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Jushoku's Meanderings

Shumon and I returned to the States 25 years ago last fall and introduced a Tendai Dharma Center in April 1995. We had been living in Brazil, and mostly in Japan for about six years. We returned specifically to start a village temple. Our idea was transformed into what we have today, thanks to many sangha members and support from Japan, especially Ichishima-sensei and the Tendai Buddhist Overseas Foundation (*Jigyodan*). (cont.)



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[Great River Tendai Sangha--Arlington, VA](#)

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April Events Calendar

Weekly Meditation Services 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.



April Wednesday Meditations and Discussions

3 Lotus Sutra Ch. 3: Parable - This chapter continues from chapter two and is the first of seven parables found in the Lotus Sutra. One of the most memorable tales, it is an example of upaya (Skillful Means) while conveying wisdom and a profound message on an essential of Tientai teachings. The primary translations used will be from the Kosei and BDK editions.

10 Buddhist Sangha: A Reflection for Buddha's Birthday - We observe Shakyamuni Buddha's birthday (April 8) on April 7th. We will discuss the most neglected of the Three Gems. This is an opportunity to examine the process by which Shakyamuni Buddha's teachings are still practiced today, 2,500 years later.

17 A Purified Religion - First of a series of four Terry Lectures at Yale University by Donald Lopez, Jr. in October 2008. Chapter one from Lopez, Jr., S. J. (2012) *The Scientific Buddha: His Short and Happy Life*. Yale University Press will be the subject of the talk. You can obtain the book and read the chapter before the evening, go to <https://terrylecture.yale.edu/previous-lectureships> to see the original lecture by Lopez, or just join us for the discussion.

24 Buddhism and Ecology: Earth Day in a Buddhist Context - Amid global warming we are confronted daily by both natural and human changes to our environment. The human caused changes are a result of negligence and willful ignorance influenced by greed and politics. We must also look at basic ethical and philosophic perspectives that give our societies license to foul our nest. What are the Buddhist teachings on this existential crisis?

Other Events in April:

6 Sutra Class and Morning Service, 8:30 - 10:30 AM - From Ch. 1: *Interpreting the Lotus Sutra*, by Stephen Teiser and Jacqueline Stone. In Teiser, SF and Stone, J (eds.) (2009) *Readings of the Lotus Sutra*. Columbia University Press. We will be starting on page 5 and go until we run out of time for discussion.

7 Shakyamuni Buddha's Birthday- Hanamatsuri (Flower Festival) and Family Day - 10:30 AM - This is a fun holiday for the whole family where we tell the story of the Buddha's birth, a special service in which we pour ama-cha (sweet tea) over a statue of the baby Buddha. This is a great opportunity to observe a special observance with your sangha and share the story of the Buddha with our children, families, and friends. There will be a special program for younger ones and a pot-luck lunch following the service.

13 Clean up Day - Tendai Buddhist Institute: 9 AM - 2 PM. Join us for a spring cleaning outdoors; leaves raking, sweeping, mulching, etc. Bring gloves and gardening tools. Lunch will be provided. Rain Day will be the next day, the 14th.

19 Lotus and Cross: A Buddhist at the Foot of the Cross: Noon at The Church of St. Francis of Assisi, 391 Delaware Avenue, Albany, NY. An Interfaith Celebration of Good Friday, Capital Area Council of Churches. Rev. Monshin Paul Naamon will be the Buddhist in question. This is an opportunity to join with Christians in the Capital Area for their most important yearly period of observation.

Meanderings (cont. from side bar at left)



When we started, we did not know the best day of the week to have our meditation service. We settled on Wednesday. For a time, we met two days a week, Wednesday and Sunday, Wednesday in the evenings and Sunday was late morning. We abandoned the Sunday because we had the same number of people total, they just split between either Wednesday or Sunday and more people seemed to prefer

Wednesdays

We typically think of meeting weekly as being derived from Abrahamic traditions. A 'sabbath' is a universal religious occurrence. *Uposatha* ("the cleansing of the defiled mind") was practiced at the time of Shakyamuni Buddha every seven or eight days. These were organized days for rest and worship, based on the New Moon and Full Moon in a lunar calendar.

Today in Thailand and China, "Lay people observe the Eight Precepts on Uposatha days, as a support for meditation practice and as a way to re-energize commitment to the Dhamma. Whenever possible, lay people use these days as an opportunity to visit the local monastery, in order to make special offerings to the Sangha, to listen to Dhamma, and to practice meditation with Dhamma companions late into the night."^[1]

In Japan, Uposatha has been incorporated into a cultural context using an ancient calendar that combines Buddhism and Daoism; there are six days each month known as the *roku sainichi*; on the 8th, 14th, 15th, 23rd and final two days of each lunar month. These days provide the ordained members opportunity for their practices. *Shinja* (devoted lay practitioners) use these days for more intensive practices.

It seems that today observance of the sabbath, whether Jewish, Christian, or Muslim is kept by only the most observant. Likewise in Asia this is true of Uposatha and roku sainichi. Our postmodern societies, Asian and non-Asian, have become secular, and part of this process is commodification of our day of rest and observance of religious practices. Going to the shopping mall or schlepping the children to soccer practice has replaced going to church, synagogue, temple, or mosque. The same people who are most likely to complain life is too rushed, too filled, and not as satisfying, are also the people who are most likely to go car shopping, push their kids into keeping a schedule of their activities and not take a day to reflect and just be - or to observe a religious practice.

Recently we have started to rethink our Wednesday evening meeting time that has worked fairly well for almost a quarter of a century. Several factors have led to thoughts of changing our meditation service day. First, many in our sangha have gotten older (driving at night, especially in inclement, weather) is a factor. Second, we have families who wish to attend, and their schedules are dictated by children's schedules, evenings are not good for them. Third, folks must get up and go to work the next day, so it becomes a hassle.

There is another factor that I have thought about on and off for the last 25 years. In the same way that Shumon and I decided to make sangha a prominent feature of our small village temple to promote a maturation of Buddhism in new soil, it may now be time to consciously incorporate Uposatha or roku sainichi into the sangha experience. Doing it specific days based on a lunar calendar is logistically and practically awkward. We would need to do it on a week-end day. From our perspective, Sunday is not the best day, Saturday seems more fitting, but we are open to a full discussion.

We will be discussing this change with sangha members, and other interested parties so we can determine the best days and times for the weekly meeting, and the various options. Give this some thought and let us know what you think. If you are not able to do it in person, send me an email.

Gassho Monshin

[1] <https://www.accesstoinsight.org/pdf/dhamma/sila/uposatha.html> - Accessed 3/23/2019

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

**The Dhammapada
by Shoshin Sandy Jacan**

Last December, one of Monshin's Wednesday evening Dharma talks focused on the Dhammapada which was one of the very first Buddhist texts I encountered. One of the very first Sutra Classes at our Dharma Center dealt with comparing various Dhammapada texts; nearly twenty-five years later, I continue to be inspired by its succinct and pithy presentation of the Dharma.

Supposedly, at the First Council after the Buddha's death, his disciples met and agreed to commit his teachings to memory to preserve them for us all. The result was the Dhammapada preserved in the Pali Canon. There are hundreds of interpretations and translations of these basic and foundational teachings. I am particularly fond of Dhammapada translations by Thomas Byrom. If you are interested, it is possible to download his entire translation of the Dhammapada. I encourage you to do so and perhaps use the verses as subjects of contemplation. Let the poetry wash over you!

Here are two of Byrom's adapted chapters which I particularly enjoy and hope you will also.

Gassho, Shoshin

Chapter 12--Self

Love yourself and be awake---
Today, tomorrow, always.
First establish yourself in the way,
Then teach others,
And so defeat sorrow.
To straighten the crooked
You must first do a harder thing---
Straighten yourself.
Who are your only master.
Who else?
Subdue yourself,
And discover your master.

Chapter 15--Joy

Live in joy,
In love,
Even among those who hate.

Live in joy,
In peace,
Even among the troubled.

Look within.
Be still.
Free from fear and attachment,
Know the sweet joy of the way.

<https://ia802701.us.archive.org/2/items/pdfy-5xsS5pS8sQDrKnc/The%20Dhammapada.pdf>

**And as always, please do send us news from your sangha!
Your poetry, your images, your suggestions!
Gassho!**