



Three Wheels NEWS



London Shogyoji Trust

April 2009

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London Shogyoji Trust

In 1994 the Trustees of the Religious Corporation Shogyoji (RCS) made the decision to establish a branch of the Temple in London and selected Rev. Taira Sato to lead the new venture. They then proceeded to buy 55 Carbery Avenue to house the new Shin Buddhist Centre and have continued to be the principal supporter of activities at Three Wheels.

However it was realised at an early stage that there are significant financial advantages in being recognised by the UK authorities as a religious foundation and as a Charitable Trust, for example rebates on Council Taxes and recovery of taxes paid on donations from UK taxpayers. A draft of the Trust Deed forming the London Shogyoji Trust (LST) had been signed in July 1997 and the final document was approved by the Charity Commission in July 1999.

The Trustees responsible for overseeing the charitable activities of Three Wheels recently held their 20th meeting, almost exactly 10 years after the first meeting on 10 October 1998. It seems appropriate to explain here some of the activities of the London Shogyoji Trust. More historical details of the various projects carried out are available on the Three Wheels website.

The following are the names of those who have served as Trustees of the London Shogyoji Trust.

Resident in Japan

Venerable Chimyo Takehara (Chairman)
Mr Reitaro Oga
Mr Masayoshi Sakimura
Mr Izumi Ida

Resident in the UK

Rev. Professor Kemmyo Taira Sato (Permanent Deputy Chairman)
Professor John White (Hon. Secretary)
Mr Frederick Adkins
Dr Stephen Montgomery
Mrs Ann Montgomery
Mrs Kaori Punwani (appointed October 2003)
Professor Hideake Nagase (appointed May 2005)
Mrs Etsuko Crellin (appointed May 2007)
Mr John Read (resigned October 2005)

An important aspect of the relationship between the British Trustees of the London Shogyoji Trust (LST) and the Trustees representing The Religious Corporation Shogyoji (RCS) is that Japanese Trustees have managed to attend over 40 percent of the meetings in London while Rev. Sato and Professor John White normally visit Fukuoka once a year allowing personal exchanges

of views between the two groups of Trustees.

In recognition of his pivotal role in maintaining Three Wheels as a vibrant centre of Buddhist practices and studies in the UK Rev. Professor Sato was appointed in 2007 as Permanent Deputy Chairman of the Trust. This allows him to sign legal documents on behalf of the Trust after due consultation.

A requirement of the Trust is that formal accounts should be submitted annually to the Charities Commission and that the accounts be inspected by an Independent Examiner. Mrs Hiroko Sato has had the demanding task of acting as Treasurer to the Trust and has kept track of all the financial transactions associated with the work of the Trust. Using her records our formal accounts have been prepared for us by Mr Adrian Woolley and Mr Mustafa Dadoo of Blinkhorns and they have also submitted documents on our behalf to the Inland Revenue under the Gift Aid scheme which has meant that Three Wheels has received a refund each year from them of between £4000 and £8000. We are extremely grateful to them all for their diligence and understanding in carrying out these critical activities.

In the early days of Three Wheels Rev. Sato was helped in his religious duties by the presence at Three Wheels of Venerable Keimei Takehara and also Rev. Eshin Shinohara. By the start of 2004 both had had to return to Japan. In 2005 when Rev. Sato was having some health problems, an appeal was made to local supporters, on behalf of the Trustees, to give more practical assistance to Three Wheels. This led to several more volunteers coming forward to assist Rev. Sato and Hiroko in carrying out the wide range of activities that are now carried out at Three Wheels. More important still was the arrival early in 2006 of Rev. Kenshin Ishii from Shogyoji Temple, followed by his family in August 2006, who set about immersing himself in the life of Three Wheels while at the same time improving his aptitude at both spoken and written English. His success is seen in the way in which the Three Wheels website has developed over the past year. In October 2007 he was formally appointed Deputy Director of Three Wheels.

A number of major construction projects with which the Trustees have been concerned involved considerable sums of money in addition to many hours of labour by supporters of Three Wheels. It started with the establishment of the Buddha Shrine, the refurbishment of the house and the addition of the porch at the rear and the construction of the Zen Garden with its viewing platform. In 1997, a large semi-detached house, together with its garden, at No. 43 Carbery Avenue, was bought to form Tenrin Taya, a second Taya House for Three Wheels, both for the long-term occupants and as short-term accommodation for

the constant stream of visitors, mainly from Japan, who come to London every year. Last year saw the establishment of the Stupa at Brookwood Cemetery, funded principally from a bequest made by Venerable Zenko Croysdale. Finally in April 2007, the identical, next-door, detached house and garden at 57 Carbery Avenue was acquired to re-house Tenrin Taya and to facilitate a

closer approach to the Buddhist concept of the Taya.

Details of all these activities can be found in the History section of the Three Wheels website www.threewheels.co.uk

Dr. Stephen Montgomery

Hoonko Otorikoshi 2008

The Hoonko Otorikoshi was held at Three Wheels this year on 5th October 2008. Reverend Sato led us through the Otorikoshi service. After the service, Reverend Sato commented that this service in particular was a manifestation of the Buddha's great compassion. The service is special because we are showing our gratitude to Shinran Shonin. The service was also a gift from Shogyoji Temple with so many people from the temple sent here for the service. Reverend Sato then gave a brief introduction about our speaker, Mr. Kensuke Hatae. Mr. Hatae studied economics and after graduation worked at Shiseido Cosmetics. Upon retirement Mr. Hatae and his wife, Yoshiko, moved back to Shogyoji Temple. He is also an old friend of Reverend Sato. Mr. Hatae is the first lay speaker, who is not a Buddhist scholar, to give a talk at Three Wheels.

Mr. Hatae gave his talk, titled "*Social conditions in Today's Japan and the Activities of Shogyoji - Family Buddhism or the Power of Faith Illuminating One Small Corner*" in Japanese whilst his wife translated into English for us. Mr. Hatae first examined the breakdown of the Japanese social structure and how this has affected all levels of relationships within society. People suffer the illnesses of isolation, such as drug abuse, self-harm, and refusal to leave the house, as society fails to cover and protect the lonely individual.

Mr. Hatae then discussed the activities of Shogyoji Temple in this social context. Historically, temples served as the social nexus of people's relationships, offering advice, mediation in interpersonal conflicts, and education to their followers. Shogyoji Temple has attempted to revive these traditional roles in a modern context. Mr. Hatae spoke of the revival of the "Temple School", where "children of the neighbourhood come together to study for about two hours every day." There is also a temple course for adults that is open to all local people free of charge. Outside lectures discuss local history and culture or the teachings of Confucius. There is also a religious discourse given by one of the Shogyoji priests on the subject of Buddhism. Mr. Hatae's talk then turned to another of Shogyoji's activities - *Shokai* (retreat) and the final dwelling place or "*Taya House*." Daigyoin-sama, the former head priest of Shogyoji, said, "*Taya* is where priest and layman alike illuminate one another and acquire faith." Shogyoji Temple, through the work of Ekai-sama, revived this notion of shared living space for all those with the common quest for the Truth. Mr. Hatae explained that "When we come to see that the Taya house is the last dwelling place for us, our feelings of gratitude flow out continuously in our everyday life, and this joy of living imparts itself quite naturally to our neighbours."

The fourth point of Mr. Hatae's talk was a discussion of "*Wasanko*" or family Dharma meetings. These are Dharma meetings, generally at private family homes, that are held throughout the year with almost one hundred being held on a regular (monthly) basis. Mr. Hatae explained that the "*Wasanko* is the foundation of family Buddhist activity, the purpose behind

it being to revitalise the family unit, our basis as human beings." As parents and children go through the *Wasanko* service over and over, each family member begins to feel accepted and opens up about their own feelings. Various worries, such as poor family communication, troubles at work, apprehension about a new school or studies, as well as problems not properly dealt with and allowed to fester over the years, come to the fore. Mr. Hatae noted, "Nine times out of ten the fundamental problem is that family members never have a heart-to-heart talk with one another...[many of the problems between parents and children are] due to a long-standing lack of communication and mutual understanding." He further stated, "Unless you know your own self, it is difficult to associate fruitfully with others; yet self-awareness is as hard to acquire now as it ever was." The foundation of all trusting human relationships starts with the relationship between parent and child. Through *Wasanko* meetings, parents and children learn about themselves and attain true encounters within all relationships. As Mr. Hatae explained, "A new world opens itself to us in which we are able to respect one another from the bottom of our hearts."

After Mr. Hatae ended his talk, Andy gave some of his impressions of it, explaining how he felt this talk will give the members of Three Wheels much to think about. Lastly, he introduced Doug McLean, his wife Masayo and their daughter Daisy. They are Americans living in Ireland for the next year and visited Three Wheels today



Mr. Kensuke Hatae and his wife Yoshiko

specially to join in the Hoonko service. Andy met them for the first time last year at a Shin Buddhist temple in Seattle. Doug thanked Three Wheels for their welcome and said how much he was impressed by the spirituality he saw at such a young temple.

Reverend Sato then introduced the other visitors from Shogyoji Temple. Introduced first were Mr. and Mrs. Ishii, Reverend Kenshin Ishii's parents. Mr. Ishii reflected on the many problems and anxieties in this world, what with environmental problems, energy scarcity, and water shortages. The fundamental cause of these conflicts, Mr. Ishii said, lies within ourselves. In keeping

with that understanding, Venerable Chimyo Takehara has begun a new project for the Sangha. One of the temple followers owns a nearby mountain. The Sangha is reviving this mountain, so that it can be enjoyed for generations to come, as a place to connect with nature. A group of thirty to forty people are now working on this project. Their ages range from twenty to ninety. Everyone involved is enjoying the exchange of wisdom and energy between the aged and the young.

The last visitor from Japan to be introduced was Miss Hiroko Murata. She is the sister of Sahoko, who lives in Three Wheels and goes to English school. Hiroko came to see her sister and dharma friends at Three Wheels. In reference to Mr. Hatae's talk, she noted that by living at Shogyoji, she began to understand what her parents and others wish her to be and how she must live beyond dependence on her parents. She is honoured to live in the Taya at Shogyoji and happy to see her sister living in the Taya at Three Wheels.



Miss Hiroko Murata

Rev. Sato then asked Mary Hall to give some of her impressions of Mr. Hatae's talk. She felt she could connect to the speech given her own family situation. Last year, she went to Shogyoji with her mother. Mary's mother was so moved by her experience at Shogyoji and the kindness shown her that she agreed to come to the Shokai retreat that starts on 31 October. Mary then reflected on how her own parents overcame their own difficult family situations to treat her with great love and respect. Her experiences at Shogyoji taught her how special her relationship with her parents and her sister is.

Andrew Webb then gave his impressions of the Eza. With regards to Mr. Ishii's speech, Andrew felt that the Three Wheels Sangha gets a tremendous energy from the interactions with our visitors from Shogyoji. Andrew then turned to Mr. Hatae's talk. Hearing about the Wasanko meetings was very fascinating, as we have not had encounters with that aspect of Shogyoji temple. At the heart of Shogyoji is this activity that is centred at regular people's lives. It is a wonderful thing that the temple has found ways that allow people to rediscover themselves. He felt it was very exciting to think of what we can learn from this and how we can bring this into our lives here in the UK.

Etsuko Crellin gave a short report on the Garden Open Days held over two days in May and two days in September 2008. There were a total 182 visitors with £376 raised going to the National Garden Scheme. She thanked everyone for helping and informed us that this year Three Wheels will be holding the event on 16th and 17th of May 2009 from 14:00 - 17:30.

Summing up his impressions of today's service and Dharma-meeting, Reverend Kenshin Ishii spoke about his gratitude for his parents and for Mr. Hatae's talk. The talk reminded him of why he became a priest and where he stands in the Sangha and in life. He also gave a brief update about the Three Wheels website. There are now several pages in Japanese as well as a newsflashes page which is updated regularly. He also noted that Dave Zimmerman had created a 3-D animation of the Zen Garden, which was available on the website via a link.,

Mary Hall

Editor's note: The text of Mr Kensuke Hatae's talk can found on the Three Wheels website <http://www.threewheels.co.uk>. Please navigate to the activities section from the main menu and select London Eza. If you would like to volunteer for this year Garden Opening event on 16th and 17th May 2009 please contact Three Wheels.

2nd Shokai Retreat

Shokai - A Shin Buddhist Retreat at Three Wheels

Our second *Shokai* at Three Wheels was held between 31st October 2008 and 2nd November 2008. The retreat began with a short welcome service lead by Reverend Kemmyo Sato in which he introduced us to its theme, namely 'the True Teaching of the Pure Land'. This, and future retreats, will be based around the structure of Shinran Shonin's most important work the *Kyogyoshinsho* (Teaching, Practice, Faith and Realisation) which sets out the religious philosophy of Shin Buddhism. In this retreat we started with the subject of the first volume of the *Kyogyoshinsho* which is 'Kyo' or 'Teaching' focusing specifically on "how we receive the Pure Land Teaching" the essence of which is conveyed in the encounters described in the Larger Sutra of Eternal Life between Shakyamuni Buddha and his disciple Ananda, and that of Dharmakara Bodhisattva (Amida Buddha) and his master Lokeshvaraja Buddha. These two encounters would respectively be the subjects of talks given by Reverend Kemmyo Sato and Mr Andy Barrit. In his welcome message Reverend Sato expressed his hope that all of the participants at this year's *Shokai* could experience the "true meaning of encounter in which individual awakening is inseparable from our mutual relationships with each other".

At the first meeting, which was held after a delicious vegetarian evening meal - a traditional American dish prepared with ingredients brought by Mary's mother Nina, we each gave a short self-introduction. It was especially wonderful to hear and reflect on how everyone had been contributing to the life of Three Wheels in their own unique ways and the friendships which have naturally developed between so many of us. Following on from his talk given at the last *Shokai* on Shrine Room Etiquette and an introduction to chanting the Shoshinge, Reverend Kenshin Ishii asked us to try and think how our daily service of chanting sutras is related to the theme of this retreat. Looking at the intimate connection between our attitude towards the Buddha and the way in which we should chant sutras, Reverend Ishii pointed out that "Even if your chanting is good it is pointless unless accompanied by a mind of respect towards the Buddha". Before we began an in depth practice of chanting the Shoshinge in the formal Chudoku style we use at the London Ezas and other important services, Reverend Ishii invited us to try and share Shinran's joy and gratitude for the teaching 'kyo' of Amida Buddha". We were grateful to be able to use, some of us for the first time, the newly published Three Wheels Service Book

which contains a romanised transliteration of the traditional Sino-Japanese chanting used in the services at Three Wheels.

The next day at the morning service Reverend Sato spoke with deep emotion on his feelings about this weekend's *Shokai* after hearing everyone joining together during the service in pronouncing the Nembutsu. Referring to the Letter of Rennyo Shonin he had earlier read in the service, the Eighth Letter of Fascicle Five, in which Rennyo Shonin wrote that Amida Buddha became Namu Amida Butsu after fulfilling his Vows to save all sentient beings without exception, Reverend Sato expressed to us that the "very nembutsu you recite is Amida Buddha himself".

After breakfast Reverend Sato gave his Dharma talk on 'The Encounter between Ananda and Shakyamuni Buddha'. This meeting was chaired by Andy who kept the inspiring dialogue on people's impressions of Reverend Sato's talk flowing. At the beginning of his talk Reverend Sato set out Shinran Shonin's unique fourfold doctrinal classification of Buddhist teachings which Shinran Shonin used to show that the Larger Sutra of Eternal Life is the true teaching. Although this theoretical explanation given by Shinran Shonin of the ultimacy of the teaching of the Larger Sutra is difficult to understand, Reverend Sato skillfully used it to introduce how Shinran Shonin on encountering his master Honen Shonin, "instantaneously attained the faith of entrusting himself absolutely to the Original Vow of Amida Buddha" and gave expression to this faith in the volume of Teaching (*kyo*) of the *Kyogyoshinsho*. It was fascinating to note in Reverend Sato's talk that having been Shakyamuni Buddha's disciple for about twenty-five years, Ananda only realised the true nature of his master's Buddhahood during this encounter when he saw the Buddha's face shining radiantly with light. It was then Ananda could see for the first time Shakyamuni Buddha's fundamental reality or Dharma-kaya. Previously to that Ananda could only see the Buddha's physical form or Rupa-kaya. Reverend Sato related this to the self-centred way in which we normally view others. Only being conscious of our own personal concerns and attachments we fail to see others as they really are - their fundamental reality or Dharma-Kaya. In this regard, Reverend Sato remembered how his master Ekai-sama used to admonish people saying: "You only see rupa-kaya, you are not awakened to Dharma-kaya at all". In conclusion Reverend Sato reminded us of the simple fact that it was through an encounter between two people, Ananda and Sakyamuni Buddha, that Amida's Original Vow was revealed in this world for the liberation of all beings.

After an early lunch together we set off to Brookwood Cemetery and the Stupa of Namu-Amida-Butsu which was erected there last year by friends of Three Wheels. Due to the appalling weather conditions we could not spend as much time there as we planned but despite this we were able to hold services before the Stupa, the memorial to the four Japanese students buried there and the grave of Professor Williamson. At the shelter which Three Wheels are kindly allowed the use of by the Serbian Orthodox Church, Andrew Webb gave a short talk on the history of the Stupa of Namu-Amida-Butsu. After an earlier than scheduled return to Three Wheels Andy and Andrew lead an informal meeting to read and discuss Reverend Sato's English translation of the *Shoshinge*. Despite its impromptu nature it went fairly successfully and we have plans to possibly hold a

similar meeting at the next *Shokai* retreat if time allows. The last formal event of the day was a short evening service followed by meditation. Such was the feeling of peace and serenity after such a long and eventful day, that Mrs Hazel Waghorn later remarked that she felt the circle we formed to sit in meditation around the Shrine was completed by the image Amida Buddha who she felt was sitting together in meditation with us. On the final morning of the retreat there was a noticeably different atmosphere, as if everyone was feeling a deep sense of personal introspection born of the wonderful encounters we had shared over the previous two days. Today's talk was given by Andy on the encounter between Dharmakara Bodhisattva and Lokeshvaraja Buddha. Andy's talk was more than a reading of a paper but a guided meditation that invited the listener to participate fully in it. The heart of this experience was the section of his talk in which we each read in turn a verse from the *Tanbutsuge*, in which Dharmakara Bodhisattva praises his master Lokeshvaraja Buddha and declares his own aspiration to attain Buddhahood and save all suffering sentient beings. It was a very emotional experience to hear these verses, which Andy described as probably the most moving in the whole Buddhist Canon, through the voices



In front of the Stupa of Namu Amida Butsu

of those present that morning. Through this reading I could appreciate Andy's description of the *Tanbutsuge* as a song of praise by Dharmakara through which we become acutely aware of "the vast gulf" between Dharmakara's pure practice and our limited, imperfect practice and abilities. It is these two forms of awareness, which as they develop in our daily lives "lead us eventually to the point of surrender" in which we entrust ourselves absolutely to Amida Buddha in the instantaneous awakening of faith.

The final meeting of the 2nd *Shokai* was the closing service which was followed by a message of thanks given by Mary-Patrica Hall on behalf of the participants. Foremost in Mary's message of thanks was her gratitude, giving voice to the gratitude we all felt, towards the efforts of all those who had worked tirelessly behind the scenes to make the retreat possible, providing all the meals and accommodation with selfless dedication, and to the enormous work put in by Reverend Sato, Mrs Hiroko Sato, Reverend Ishii and Mrs Sanae Ishii.

Andrew Webb

Form is Emptiness and Emptiness is Form

An Introduction to the Video: *A Zen Life – D. T. Suzuki*

Editor's Note: This talk by Reverend Kemmyo Sato was given at the 83rd London Eza on 14th December 2008, as an introduction to the video 'A Zen Life – D.T. Suzuki' in which Rev. Sato appeared as a contributor. If you are interested in purchasing a copy of the DVD, Three Wheels has a limited number of copies for sale.

Thank you very much all of you for braving the British weather to attend what will be the last London Eza of 2008. At today's meeting we have a video for you to enjoy, entitled *A Zen Life – D.T. Suzuki*, followed by our end of year party.

First of all, however, I would like to seize this opportunity to thank every one of you for all the generous help and support, of both a practical and spiritual nature, extended to us at Three Wheels ever since this centre was first established fourteen years ago, and especially to thank you for your help over these last twelve months.

As regards the video we are about to watch, I should mention that from 1964 to 1966 I myself was a student of D. T. Suzuki and studied Buddhism, or the truth of life, with him at Kamakura in Japan.

Having spent three very happy years living with the great man at the end of his life, I learned to appreciate at first hand what a truly marvellous person he was and how vital his role was in the future of Buddhism and its international development. I am extremely grateful, therefore, to be able to give this brief introduction to the video, *A Zen Life - D. T. Suzuki*.

D. T. Suzuki was a Zen man of the world, totally free of all forms of discrimination, whether to do with race, nationality, sex or cultural background, a man full of love and compassion for those around him, a man filled throughout his life with a deep sense of inner peace.

During a Zen training session (*sesshin*) in December 1896, at the age of 26, D. T. Suzuki underwent the satori experience (*kensho*) whilst under the tutelage of his master, Venerable Shaku Soen. Immediately after this experience, he was sent by his master to the United States where he worked for the next twelve years with Dr Paul Carus, chief editor of the Open Court Publishing Company at La Salle, a beautiful little town near Chicago. This, of course, meant that while in the process of digesting the great experience of satori, D. T. Suzuki was in fact living his life in an international environment, encountering many people from various spiritual backgrounds. As I see it, these two experiences, the attainment of satori and D.T. Suzuki's subsequent life in the United States, helped him develop into a true Zen man of the world.

The reason why I came to live with Daisetz T. Suzuki for his last three years was because my own master, Dharma-mother Ekai, had advised me to go to him at a point when I was desperately trying to work out whether I should become a priest or a scholar. At our very first meeting Daisetz Sensei said to me, "all you need to do here is simply become *Namu-Amida-Butsu* itself." To me, a Shin Buddhist, this sounded like a Zen koan. On the 28th May 1966, about six weeks before his death, however, he invited me to attend a talk he was giving at Tokeiji Temple.



D.T. Suzuki

About an hour into his speech D.T. Suzuki suddenly began saying, "I'm not a politician or an economist, I'm not a scholar, thinker, religionist..." On and on he went, rejecting every possible position for himself in society until I began wondering where then it was he did see himself standing. Just as I did so, however, I felt as if I were being addressed directly by a voice from beyond: that I was the one being questioned, "You ask whether you should become a priest or a scholar, but all you are looking for is the support of some outward form, isn't it?" How right he was. Some sort of status or position in society to bolster me up was exactly what I had been looking for. All at once I saw that D.T. Suzuki stood on nothingness or emptiness. In that instant, realising there was nothing within myself I could ultimately depend on, I took refuge in the Buddha and from the innermost depths of my heart "*Namu-Amida-Butsu*" issued forth in a ceaseless flow. Finally it became clear to me what D.T. Suzuki had meant when he said, "All you need to do here is simply become *Namu-Amida-Butsu* itself."

The next morning I made my way to the Matsugaoka Library as usual but I could barely contain my joy as I went to express my thanks to D.T. Suzuki. I found him sitting in a low chair next to a *hibachi* (Japanese charcoal brazier) on which stood an iron kettle. Raking the ashes with a little tool, he listened quietly to what I had to say and then asked, his eyes on my face, "So, what are you going to do?" to which I immediately replied, "Become a scholar!" I could see his eyes glisten with tears behind his glasses as he encouraged me with the words, "well, you are now on your way." A month later Sensei made his final journey to the Pure Land. Being ignorant and foolish, I never quite amounted to the scholar I had set out to be. But D.T. Suzuki had shown me that when one stands on formlessness one can take any form one wishes. I saw in a deeper dimension that 'Form is Emptiness' evolves into 'Emptiness is Form.' With hindsight I

can see that all this played out at a time when D. T. Suzuki was very much aware of the spiritual conflict I was going through. He was the sort of person who looked upon the people around him, just as they were, with a gaze overflowing with love and compassion. It was my great good fortune to have been one of those people. He was truly a man of peaceful awareness and the only war he recognised was the one he himself fought against his own attachments and blind passions. This was the D. T. Suzuki I knew, so you can imagine the astonishment I felt on reading the polemic *Zen at War* by Brian Victoria. The image presented there of D. T. Suzuki co-operating with the then government in its war-effort was at a total variance with all I knew and revered

in the man. After a long period of reflection and research into the problem, I wrote an essay last year in Japanese, entitled *A Re-examination of D. T. Suzuki's Wartime Stance in Light of 'Zen at War'*. With the invaluable help of my friend, Venerable Thomas Kirchner, I have now revised and translated this article into English. I very much hope some of you may have the time and inclination to read this revised English version, entitled *D. T. Suzuki and the Question of War*. I am waiting for a number of off-prints of the English version from the office of *The Eastern Buddhist* and hope to make copies available to you should you be interested.

Kemmyo Taira Sato

My Path to Meditation at Three Wheels

Editor's Note: This article was written by a long time regular participant in the meditation group which sits every Monday at Three Wheels between 19:30 - 20:30.

Meditation is a very important part of my life. By meditating, I have been able to develop a sense of stability in uncertain times. It was not an easy practice to begin, but now that I know what it has done for me, I cannot imagine a life without it.

I started meditating six years ago in the Soto Zen tradition. When I moved to England from America over three years ago, I found that my life was changing at a pace that was increasingly hard to manage. As soon as I could, I began to search for a place to meditate. I found the Three Wheels website and thought that the place looked interesting.

The first time that I sat at Three Wheels was my introduction to Shin Buddhism. I found the chanting service that begins each session to be quite calming. The meditation was much needed. Afterwards, we had a chat around the kitchen table, where I learned about Three Wheels and what is being done there. I have been going regularly ever since. Meditation is a funny thing. To simply do nothing and be present in the moment can be very difficult, which is why meditation is important. With practice, I've become more aware of the space between thoughts. Sitting in a room without distraction allows me to direct my attention inwards. Through observing my mind, I've learned to recognise the patterns of thought that motivate me on many levels of consciousness. To have a place to do this is very special indeed.



The Meditation class

Three Wheels has given us an opportunity to meditate on Monday nights from 7:30 – 8:30. In doing so, a very diverse and robust Sangha has emerged. Through the devotion of the people of Three Wheels, and the support of Shogyoji Temple, people who value a deep connection with the human spirit can come together and simply be. The sangha continues to evolve as people come and go. To be a part of that experience is a true privilege.

Dave Zimmerman

Namu-Amida Butsu is Always With Us

A 'Buddha Entrance Ceremony' in our home

Editor's note:

From a letter written to the wife of the Head Priest of Shogyoji Temple in gratitude for having received from them a calligraphy scroll of the Buddha-Name (Namu Amida-butsu) inscribed by the Head Priest, and for having the 'Buddha Entrance Ceremony' held at the Punwani family's new house.

Dear Bomori-sama,

Namu-Amida-Butsu

On the 22nd of February from 11:00am, my husband and I humbly received the Buddha entrance ceremony, welcoming Reverend Kemmyo Sato, Reverend Kenshin Ishii and Mrs Hiroko Sato

into our new house in Marlow. I would like to express, once again, the deepest gratitude for receiving the Buddha-Name, Venerable Takehara's calligraphy especially written for my family with his and your tremendous love, which I have no way to fully understand.

For the first time, my house was filled with dynamic chanting

led by two priests. Thank you so much for allowing us to receive such a Buddha Entrance Ceremony embraced and full of warmth, love and thought only for my family.



The Punwani family after the ceremony

Having being guided by people at Three Wheels, on how to enshrine the Buddha-Name we prepared for the day, never enough but the best we could. We placed the Buddha-Name, with utmost respect, in a rectangular picture frame with a birch wood rim. A candle stand and flower vase were kindly given to us by Three Wheels. All the tools that we received were Reverend Sato's private belongings that he and Mrs Sato had been using for their own personal Buddha shrine since they had married. I was moved to tears when I came to know about this. After the burning of incense during the ceremony, Rev Sato gave a short talk about the history of ourselves since the time we began living at 43 Carbery Avenue. My husband and I were then asked to make a comment. He said 'whilst we now live by ourselves away from Three Wheels today it feels like Three Wheels has

come to this house'. This made me feel as if Venerable Takehara and Bomori-san are themselves in our house constantly guarding and looking after our family in everyday life. I, the person who returns nothing but constantly receives, could do nothing but bow down as low as possible.

The day following the ceremony, I called my children to me and talked about how important it was to respect and look after the Buddha shrine every day, for example to perform service, to offer fresh rice etc. My children then started jumping up and down, shouting with joy saying, "YES". They were over the moon and suggested that we should also have daily service performed from 18:30 just like Three Wheels. Excitedly, they wanted to know who would lead the service as no monks were living with us and were eager to know which sutras we would chant etc. Having observed such an unexpected reaction from my children, I was lost for words and filled with just an innermost happiness beyond words. I then felt that in fact they were the ones who had been guiding me. I confirmed clearly that all the guidance we received in our lives at Three Wheels for the last 11 years had so naturally penetrated into my children. The children shouted for joy because they could reproduce their lives at Three Wheels in our new home by the new arrival of the Buddha-Name into our house. That was exactly how I felt, too.

I am very much aware that whether or not these irreplaceable treasures that my children have already acquired are kept alive is entirely dependent upon how I am in my everyday life. I take a step forward in my life, with care, feeling so much of joy and a sense of great responsibility to live everyday with the Buddha-Name.

With Gassho

Kaori Punwani

Shogyoji, Buddhism and Language

The 84th London Eza took place on a cold and bright afternoon on the 1st March. As is often the case with winter meetings a number of friends were unable to attend due to ill-health and their presence was much missed. However, just as the camellias in the front-garden of Three Wheels are now coming into bloom, there were also signs of spring within the samgha. As well as there being several new faces present, there were a couple of people re-visiting the dojo after time away, and amongst all those attending there was much spirited conversation.

At the heart of the meeting was Professor White's annual talk; this year regarding the failure of many translators to accurately translate the Sanskrit word 'puṇya' (Pāli: 'puñña'). He argued that the translation that has recently become normative, which is 'merit', risks implying a sense of 'deserving' which risks undercutting the message of 'doing for the doing', or non-goal oriented practice, which is at the heart of the Jōdo Shinshū teaching. Having consulted extensively with Rev. Sato and Professor Shimoda, Prof. White suggested instead the translation 'virtue', based on the relationship of 'puṇya' to another Sanskrit term 'guna'.

Prof. White also highlighted a "quite extraordinary aspect of Shinran Shonin's spirituality", namely that, despite having



Prof. John White

access only to Chinese translations which mistranslate ‘punya’, “his absolute faith in the Nembutsu should be in complete accord with that key statement in the original Sanskrit of the Smaller Sukhavati-viyuha of which, of course, he could have known nothing.” This perhaps suggests that in order to produce an accurate translation it is essential for the scholar to have spiritual insight into the matter at hand. It is therefore very important, he added, that Shogyoji seek to nurture a young generation of scholar-priests who can aid the transmission of the Dharma to the West by producing reliable modern English translations of Buddhist texts.

Following the talk Rev. Sato reported that whilst staying at Shogyoji, where Prof. White recently raised the same issues, he was invited to join a meeting of elderly ladies who were greatly enjoying discussing this problem of translating ‘punya’ and was surprised and delighted to discover their enthusiasm and interest in the matter.

Rev. Satoru Kato gave an appreciation of Prof. White’s talk and discussed the problem of translation further, particularly in relation to the way in which the Bible has been translated into Japanese and Dr. Lucien Chocron responded by noting the differences between Catholic and Calvinist interpretations of ‘faith and works’ which may be illuminating of the relationship of Jōdo Shinshū doctrine to that of the broader Buddhist tradition.

Andy B. thanked Prof. White and shared two thoughts for consideration. Firstly he argued that ‘virtue’ whilst an enormous improvement over ‘merit’ still does not capture the sense of “wholesome karmic momentum, or fruitfulness” which is contained within the notion of ‘punya’. Like the ease felt when one follows a clear path, ‘punya’ is not so much ‘something we have’ as ‘something we can enjoy’, moment to moment, through the benefit of being brought to accord with the way-things-truly-are (Dharma).

Secondly Andy said that in translation we will always be forced to choose between neologisms, which are often awkward, and existing English words, which have a lot of baggage, and that it is unavoidable. As such, as exemplified in the writings of Shinran Shonin and Dōgen Zenji, care must be complemented by courage and creativity, and we should not be afraid to challenge people through surprising and provocative translations.

After the meeting everyone enjoyed an informal meal together, and many happy and interesting conversations, bringing to a conclusion a very successful and energetic first London Eza of 2009!

Namuamidabutsu

Andy (*Kyōshin*)

Poet’s corner: Prof. John White

To be,
and at peace,
beyond thought
or hopes
or fears
that
is the Pure Land.

Editors’ Note.

For comments, criticisms, and questions concerning the Newsletter or if you want to provide material for inclusion, please contact Dr. Lucien Chocron, 31 Sherlock Court, Dorman Way, London, NW8 0RU, Tel/Fax 020 7722 1693, Email: lucienchocron@msn.com.

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The Garden under the snow!

All donations are welcome

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