



Meanderings

MY RECENT reading has focused on how our world has gotten to its present state. Naomi Klein's well-documented *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* shows how corporate economic and social control has become consolidated through exploiting citizens' disorientation and confusion in the wake of disasters, such as war, terrorist events, hurricanes and other natural disasters. Using such techniques, derived from a combination of psychological research on the effects of electroshock therapy and neo-liberal/neo-conservative economic ideology (which posits that the only healthy economy is one completely left to regulate itself with no governmental interference), has produced vast increases in poverty, extreme wealth for a few, and sharp increases in state violence (torture, war, police brutality) to maintain these inequalities.

In *Getting a Grip: Clarity, Creativity and Courage in a World Gone Mad*, Frances Moore Lappe shows how a belief in human nature as selfish, competitive and materialistic leads step by step in a spiral of powerlessness to our current state of consumerism, expanding poverty and ecological collapse. She then shows that a comparable spiral of empowerment arises from the belief that humans naturally have deep needs for fairness, cooperation, and meaning. This belief leads to political and economic structures designed to allow us to effectively solve our problems.

Neither of these books is religious in any way, yet I find them useful for deepening my commitment to and practice of Buddhism. They show real life examples of Buddhist teachings. Our current state of affairs is not random, but an example of dependent arising—all things arise due to sustaining conditions and pass away when those conditions are no longer present. The inequities in our economic system (touted not merely as the best system, but actually as a law of nature) are an example of the painful consequences of relying on greed (one of the five hindrances) rather than compassion as a motivator. Building a society based on an ideology of selfishness and competition shows how, through these ignorant and unwholesome mental formations, we experience and create the world as *samsara*. Teachings that are usually discussed in a personal context come to life on a societal level as well.

One of our modern delusions is the notion that we live our lives as individuals, atomically self-contained, each of us solely responsible for our happiness or misery. Buddha Dharma teaches the exact opposite—this delusion of separate self is one of the main sources of our suffering. In fact, there is no such thing as *my* suffering or *your* suffering or *my* liberation from suffering or *yours*. All of our thoughts and actions together add to or reduce the suffering of all. Each of us is one aspect of an indivisible whole.

So, we practice on the cushion or at the altar to remember our true Buddha nature, and we engage with the world to express the universality of that realization. Meditating on the Four Divine Abodes, for example, allows us to recognize our minds' natural state of love, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity. All of our actions in the world—how we relate to family, friends, and colleagues; how we make our living; what time and money we donate; what we buy and how we use our purchases; who we vote for; what public and business policies we support, etc.—then demonstrate this love, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity. There is practice and the fruits of practice. Books and articles and news broadcasts and conversations that describe in detail the state of suffering in the world and what can be done to alleviate it become useful guides as we live the fruits of our practice.



Jiunzan Tendaiji and Mahasangha

August Events

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

For August we will discuss the basics of Buddhist teachings. The basics of anything are often the most profound. We think, 'Oh I know what Buddha means', or 'of course Dharma means teachings.' Like many things we know what we have read, or been taught to that point. It is valuable to step back and examine once more these essential teachings. By probing these fundamental cornerstones of our philosophy we can gain new insights that assist us in our practice. Join us for a fresh look at 'what does it mean to be a Buddhist'?

6 **Buddha** What are the dimensions of the term Buddha? When we say Buddha what, who, where, are we talking about?

13 **Dharma** The Dharma specifically is translated as teaching. Whose teaching; what are included in the Dharma? Is it limited to a specific set of canonical works? Is it only printed? What are the characteristics of the true Dharma contrasted with misleading teachings?

20 **Sangha** There are several specific meanings of the term Sangha. Some of these meanings are mutually exclusive, so what do we mean by the term? Is Sangha necessary for a Buddhist practice?

27 **Fourfold Noble Truth** A basic doctrine that is widely used and little understood. This foundation of Buddhist teachings is often skimmed over with little real reflection. We will probe the many facets of this crucial set of Buddhist assertions.

❖ **Morning Service and Sutra Class** is taking a vacation in August. The September class will be on Saturday, the 6th. We are studying the *Lankavatara Sutra*, Chapter 6. The sutra can be found on-line in its entirety at, http://www.buddhistinformation.com/lankavatara_sutra.htm. These classes are more than an exploration of the specific sutra. They often take us in to realms of philosophy, teachings and practices that we do not have an opportunity to explore on Wednesday evenings.

❖ **Food Pantry at Jiunzan Tendai-ji** Bring non-perishable

food items to the Tendai Buddhist Institute on Wednesdays. We contribute these items to the Chatham Silent Food Pantry. There are many people truly in need.

❖ **Lotus Blossom Classes for our Dharma Heirs** Nishin Eleanor Phelps will be leading the Children's Buddhism classes with the assistance of several others. We are looking for the right days and times, as well as more children to join the classes.. These programs will be twice a month and offered on week-ends so parents can easily bring the kids. In addition to storytelling, 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 attend, please let us know by contacting Shumon at tkumasaki@msn.com. 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.

❖ **Notes on Practice for August** The last Wednesday in August we will be examining the Fourfold Noble Truth. There are many sources available, on the web and in books. Find these sources and begin to examine them. Read them, think about about them, question where they came from, what was the perspective advanced by the author, etc. Try different translations and interpretations of each of the four truths (e.g. *Dukkha*). Use each of these for a week as a meditation/contemplation and experience the meaning through your practice. On August 27, you will have a very different sort of conversation than you might have had if you had not investigated the meaning experientially.

❖ Upcoming in September:

September 19–21, **O-Higan Retreat**. The Autumn O-Higan retreat will be devoted to **Living a Sacred Purposeful Life**. The teachings will come from a number of sources and will deal with issues revolving around how to bring Buddhist teachings into our everyday world. There will be more about this in next month's *Shingi*.

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



Scenes from 2008 Doshu/Soryo Gyo (l to r) Mushin-sensei leads a class on the "Four Samadhis"; Kanno-sensei and Monshin-sensei testing Koyo and Shoken on Juhachido; Sangha member Kokyo Allen Livermore teaches a class in taiko drumming for accompanying chant..

Nishi Sangha

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

August Events

- 5 Commit to Sit
- 12 *Tathagata-garbha Sutra*
- 19 Service and Dharma Talk by Monshin-sensei
- 26 Engaged Buddhism: The Fruits of Practice

❖ During the month of August, Mushin will be leading Nishi Sangha in its own version of “**Commit to Sit**”. This is a wonderful opportunity for us all to make a new commitment to our practice and to fellow Sangha members. Mushin will be leading the meditations each week for three weeks in August focusing on various techniques of meditation. Everyone is invited to join us at 6 p.m. on Tuesday evenings in Albany.

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.*

August Events

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>. Additionally, we will be experiencing other forms of meditation promoted by Chih-i in some of his other texts. 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 class, begun in June, concludes this month. There is a change in the syllabus as noted below. Since we have only 7 weeks to cover this important and formative period of time I've had to make decisions on what to include and what to neglect. We now will be covering the Pure Land teachings on August 14.

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 enlight-

Danish Lotus Sangha

August Events

- 19 Evening service, meditation and discussion, 7:30-9:30 p.m.
- 21 Morning service and meditation, 9:30–10:30 a.m.
- 26 Evening service, meditation and discussion, 7:30-9:30 p.m.
- 28 Morning service and meditation, 9:30–10:30 a.m.
- 31 Advanced lay training, 9 a.m.–3 p.m.

Washington Tendai Sangha

❖ *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 for the address and directions. We meet downstairs in The Walden Room. Weekly meditation services begin at 7 p.m. All are welcome*

enment <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 **Sutra on the Contemplation of Buddha Amitayus** is one of three sutras that form the basis for Pure Land teachings. http://www.fodian.net/world/365_sutra.htm.

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.



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

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