



# Meanderings

I RECENTLY read a very interesting article in a Danish newspaper, about a Danish man's experiences in a Japanese Zen temple. Before he was allowed into the Zendo, the Zen Master asked him, "Can you sit still for 40 minutes of meditation?" The man, being a typical Dane, answered, "I would think so—at least I can try". "Okay," the Zen Master answered back, "I'll ask you again: Can you sit still for 40 minutes of meditation? The answer must necessarily be a 'Yes' or a 'No'". The man said yes, and after 40 minutes of meditation his body was asleep from the chest down. But he had been sitting still. Completely still. He had done it, rather than just trying to do it. And there's a lesson for many of us in this; we can learn to surrender to what has to be done, and just do it, instead of limiting ourselves to trying. After all, it's just doing...



This lesson is extra valuable in the context of intense practice. We've just had a four-day retreat in the Danish Lotus Sangha, and we all decided to just do it. And we needed all the strength of our decision! On a retreat, we come face to face with *dukkha*; pain, suffering and discomfort in different forms and manifestations. We're also faced with

*dukkha* in our everyday life, but it's not nearly as noticeable. We're used to our *dukkha*; we've created it ourselves, and we constantly keep it alive. So our own, well-known *dukkha* is very familiar to us, and we find comfort in the stories we tell ourselves about it; "It's really not so bad—let's look at the bright side, etc", not realizing that these very stories feed our *dukkha*, allows it to grow stronger day by day. When we're on retreat, we're faced with our *dukkha*, we can't escape, and perhaps this gives us an opportunity to see through our stories. We're forced to relate to what really is, rather than to what could have been, should have been—and this sometimes leads to a simplicity of life, a break from the never-ending desire to change everything, so all we have to care about is the desire to have our knees stop hurting!

When we're on retreat we have to function in a very restricted, and restricting, environment, and that may accentuate our tendency to judge every sense-impression. When the mind is bored, there is no end to the possibilities! It becomes clear how we constantly struggle with what is; we would rather have a little more, or a little less—or just something different. And the struggling hurts. We hurt ourselves when we don't accept the true nature of reality. In the midst of busy everyday life, it seems plausible that the problem lies outside of us. The others are wrong, and so is the world. We may actually be able to convince ourselves that with only a few, minor change (*i.e.* world-peace and pleasurable surroundings), the world would be a great place, and we could start to be happy. Intensive practice often leads us to confront our illusions, making it impossible to hide behind them. When confronted, they'll reveal themselves as nothing but...illusions. Perhaps we decide to change our lives through Buddhist practice, and we tell ourselves that we'll start doing the practice as soon as x, y and z are taken care of. That is as stupid as deciding to start brushing our teeth regularly as soon as we're not so busy at work / the children are older / we've finished whatever project we're presently involved in! All we really have is the present moment, and it's up to us to make the most of it. Our Buddhist practice isn't aimed at happiness in a distant, future utopia; it's about mastering the art of living wisely and compassionately, right here and now.

TENDAI BUDDHIST INSTITUTE  
SHINGI

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# Jiunzan Tendaiji and Mahasangha

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## July Events

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

A major doctrine of Tendai Buddhism is referred to as *hongaku shiso*. In fact this idea was seminal in transforming Japanese Buddhism during the Kamakura Period. *Hongaku* is defined as Original or Innate Enlightenment; *shiso* is thought or ideology. Tendai innate enlightenment thought asserts that awakening as a buddha is not something achieved as an external goal, but is inherent from the beginning; one has only to realize it. There are many philosophical permutations of this essential teaching and we may glance in that direction periodically during the months of July and August. However our primary focus will be on the ramifications of this thought in practical terms. How does this notion affect our practices? How does our knowledge of this affect our relationships with other people? What does it mean to my daily life? Why haven't I heard more about this in my Buddhist readings? Many ideas come to mind. In the first week or so we will discuss the, philosophic, historic and practical. The following weeks will deal with the ramifications of *Hongaku Shiso* in our aspiration for negotiating our lives mindfully and with grace. Be prepared to be surprised and enabled by our discussions.

❖ **Morning Service and Sutra Class** is on vacation for July and August. We will resume on Saturday September 6. The class begins at the conclusion of the service, about 9 a.m. We continue with the study of the *Lankavatara Sutra*, Chapter Six. The sutra can be found on-line in its entirety at, [http://www.buddhistinformation.com/lankavatara\\_sutra.htm](http://www.buddhistinformation.com/lankavatara_sutra.htm).

❖ **Food Pantry at Jiunzan Tendai-ji.** You don't need to be told that we are experiencing a period of great need by people who

## Nishi Sangha

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

## July Events

- 1 Gyo Review and Planning
- 8 Original Enlightenment
- 15 Ritual
- 22 Direction of Tendai Buddhist Institute
- 29 Commit to Sit

Nishi Sangha is very proud of Koyo Susan Spang who passed the *Jubachido* test during the Gyo. Koyo put in many hours of study and practice to reach this goal. Congratulations, Koyo! We hope to view the ritual soon.

Also, congratulations to Mushin Sam Press for not only completing the Gyo but also for enthusiastically finishing the *Kokoro-do*, a fourteen-mile pilgrimage walk, for the second year!

were barely making it before the economic downturn. Reach out with your heart and connect with our brothers and sisters who are suffering from this period of economic misery. Please donate non-perishable food items to the Tendai Buddhist Institute on Wednesdays. We contribute these items to the Chatham Silent Food Pantry.



❖ Summer Schedule at Tendai Buddhist Institute is on a slow simmer. We will be holding our regular Wednesday evening services. Many folks are on well deserved vacations and spending their free time re-charging their batteries in the garden, with family and friends, or perhaps enjoying a concert or ballet at SPAC and Tanglewood on week-ends. Come September we will return with classes on Saturday the 6th, an O-Higan retreat on September 19–21, and some surprises. Stay tuned.

❖ Please send your articles, sangha news, artwork and photographs for the August issue of *Shingi* to [fitterer@acmenet.net](mailto:fitterer@acmenet.net) by July 15.

## Washington Tendai Sangha

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❖ **The Washington Tendai Sangha meets on Tuesday nights at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Arlington, Virginia. See our updated website at [www.washingtontendai.blogspot.com](http://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**

## Danish Lotus Sangha

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❖ **Abbreviated Schedule for July:**

## July Events

- 1 Evening service, meditation and discussion, 7:30 – 9:30 p.m.
- 3 Morning service and meditation, 9:30 – 10:30 a.m.
- 8 Evening service, meditation and discussion, 7:30 – 9:30 p.m.
- 10 Morning service and meditation, 9:30 – 10:30 a.m.

# 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](mailto:fitterer@acmenet.net).**

## July Events

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.

❖ **Sangha class: The development of Mahayana Buddhism and its Transmission into China.**

The Mahayana developed over the course of several centuries in India at the beginning of the Common Era not as a self-identified, unified reform movement, but in many places and times (often in contradictory ways) as a further development of aspects inherent in the early teachings and in response to difficulties that arose in the early interpretations. The sutras, other texts, and the schools that developed around them at that time, form the foundation of all that has developed in east Asian Buddhism (notably China, Korea and Japan) from then up to the present. Hence they inform our own practice of Buddhism in the West today. This survey class will put these developments in their historical and cultural perspective providing both a basis for further study as well as a greater understanding of our own practice. Each week we will look at a selection from a representative text as the basis for discussion. We'll use two books, *Buddhism, The Buddhist Experience* by Donald Mitchell and *Mahayana Buddhism, the Doctrinal Foundations* by Paul Williams for background information. The texts of the sutra are posted online and I've provided links to them below. This is far more reading than anyone can reasonably expect to complete in the given time, and the subject is more vast than be covered in seven weeks. My only intention is to provide an overview to enable you, as I mention above, to gain a greater understanding of our practices and their underpinnings. We meet each week at our home on Big Brook Rd. (email for directions if you haven't been here) each Thursday evening from 6-7:30 p.m.

July 10 **Perfection of Wisdom: The Prajna Paramita Sutras** (specifically the *Heart Sutra* as we chant it on Monday evenings)

July 17 **Nagarjuna and Madhyamika (The Middle Way)**: exposition of *shunyata* or 'emptiness' <http://www.fodian.net/world/1564b.html>

July 24 **Tathagatagarbha**: inherent Buddha-nature; inherent enlightenment <http://www2.fodian.net/old/English/0667.html>

July 31 **Yogachara: "Mind-Only"**: investigates the nature of consciousness and the nature of phenomena. We'll look at the *Lankavatara Sutra* as a representative teaching. <http://civet-cat.skandinaviskzen-center.org/civet-cat/mahayana-writings/lankavatara-sutra.htm>

August 7 **C'han**: The 'meditation' school that became known as Zen in Japan. We'll look at the Chinese text *On Faith in the Heart Mind* <http://www.fodian.net/world/2010.html>

August 14 **Brahmanet Sutra** is another Chinese text in two parts; the first describing the mutual interpenetration of all phenomena and the second expounds a set of precepts appropriate for both the laity and the ordained emphasizing compassion and acting selflessly for the benefit of others. This became the ethical foundation for the Mahayana. <http://www.fodian.net/world/1484.html>

August 21 **The Lotus Sutra** is one of the 'doctrinal sutras' claiming to be the complete ('round') and final teaching of Shakyamuni Buddha, expounding such themes as 'skillful means' (all the various teachings are pragmatic ways to meet the needs, capacities and interests of those to whom they are directed); all the various teachings, while seemingly disparate, express the one truth that all beings will eventually become Buddhas; that the Buddha is eternally present; promotes the 'Bodhi-sattva path' of compassionate activity to assist others out of sorrow and onto the path to awakening; among other themes. <http://www.fodian.net/world/262.html>

As I said above, this is a LOT of material so don't be daunted. This is a survey course only; we won't be expecting to master all (or any) of this material.

❖ **Looking ahead to September**, we'll be offering, during our regular Monday sessions, a survey of the life of Shakyamuni Buddha, the historical figure who lived in India 2,500 years ago, and the basic Buddhist teachings he presented after his awakening.

Hexagram 58, "*The Joyous, The Lake*" from *The I Ching*

*Lakes resting one on the other:*

*The image of "The Joyous".*

*Thus the superior man joins with his friends*

*For discussion and practice.*

*A lake evaporates upwards and thus gradually dries up; but when two lakes are joined they do not dry up so readily, for one replenishes the other. It is the same in the field of knowledge. Knowledge should be a refreshing and vitalizing force. It becomes so only through stimulating intercourse with congenial friends with whom one holds discussion and practices application of the truths of life. In this way learning becomes many-sided and takes on a cheerful lightness, whereas there is always something ponderous and one-sided about the learning of the self-taught.*

*From the translation by Wilhelm/Baynes*







# July 2008

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 Nishi Sangha Meditation Service Danish Lotus Sangha Meditation Service Washington Tendai Sangha Meditation Service	2 Jiunzan Tendaiji Meditation Service	3 Danish Lotus Sangha Meditation Service Celestial Drum Class  <i>New Moon</i>	4	5
6	7 Celestial Drum Meditation Service	8 Nishi Sangha Meditation Service Danish Lotus Sangha Meditation Service Washington Tendai Sangha Meditation Service	9 Jiunzan Tendaiji Meditation Service	10 Danish Lotus Sangha Meditation Service Celestial Drum Class  <i>First Quarter</i>	11	12  <i>Yakushi Nyorai Day</i>
13	14 Celestial Drum Meditation Service	15 Nishi Sangha Meditation Service Washington Tendai Sangha Meditation Service	16 Jiunzan Tendaiji Meditation Service	17 Celestial Drum Class	18  <i>Full Moon</i>	19
20	21 Celestial Drum Meditation Service	22 Nishi Sangha Meditation Service Washington Tendai Sangha Meditation Service	23 Jiunzan Tendaiji Meditation Service	24 Celestial Drum Class	25  <i>Last Quarter</i>	26
27	28 Celestial Drum Meditation Service	29 Nishi Sangha Meditation Service Washington Tendai Sangha Meditation Service	30	31 Celestial Drum Class		

Jiunzan Tendaiji Nishi Tendai Sangha Danish Lotus Sangha  
Washington Tendai Sangha Celestial Drum Tendai Sangha