

October 2009

# SHINGI

Newsletter of the Tendai Buddhist Institute



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## Jushoku's Meanderings

Bringing one's palms together in gassho accompanied by a bow is a traditional gesture of salutation, welcome, and greeting among Buddhists. It is also a simple and graceful way to pay respect to a person, a space or horizon. When performing this straightforward act, one reveres the Buddha nature innate in all sentient beings.

We at the Tendai Buddhist Institute have also had a long-standing tradition to hug as a greeting and

## October Events Calendar



**Weekly Meditation Services (WMS)** are on Wednesday evenings. They begin at 6 PM with a discussion or talk (see below for this month's discussion topics). At about 7 PM there is a meditation service followed at 8 PM by a potluck dinner. All of Wednesday evening's events are open to the public. There is no fee and reservations are not required.

### October Wednesday Meditations and Discussions

7th Buddhist Travels - Iron Age to Postindustrial - Part 2. This is the second discussion in which we explore the spread of the Buddhist Path from Northern India throughout Asia. We will locate our tradition to better understand how we conceive and practice it in the 21st century.

14th Article Discussion: Is Meditation Enough? The article can be found at the following link: ["Is Meditation Enough?"](#) Read the article on-line or print it out, then come with questions and comments to discuss this important point of view.

21st Affirmation of the World in the Lotus Sutra. It has been stated that Buddhism is mostly concerned with one's inner life, while ignoring the outer world. The Lotus Sutra rejects this notion. Join the discussion to find out why.

28th Buddhist Chanting, its uses, abuses, benefits and technique. A brief introduction to different types of Buddhist chanting.

### Events

10th Morning Service and Sutra Class, 8:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m. The class continues our monthly exploration of the Sutra of Perfect Enlightenment. This month we will be reading and

when saying goodbye. It is a gracious way to show friendship among sangha members.

However, it is also a way to pass viruses from one person to another. I regret that we must be careful during the upcoming flu season. I am concerned that our welcome might actually be the cause of unnecessary illness.

Starting this fall I am asking everyone to practice gassho with mindfulness, rather than our customary hugs. This, as well as the other simple measures we are advised to follow, will ensure that we are respectful and friendly, and also healthy.

Gassho . . . Monshin



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discussing chapters 7 through 9. Go to [http://zen.extra.hu/sutra\\_of\\_perfect\\_enlightenment.html](http://zen.extra.hu/sutra_of_perfect_enlightenment.html) for a copy of the sutra. A more complete version of this sutra, translation and commentary by A. Charles Muller and Kihwa is available. It is published by State University of New York Press, 1999.

**Food Pantry at Jiunzan Tendai-ji** : Bring non-perishable food items to the Tendai Buddhist Institute this month. We contribute these items to the Chatham Silent Food Pantry. The first of the Six Paramitas is Dana, this is a 'perfect' opportunity for practice.

Beginner's Mind—"Two good books for beginners - that should be read by everyone."



*Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind* by Suzuki Shunryu, first published in 1972, remains one of my favorite books on Buddhism. Suzuki did not actually write it. It was based upon a series of lectures he delivered that were edited and published

posthumously by several of his devoted disciples. It is so elegant and so deceptive. It seems at the first reading uncomplicated. Then upon a second reading, it provides a fresh insight into meditation practice. By the third reading, one realizes that what one thought one knew from the first and second reading is turned upside down. After the fourth reading . . . well you get the point.

There are a number of good dictionaries of Buddhism and several not so good ones. Some are for scholars, and some are for Buddhist dabblers. A dictionary I can recommend for everyone is the *Oxford Dictionary of Buddhism*, by Damien Keown, 2004 - paperback edition, Oxford University Press. This is an illustrated dictionary that is clearly written and inclusive. What I especially like about this 346 page compact volume is that it manages to cover a broad range of material in a small package. There are judiciously selected illustrations, useful maps, appendices of Buddhist Canon and chronology. Keown manages to be pretty evenhanded in his presentation, not favoring one school or tradition over another. In addition to standard vocabulary definitions, places and names (i.e. sangha, or Lumbini, and Peltrul Rinpoche), Keown provides important discussions of topics, such as vegetarianism and abortion.

Another volume, *Encyclopedia of Buddhism* also by Damien Keown with the addition of Charles S. Prebish, is out and awaiting shipment. I have been told it will be shipped on October 22nd. It shows promise, based upon the authors,

both of whom I have great respect for. But, I haven't actually seen it yet. It will be available for about \$60, which is far less than other Buddhist encyclopedias that cost in the \$350 range.

Gassho . . . [Monshin](#)

**The Third Jewel**--where sangha members share ideas, poetry, and art to enrich everyone's Buddhist practice.

### ***The White Path Crossing Two Rivers***

The story of "The White Path Crossing Two Rivers" is well known in Pure Land Buddhism. A pilgrim is fleeing to the west, trying to escape vicious thieves and wild animals. He encounters a river of fire (signifying anger) and a river of water (signifying greed) divided in half by a perilously narrow white path. Beyond the river, the Buddha Amida presides over his glorious Western Pure Land, a paradise-like realm where devotees experience enlightenment. Encouraged by Amida, the pilgrim dares to cross the narrow white path and arrives safely in the Western Pure Land.

I wanted to suggest this story in the western part of our garden in the Berkshires (garden overview). I planted shiny European ginger around an iconographically correct image of Amida purchased at a local garden center. The ginger, which will continue to fill in over time, looks to me like the lotus plants that are said to fill the lake of Amida's Pure Land. I place flowers from other parts of the garden in an old mortar filled with water in front of the Buddha.

The flowers--in this case, June peonies--are meant to represent the lotus flowers that bloom on the Pure Land lake. Two stones with prominent white striations appear in front of the flowers and in front of the Buddha (garden detail). One stone comes from the Berkshires, the other from Maine. These stones suggest the rivers of anger and greed divided by the narrow white path that offers devotees a way to enter the Western Pure Land.



--Elizabeth ten Grotenhuis

**Call for material:** Please [send the Shingi](#) photographs, artwork, poems, etc. that you have created that you consider an outgrowth of your Buddhist practice or that you think reflect Buddhist themes, ideas, questions, etc. If submitting an image, please include a short statement explaining some of your thoughts to accompany it.

**Questions? Comments? Suggestions? Contact . . .**

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