

Editorial Note: Meditation in American Shin Buddhism

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ON FEBRUARY 24, 2005, the Institute of Buddhist Studies, in association with the Stanford Center for Buddhist Studies, sponsored a symposium entitled, "Meditation in American Shin Buddhism" at Stanford University, Palo Alto, California.

The symposium was organized on the premise that the question of meditation and the broader issue of practice in Shin Buddhism are in need of reexamination within a contemporary, Western context. Shin Buddhism, one of the first forms of Buddhism in the United States, is now just one of many Western Buddhist communities, a great number of which are increasing in scope and activity through a focus on the practice of meditation. American Shin Buddhism is also experiencing an infusion of non-Asian followers and new perspectives on the role and value of religion in the world. Many Shin Buddhist followers adopt the Western call for social praxis and engagement and for the practical application of doctrine to everyday life. Non-traditional approaches to meditative practice are also being demanded by those who look to Shin Buddhism for personal transformation, fulfillment, or healing. All of this is taking place in the context of the development of Western perspectives on institutional orthodoxy and orthopraxy, which are often at odds with those of traditional Shin Buddhist organizations.

This symposium featured a number of renowned Buddhist and Shin Buddhist scholars, whose consideration of the role of meditation in American Shin Buddhism placed emphasis not only on historical and contemporary developments in Buddhist meditative practice, but also on propagational, institutional, and spiritual questions surrounding it. In sum, each of the presentations represented a unique and creative approach to the possibility of resituating practice within American Shin Buddhist thought, community, and life.

The Institute of Buddhist Studies wishes to thank the many people and organizations that made this symposium possible, including Socho Koshin Ogui of the Buddhist Churches of America; Dr. Takamaro Shigaraki, Professor Emeritus, Ryukoku University; the Stanford Center for Buddhist Studies; the George Aratani Endowment for the IBS Center for Contemporary Shin Buddhist Studies; the Reverend Russell Hamada Memorial Endowment for Contemporary Shin Buddhist Studies; the Yehan Numata Foundation; and the BCA Research and Propagation Program.