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Jushoku's Meanderings

Recently a close friend asked in an email, "Why are we so concerned about Brexit?" I thought about writing back and as I was formulating a response, I recognized that my reply was grounded in both a secular global perspective and in a Buddhist interpretation. My friend is not a Buddhist.

(cont.)



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February 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.



February Wednesday Meditations and Discussions

6 Confronting Racial Discord in America - As an ongoing process we are trying to better understand racism and how we can dissolve its corrosive effect in our society. We will use the article [White people assume niceness is the answer to racial inequality. It's not.](#) by Robin diAngelo published on [Guardian.org](#), 1/16/19 as a discussion piece. A copy will be made available before the discussion

13 Parinirvana Day - February 15th is the day of the historic Buddha's death observed by most Mahayana Buddhists. How Shakyamuni Buddha's death is presented is a philosophical issue as well as an observance.

20 Saddharma Puṅḡarika Sutra (Lotus Sutra) Ch. 1: Introductory - Once a month a chapter from the LS will be presented in numerical order of the table of contents. The primary translations used will be from the Kosei and BDK editions, other translations may be used as a cross reference. If you would like further information about the translations - just ask.

27 What is Buddhism II? - We are examining contemporary conceptions and misconceptions about the Buddha-dharma. Using the format in Faure's *Unmasking Buddhism* we examine various perceptions of Buddhism that abound in our postmodern milieu.

Other Events in February:

2 Sutra Class and Morning Service, 8:30 - 10:30 AM - The *Maha Prajna Paramita Hridaya Sutra* (Heart Sutra) is the most often chanted, cited and best known sutra in the Mahayana canon. We will read and discuss two different translations and commentaries (Mu Soeng's and Red Pine's) as a set throughout the classes. With this class we conclude our three-year in-depth exploration of the Heart Sutra..

NOTES:

Flowers for the Hondo. You may have noticed that we have not posted a sign-up sheet for monthly flower donations. We have decided to use silk flowers, which has been increasingly common in Japanese temples. People may not realize that the flowers purchased by sangha members often do not last for a whole week and they require consistent touch-up. The temple is not open just on Wednesdays. Additionally, florist flowers while nice, are not as environmentally friendly as people might imagine. We will still use some fresh flowers to augment the silk flowers during special occasions. We invite people to make a donation for the purchase of the silk flowers, which will be changed seasonally. Thank you for your understanding.

Starting in March the sutra class will embark on a contemporary investigation of the Lotus Sutra. The book we'll be using is: [Teiser, SF and Stone, J \(eds.\) \(2009\) Readings of the Lotus Sutra. Columbia University Press.](#) Several factors led to our selection of this volume. The first criteria was that we wanted to employ a work with an explicit female voice. Jackie Stone, (Princeton University) is an exemplary scholar of Lotus Sutra, Tendai and Nichiren, Medieval and Modern Buddhism, one of the editors and half the authors of the articles are by women. Another factor was that we wanted to examine the Lotus Sutra more fully. We will be progressing with the time it takes to do the work justice. Join us on a meaningful journey into the Lotus Sutra is, arguably, the most influential sutra in East Asia, and gaining greater attention in Europe and the Americas.

Meanderings (cont. from side bar at left)



This is an example of how we evaluate Buddhist teachings in post modern society. We begin by examining rational, reasoned, opinions and facts. We then look to Buddhist teachings which address the issue on several levels. After this process we can assess our individual, response, proposal or action.

The rational explanation in the case of Brexit.

There was a referendum that was passed by a British voting majority in June 2016 that required the United Kingdom (UK) to leave the European Union (EU). This formally triggered the EU's Article 50, with an exit on March 29, 2019. The vote was close and those in favor of Brexit responded more to emotion and pseudo-populist sentiment than to the demonstrable facts of the situation. The referendum was intended to do the following: 1) close borders limiting immigration, this was Boris Johnson and Nigel Farage's 'Wall'. 2) the U.K. would be more competitive because it could make its own trade deals with other nations and legislate in the interest of British manufacturing, the slogan was 'Make Britain Great Again', 3) a reaction against the establishment, 4) reject the bureaucrats, and 5) a protectionist, isolationist sentiment. This is nationalism plain and simple. As Roger Cohen points out in the NYT 1/25/19, "As Francois Mitterrand, the former French president, observed in 1995, prejudices must be conquered because the alternative is nationalism - and "nationalism is war."

From the British and European points of view Brexit, hard (with little cooperation from the EU) or soft (favorable terms from the EU), will result in drastic slowing of economic growth, increasing housing costs, dramatic loss of jobs, raise costs to such utilities as phone, internet and airfares, require current immigrants to leave UK, return to a divided Ireland, custom delays, etc. On the benefits to the EU, the EU might be strengthened by a new sense of solidarity.

From the U.S. perspective, the dollar would be strengthened to the point where goods and service would become too expensive for buyers in Europe, leading to an economic tumble. U.S. subsidiaries in UK and EU would need to reformulate, costing billions in expense resulting in higher costs in the U.S., U.S. businesses are the biggest investors in UK, thus a drop in the stock market. All of the preceding would result in job loss and economic downturn. Additionally, the 'Troubles' are predicted to return to Ireland resulting in international instability.

What is the Buddhist perspective? It goes back to who voted for Brexit and why did they do it? Who voted for Brexit: those who were economically challenged, less educated, and older folks. Why did they do it? Xenophobia, fear of immigrants (the stranger), egoism, mistrust of authority, and self-centeredness. The causes of dukkha (discontentedness and suffering) are a result of anger, greed and ignorance (the Three Poisons), ultimately caused by attachment.

We can recognize the perceived anguish of those who supported Brexit while seeing their vote as one of delusion, brought about by the Three Poisons. We do the pro-Brexit people, and us, a disservice by marginalizing or feeling superior to them. At the same time, we recognize that nationalism (which includes racism) is a by product of a host of ills and we should strive to mitigate those causes and effects.

More to the point, from a Buddhist perspective, is the concept of interpenetration and interconnectedness. The separateness of the United Kingdom and the European Union, or the EU and UK and the U.S for that matter, is a provisional delusion that speaks to a form of American particularism on a rational level and a misconception of self on a Buddhist level. This is true of the Brexit issue, but also our willful ignoring of the Syrian conflict, the Rohingya of Myanmar, the plight of minorities in China, etc., all the product of nationalism. All of us in this world are interrelated, by our physical environment, this earth, and our cultural interconnections. The American isolation that led to the two world wars is an example of this. Our consciousness informs all of our actions, interpersonally and societally. Each of us is responsible for each other sentient being on this planet. This is not metaphysical. Each of us can spread compassion by how we view ourselves and each other in a cascade of Loving-kindness. Yes - we are all responsible to be a force for positive change - day in day out in our most mundane actions. Be a force for change by our conscious decisions.

Gassho Monshin

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

O-Sechi Ryori, Japanese New Year's Foods

Since the establishment of our Dharma Center in 1995, we've been celebrating the New Year by gathering at the New Year's Eve in the Hondo, hitting the gong 108 times and meditating into the New Year.



Shumon has been preparing the O-Sechi Ryori, Japanese New Year Foods, every year. The dishes that make up o-sechi each have a special meaning celebrating the New Year, with its color, shape and by word-play (meaning Happiness, Joys, Diligence, Generation after Generation etc)



In modern Japanese, fewer and fewer families have the O-Sechi in recent years.



Shumon also admits that her O-sechi is getting simplified recently, but she hopes to continue this tradition at TBI to welcome and celebrate the New Year with sangha members.



Story and images by Wyn Hayes

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