

January 2011

SHINGI

Newsletter of the Tendai Buddhist Institute



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Starting the new year living a mindful life is a characteristic New Year's resolution. And like most New Year's resolutions, we forget the resolution by the second or third week of January. Let's try a different approach to our resolution to living a mindful life.

In November we were discussing being devoted and mindful during the Dharma talk prior to meditation.



January 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.

January Wednesday Meditations and Discussions

5 Living a Mindful life - Mindfulness is a generic, overused phrase that means everything from paying attention to a task, to a psychological technique for overcoming debilitating neurosis, to Smrti, which involves awareness, vigilance and ardency. There are Zen critics of mindfulness, such as Dogen, who argue that to employ the Theravada notion of mindfulness is idealistic and should not be practiced by those seeking the Buddhist Path. Read the Meanderings offering this month and come to the Dharma talk prepared to discuss one way we might employ mindfulness in our daily life.

12 When Buddhists Go to War - By most accounts the Buddhist Path is devoted to peace and cooperation. There are a number of occasions in which this has not been the case. We should examine some of those situations so that we might learn

There were several suggestions, such as taking a few minutes each hour to be mindful of Buddhist teachings. This is a very useful recommendation. However, we know how difficult such an intention is to put into practice.

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from them. I will be drawing from the following works: Zen War Stories, and Zen at War by Brian Daizen Victoria as well as The Teeth and Claws of the Buddha: Monastic Warriors and Sohei in Japanese History by Mikael S. Adolphson and In Defense of Dharma: Just-War Ideology in Buddhist Sri Lanka by Tessa J. Bartholomeusz

19 The Notion of Evil in Buddhism - The term evil is often found in Sutra and other Buddhist writings. From a Buddhist perspective what is the meaning of evil? Examining this concept leads to a better understanding of Buddhist teachings.

26 Tendai-shu Established in Japan - "Tendai Buddhism was authorized as an officially recognized Buddhist School by the Japanese Imperial court on January 26th, 806 C.E.. Dengyō Daishi (Saichō), the founder of Japanese Tendai Buddhism, believed in the teaching of Ekayana (One Vehicle); everyone is equal and anyone can attain spiritual awakening. He was authorized to educate and train monks to spread this teachings [sic] based on One Vehicle." -- From a Tendai-shu webpage on Saicho (<http://www.tendai.or.jp/english/index.php>)

While this sounds like the normal state of affairs to those who follow Tendai teachings today, anywhere in the world in the 9th century this was a radical idea. This day should be observed for the truly sweeping changes this development brought to Buddhism.

Events

December 31st - January 1st - New Year's Service, Meditation and Celebration - People will begin gathering around 10 PM. There will be a discussion on 'The Year of the Rabbit.' From 11 PM the New Year's Service will be followed by meditation. The Meditation will continue into the New Year with the service concluding at about 12:30 AM. From the Hondo everyone will reassemble in the main house for a New Year's celebration. Bring finger foods and champagne, sake, non-alcoholic beverages, whatever you would like to share, as well as finger foods.



6 Morning Service and Sutra Class, 8:30 - 10:30 AM - We have been deeply involved in a study of 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 continue to examine the second volume of the translation of *The Very Mahayana Buddhist Ethics: Introduction and Translation of the Fan-wang-ching* by Shigeru Osuka. We have finally finished the 10 Major Precepts and we are starting on the 48 Minor precepts. Expect some spirited discussion. If you don't have any idea what I'm talking about, join us.

29- 31 Tathata (Suchness) Mindfulness Retreat - Tathata is a fundamental concept of the Buddhist Path. It acknowledges the true nature of reality in any given moment. Each moment is distinct; as such we should observe our mind and our interactions afresh in each moment without conceptualization and discrimination. In the early texts, Tathata is described as an aspect of Nirvana. This retreat is open to people at all levels of practice. It is based on the Contemplation of Tathata attributed to the Tendai scholar/monk Genshin. Registration is necessary. Notes

Notes

Akemashite Omedeto Gozaimasu (Happy New Year). This is the year of the Metal Rabbit. The Asian zodiac sign of the Rabbit describes characteristics of people born in this fourth of the twelve year cycle. The Rabbit symbolizes such character traits as creativity, compassion, and sensitivity. People born under this sign take a calm approach and are considerate of others. There are five element signs that amend these characteristics. Metal gives Rabbits more strength, resilience and determination. They are more intense in their actions.

Food Pantry at Jiunzan Tendai-ji. The number of families who now depend on the food pantry has grown as a direct result of the continued economic recession. There are fewer and fewer resources going to more and more people. Please bring non-perishable food items to the Tendai Buddhist Institute on Wednesdays. We contribute these items to the Chatham Silent Food Pantry.

Please sign up to be in charge of Flowers at Jiunzan Tendai-ji for a month. You can either bring them yourself or pay to have them purchased for you. Supplying the flowers is an offering and a way to make a connection with the temple and the sangha. There is a sign-up sheet in the entryway. If you have any questions please ask Chip or Shumon.

If you are in New York City on January 26th - 1pm to 2:30pm - Rubin Museum of Art is showing the Marathon Monks by Mark Simkin. Monshin Naamon will be providing context and answering questions following the film. The film is part of the Body Language lunchtime documentary series LunchMatters which runs alongside an exhibition of Thomas Kelly's striking photographs: *Body Language: The Yogis of India and Nepal*, due to open on January 28th. The museum is

located at, 150 West 17 Street, NYC, NY 10011
(www.rmanyc.org)

Meanderings (cont. from side bar at left)



Religions such as Islam and Judaism have strict observances that ensure practitioners hold Allah and Hashem in their heart at prescribed times during the day; this is a type of mindfulness.

Mindfulness in a Buddhist context has a number of meanings and practices, as we have discussed many

times. For the month of January I would like to apply the 7th of the Eightfold Noble Path as the basis of mindfulness; which is, a calm awareness of one's body functions, feelings, and consciousness.

Doing this several times a day, while we are also trying to earn a living, study for our classes, or otherwise be involved in the mundane world we inhabit is not easy. In order to do this effectively using short periods of time several times a day, it is best to be specific. To Muslims this becomes second nature. What can we learn from Islam?

For Muslims, prayer occurs five times a day and each time has a particular meaning. The first prayer is set at pre-dawn. This prayer starts off the day with the remembrance of God. The second is at noon, after the day's work has begun; one pauses shortly to remember God and seek His guidance. In the late afternoon, when one is involved in completing the day's tasks and thinking about the evening, it is important to take a few minutes to remember God and the greater meaning of our lives. Just after the sun goes down, Muslims remember God again as the day comes to a close. And, finally, before retiring for the night, Muslims take time to remember God's presence, guidance, mercy, and forgiveness.

Buddhist mindfulness is not centered on God. Therefore when we are being mindful we are keeping in our hearts the essence of Buddhist teachings.

I suggest we devote ourselves to the Four Brahma Vihara (Divine Abodes or Sublime Attitudes) for the second through fifth observances and start out the day with as much or as little

of the Daily Service as you choose. Find the times that work for you. But, here is the key, choose five times a day and do not treat this as an optional practice, but as a means of being observant of the Seventh Noble Path - Right Mindfulness.

Recall, the Four Brahma Vihara are: 1) loving-kindness or benevolence, 2) compassion, 3) sympathetic joy, and, 4) equanimity. For each of the Brahma Vihara take a few moments to extend the quality first to oneself, then to loved ones, acquaintances, those with whom we do not have good relationships and finally, to all sentient beings.

During the current eruption of Islamophobia in the West we should be supportive of our peaceful Muslim brothers and sisters who have been subjected to insults, discrimination and worse. It is in this spirit that I thought of combining the two practices. One as a means by which we keep our resolve to be mindful, and the second as a means of showing our solidarity with our Muslim brothers and sisters, When one person of faith is assailed we should recognize this as an assault on everyone of faith.

Start the year with peace in your heart/mind and actions. Start the year with love.

Gassho . . . [Monshin](#)

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



Koho's Clouds

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

Tendai Buddhist Institute | 1525 Rt. 295 | East Chatham | NY | 12060