



Jushoku's Meanderings

THIS month we are looking at the Buddhist concepts of self and how this perspective might influence our practice. First, let's discuss the question of practice. What is your practice? How often do you do it? A Buddhist life implies a regular spiritual practice. The practice should certainly encompass all aspects of your life and provide both respite from daily pressures and the mundane; conversely it should not be an escape, but an engagement, an insight into the nature of Shunyata. Regular practice should be daily, or at least every other day. Some people assert it's just not part of their character, they have a different circadian rhythm, or perhaps they are just too busy. Human beings have a multitude of ways to justify their delusions. My personal favorite is plain old-fashion procrastination. It is the Golden Oldie of excuses for not doing something that the rational brain affirms is good.

There must be a balance between experiencing the Buddha on your butt and off the butt. But, there must be Buddha on the butt in order to get Buddha off the butt. If you don't have a regular practice—stop deluding yourself and place your butt securely on the cushion of practice, whether meditating, chanting, or employing *mikkyo*. You will discover the time off the cushion will be much more enriching.

As we explore the Buddhist view of self and 'no-self' I encourage you to orient your practice to this essential Buddhist focus. Shakyamuni Buddha asserted that self is not the *Atman* or soul that was affirmed in *Vedanta* philosophic works and is still seen in Hindu beliefs. Rather it is *Anatman*, or 'no-self' that is a limiting self identity. For more about these concepts attend the Wednesday evening discussions at Jiunzan Tendaiji . However, the place where these concepts are experienced rather than discussed is through the meditations on the *Five Skandhas* or the Buddhist doctrine of five aggregates. The *Skandas* are the impermanent constituent elements of the mundane body and mind of each being. Specifically they are:

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|----|-----------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. | <i>Rūpa</i> | form or matter |
| 2. | <i>Vedanā</i> | sensation or feeling |
| 3. | <i>Samjñā</i> | perception, conception, cognition |
| 4. | <i>Samskāra</i> | mental formations or volition |
| 5. | <i>Vijñāna</i> | consciousness |

Using these in your practice can be profound. If you meditate, sit with each one of the five for one or more days. After going through a cycle of these individually, sit and examine the relationship between the first and the second, the next day the second and third and so on. Once this cycle is completed, sit following one to the next without analyzing them during an entire sitting. If you complete a full cycle as described, start again from the beginning. Be aware that this series of meditations is especially useful for walking meditations. If your practice is chanting or *mikkyo*, reflect on these in the way described for meditation for a short time (five–ten minutes) before embarking on your practice. Allow your heart/mind to absorb the true essence of this basic practice.

As you go about your daily tasks permit the lessons learned from the practice cushion to penetrate your being. Take this lesson off the butt into the world.

TENDAI BUDDHIST INSTITUTE
SHINGI

Monthly Bulletin

Tendai-shu New York Betsuin

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*Gassho,
Monshin* 

Jiunzan Tendaiji and Mahasangha

April Events

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

For the month of April we will be exploring **Non-self: Personal Continuity and Dependent Origination**. This very basic teaching is among the most misunderstood perspectives of Buddhist philosophy in the West. It is however of more importance than mere philosophical discourse. How we practice the Dharma in daily life, indeed how we commit ourselves to a regular practice, is conditioned by an understanding of these views on a visceral level. While there will be an effort to look at the Buddhist critique of an unchanging self and an elaboration of the teaching of dependent arising, we will be orienting these philosophies into a focus on how they can be essential to our worldview and daily life. Come to these discussions with an open mind and heart. All discussions will be led by Rev. Monshin Naamon, Abbot of Jiunzan Tendai-ji and Tendai Buddhist Institute.



Mahasangha members discuss the Six Paramitas during last month's Haru O-Higan Retreat.

❖ 5 **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 three. The sutra can be found on-line in its entirety at http://www.buddhistinformation.com/lankavatara_sutra.htm.

❖ 10 **Presence in Suffering: Buddhist Healing Ethics in an Interfaith Context**, 7 p.m., lecture by Dr. Michael Brannigan. The core of Buddhist teaching compels us to address and relieve the suffering of sentient creatures in the best ways we can. Our health system therefore assumes a special role in alleviating suffering. This presentation will examine Buddhist views of presence and healing within this context and that of Buddhist beliefs and values. Dr. Brannigan will explore ways this resonates with other faith traditions, lending weight to the proposition that we have much to learn from other perspectives, and that looking outward is looking within. Michael

Brannigan is the George and Jane Pfaff Endowed Chair in Ethics and Moral Values at the College of St. Rose with a joint appointment in Bioethics at Albany Medical Center. The lecture is hosted by the Sidney and Beatrice Albert Interfaith Lectureship. The event is held at the College of St. Rose, Hubbard Interfaith Sanctuary, 959 Madison Ave. Albany, NY. Reception immediately following.

❖ **Food Pantry at Jiunzan Tendaiji:** A quick stop at the local supermarket is a better indicator of the state of the economy for the average person than many other measures such as the Consumer Price Index or the Gross Domestic Product. Those who are hit hardest are those who have the least to begin with. The more affluent have an opportunity to change some of their food buying habits, spend less on high end items, and so forth. The working poor with children, or on low fixed incomes, don't have many choices. They often depend on food pantries to supplement their meager food budget. Please consider those who suffer the most during lean times. Bring non-perishable food items to the Tendai Buddhist Institute on Wednesdays. We contribute these items to the Chatham Silent Food Pantry.

❖ **Classes for our Dharma Heirs: Buddhist Classes for Children.** A number of parents have asked if we would offer Buddhism classes for children. We are putting together a program for primary school children starting with those ages 5–7, and a little later adding ages 8–12. These programs will be offered twice a month on weekends so parents can easily bring the kids. In addition to story telling there will be arts and crafts projects and other fun activities designed for the appropriate age group. If you would like to have your children participate, or know other children who would like to do so, please let us know. There will be a small charge for the materials used in the classes. More information will be coming soon as we pull together the details.

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



Spring flowers grace the butsudan surrounding Yakushi Nyorai.

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.



Borobudur is a 9th century wonder is constructed as a 3-dimensional gigantic tantric mandala in stone, with beautiful reliefs and Buddha images throughout its nine superimposed terraces. This structure was most likely used by Buddhist monks as a walk thru mandala for Vajrayana practice. Located in central Java 40 km from Jojakarta and in proximity to Mt. Merapi (a major active volcano), the site was buried in volcanic ash until rediscovered in 1815, and has subsequently undergone several restorations. Mushin Sam and Suzi Press an entire day a day Borobudur in February wandering thru the site, marveling at the reliefs and statues, and touching one of the Buddhas ‘for good fortune’.

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*

April Events

Sacred Time, Sacred Space: Creating an Environment for Practice will be the topic of discussion during the month of April at Celestial Drum Tendai Sangha. A common lament is a sense of ‘time poverty’ that makes it difficult to find time to establish and maintain a practice. Despite good intentions, in our busy lives many feel that they don’t have enough time. A resolution to this dilemma may be discovered not by better ‘time management’, but through a different understanding of time. This month we will investigate our perception of time and how creating an environment of practice through the use of incense, ritual implements, offerings and chant can help to alter that perception leading to the experience of time outside of time.

Danish Lotus Sangha

❖ *Meditation Service, every Thursday, 9:30–10:30 a.m.*

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

April Events

Classes in **Beginning Meditation** continue on Thursdays, 7:30–8:30 p.m.

26 **Advanced Lay Training**, Open meditation for all sangha members, 10 a.m.–1 p.m.



Higashi Sangha

❖ For the next several months, Higashi Sangha will join the weekly meditation service at Jiunzan Tendaiji in Canann, NY, on Wednesday evenings beginning at 6 p.m. Members of both sanghas will benefit from their combined activity as they come together to explore the Dharma and join in practice.

Nishi Sangha

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

April Events

- 1 Mindfulness
- 8 Dengyo-Daishi’s Life and Teachings, part 1
- 15 Loving Kindness Practice
- 22 Dengyo Daishi’s Life and Teachings, part 2
- 29 Quarterly Sangha Dinner (one period of meditation only)



April 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 Nishi Sangha Meditation Service Danish Lotus Sangha Meditation Service Washington Tendai Sangha Meditation	2	3 Danish Lotus Sangha Meditation Service Danish Lotus Sangha Meditation for Beginners	4	5 Jiunzan Tendaiji Class
6 <i>New Moon</i>	7 Celestial Drum Meditation Service	8 Nishi Sangha Meditation Service Danish Lotus Sangha Meditation Service <i>Shakyamuni's Birthday</i>	9 Jiunzan Tendaiji Meditation Service	10 Danish Lotus Sangha Meditation Service Danish Lotus Sangha Meditation for Beginners	11	12 <i>Yakushi Nyorai Day First Quarter</i>
13 Washington Tendai Sangha Meditation Service	14 Celestial Drum Meditation Service	15 Nishi Sangha Meditation Service Danish Lotus Sangha Meditation Service Washington Tendai Sangha Meditation	16 Jiunzan Tendaiji Meditation Service	17 Danish Lotus Sangha Meditation Service, Danish Lotus Sangha Meditation for Beginners	18	19
20 <i>Full Moon</i>	21 Celestial Drum Meditation Service	22 Nishi Sangha Meditation Service Danish Lotus Sangha Meditation Service	23 Jiunzan Tendaiji Meditation Service	24 Danish Lotus Sangha Meditation Service Danish Lotus Sangha Meditation for Beginners	25	26
27 Washington Tendai Sangha Meditation Service	28 Celestial Drum Meditation Service <i>Last Quarter</i>	29 Nishi Sangha Meditation Service Danish Lotus Sangha Meditation Service	30 Jiunzan Tendaiji Meditation Service			

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