



TENDAI BUDDHIST INSTITUTE

SHINGI

Meanderings

THIS is the time of year we celebrate graduations and attaining degrees. (And now this seems to occur from the ages of “Day Care” to advanced degrees of all kinds!) And of course some just celebrate the release from the structured “halls of ivy” to the freedom of a long, lazy summer.

The Buddhist Path encourages and, in fact, is most characterized by its emphasis on continual learning about ourselves and our relationships with others. We are counseled to seek out a genuine teacher who has the wisdom to guide us along this spiritual path, which is often very steep at times, as we work our way toward the ultimate wisdom of Awakening. It seems to me that from time to time we should pause, rest on the path and thank our teachers. Realizing who our teachers actually are is often a kind of revelation in itself.

Obviously we all owe attention to Shakyamuni Buddha who led a way out of the suffering during our service, further venerate Chih-i who taught us the teachings and taught us the the *Mo Ho Chih Kuan*. We of our lineage but for brevity's and Dengyo Daishi (Saicho) t'ai teachings from China to striking accomplishments. seeing the wild mountain century, I truly marvel at the Saicho must have had to be particularly fond of the small Daishi outside our hondo. captured a uniquely serene Saicho was the first of our Jap-to Ichishima-sensei's father ishima himself. And finally to are the current representatives one could fail to recognize the Dharma.



thanks, gratitude and vener- whose wisdom first delineat- of samsara. When we repeat we recognize this and then systematized the T'ien-t'ai meditation techniques in could recite an extensive list sake we only cite Chih-i who brought the T'ien-Japan—among other of his Since visiting Mt. Hiei and as it exists now in the 21st patience and forbearance dure the seasons there. I am statue honoring Dengyo The sculptor seems to have expression on Saicho's face. anese lineage that progresses and grandfather and Ich-Monshin and Shumon who of the teachings for us. No these dedicated teachers of

But there are so many teachers of the Buddhadharma—and yes, the “dharma”—whom we may often fail to recognize. And some may be most improbable at first glance.

For several years after retirement, I taught in two different local county jails. Murderers, rapists, drug dealers, thieves and petty criminals of all kinds were among those who taught me. I learned on a very basic level that, as we Buddhists say: “I am not just my brother's keeper, I am my brother.”

I have corresponded for several years with a sangha member who is on death row in the Oklahoma State Penitentiary. Even though I read newspaper accounts of his horrendous crimes, I came to realize that in spite of the fact that he is a convicted murderer, he also has that same Buddhanature that we all “gassho” to when we pass a statue of a Buddha or Bodhisattva or when we meet one another. This was a true learning experience.

And surely on a more obvious level our family and friends are our constant guides and teachers, no matter what their ages. My grandchildren can focus me more directly on generosity, patience and energy—three of the Six Paramitas—in a weekend than I might practice in a month of meditation and study. Our relationships with our spouses and partners provide fertile ground for practice in an ongoing, in-depth way from moment to moment if we are open to the possibilities. Hopefully our daily meditation helps us develop the space for these possibilities.

(continued on page two)

Monthly Bulletin

Tendai-shu New York Betsuin

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Jiunzan Tendaiji and Mahasangha

June Events

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

During the month of June we will concentrate on the “Poetry of Awakening” for the lectures and discussions. We will include such works as Seng-ts’an’s (Jianzhi Sengcan; d. 606) *Xinxinming* (*Hsin Shin Ming*) sometimes translated as *Trust in Mind* or *Faith in Mind*. Sengcan was the third patriarch of Chinese Ch’an, as Chinese zen is called. We will also examine Nagarjuna’s (c. 2nd century) *Mulamadhyamakakarika* (*Verses from the Center*) in poetic form by Stephen Batchelor, as well as poems by Taigu Ryokan (1758–1831), Hui Neng (638–713) and others. Buddhist poetry, such as the *Xinxinming*, was written to expound on Buddhist philosophy, teachings and practices in a way that scholarly treatises often cannot. They are not meant to be beautiful or witty; they are often insightful and exquisite in their simplicity. Used for meditations and contemplations, they are a way of expressing what it is we can experience on and off the cushion through Buddhist practice. The examination of this poetry unravels the teachings without the need for intellectualization. They touch the heart/mind completely without discursive thought. Allow yourself to be permeated by the poetry of awakening.

❖ **7 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 five. The sutra can be found on-line in its entirety at http://www.buddhisminformation.com/lankavatara_sutra.htm.

❖ **11–25 Tendai Buddhist Institute Doshu / Soryo Gyo.** A Doshu is a temple assistant and a Soryo is a priest or monk. A gyo is a period of spiritual practices and training. Each year for several weeks the Betsuin is transformed into a monastery. This year we will have 16 people altogether staying at the Betsuin. The two week period follows a traditional ascetic monastic experience. We arise at 3:30 a.m., start with cold water purification, a long devotional walk in the dark, 108 full prostrations (these are done three times a day), Morning Service, breakfast, a period of meditation, etc. The day is filled with Sutra study, lessons in shomyo (a style of melodic chanting), taiko (Japanese drumming), as well as classes in history, practices, leadership and other topics. Participants this year will come from Denmark, California, Georgia, Northern Virginia, New York City, the Adirondacks, as well as our local environs. The presence of the monastics creates an enhanced environment for the regular services.

We will have our regular meditation services, though we will not have a pot-luck meal on the 18th, nor on Mahasangha Sunday on the 22nd. The meditation meeting on the 25th will finish with a pot-luck dinner as usual. Additionally, please join us every morning from the 12th–25th at 8 a.m. for meditation. This is meditation only, the Morning Service is held at 5 a.m.

❖ **22 Mahasangha Sunday, 10:00 a.m. – 12 p.m.** Join us for a very special Mahasangha Sunday. We start with a discussion at 10 a.m., followed by the Service. The service will also include a Doshu

ordination for Gonshin Jake Halcomb. There will not be a pot-luck lunch on this day.

❖ **Food Pantry at Jiunzan Tendai-ji.** 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.

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

Meanderings (Continued from page one)

Another forum for learning for me is nature. Here in the Northeast we are so privileged to witness all the seasons and the constancy and inevitability of birth and death. As the *Evening Gatha* says: “Time passes swiftly by and opportunity is lost”. The passing of time and what it means for all sentient beings can be so obvious to us in the vivid details of whatever season we happen to be in.

In the Buddhist tradition we have the concepts of jiriki and tariki. Some Buddhists schools subscribe to the belief that putting one’s faith entirely in the hands of another, such as a heavenly Buddha, is all that is needed to reach Awakening; this is the essential meaning of tariki.

Other schools hold to the notion of jiriki, maintaining that one’s own efforts are the most important fount of Awakening. In our Tendai School we see these two concepts as largely artificial distinctions and maintain the truth of a middle way between them, the importance of both tariki and jiriki in our practice.

So while our own efforts and realizations are of “supreme importance”, they combine with the power of “the other” to guide us along the spiritual Path. It is important and relatively easy to acknowledge what the great Buddhas and bodhisattvas represent and what they teach. We are often not as quick to realize the important teachings that are right before us in our daily lives.

Monshin-sensei often reminds us we must ultimately take our practice off the cushion. When we do, our wealth of teachers seems to underline the vitality of this practice. And it is important to remember that each of us is also a vital link in the chain of those day-to-day practitioners who pass down the Dharma.

Perhaps the most valuable lesson we can learn is that “Awakening” is not somewhere “out there” in the future or something deep, profound and mysterious that comes to a special few “enlightened Buddhas”; rather, it is something that is revealed in small glimpses at a time to very ordinary people and often through very ordinary experiences.

Gassho,
Shoshin



Washington Tendai Sangha

❖ *The Washington Tendai Sangha has moved its meeting location! We are now meeting on Tuesday nights at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Arlington, Virginia. See our updated website at www.washingtontendai.blogspot.com for the address and directions. We meet downstairs in The Walden Room. Weekly meditation services begin at 7 p.m. All are welcome!*

Celestial Drum Tendai Sangha

❖ *Meditation Service and Dharma discussion, every Monday, 6:30 p.m., introductory meditation instruction offered at 6:15 p.m., in Indian Lake, NY. For directions email fitterer@acmenet.net.*

June Events

Parables of the Lotus Sutra. The Lotus is the foundational sutra of Tendai, with its explication of the harmony of all the teachings. Using parables and stories, this sutra relates the themes of “skillful means”: that the many teachings reflects the varied capacities of listeners to understand and practice the Dharma; of *ekayana*, or “one vehicle”: that all the many practices lead to Buddhahood for all; and of the “eternal life-span of the Tathagata”: that the Buddha is not merely an historical figure who lived and died 2,500 years ago, but is ever present. We will continue our exploration and reflection on these parables on Monday, June 2 and 9.

There will be no Monday meetings on June 16 and 23 during gyo.

Beginning on June 30 and continuing throughout the summer, the Monday discussions will be on **Shikan Meditation**, based upon Chih-i’s shorter meditation manual which can be found on the web at <http://fodian.yolook.net/world/1915.html>. This will be an opportunity for those new to practice to gain a solid understanding of and experience in the process of meditation. For experienced practitioners, it will be an opportunity to gain a greater understanding of the structure of meditation, the variety of practices, and how to apply them in the proper way at the proper instance.

❖ **Looking Ahead:** Begining in July we will offer a weekly seminar on the development of Mahayana Buddhism in India and its transmission into China. This period of Buddhist history is especially interesting since it was at this time that many of the teachings and practices we take part in today began to take shape. Additionally, the evolution of a true Chinese form of Buddhism from Indian roots reflects many of the same cultural issues we are experiencing today as Buddhism enters the West from Asia. Looking back helps to give us a clearer perspective in looking into the future. If you are interested in taking part, inquire regarding the reading list and meeting times.

Danish Lotus Sangha

❖ *Abreviated Schedule for June:*

June Events

3 Meditation followed by traditional Christmas party, 7:30 p.m.–9:30 p.m.



Yakushi Nyorai, the Healing Buddha

Nishi Sangha

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

June Events

- 3 Have You Changed Your Mind?
- 10 Breath Meditation
- 17 Gyo--(TBA)
- 24 Gyo--(TBA)



June 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 Celestial Drum Meditation Service	3 Nishi Sangha Meditation Service Danish Lotus Sangha Meditation Service Washington Tendai Sangha Meditation Service	4 Jiunzan Tendaiji Meditation Service	5	6	7 Jiunzan Tendaiji Class
8	9 Celestial Drum Meditation Service	10 Nishi Sangha Meditation Service Washington Tendai Sangha Meditation Service <i>First Quarter</i>	11 Jiunzan Tendaiji Meditation Service	Tendai Buddhist Institute Doshu / Soryo Gyo		
				<i>Yakushi Nyorai Day</i>		
15	16	17 Nishi Sangha Meditation Service	18 Jiunzan Tendaiji Meditation Service	19	20	21
Tendai Buddhist Institute / Soryo Gyo						
			<i>Full Moon</i>			
22	23	24 Nishi Sangha Meditation Service	25 Jiunzan Tendaiji Meditation Service	26	27	28
Tendai Buddhist Institute Doshu / Soryo Gyo				<i>Last Quarter</i>		
29	30 Celestial Drum Meditation Service					

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