



Meanderings on the Body

GOING back to school to study acupuncture and Traditional Chinese Medicine, I never would have imagined that working through physical pain would become as consuming as the mental aspect of learning. I must admit that courses about anatomy and health make me more aware of way the body functions, but that's another meandering altogether. The pain started after the first *t'ai chi* class; it burned my joints and muscles as I had never felt before.

Upon asking more about the movements we were doing and the pain I was feeling, the teacher explained it simply: I had never moved like that before! I had never put my limbs and hips and torso and head together in those particular positions; I'm awakening muscles that have slumbered in disuse; aligning joints in ways contrary to my habitual posture. The stretch I felt in every position was a testament to that. Then in anatomy class, I learned about the joints and muscles called into action by these movements and became amazed at the complexity and intricacy of the body and its workings.

I found *t'ai chi* to be a great meditation, but only taking class once a week and not knowing a full form, my own practice outside of class time consists of the warm up movements done at the start of every class. I find these simple movements to be rewarding in their own right. They allow me to stop, stand, calm myself, breathe, and do one single movement, using only those muscles necessary. Everything else relaxes. Waves of memories of *kinhin* (walking meditation) during meditation services at the Temple wash over me, and the whole experience calls to mind the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. In that practice, we begin by contemplating the body as the body, then move on to contemplating the sensations that arise within body. From the sensations we contemplate the emotions that arise from the sensations and finally contemplate the thoughts that arise from the emotions.

In formal Buddhist practice, we might often, mistakenly, consider meditation something that takes place on the cushion in the *bondo*. So even in this series of contemplations, we are introduced to them in context of sitting meditation and, without exploring further, may think of this as something to be done only in stillness, leading to, perhaps, our emphasis on the mental aspects of the contemplations and giving the physical aspects short shrift. Incorporating a movement-based meditation has allowed me to give both equal weight.

Posture and how I carry my body have become my meditation, creating a bridge between the formal practice in the *bondo* and practice throughout the course of daily life. Doing the dishes, I work on recognizing the tensions my body holds all the time and let them go. Frustration consumes me after realizing that the same tension has to relax every five seconds. "Now see here *sacroiliac* ligaments, you *psaos major* you, yeah, I know you're there *piriformis*. That's right! I'll stretch you guys yet, you'll see -- sniff." I try to do it as much as possible throughout the day with whatever I'm doing and if I am fully engaged, I can leave tensions relaxed for a time and it is nice. Inevitably, however, I lose my sense of it and the muscles tighten and have to be let go again. It feels like time on the *zafu*; posture, pain, thoughts are all contemplated and let go. I remember to establish mindfulness and awareness; I forget to do it as my mind drifts, called away by some sweet or fearful thought; I recall myself to take up awareness once more. I let go of annoyance with pain. It comes back. I let it go again. This process is the process of meditation, whether the meditation is being carried out in stillness or in movement.

This awareness throughout my day is flighty and transient, but whenever it comes, I can at least say I was conscious of my posture in that moment, in that place, and by becoming more aware of the bodily sensations during the course of daily life I've become more aware of habitual ways that previously went unnoticed. (Continued on Page Two)

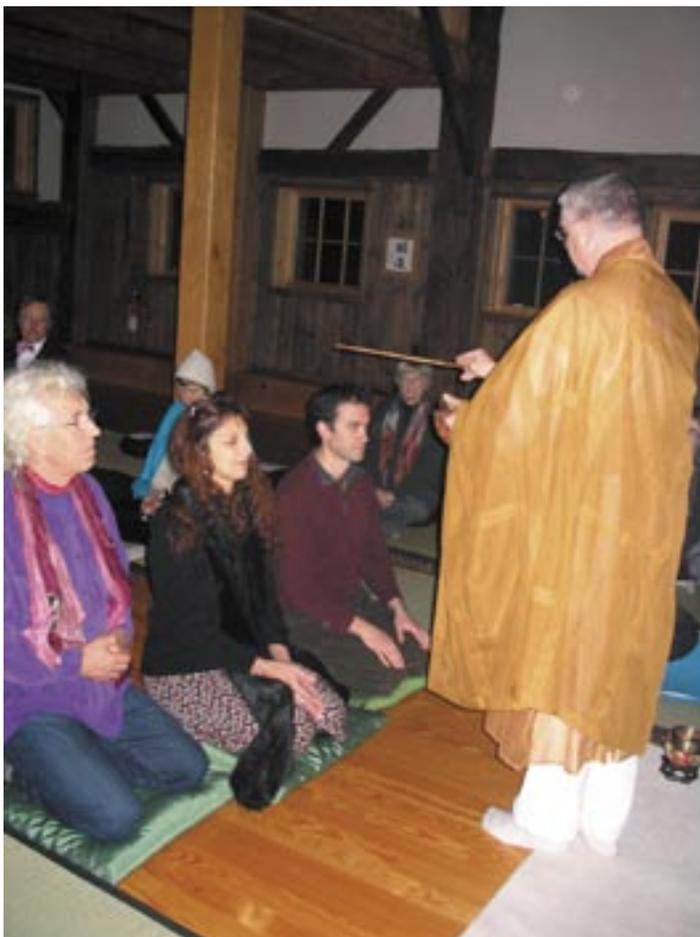
Jiunzan Tendaiji and Mahasangha

February Events

❖ **Meditation Meetings every Wednesday 6 p.m., discussion, Meditation Service and pot luck dinner**

- 6 Buddhist Precepts for Living, *part 1*
- 13 Shakyamuni Buddha's Parinirvana
- 20 Buddhist Precepts for Living, *part 2*
- 27 T'ien-t'ai's "Five Periods and Eight Teachings"

❖ **2 Morning Service and Sutra Class, 8:30 a.m.–10:30 a.m.** The class begins at the conclusion of the service, about 9 a.m. We are studying the *Lankavatara Sutra*, chapter two. The sutra can be found on-line in its entirety at http://www.buddhistinformation.com/lankavatara_sutra.htm.



❖ We would like to acknowledge several people who recently made a commitment to the Buddhist Path. On December 31, during the New Year's Service, *Koho* Daniel Beaudry, *Koren* Karen Noel and *Daido* Jurek Zamoycki at Jiunzan Tendai-ji; and in Denmark *Jisei* Marin at Lotus Danish Sangha all received Refuge and took the vows of the Five Precepts. During the Ekayana Retreat, on the 25th of January *Jikan* Daniel Anderson from the Washington D.C. Sangha also took Refuge and Vows at Jiunzan Tendaiji.

❖ **Coming Events: O-Higan Retreat, March 14–16.** O-Higan is a time when the spiritual and material worlds are in closest alignment. The energy that dominates during this period is very conducive to spiritual exploration. This three day retreat is open to people of all levels of practice. The O-Higan retreat is the last retreat open to everyone for several months, so register early.



Sangha members from Jiunzan Tendaiji, Higashi, and Washington attended the Ekayana Retreat in January.

❖ Please send your articles, sangha news, artwork and photographs for the March issue of *Shingi* to fitterer@acmenet.net by February 15.

Meanderings *(Continued from Page One)*

The pain is becoming an adventure now, one that involves exploring, experiencing and experimenting.

In these cold months, joints get stiff, muscles tight, pain ensues and crankiness sets in. By spending some time with the body through the formal movements of *tai chi* and connecting it to the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, I've been finding exciting new adventures in sensation and my reaction to it while at work, cleaning the floors, at the computer, eating, drinking, or even sleeping! Bringing the meditation off the cushion and becoming mindful of the body in use every day in all the great variety of ordinary activities puts me in awe its complex workings, renewing my drive to continue to become more conscious of the interconnectedness of all bodies and of all sentience.

gassho,

Koki Karl Bower

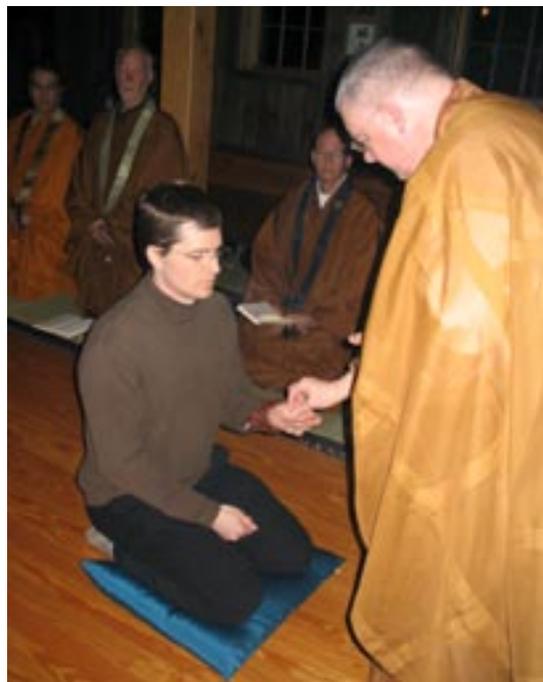


Washington Tendai Sangha

❖ *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.

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



. Washington Tendai Sangha member Jikan Daniel Anderson took Refuge and Vows at Jiunzan Tendai,

Higashi Sangha

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

February Events

- 4 Introduction to the *Lankavatara Sutra*
 - 11 Peace, Equanimity, and a Department of Peace Update
 - 18 Anger, the Attachment That Just Keeps on Giving
 - 25 Pot Luck Wisdom—TBA
- ❖ Nicolas, a young man who lived at Gould Farm and a stalwart sangha member for many months has moved to Gould Farm's Boston campus. Nicolas' attendance could be counted on each week and his interest in the Dharma was unfailing. He will be missed.

Danish Lotus Sangha

❖ *Meditation Service, every Thursday beginning January 17, 9:30–11 a.m.*

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

Meditation class for beginners every Thursday, 7:30 p.m.

Nyoirin-An (Ekayana Tendai Sangha)

❖ *Nyoirin-An will not meet during the month of February*

Nishi Sangha

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

February Events

On February 5, 12 and 19 the discussion will focus on Buddhism and Health.

February 26 Just Sitting

Celestial Drum Tendai Sangha

❖ *Meditation Service and Dharma discussion, every Monday, 6:30 p.m., introductory meditation instruction offered at 6:15 p.m., Parker-Benton American Legion Post, Main St., Indian Lake, NY*

February Events

In February, we'll continue our discussion of the various Buddhas and Bodhisattvas that appear in Buddhist texts and art, considering their stories and the messages they contain, the qualities they represent and manifest, and their role in practice.

❖ We have changed our meeting night from Thursday to Monday, and more importantly, moved to a *much* more convenient location at the Parker-Benton American Legion Hall (next to the Indian Lake Health Center) on Main Street in Indian Lake, NY. Many thanks to the post members for allowing us to use their space.



February 2008

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 Jiunzan Tendaiji Class
					3	4 Higashi Sangha Meditation Service
10 Washington Tendai Sangha Meditation Service	11 Higashi Sangha Meditation Service	12 Nishi Sangha Meditation Service Danish Lotus Sangha Meditation Service <i>Yakushi Nyorai Day</i>	13 Jiunzan Tendaiji Meditation Service	14 Danish Lotus Sangha Meditation Service Celestial Drum Meditation Service <i>First Quarter</i>	15	16
17	18 Higashi Sangha Meditation Service	19 Nishi Sangha Meditation Service Danish Lotus Sangha Meditation Service Washington Tendai Sangha Meditation	20 Jiunzan Tendaiji Meditation Service	21 Danish Lotus Sangha Meditation Service Celestial Drum Meditation Service <i>Full Moon</i>	22	23
24 Washington Tendai Sangha Meditation Service	25 Higashi Sangha Meditation Service	26 Nishi Sangha Meditation Service Danish Lotus Sangha Meditation Service	27 Jiunzan Tendaiji Meditation Service	28 Danish Lotus Sangha Meditation Service Celestial Drum Meditation Service	29 <i>Last Quarter</i>	

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