



Three Wheels NEWS



The London Shogyoji Trust

June 2011

Number 19

HOONKO OTORIKOSHI

To begin the Eza meeting we watched a special video message from the Supreme Primate of Higashi Honganji, the Venerable Koken Otani, a direct descendant of Shinran Shonin. In his message His Eminence described the ceremony that marked the first chiselling of a brand new statue of Shinran Shonin which is now being carved as part of the celebrations to mark the 750th Anniversary of the Founder that will be held in 2011.



His Eminence Venerable Koken Otani during the video message

Reverend Kemmyo Sato then gave the talk he had prepared for this occasion entitled 'On Welcoming the Hoonko-Otorikoshi of this year'. After expressing his deepest gratitude to Venerable Koken Otani for sending us his special video message, Reverend Sato was able to report the very happy news that his first English language publication is currently being printed in New York and would be with us in the next few months. Reverend Sato especially thanked all the Dharma-friends who had encouraged him in this work and giving him such a great deal of help and support, both practical and spiritual in compiling the publication.

For the main subject of his talk Reverend Sato looked at the last days of Rennyo Shonin as revealed through his recent study and talks on the twelfth and thirteenth letters of Fascicle 4 of the *Letters* by Rennyo Shonin. Researching the background of the twelfth letter, entitled 'On Two Monthly Meetings', Reverend Sato discovered that until the days of Rennyo Shonin one of the monthly meetings was dedicated to the memory of Honen Shonin. On that occasion a eulogy entitled the *Chionkoshiki* ("Memorial

Tribute to the Master in realising all that He has done for us") would be read aloud before the image of Honen Shonin.



Mr Ida giving his talk

This ceremony must then have been transmitted from generation to generation of Shin Buddhist followers which reflects the fact that Shinran Shonin's disciples, both direct and indirect, were aware of how crucial and essential his encounter with Honen Shonin was for his own attainment of faith. It is very clear from the letter by Rennyo Shonin how exceedingly important this encounter between Honen Shonin and Rennyo Shonin was.

Andy then introduced Mr and Mrs Ida, two Dharma-friends from Shogyoji Temple who have been tirelessly offering their help and support to Three Wheels for many years now and have annually been joining our Hoonko Otorikoshi. Mr Ida then gave a talk of thanks on his latest



The plaque at Brookwood Cemetery

visit to Three Wheels and to Brookwood Cemetery for the unveiling ceremony of the plaque for the Stupa of Namu-Amida-Butsu.

Reflecting on the unveiling ceremony, Mr Ida said that although the plaque may be small in size, what it signifies is something immensely great. The reason behind this is

that in order for this plaque to be made all the Dharma-friends of Three Wheels joined together to raise donations for its construction. They achieved their “objective wonderfully” and now the “plaque deserves a great place as an expression of the enthusiasm and sincerity of the Dharma-friends of Three Wheels”.

Andrew Webb

THE 97th LONDON EZA

The 97th London Eza was held on a gloriously sunny bank holiday weekend. Despite it falling over Easter, there was a good turnout of Dharma friends of Three Wheels ensuring that the Eza was a success. We are very grateful to all those who gave their time to attend, it was a joy to see them and share in Dharma together.

Andrew Webb began by welcoming everyone, drawing attention to the fact that this was the first Eza since Reverend Sato had returned from Japan. As the previous Eza was the first one ever conducted in his absence, this served to remind everyone of how we had missed him and how, through his selfless commitment to Three Wheels he remains the vital, beating heart of the Samgha. Andrew then introduced his talk.

Reverend Sato was kind enough to share his experiences



The Service of the Buddha

of *Chomon* [an individual session of Introspection held at Shogyoji Temple] with us and I know I speak for all those in attendance when I say how deeply moved we were to hear such an expression of sincerity. To highlight how strict his *Chomon* was, Reverend Sato reminded us that even the priests during introspection disrobe and become once again lay followers. Despite Professor White being at Shogyoji during this time, he kindly allowed Reverend Sato the private space he needed to look into himself. Recalling this kindness, Reverend Sato was moved to tears and all those present were once again reminded of the deep and profound ties between these two individuals and indeed, how much Professor White has done in tending to the health of this Samgha.

Reverend Sato went on to recount DT Suzuki’s reflections on his own first awakening and the profound effect it had during his later years when he looked back on it. Hearing this mirrored Reverend Sato’s own recent experience, through *Chomon*, of returning to and re-encountering his first awakening to the Vow of Amida.

Andrew then introduced Rochelle Sherwood, who for her Masters Degree had written a paper on the influence of Buddhist (specifically Zen) concepts of Emptiness and Space on Art. Her dissertation contained photos and a description of the garden here at Three Wheels and she thanked Reverend Sato and Professor White for their help and allowing her to interview them.

Jon Brown

THE SIXTH SHOKAI RETREAT ‘Encounter and Compassion’

The Sixth Shokai Retreat, with a subject of *Encounter and Compassion in the Tannisho*, opened with a short service at 6.30pm on 22nd October. Ms Sanjee C. then offered a very moving and heartfelt ‘Vow of Sincere Practice’ on behalf of all the participants and, having thanked Sanjee, Reverend Sato responded by delivering a brief welcome talk introducing the main themes of the retreat. The meeting concluded with the nineteen participants introducing themselves to one another.

The main activity on the first night of the retreat was an *otsutome* lesson in which we practised various things including chanting of the *Shoshinge* and first six *Sanjo*

Wasan. The relatively high standard of chanting at the morning service the next day suggested that it had served as a useful refresher.

The Saturday Dharma talk was given by myself and Mr Andrew W. on the theme of *Encounter and Faith Transmission in Jodo Shinshu*. Due to the subject matter we had decided to try an experiment and present the talk as a kind of dialogue. Although initially somewhat daunting this approach turned out to be very successful as it helped to create a dynamic in which Reverend Sato and the retreat participants were able to join in the discussion very naturally. We will certainly try this way of presenting

our talks again in the future. The talk itself was primarily based on Chapter 2 of the *Tannisho* and structured around the four types of encounter found in that passage, (1) encounter with one's self, (2) encounter with a true teacher, (3) encounter with Amida Buddha's Original Vow and (4) encounter with Dharma friends and fellow seekers.

After lunch the retreat participants did work practice (*sagyō*) in the form of cleaning and maintenance in the gardens of the three taya houses. These activities were gently but skilfully co-ordinated by Mr Chris D. which helped to ensure that the work was completed within the limited time available.

After a short rest period Shokai continued with a *Zadankai* session in which people divided into three groups to discuss various topics and challenges. This was the first time that such a session, modelled on those held during Spring and Winter Training at Shogyoji, had been included in Shokai.

On Sunday morning Mr Jon B. gave a talk entitled *The Mind of Great Unconditional Love* in which he spoke of the difficulties of trying to integrate the experiences he had during his introspection session (*chomon*) into his daily life. Whilst contending with these issues Jon approached Reverend Sato for advice and Sensei told him, "You know, Jon, when you visit [Shogyoji] all you see is a seemingly calm surface but underneath there are real people with real problems, stress, worries, hopes and fears and there is Goinge-sama [the Head Priest of Shogyoji Temple], listening to all of their concerns, helping them and accepting them just as they are." Hearing this Jon was initially very dissatisfied as he felt that is of course Goinge-sama's proper role as Head Priest, and he couldn't understand how this related to "the problems faced at large in society". In continuing to listen to Sensei and Dharma

friends, however, and also in reading *Tannisho* chapter 4, Jon came to realise that "in looking for a definite form or manner in which compassion may take place, [we miss] that such compassion arises naturally from the well-spring of nembutsu. Goinge-sama's acceptance of people just as they are comes from this very place of pure faith."

Shokai drew to a close with a short service and meeting held just before mid-day on the Sunday. Mr Dave Z. then gave a talk of thanks before the Buddha-shrine, on behalf of all those present, and picked up a theme from the Saturday Dharma talk which was the 'invisible and the visible'. In this vein he thanked all those who had contributed to the retreat both openly or behind the scenes, and especially the ladies who worked in the kitchen to prepare all the excellent meals enjoyed by the retreat participants; Mrs Ueda, Mrs Mako W., Mrs Kaori P. and Mrs Hiroko Sato.

Andy B.



The Participants of the Sixth Shokai Retreat

IMPRESSIONS ON THE SIXTH SHOKAI RETREAT

Editor's Note: This is a letter sent by Jon Brown to express his gratitude to Rev. Kemmyo Sato and his wife Hiroko for the 6th Shokai Retreat which he participated in.

Dear Kemmyo-sensei and Hiroko-san,

I'm writing to thank you both for all the time and hard work you put in to making this sixth Shokai possible. This time round wasn't easy for me and due to the compassion of my dear Dharma-family I was able to face several problems in the light of Amida's embrace. Sensei, I am so grateful to you for listening patiently and non-judgementally to my fears and worries, encouraging me to move forward.

It was wonderful to hear Andy and Andrew share their talk in the form of an open dialogue. I feel that the whole *Samgha* benefited from the fruits of their friendship together and that these benefits have a great influence in the life of Three Wheels on a day-to-day basis. I feel privileged and extremely fortunate to share in them.

Listening to their words and your opening address, I realised that my approach to the Shokai this time had been drastically wrong - prior to its commencement I had given little consideration to any of the problems

I was being called to face by the Tathagata. Indeed, I had wished to shun them, merely looking towards Shokai as a chance to enjoy the friendship and pleasure in coming together to share the Dharma. Of course there is nothing wrong in looking forward to encounter, but I had wished to ignore the deeper undercurrents - the acknowledgment and confession of my karmic nature - which unfolds in the midst of being accepted just as I am.

Thank you also for giving me the precious opportunity to reflect on the role of compassion and in doing so, return to its very source (which so often I shamefully look to neglect) - the Nembutsu. As I have said, I really felt being asked to give the talk was solely for my benefit.

Hearing people's kind words of encouragement and appreciation afterwards made me aware of two things - firstly, how I would so often use such a precious opportunity to foster my own inflated sense of self-importance and secondly, the responsibility one bears towards others in sharing the faith-experience with them. In both cases I feel the only way to move forward is with a heart of entrusting and I feel indebted to you both in providing me with the embodiment of such pure faith, Namandabu.

It was a great pleasure to meet Mr and Mrs Ueda and have them bring across the spirit of Shogyoji, to share and participate in the retreat. Their presence served as a reminder to me of all the support we receive from our Dharma brothers and sisters across the pond and of the universality of Shinran's teachings, transcending all borders and nationalities.

Finally, I must thank you Hiroko-san for your words of honest guidance and compassion on the last day. You're like a second mother to me and you have the uncanny (and sometimes un-nerving!!) ability to read what's in my heart and find the words to help me read what lies in it too.

Please pass on my deepest thanks to Goinge-sama and Bomori-sama for their on-going love and support for us here.

Namadabu

Jon

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Garden Open Day

Three Wheels welcomed 73 visitors to our Zen garden on the 14th and 15th of May. This is now our 5th year to open the garden to the general public as part of the National Garden Scheme (NGS). Additionally, we were honoured to receive a request from the Japanese Garden Society to visit us as a part of their tour and welcomed a total of 39 of their members to our garden. Once again our two Tea officiators and helpers conducted traditional Japanese tea ceremonies throughout the afternoon which was greatly appreciated. We cannot thank enough all of the volunteers for their help and support which made this event such a success.

The next Garden Open days are 18th and 19th June from 14:00 to 17:30.



The Tea Ceremony

Kaori Punwani

Student Retreat

I am pleased to report the establishment of a monthly Student's Meeting for our ten years old and over Children's Meeting graduates. The Student's Meeting program includes a 3 times a year Junior Retreat. During the retreat the students stay over one night at the temple and participate in temple activities such as the morning and evening services and sessions of cooking and cleaning. They also have some open discussions with teachers. The aims of the meetings and retreats are to help make students feel at home with life at the temple and to build strong relationships with its residents, as well as developing their own friendships with one another.



The Students' Retreat

Flower Festival



The participants of the Flower Festival

On the 17th of April, we held a Flower Festival to celebrate the birth of Shakyamuni Buddha.

Thank you to all the mums of Student/Children's Meeting participants for making such a beautiful flower shrine and all their generous contributions towards the party held after the service.

Please contact Three Wheels for further details about the Student and Children's Meetings.

Our email is: threewheels@threewheels.co.uk

Kaori Punwani

NEWS EVENTS

'Great Castle Rajagriha'

Reverend Sato has begun a new series of talks on the Shin Buddhist work 'Great Castle Rajagriha' by the Venerable Daigyoin. The first of these meetings was held on 10th April 2011 in which Reverend Sato gave a wonderfully clear and insightful translation and spoken commentary on the Venerable Daigyoin's introduction to his composition.

The text is a key part of the teachings imparted to the Shogyoji Temple Samgha in Japan and used during personal retreats or 'Introspection Sessions' at the temple in order to help participants awaken to a deeper understanding both of the Buddha-Dharma and their

own selves. This is the first time it has been rendered into English so that non-Japanese speaking Dharma-friends can also appreciate this most important text.

The next dates are 24th July, 4th September and 6th November 2011

Reverend Sato has now also started a new program of Pure Land Buddhism classes at the Buddhist Society exploring the Parental Love Sutra using his new translation of the text. Classes will be held on 28th August, 18th September and 18th December 2011.

Thatched Roof Appeal

In the near future we will have to replace the thatch on the roof of the Zen Garden viewing shelter. This is a major expense in the region of £25 – 30,000. So far we have already raised approximately one third of the estimated total.

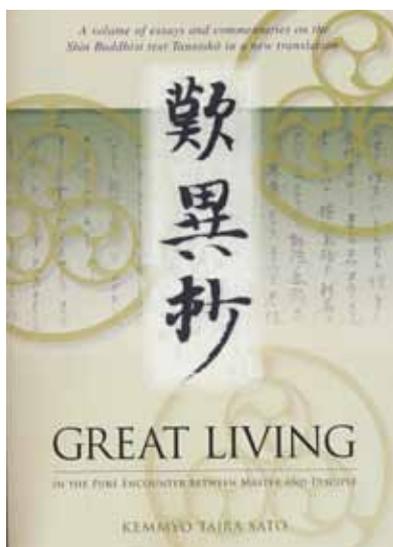
We would like to make readers of this newsletter aware that any help would be gratefully received in raising the rest of the total. Our email is:

threewheels@threewheels.co.uk



Present condition of the thatched roof

GREAT LIVING - K. T. Sato



We are very pleased to announce that Reverend Kemmyo Taira Sato's new book 'Great Living – In the Pure Encounter between Master and Disciple' has just been published by the American Buddhist Study Centre Press, New York. This new publication is a volume of essays and commentaries on the Shin Buddhist text *Tannisho* in a new translation. The book has been revised and adapted from the series of talks K. T. Sato gave on the Tannisho at the Buddhist Society and is one of the most detailed examinations of the text which, has been published in English. The publication of this book is the culmination of several years of careful revision by K. T. Sato of his ground breaking translation of the *Tannisho* and has been eagerly awaited.

Copies to purchase in hard and soft cover are available from Three Wheels.

Meditation class

Every Monday we have a Meditation class at Three Wheels from 7:30 to 8:30 pm

Please call Reverend Sato at Three Wheels or email him at threewheels@threewheels.co.uk

BUDDHIST TEACHING: 'BOMBU'

The term *bombu* literally means 'ordinary beings' still remaining ignorant or unenlightened in contrast to the awakened or enlightened such as Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. In Shin Buddhist religious philosophy we remain *bombu* until we attain birth in the Pure Land. Awakening to the fact we are *bombu* is a crucial part of the Shin Buddhist faith-experience or religious awakening, as it occurs simultaneously with our awakening to the unconditional love and compassion of Amida Buddha, who saves all beings without any discrimination whatsoever. Thus, it is through entrusting ourselves to this Original Vow of Amida Buddha that we, *bombu*, attain birth in the Pure Land and then Enlightenment.

A Letter of Thanks to Venerable Chimyo Takehara

Editor's Note: This is a letter from Jon Brown to Venerable Takehara the Head Priest of Shogyoji Temple. Jon has recently begun living at the Tenrin Taya house at Three Wheels along with Matthew Albiges and we are very happy to welcome them both to the temple community.

Dear Venerable Takehara,

I am writing firstly to let you know that I have been offered and have accepted a teaching position in Hakata for AEON Language School. I am uncertain of my precise address regarding accommodation but will find out nearer the time. I do know however, that I have to land in Japan on the 2nd of September, which is when my work visa will be valid from. I am very excited and surprised to be so close to Shogyoji and of course will keep all of you up to date with any further news or developments.

I also need to tell you about the wonderful re-encounter I had recently with my *Chomon* [Introspection Session] experience. As you know, when Andy suggested to me that I might want to consider moving into the *Tenrin Taya*, my reaction was one of fear. The truth is, I preferred keeping a distance between myself and Three Wheels. I am sad to say that I had constructed a wall between what I saw as my daily life and the Dharma. If I ever felt the world had been cruel or vicious towards me, then I would run to the teachings of Shakyamuni and Shinran Shonin for refuge. But other than during these times, I was quite content to leave the Dharma untouched.

What's more – I was afraid that living with Reverend Sato and Hiroko-san, all my faults and shortcomings would be exposed. With nowhere left to hide them, I was afraid that my relationship with my teacher and Dharma friends would suffer irreparable damage.

All of these concerns and fears I must confess, I had been doing my best to hide from and ignore since moving into the *Taya*. But then, quite unexpectedly, something wonderful happened. During meditation this Monday just passed, Reverend Sato began to give a brief talk about the importance of re-encountering one's first awakening of faith. I had heard him give this talk previously, but at that time my heart felt like hard, impenetrable stone and the words he spoke past straight through me as my mind was closed to them. However, hearing him speak them again, I suddenly realised - "Ah! He is saying this for me alone! He is telling me – Jon, please remember the pure embrace you felt during *Chomon*, it has not left you and has always been there. Turn toward and face it!"

The following morning during Service, I expressed everything that had lay in my heart and confessed that I had lacked entrusting. I had entirely taken my moving into *Taya* for granted and paid it no respect. I expressed my sorrow to my Dharma friends in front of the Buddha and made the firm resolution to walk forward in the light of the Buddha's vow.

I wish to extend that apology to yourself and indeed, everyone at Shogyoji as I realise I am indebted to you all for my being here, living in *Taya*. I look forward to seeing you all when I come across in September, sharing in the Dharma together.

In Dharma,

Jon

POET'S CORNER : John White

One hand
clapping

a soundless
sound,

a sudden

sharp

truth,

the thunderclap

of interdependent
origination.

Koan

COMING EVENTS

June

- Garden Open Days 14:00 - 17:30, on Saturday 18th and Sunday 19th June
- 98th London Eza, Sunday 26th June, 13:00 - 15:00

July

- *Daisetz-ki* Tuesday, 12th July, 10:15 - 12:00
- *Great Castle Rajagriha* Meeting, Sunday, 24th July, 13:00 - 15:00

August

- *Bon Ceremony Memorial Service*, Sunday, 14th August, 10:00 - 15:00
- 99th London Eza (Annual Ceremony to Pray for Peace and Reconciliation), Saturday 20th August, 13:00-15:00
- *Sutra of Parental Love*, Meeting Sunday 28th August, 13:00 - 15:00

September

- *Great Castle Rajagriha*, Meeting Sunday, 4th 13:00- 15:00
- *Sutra of Parental Love*, Meeting Sunday, 18th 13:00 - 15:00

October

- 100th London Eza, *Hoonko-Otorikoshi*, Sunday 2nd, 13:00 - 15:00
- Biannual Shokai Retreats, From Friday 21st, 18:00 to Sunday 23rd, 12:00

Every week

- Meditation class every Monday, 19:30 - 20:30

Monthly

- **Japanese Dharma-talk meeting** Held once a month at the weekend. For further details, please visit our website.
- **Children's Meeting** Held once a month at the weekend. For further details, please visit our website:
<http://www.threewheels.co.uk/>

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: lucienuk03@gmail.com

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All donations are welcome

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