

August 2011

# SHINGI

Newsletter of the Tendai Buddhist Institute



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### Jushoku's Meanderings

There are many definitions for what makes us human.

Anthropology informed me, while still in high school, that humans are different from other animals in that we make tools. We now know that to have been misinformed.

Psychologists posited that humans are distinct because we are self-conscious. That is now in dispute.

Some philosophers maintain that we are the only animals to know of our eventual demise, thus we turn to religions for meaning. Perhaps.

[\(cont.\)](#)

## August 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.

### August Wednesday Meditations and Discussions

**3rd Uppekkha (Equanimity)** - embraces the good, bad, loved, and unloved, pleasant and unpleasant. It is a perfect, unshakable balance of mind, rooted in insight. This is the fourth of the Brahma Vihara and an essential quality to cultivate as part of the Buddhist Path. We will investigate various aspects of Buddhist equanimity.

**10th Ask the Sensei** - Have you been writing down your questions for Ask the Sensei night? Bring along any question about Buddhism you may have developed in the last month. This is your opportunity to receive a quick answer to a burning question, or a fuller explanation of a longstanding question.

**17th Dengyo Daishi (Saicho)** - is the founder of the Tendai Buddhist school. He made great contributions to Japanese Buddhism as well as to Japanese culture. August 18th is the yearly Tendai observance; we will investigate his life and contributions.

**24th Is the First Noble Truth Nihilistic?** - The First Noble Truth is that life is suffering. This very basic Buddhist contention is antithetical to the "Positive Thinking" culture of the post-modern world. We will discuss the personal and social ramifications of the First Noble Truth in light of Barbara Ehrenreich's thought-provoking book *Bright-Sided: How Positive Thinking Is Undermining America*.

**31st What the Buddha Taught?** - by Andrew Cooper. Resorting to direct connection to Shakyamuni Buddha is common to many schools of Buddhism. The question is - does it really matter? Read the article in *Tricycle* - Spring 2010 issue - and join the discussion on this important subject. The article can be found at: <http://www.tricycle.com/my->



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Monshin Naamon](#)

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### **Our Other Sangha:**

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NY](#)

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Sangha--Arlington,  
VA](#)

[view/what-buddha-taught](#)

### **Events**

**6th Sutra Class and Morning Service, 8:30 - 10:30 AM -** *Vajrachedika Prajnaparamita Sutra* (The Diamond Sutra) will be the subject of our scrutiny for the next several months. The sutra is also known as the *Prajnaparamita Sutra in Three Hundred Verses*, thus it is not a long sutra. Please obtain the following book for this class - *The Diamond Sutra: Transforming the Way We Perceive the World*, by Mu Soeng; Wisdom Publications (2000). It is one of the earliest Mahayana Sutras and is considered by many scholars as foundational to subsequent Mahayana thought. There are a number of useful translations and commentaries about this sutra. We will use this opportunity to investigate the context of the early Bodhisattva path, which then locates sutra that were compiled later in time. It should be readily available. For the first class we will cover the Preface through page 31.

**13th Sangha Evening on the Diamond Path.** - That is we will have an evening at a **TriCity ValleyCats** Minor League Baseball game at Joseph Bruno Stadium on the campus of Hudson Valley Community College, on Rt. 4 Troy New, York. The ValleyCats will be playing the Hudson Valley Renegades. We will assemble at the stadium picnic pavilion starting at 5:00 PM; the game begins at 7 PM.

This package includes a pre-game buffet style picnic for all the sangha members

- The menu includes marinated chicken, hot dogs, hamburgers, sausage with peppers & onions, salt potatoes, salads, potato chips, watermelon, and beverages.
- Each sangha member will also get a souvenir ValleyCats cap.
- Following the picnic we will enjoy the game from the Reserved Box seats.
- This package is \$25 per person, \$20 for children age 12 and under.
- Check out some pictures and more information at: <http://web.minorleaguebaseball.com/index.jsp?sid=t577>

[Nagado Sangha--  
Springfield, MA](#)

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Renfrew, Ottawa,  
Canada](#)

We need to assemble at least 20 people for the package. Please contact Koki or Chip to register for the event. Bring the whole family to this fun night out.



### **Notes**

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

**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)



*What I do know is that humans are filled to overflowing by mental constructions. This may or may not be true of other species--I haven't asked them.*

*These mental constructions have created sublime music, voyages to the moon, awe-inspiring mythologies, and a myriad of other worthy endeavors. Likewise mental constructions lead to self-doubt, anxiety, horrendous behaviors, and dukkha (mental and physical suffering).*

Buddhist teachings are largely concerned with how we reformulate and harness these mental constructions in a way that bring us happiness and a vision of the nature of reality. The

dharma provides a framework for orienting our perceptions of all phenomena in a way that reintegrates humanity into the fabric of the cosmos. There is no finer aspiration. That is awakening.

Gassho . . . [Monshin](#)

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

### **"Looking Out The Window"**

The grasses are happy  
A second year unmown  
So tall in the sun  
Blown by the wind  
They bow resilient and strong  
Triumphant at last with seed.

--Sherry Payne Kohler  
June 21 2011

**Photo from Monshin**



**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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