

Teachers, Traditions and the Red Maple Sangha

We understand that, in earlier times, Dharma teaching was less available, through materials and teachers to whom we might have limited access. We also understand that we now live in an extraordinary period where massive amounts of Dharma material are available in print, audio and digital forms, in ways never before imagined. Rather than struggling to search for limited sources of teaching, we are faced with multiple sources, often of variable quality. This availability is reflected in the modern Western preference to conflate traditions and lineages, even to dis-associating from Buddhas and Buddhism as a religion.

For most modern Dharma students, this allows us:

- to search widely as well as deeply to explore the breadth and the depth of Dharma presentation,
- to gain a capacity to study critically and finally,
- to identify whatever sources and teachers resonate with our capacities as students, so we may deepen our knowledge and practice.

We understand that truly excellent teachers may still be rare, and so we need to hone our critical skills to avoid teachers of inadequate or unwholesome skills and those with unscrupulous intent.

The Red Maple Sangha:

- encourages all its members and associates to investigate Dharma teaching broadly and thoroughly before making any decision to identify with any school or sect;
- encourages all its members and associates to critically evaluate prospective teachers before making a serious commitment to them; and

- accepts the possibility that deep and satisfying Dharma capacities may be possible without any relationship with a Teacher, tradition or lineage.

The Red Maple Sangha itself was originally established as a community of practice, unaffiliated with any specific sect or school of Dharma and unaffiliated with any living or past Dharma teacher. After several years of functioning in this manner, the RM Sangha discovered a harmony between the intentions and views of RMS and those of the international Tendai Buddhism in North America.

We recognize that our present practice context includes a range of needs, from first investigations and practice, to a more mature and guiding relationship with a teacher. We accept that teachers within many Dharma traditions may still have crucial information, teaching and inspiration for us on our path and we benefit from remaining open to them, through study and discussion. All those who practice within any RMS regular practice events are free to identify themselves however they choose. We will not require any identification with any Buddhist tradition or teacher, nor with Buddhism itself. We support individual autonomy and decision to find appropriate teaching and support. At the same time, we welcome anyone who chooses to explore Tendai and we will facilitate their growth however we can.

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May all beings realize Buddhahood !