

March 2011

# SHINGI

Newsletter of the Tendai Buddhist Institute



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## Jushoku's Meanderings

Purity is an important idea in Buddhist philosophy and practices. However we often rush right past this term without examining its true meaning and how it is applied to the Buddhist Path.

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## March 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.

### **March Wednesday Meditations and Discussions**

**2nd Why are we on the Buddhist Path?**--This is a conversation among friends. There is nothing to expect, nothing to know. The intention is to share with the sangha your observations, experiences, and hopes. We invite an open mind, gentle words, and an expression of our inner wisdom.

**9th Reconciling Buddhist Myth and History: "[Buddhist History for Buddhist Practitioners](#)"**--An article from *Tricycle*. Read the article and discuss its relevance to our practices and the Buddhist path. The link is at: <http://www.tricycle.com/feature/buddhist-history-buddhist-practitioners?page=0,0>

**16th O-Higan is not for Wimps**--The week spanning the equinox is observed in various ways around Asia. There are a number of traditions that typically take place during this period, like spring-cleaning the temple, observing the Six-Perfections, offering the refuge ceremony, etc. In Japan this is also a period of pilgrimages; some are arduous and some, well, not so much. We will discuss the meaning of the O-Higan period that begins on the 18th and ends on the 24th.

**23rd** Ok it's that time again - **Buddhist Joke Night**. Q: What happens when a Buddhist becomes totally absorbed with the computer he is working with? A: He enters Nerdvana.

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OK - some are better than others. Bring a Buddhist joke of your own or just come and share the wit. Smiling, laughing, and sharing good humor are as much a part of the Buddhist path as sitting quietly. Why did the buddha cross the road? Join us to find out.

**30th Meditation as a Practice**--The Buddhist Path is often viewed as synonymous with meditation; however, there really is no single Buddhist meditational method. We will investigate some of the more prominent forms. This is both an exploration as well as instruction.

"Shikan"

### Events

**5th Sutra Class and Morning Service, 8:30-10:30 AM**  
We are currently studying *The Sutra of Brahma's Net*. This sutra is the basis for the Bodhisattva vows in East Asian Buddhism. The vows are relevant for lay and ordained practitioners alike. This week we will continue looking at the 48 minor precepts. The text we are using is *The Very Mahayana Buddhist Ethics: Introduction and Translation of the Fan-wang-ching*, by Shigeru Osuka.

**18th-20th Spring O-Higan Retreat**--The focal point of this year's Spring O-Higan retreat is Anatman - the Elusive Great Self. There will be practices, classes, teachings, and discussions. We will draw upon Bodhisattvayana teachings from a variety of historic sources as well as contemporary insights. This retreat is appropriate for all levels of practice and experience; it is intended to provide a reference and context for a Buddhist life. Please note: ***this retreat is already fully reserved.***

**20th Mahasangha Sunday and Refuge Ceremony, 10:30- 12:00**--followed by a potluck lunch. There is no discussion; meet in the Hondo at 10:30 AM. Please join your sangha sisters and brothers as they take formal refuge on the Buddhist Path.

### Notes

**Do you have a question or a topic** you would like to have addressed during a Wednesday evening discussion? Please [let Monshin know](#). Your question or topic is no doubt of

interest to other people.

**Flowers** - There are still several months that no one has claimed for flower donation. Please sign-up to provide flowers, or the money for flowers, for the temple. It is a fabulous way to contribute to the first of the Six Perfections - Dana, or generosity.

**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.

### Meanderings (cont. from side bar at left)



A reference to purity is provided in the *Sutra Spoken by the Buddha on the Contemplation of the Two Bodhisattvas, King of Healing and Supreme Healer*[1], where it is written that to obtain awakening and a pure existence "one's body and mind should be peaceful and quiescent, with thoughts bound to that which is free of disorder."

An additional reference, from a different perspective, *The Tathagatagarbha Sutra*, asserts that the existence of the Tathagatagarbha (Buddha-Essence) is within all sentient creatures. This implies an inherent purity in all things.

We often address purity from a metaphysical, Abrahamic perspective in which (according to *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*) purity is "Freedom from sin or guilt; innocence; chastity." In this context there is an assumption, or at least an echo, of the concept of original sin. This is distinctly different from the intimations provided from sutra.

One can identify purity in a Buddhist context as purifying the personality of the Buddhist practitioner so that all moral and character defilements and defects (such as hatred, spiritual ignorance, and lust) are dissolved. In other words, we are addressing the origins of dukkha (discontentedness) and morality and proper conduct.

How does this relate to our daily lives on the Buddha Path?

Purity is a unifying inspiration under which personal practice (mental development), ethical conduct, and wisdom are essential to the Buddhist Path. Oh--did I mention, the foregoing are the essence of the Noble Eightfold Path and the Six Perfections?

Have a meaningful and fulfilling O-Higan.

Gassho . . . [Monshin](#)



Compon Chudo, interior

[1] Birnbaum, R. (1979)The Healing Buddha, Shambhala Publications; Boston, MA.

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

### Letting Go

Write the names and etch the images upon the green leaves of summer aspens.

And as they are dropped  
one by one  
into rushing brook water,  
wade out among the flow of forgotten alphabets

where  
the scrawlings of your weathered, open hands  
become tiny things of distance.

I am water within water;  
a circular sentence whose flow of meaning

speaks within the silence of sound,  
the stillness wrapped in movement,  
and the emptiness of my footprints  
on sandy beds of gravel in a stream of liquid June

where memories  
and calendars  
become tiny things of distance.

--Michael Sanders

Photo by David S. Rubin

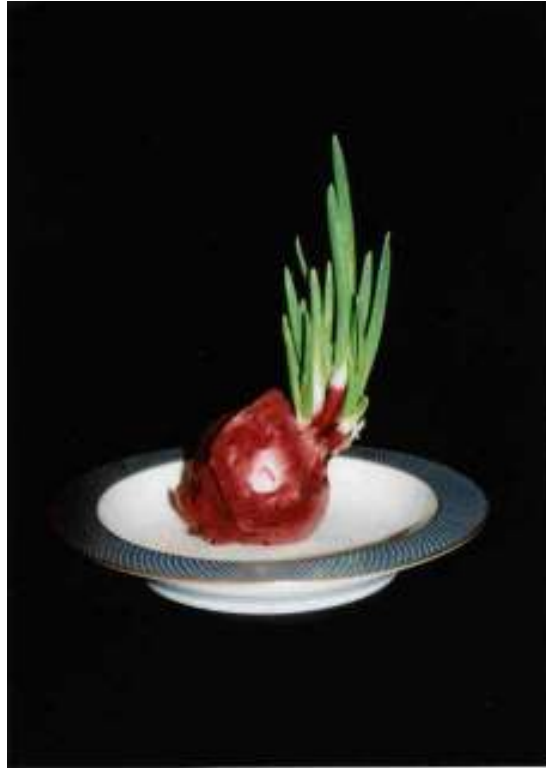


Photo courtesy of David S. Rubin

**"Somehow the change from edible plant to beautiful object speaks to rebirth . . ."**

***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 . . .**

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