

July 2010

SHINGI

Newsletter of the Tendai Buddhist Institute



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When a Buddhist [1] refers to the 'sacred' what is being described? The term 'sacred' is oft used in religion and spiritual contexts. The meaning varies from numinous (the specific presence or power of the divine, often associated with God or deity) to the idea that all is sacred, undifferentiated and without bounds.

In this sense I am not speaking for all Buddhist this writing is a reflection of Tendai

July Events Calendar



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

July Wednesday Meditations and Discussions

7th The Buddhist Path and the Natural World. The Buddhist perspective is that between sentient beings, of which humans are one type, and the environments we occupy. How does this play out in our post-modern approach to how we treat people, animals and organizational entities?

14th Sacred Places. Virtually all universal religions identify specific places as sacred. This is true in Buddhism as well. What are sacred places? Where are they found? Should they be treated differently from more mundane locations? Bring an example of a sacred place you recognize. Join a wide ranging discussion.

21st Chapter 7 "The Buddhist Path: The Way of Calm and Insight." This Chapter provides a good introduction to the reason for and the basic methods used in meditation. From *Foundations of Buddhism* by Rupert Gethin (1998 - Oxford University Press). Please read this chapter for discussion on Wednesday. This is an ongoing series of monthly classes on essential Buddhism.

28th Give and You Shall Receive by Reginald A. Ray

Buddhism and my views. [\(cont.\)](#)



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"This same logic of giving is found at the heart of later Buddhism. In both the Mahayana and the Vajrayana, the major themes of the earlier tradition are taken as a foundation and the practice of giving is developed in some interesting directions." A discussion of this article in the Spring 2005 of Issue of *Buddhadharma: The Practitioners Quarterly*. The article can be found [online](#).

Other Events

3rd Morning Service and Sutra Class, 8:30 - 10:30 AM - We continue investigating the Sutra of Brahma's Net. This work has had a profound influence on East Asian Buddhist thought and practice. The ramifications of that effect influence the ways we look at and practice Buddhism in the west. This week we will examine the first volume of the translation, pages 40-84 of *The Very Mahayana Buddhist Ethics: Introduction and Translation of the Fan-wang-ching* by Shigeru Osuka. We will make these books available to those attending the class for a small donation.

Note - Great thanks to the sangha for all your support and assistance during the recent gyo (training period) for Doshu and Soryo. Thank you for joining us in the mornings from 7 - 8 AM for meditation, the fresh vegetables, flowers, and treats you provided, and especially, for your support on an ongoing basis. Both the Jiunzan Tendai-ji sangha and the participants from North America and Europe benefitted from the period of intense practices, teachings and study. Sangha is extremely important to Buddhist endeavors. The next stage in the development at Tendai Buddhist Institute is a lay leadership series and more one day advanced retreats. The Doshu/Soryo program provides insight into the best way to proceed with these programs.

A Scene From Gyo - 3,000 Names of the Buddha (prostrations). More to come in the next Shingi!



Meanderings (cont.)



The commonality that exists between these ends of the spectrum is a sense of something that defies a precise explanation. Virtually every society holds something as sacred, which suggests that there is something in human experience that evokes feelings of reverence, awe, and ultimate respect, often that which is beyond known physical existence.

Vernacular definitions of 'sacred' include, but are not restricted to that which is: 1) set apart, consecrated to or dedicated to a deity, 2a) worthy of religious veneration; holy, 2b) entitled to reverence and respect, 3) of or relating to religion; not secular or profane. Certain Buddhists would eschew the first meaning while embracing the latter two. Other Buddhist would accept all three.

In a Buddhist sense the sacred is both transcendent (lying beyond the limits of ordinary experience) and immanent (a force that pervades and influences all that exists). The sacred can be a place or object, such as the Bodhi tree, Bodh Gaya, India; pilgrimage sites; temples and shrines. The writings are also considered sacred. Buddhist sacred texts are thought of as guides on the path to truth, not truth itself. Nonetheless, the inspiration and wisdom found within the canonical works are sacred. Specific ceremonies may be sacred, such as *tokudo* (ordination) and the *goma* (fire) ceremony.

What is important in all this is that we recognize that the limits to the human experience and means of knowing are not the limits of the cosmos. The sacred, as veneration and respect, and perhaps as consecration, acknowledges the boundary of our *Skandha* or Five Aggregates[2] We should seek to know both the physical world around and within us, as well as the absolute or sacred, around and within us.

[1] In this sense I am not speaking for all Buddhists. This writing is a reflection of Tendai Buddhism and my views.

[2] 1. Form - external and internal matter, 2. Sensation or feeling, 3. Perception conception, cognition, 4. Mental formations, impulses, volition, 5. Consciousness or discernment.

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

Our Meditation Spaces- A year or two ago, Monshin lead a Wednesday night discussion about creating spaces for meditation in our homes. Everyone shared a little about what his or her space was like, and I found myself wanting to visit each one. How interesting and enriching that would be! It only took me this long to realize that we can, in fact, "visit" each one . . . through the magic of modern photography and the Shingi.

Sam Mushin Press' Altar - My home altar began modestly with a Buddha image, incense holder, and candles. It has grown considerably over the years with my collecting of statues and images in travels to Japan, Thailand, Cambodia, and Burma (Myanmar).



The main image is a seated 1,000 armed Kannon which I bought at a shop in Asakusa, Tokyo, and is flanked by a reclining Buddha (Parinirvana) purchased in Chaing Mai, Thailand, and a sandalwood Buddha in meditation posture from Burma.



The two Tendai Mandalas on the wall were acquired from my favorite temple in Japan - Sanjusangen-do in Kyoto.



I enjoy searching for Buddhist statues and images while traveling Buddhist lands, and plan to continue adding or substituting images on my altar. I find these images inspiring for meditation and reminders of my travels.

From Elizabeth ten Grotenhuis - A month ago I visited the Chinese-inspired garden complex of [Innisfree](#) in Millbrook, New York (Tyrell Road; tel: 845-677-8000). Beautiful gardens surround a lake where (I was told) lotuses bloom in the last week of July and through much of August. The sacred lotus of Buddhism in bloom is truly an inspiring sight. I hope we will all have a chance to visit or revisit Innisfree this summer to

see the lotuses in bloom.



Photo courtesy of the [Innisfree](#) website.

Call for material: Please [send the Shingi](#) photographs, artwork, poems, book reviews, articles, 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, you may wish to include a short statement sharing some of your thoughts to accompany it.

Questions? Comments? Suggestions? Contact . . .

Shingi Editor
Koho J. Daniel Beaudry
beaudryjd@mac.com