

June 2011

SHINGI

Newsletter of the Tendai Buddhist Institute



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Jushoku's Meanderings

Much of *dukkha* (discontentedness or suffering) is due to our desire--but inability--to control all things in our environment. We want the world around us to follow our dictates rather than the seeming whims and vicissitudes of nature or larger human forces than we can manage.

[\(cont.\)](#)

June 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.

June Wednesday Meditations and Discussions

1st Mindful Eating - We eat because we are hungry. We eat because we are bored. We eat with friends and family to enjoy their company. On a daily basis we may take a bite for any number of reasons. Yet, how often do we slow down to examine the reason that we are eating? Tonight's class will offer some tips for better noticing when and why we are eating. We will discuss how we can appreciate eating as a sacred act on a daily basis. This talk will be led by Shingaku Jenny Henderson.

8th Poetry as Practice: The *Other Way of Flowers* - As discussed during a previous dharma talk, other arts like writing poetry (*kadō*) can serve as a Buddhist spiritual practice just as other better-known "way arts" like the homonymous *kadō* (way of flowers) and *chadō* (way of tea) can. This discussion, led by Koho Daniel Beaudry, will primarily take the form of a no-pressure mini workshop on writing poetry as a spiritual practice. To provide a common starting point for this discussion, please read "[Haiku Moments: An Interview with Artist An Xiao](#)" in *tricycle*. Also, please bring something to write with and on.



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15th Japan Trip Reflections - Monshin returns from Japan on June 14th. He will provide the sangha with a description of the current disaster situation in Japan as well as an update on the project he worked on while there.

22nd Dharma Q&A - Now a monthly feature. Write down your question and you will have an opportunity to ask it during the discussion. It should be relatively short and address a specific aspect of the teaching, philosophy, or practice. No question is too basic or too difficult. Remember, write down your question so you don't forget it.

29th The Vital Importance of Laity in the Buddhist Sangha - Some schools of Buddhism are dependent upon ordained and monastic sangha while many modern, especially Western forms, eschew any reliance on those who choose ordained precepts. What is often overlooked is the equally important role of both groups. The discussion will be focused on the role and importance of the lay sangha with reference to a provocative article by Stephen Batchelor titled "Creating Sangha." The article may be found [here](#).

Events

June 4th & 5th Spring Sangha Work Days - We will be removing all the mulch from around the Hondo, taking up the boards, and putting down new edging for the white limestone that is going in. Help on this day would be greatly appreciated. If people are not able to make it Saturday, please let us know, for there will certainly be things that need to be accomplished on Sunday too if people are willing to come and help out then. Please contact [Koki](#) with any questions.

June 18th 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.

Coming Events:

July 3rd Mahasangha Sunday 10:30 - 12 followed by potluck lunch - A day to celebrate sangha with fellow sangha members from near as well as Washington, DC, California, Colorado, the Adirondacks and Denmark.

Notes

Monshin's Blog - While working in Japan, Monshin will be posting to a blog his thoughts concerning his travels and work while there. Please access it at <http://monshin.us/>

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)



During my stay in Japan I am in a small village and am constantly reminded of nature's power-the earthquake and tsunami-as well as human shortsightedness and greed. The nuclear disaster is just 120 miles north of where I'm staying.

Keibo Oiwa[1] expresses this very well in a recent blog.

"With all the events of the few weeks following 3/11, I often had difficulty in focusing and thinking clearly. But while a bit confused, I was hoping that going through this would make me more courageous and creative. And now that I have come out of the

tunnel, I feel much better and positive, and see things more clearly.

"What Japan has experienced since 3/11 is like X rays; yes, all of us and our society were X-rayed and have now become transparent. What do I see? That what we need now is a bit of silence, time for mourning, prayer, and awe. We must contemplate on the dead and realize, as Thich Nhat Hanh said in his recent message to Japan, that part of ourselves, part of the earth, has died, and the dead is and will be in us forever.

"We are shocked to see in front of our own eyes our arrogance and the illusion that we can somehow control our Mother Earth. The Earth that created the great tsunami is the same Earth that has been giving everything to nurture us. We must re-instill the sense of awe that we might have been missing for a long time. We must meditate so that we can rediscover a way to reconnect ourselves to our Mother.

"We see clearly that we have been a part of this civilization and its violent system built upon our own greed, hatred and ignorance, or what Buddhists call the three fundamental poisons. Instead of accusing TEPCO (Tokyo Electric Power

Company) and the governments, we must realize that it is we who created this monster called TEPCO that has become powerful enough to control governments, media and other big businesses. Yes, they had a kind of dictatorship, and we were willing to support and embrace it, increasing our consumption of electricity 5 times since the 70's. With their massively financed "All Denka (entirely electrified homes)" campaign, they have been [sic] successfully made us believe that more and more nuclear plants are necessary to live comfortably.

"The fisherman-philosopher Masato Ogata once said "Chisso is me." He is a survivor and witness of the Minamata environmental crisis and was referring to the powerful Chisso Corporation that caused the mercury poisoning of the ocean killing innumerable lives including humans. Yes, TEPCO is me."

The interpenetration, the strands of mutuality, person to person, sentient being to sentient being, is ever present. One small action seemingly innocuous and benign may have profound consequences in this net of relatedness. Nowhere do I feel it more than in this small village embedded firmly in the flow of Japanese society. I recognize that each time I flick the electric switch on I am setting in motion the roots of our own suffering, the nuclear plant designed to respond to my wants. Each time I extend myself in kindness to the earth, an animal or another human, I am setting in motion the roots of our liberation.

Gassho . . . [Monshin](#)

[1] Keibo Oiwa (Japanese pen name: Tsuji Shin'ichi 辻信一) is a cultural anthropologist, author, translator, environmental activist, and public speaker. He lived in North America for sixteen years and holds a Ph.D. in Anthropology from Cornell University. Since 1992, he has taught in the International Studies Department of Meiji Gakuin University. The founder of the Sloth Club, an ecology and "Slow Life" NGO, he gives lectures and workshops on social and environmental issues. His blog can be found at: <http://keibooiwa.sblo.jp/>

Monshin's Own Blog - While working in Japan, Monshin will be posting to a blog his thoughts concerning his travels and work while there. Please access it at <http://monshin.us/>

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

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Shoshin's Meditation Space



My meditation space is in a corner of my study and so is private and quiet--although sometimes I am aware of the throb of the computer modem in the silence and think it is vying for my attention as the heartbeat of the cosmos!

I purchased the carved wooden Buddha many years ago in an antique store in Troy. He has a lovely countenance and I had him stained and oiled to help preserve the wood. I don't know if he is really an "antique," but I don't care either.

Everything on the altar, except the *egoro*, is a gift from someone special to me. If you look carefully on the Buddha's left arm you may see two small dried leaves from the huge, sheltering tree at Tamonin in Japan. Tamonin is Shumon and Monshin's temple where some sangha members visited in 2005.

Several items on my altar remind me of other sacred spaces as well. The white talisman (I don't remember the Japanese word) on the Buddha's right arm is from Mt. Hiei and the photo of Fudo-myō is from Yamada-sensei's temple in Tokyo.

I think the most unusual item on my altar is my makeshift *mokugyo*; traditionally a *mokugyo* is a carved wooden fish used to keep time during chanting. There is a very large one in the front of the *Hondo*, and we do use it occasionally. My *mokugyo* is a carved wooden frog which is a child's noisemaker when the striker is drawn across the wooden ridges on its back. The frog works very nicely for me and lets me smile when I begin to use it.

Haiku by [Koho](#) Daniel Beaudry

cutting the grass--
apple blossoms falling
all around

highway median--
the goose's webbed foot
stuck skyward

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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