-ji and Tendai-shu New York Betsuin. The distance that we will travel is about 12 miles and will include lunch during the day. The donation for the day is \$40 for members and \$55 for non-members, all expenses included. Experience the fall foliage in a new and profound way.

❖ Other September Events

21–23 **Retreat: O-Higan Dynamic Compassion: Life and Death**, led by Monshin Naamon, Jushoku of Jiunzan Tendaiji. The ‘circle of life’ is a reality that is well addressed in Buddhist philosophy, teachings and practices. This retreat is an opportunity to explore the Buddhist view of death and dying, preparing for one’s own death, assisting others through their journey and ways to live more fully through this knowledge. The practices include meditation and chanting. This retreat is appropriate for all levels of knowledge and practice. The cost is \$180 for members and \$210 for non-members, meals, lodging and all materials included. We start at 7 p.m. on Friday the 21st and finish about 1 p.m. on Sunday.

23 **Mahasangha Sunday**, 10:30 a.m. begins with a discussion on the *Brahma Viharas*. Summer is over and we’re ready to pick up our practice a bit. The Sangha is an integral component of Buddhism. Join the Mahasangha to further incorporate this treasure in your life. This Sunday will initiate a series of intermediate practices for all who would like to invigorate their practice.

Meanderings *(continued from page 1)*

It requires a willingness to set aside our own ego, and to listen, and consider ideas and explanations that may not make sense to us at first. Are you smarter, or wiser, or more compassionate, than the teacher before you? Really? At some point, all the questions should evolve into silent introspection. When honest questions lead us to honest introspection, then mutual affection, respect and loyalty between the student and teacher naturally arise, to the benefit of them both. This is the most beneficial relationship between a Dharma student and Dharma teacher, and is the reason why I believe that both Confucius and the Buddha valued an honest question most of all.

Gassho,
Chion Ernest Lissabet



Washington Tendai Sangha

❖ **Meditation Service, 2nd and 4th Sunday of the month, 8–10 a.m.; Dharma Class and Meditation, 1st and 3rd Tuesday of the month 7–9 p.m., Cherrydale Volunteer Fire Department, 3900 Lee Highway in Arlington, VA.**

Please join us for “Dharma Breakfast”, 1st and 3rd Sunday of the month, 9:30–10:30 a.m. at a local restaurant for conversation about Buddhism and the Dharma.

News and event updates are available at the sangha web site washingtontendai.org.

There are no meetings of the Sangha on the 5th Sunday or Tuesday of any month.

Nyoirin-An (Ekayana Tendai Sangha)

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

September Events

6 Chih-i's *Fa Hua Hsüan I* (The Meaning of the Lotus Sutra) – Part I

20 Chih-i's *Fa Hua Hsüan I* (The Meaning of the Lotus Sutra) – Part II

In Hungary near the Austrian border the Ekayana Tendai Weekend Retreat took place from August 3rd to 5th. The program was developed for lay people in the style of a gyo. The lectures were on basics of the Tendai school and its history and the Lotus Sutra as Ekayana (One Vehicle) Teaching as well. Many questions arose to be answered. The "mini gyo" gave the five attendants a glimpse of a complete Buddhist practice. For Daishin as the leader it is an inspiration to continue on this way to spread the Dharma.



Celestial Drum Tendai Sangha

❖ **Meditation Service and Dharma discussion, every Thursday, 6:30 p.m.; introductory meditation instruction offered at 6:15 p.m.; Indian Lake, NY; e-mail fitterer@acmenet.net for directions.**

During the summer months the Sangha explored through discussion and practice basic *shikan* (shamatha/vipashyana) meditation as presented by Chih-i. In September we move on to becoming

more familiar with the basic Buddhist teachings to provide a firm foundation for continued study and practice.

❖ Other Events

2 **Kaihogyo:** a 13 mile pilgrimage/meditation walk through the southern High Peaks of the Adirondack Mountains.

20 **Refuge Ceremony**

Danish Lotus Sangha

❖ **Meditation Service, every Thursday, 9:30–11 a.m.**

Meditation Service and discussion, every Tuesday, 7:30–9:30 p.m.

September Events

Higashi Sangha

❖ **Meditation Service and Dharma Discussion every Monday, 6:30 p.m., East Mountain Retreat Center, 8 Lake Buel Rd., Great Barrington, MA**

September Events

3 Exploration of the Ego-Self

10 Skillful Means, Historical Meaning and Practical Application

17 Physics, The Dali Lama and Buddhism

24 Sangha Pot Luck Dinner

4 **Long Tuesday:** We meet at 4:30 p.m., sit meditation for three hours; at 7:30 p.m. we hold our regular Tuesday service and meditation, followed by a discussion meeting.

30 **Kaihogyo,** 10 a.m.–2 p.m.

Nishi Sangha

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

September Events

4 Collective Karma – Part II

11 Are We There Yet?

18 The Six Paramitas

25 Sangha Planning



September 2007

Tendai Buddhist Institute

Tendai-shu New York Betsuin and Karuna Tendai Dharma Center www.tendai.org



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1
						2 Celestial Drum Kaihogyo
9 Washington Tendai Sangha Meditation Service	10 Higashi Sangha Meditation Service	11 Nishi Sangha Meditation Service Danish Lotus Sangha Meditation Service <i>New Moon</i>	12 Jiunzan Tendaiji Meditation Service <i>Yakushi Nyorai Day</i>	13 Danish Lotus Sangha Meditation Service Celestial Drum Meditation Service	14	15
16 Jiunzan Tendaiji Mahasangha Sunday	17 Higashi Sangha Meditation Service	18 Nishi Sangha Meditation Service Danish Lotus Sangha Meditation Service Washington Tendai Sangha Meditation	19 Jiunzan Tendaiji Meditation Service <i>First Quarter</i>	20 Danish Lotus Sangha Meditation Service Nyoirin-An Meditaion Service Celestial Drum Meditation Service	21 <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">Jiunzan Tendai-ji O-Higan Retreat</div> OHIGAN	22
23 Washington Tendai Sangha Meditation Service <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">Mahasangha Sunday</div> 30 Danish Lotus Sangha Kaihogyo	24 Higashi Sangha Meditation Service	25 Nishi Sangha Meditation Service Danish Lotus Sangha Meditation Service O-HIGAN	26 Jiunzan Tendaiji Meditation Service <i>Full Moon</i>	27 Danish Lotus Sangha Meditation Service Celestial Drum Meditation Service	28	29

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