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April 2014

SHINGI

Newsletter of the Tendai Buddhist Institute



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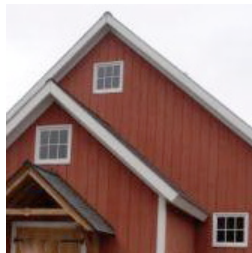
Meanderings

The Third Jewel

Jushoku's Meanderings

Identity is an interesting phenomenon. Many people identify themselves by their ethnic group, such as Irish or African-American. Gender, nationality, sports affiliations, one's education, political party, family, activities, a musical instrument played, or our

April 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.

April Wednesday Meditations and Discussions

2 Lotus Sutra: Chapter 2 - Tactfulness - This chapter is one of two that is considered the heart of the Lotus Sutra. Each month we examine a chapter of the Lotus Sutra, the primary doctrinal teaching of Tendai. There are two complete versions of this formative East Asian sutra available as pdf on line. Find these at the following links:

https://www.bdkamerica.org/digital/dBET_T0262_LotusSutra_2007.pdf

<http://www.rk-world.org/publications/ThreefoldLotusSutra.pdf>

9 Shakyamuni Buddha's Birthday - In Japan, Buddha's birthday is observed on April 8th in the Gregorian calendar, it is called Hanamatsuri, or the "Flower Festival." On this day people bring fresh flowers to temples in remembrance of the Buddha's birth in a grove of blossoming trees. We will perform a special ceremony for the service.

16 Buddhism for Beginners - It is useful to periodically go back to the basics. We will examine the fundamentals of the Buddhadharma in order to refresh our understanding and motives to pursuing the Buddhist Path...

23 Gentrifying the Dharma - This very short article was written by Joshua Eaton for the March 5th Salon.com. The tag line reads, "As big corporations embrace meditation, some Buddhists fear their religion's being co-opted by

occupation, all categorize ways in which we identify ourselves. It is the 'self'.



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[California Tendai Buddhist Monastery](#)

[Tendai Denmark](#)

[Flowing Rivers](#)

elites." You can find the article at the link below and copies of the article will be available. The article will be the basis for a broader discussion.

http://www.salon.com/2014/03/05/gentrifying_the_dharma_how_the_1_is_hijacking_mindfulness/

30 An American Actor in the World of Suzuki - Jundo Eric Hill will talk about his years of training and performing with the Japanese experimental theater director Tadashi Suzuki. Please see his comments below in *The Third Jewel*.

Other events in April:

5 Sutra Class and Morning Service, 8:30 - 10:30 AM - While not a sutra in the formal sense *A guide to the Tiantai Fourfold Teachings*, is seminal to Chinese and East Asian Mahayana philosophy, practice and development. The version we are using was translated by Masao Ichishima and Davis Chappell and it is found in *Tiantai Texts*, Bukkyo Dendo Kyokai America, 2013. Join us for a fascinating exploration of pivotal Buddhist teachings.

11-13 Retreat - Coming to terms with the anatman (non-self). The retreat will begin the evening of April 11th and end around noon on April 13th. This retreat is intended for all levels of practice and experience. For more information on this retreat see Jushoku's Meanderings below.

Notes and Announcements

Food Pantry at Jiunzan Tendai-ji - 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)



Anthropologists suggested that identity is a basic human characteristic. Such identity had its origins with tribal membership early in our hominid development. It is part of our DNA, our ability to socialize and cooperate was as useful to Homo sapiens evolution as adaptation to climates and resources. Identity with sports teams and ethnic groups is a demonstrable link back to this ancient identity.

In the provisional world such identity is as natural as cooperating with others in our own self-interest. The idea of identity is related to the self. It places each of us into a larger context and often provides us with a sense of satisfaction, pride, and meaning.

Such identity also has a dark side. The subjugation and genocide of the Hutu's by the Tutsi in Rwanda, the break-up of Yugoslavia by Slavic, Croatian, Serbians, etc. or the subjugation of Chinese minorities by the Han, are all examples of ethnic and nationalistic identities used as a tool for political purposes. North and South Ireland, Buddhists and Muslim in Burma, European-American, Latino, and African American groups in the U.S. are examples of economic differentiation of

[- Ottawa, Ontario,
Canada](#)

ethnic groups, often along religious lines. There are no end of examples that could be used to make the point.

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

On an individual level we see the 'self' as a composite of many identities which constitute who we perceive ourselves to be. This self is derived from the Five Skandhas or the five heaps. These are: 1. form, 2. sensation, 3. perception, 4. mental formations, and 5. Consciousness. On a provisional level, for most of us reading this piece, it is benign and in many instances advantageous for our contemporary lives.

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

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Albany, NY](#)

From a Buddhist perspective, in the absolute (*shunyata*), we are taught the self is a form of delusion; that there is no separate autonomous self. This is one of the most difficult teachings to understand yet it is one of the Three Marks of Existence (skt. *trilakṣaṇa*) of all sentient beings, called *Anatman*. Some claim this idea is nihilistic. In fact it is the obverse of nihilism, because if properly understood there is no life and death. Without a true understanding, an understanding from within, not from the intellect, following the Buddha Path becomes difficult, perhaps onerous. To experience the true meaning of anatman is to experience liberation.

[Red Maple Sangha--
Renfrew, Ottawa,
Canada](#)

The April retreat, '*Coming to terms with the anatman (non-self)*', is exploration and practices of this most important Buddhist teaching. If possible attend the retreat, if that is not possible, contemplate the meaning of the Five Skandhas in your daily life. Delving into this foundational concept is essential to the liberation of all sentient beings

Love and Gassho . . . Monshin

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

An American Actor in the World of Suzuki by Jundo Eric Hill

In 1984 (apologies to George Orwell), I went to Japan to study with Japanese experimental theater director, Tadashi Suzuki. It was a one-month workshop that ended up changing my life. Over the next ten years I would return to Japan many times and work with Suzuki and his world-renowned Suzuki Company of Toga.

I became a master teacher of Suzuki's method of actor training that I eventually brought to universities and professional companies across America. I became a member of Suzuki's company in 1989 and toured worldwide with the company until the early 1990's when my work in the U.S. sent me other directions. Suzuki's method, drawn in large measure from the tradition Japanese performance arts of Kabuki and No, will be the subject of my discussion.

In its essence, it is a method that draws on the very same intensive levels of concentration and focus that come to bear in other traditional Japanese arts

forms, all of which are rooted in zen. Its bearing on the world of Buddhism and Tendai is negligible other than what might be found in the quality of the training - Tendai and Suzuki are extremely physical at their highest levels. Other than that, Buddhism was never mentioned nor was the Buddha in my time in Toga. It was all Suzuki all day, every day. It wasn't until I had left the Suzuki Company that I began to follow the path of the right guy. In the meantime, I had become a much better actor with suitcase full of incredible memories.

Questions? Comments? Suggestions? Contact . . .

Shingi Editor

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