

Three Wheels NEWS

London Shogyoji Trust

October 2001

Number 2



The Inauguration of Two Small Shrines

On the 18th February, 2001, on the occasion of the 36th London Eza, two small shrines in honour of Daigyoin-sama and Ekai-sama, on the one hand, and of D. T. Suzuki on the other, were inaugurated at a ceremony conducted by the Reverend Kemmyo Taira Sato, the immaculate calligraphic inscriptions



Left side



Right side

in both cases coming from the brush of the Venerable Chimyo Takehara.

The shrines, made out of British walnut, were designed by the young sculptor Naoki Eri and, as in the case of the Buddha Shrine itself, their superb craftsmanship is owed to James Winby, who was likewise able to be present at the ceremony.

With their beautifully matched grain patterns, they make a splendid, complementary pair on either side of the main shrine. Yet it is not a matter of a simple symmetry. Each has its own distinctive character, the one an elegant hexagon, the other a rectangular structure with rustic overtones.

Yet, for Three Wheels, and for Shogyoji itself, it is not their design and craftsmanship, but their significance that is all-important. They honour the lives and achievements of three great souls.

It is to Daigyoin sama that the strict continuation of Shin Buddhism at Shogyoji in the years during and after the second world war is due, and it is to Ekai sama that the interpretation of his vision, making it real and understandable to so many of the temple's followers, is owed. Indeed, it was she herself who was responsible for the transformation of Taira Sato's own life to the eternal benefit of all who visit Three Wheels.

D. T. Suzuki, whose assistant Taira was throughout his later years, was likewise a towering figure in his own special way. Though himself a Zen Buddhist, he rose above the sectarian squabbles of his day and came to study and elucidate the fundamentals of Shin Buddhism with a depth of understanding well beyond the reach of most Shin Buddhists.

It is these three lives, and the achievements in those lives, that the two small shrines commemorate and symbolize, both now and for the years to come.

(John White)



Encounter with Friends From America and Japan

The 38th London Eza

An electrical storm in the east of America delayed the start of the 38th London Eza on Sunday 24th June. A little late, but in excellent form, Three Wheels' special American guests were accompanied by the Reverend William Masuda and Professor Taitetsu Unno.

During his 'Talk of Thanks,' Prof. Sato likened the gathering to "an assembly of bodhisattvas from all ten directions."

He then gave a brief history of Three Wheels, which was established as a Shin Buddhist Centre in December 1994, and based on his master's prayer for world peace and spiritual exchange between East and West.



During the Ceremony

"Viewed from a broader perspective," he said, "Three Wheels also finds itself within the eastward movement of Shin Buddhism outwards from Japan."

Professor Sato described himself as the last disciple of D.T. Suzuki, the man who contributed so much to the development of both Zen and Shin Buddhism in the USA.

In welcoming our American Shin Buddhist friends, with their much longer history, Professor Sato emphasised the concept and importance of 'encounter'. "Encounter with oneself, and encounter with Amida Buddha are two aspects of one truth."

The Reverend William Masuda then told us how the idea of their trip to Europe grew out of the wish to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Buddhist church in America.

"Symbolically," Reverend Masuda said, "this tour is part of the flow from India to South East Asia, then to Korea and Japan." The flow continued on to America in 1885 as immigrant labourers

worked the pineapple plantations of Hawaii, and then went to the agricultural belt of California."

"Since World War II the Japanese population of America has inter-mixed, with 80% of the Japanese population out-marrying," Reverend Masuda said. "Although this has necessitated an English approach to meet inter-cultural needs," he noted, "the Japanese way of doing things has continued."

Professor Unno then gave a talk, saying he came to know Professor Sato through his son, Mark, who went to study in Japan in 1984. The two of them worked together to publish a book by D.T. Suzuki.



In his summary of the nembutsu tradition, Professor Unno invoked these words: "life is suffering." "We have to awaken to the reality that we have no control over birth, illness, old age and death," he said.

"By 'awakening' to this reality, we come to understand changing nature. If we don't do that, then there is suffering." He emphasised the starting point of Buddhism as being descriptive, not prescriptive.

Professor Unno concluded his talk by saying that the Buddhist life is a creative act. "We don't have answers to everything, but we respond appropriately with awareness of ourselves sustained by Buddha's compassion."



Kofukuji-san then read a poem in Japanese, followed by a short speech by Fukuoka-san, both of which were translated by Professor Sato. A number of other visitors also made contributions, including a Buddhist priest, David Brazier, and Professor John White.

The English Buddhist priest, David Brazier said, he "particularly liked the exhortation to the audience to 'wake up' and to 'be creative together.'"

John White, the designer of Three Wheels' stone garden, gave a welcome from the British members of Three Wheels and introduced his new book of poetry 'The Breath in the Flute.'

(Vivienne DuBourdieu)



Reconciliation Ceremony and Memorial Service at Three Wheels

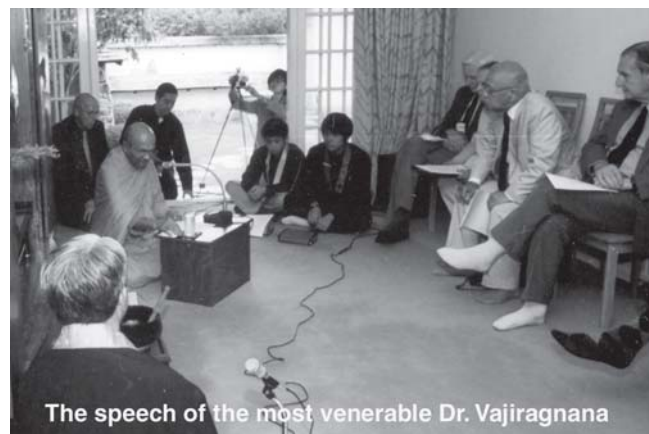
In the peace and harmony of Three Wheel, the Ceremony of Praying for World Peace and Reconciliation and the Memorial Services for those who died in Burma during the Second World War were held on the 26th of August. The ceremony has been



held at Three Wheels for several years, but this year it was marked by the presence of the Most Venerable Dr. Medagara Vajiragnana, Head Monk of the London Buddhist Vihara. During the ceremony Sutras were sung to thank the soldiers who give



their lives during the war. The veterans were offering incense to honour their memories and after the ceremony of chanting Gathas, the traditional shaking of hands took place. In their speech, they renewed their wishes for the new generation to



keep alive the spirit of peace and reconciliation and for the continuation of the Burma fellowship.

The Most Venerable Dr. M. Vajiragnana gave a wonderful talk on peace. He explained that quarrels, conflicts and wars are the result of three kinds of motives: selfish desire for pleasure and acquisitions; egotistical lust for power and



dominance, and clinging to opinions, faiths and ideologies. World peace can only be achieved through the progressive cultivation of loving kindness, benevolence, tolerance, patience and moral discipline. To bring peace the world leaders should realise this concept and must be able to look at the world with fellow feelings of loving kindness and compassion.

Among the audience, young people were present and the daughter of a former British soldier offered a souvenir from her father, a picture of a jacket button from the first Japanese soldier he killed and that he could never forget.

(Lucien Chocron)



Three Gagaku Performances

The Director of Three Wheels was asked by Mrs Phillida Purvis, one of the organizers of the Matsuri in Gunnersbury Park, to conduct the inaugural ceremony of the restoration of a former Japanese garden in Gunnersbury Park, a garden that



had originally been laid out by the Rothschild family in 1901.

This was one of the events of Japan 2001. Seven Gagaku musicians from Shogyoji Temple took part in the ceremony on the 8th September and Professor John White gave a very nice talk on Gagaku music and Shin Buddhism. It was a very pleasant occasion.

On the 7th September, one day before the inaugural ceremony, at the request of Venerable Chimyo Takehara, Head Priest of Shogyoji Temple in Japan, the Gagaku musicians visited Brookwood cemetery and played a piece of Gagaku music as an offering to the four Japanese students who had died in this country around the beginning of the Meiji Period.

The seven musicians played their beautiful melody at Brookwood cemetery, their feet firmly planted on the ground, standing in a semi-circle in front of the graves of the four

students, the Gagaku music seeming to seep into the silent earth and echo into the other world.

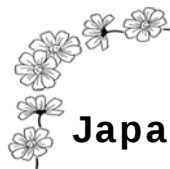
Professor White gave a short talk: "Everyone's life is equally precious for themselves, not only for those who became famous in Japan, succeeding in their lives, but also for those who unfortunately died in this country. Those four students gave for their country what was most important for them. It was their lives. We are now here to understand what it meant." Every



word he uttered moved the musicians to the bottom of their hearts.

On the 9th September they gave a concert of Gagaku music especially for the British friends who had been so supportive of Three Wheels. In welcoming eighty people to the concert, the musicians performed Gagaku music with sheer sincerity as an offering to the Buddha and his Pure Land. Mr Robin Thompson very kindly interpreted between the Japanese musicians and the audience.

(K. T. Sato)



Japanese Brush Painting Class

A Japanese Brush Painting Class was held at Three Wheels on 22nd May as one of the events of Japan 2001. Mr Mitsunori Takeo, a brush painting teacher from Japan, gave three classes that day, one in the morning, one in the afternoon and one in the evening. We had 30 participants.

Some of the participants expressed a desire to continue to study Japanese brush painting even if a teacher could not always be with them. So we now have a self-teaching brush painting class every month.

With some very kind long distance assistance from Mr Takeo back in Japan, this class appears quite successful at the moment.

(K. T. Sato)



Spring School 2001

The fourth Spring School was held at Three Wheels for twelve days from 20th March to 1st April. Spring School is now a popular



annual event for young people studying Buddhism at Shogyoji Temple.

A group of ten teenagers and five adult helpers, including two priests, came over to London from Japan to take part in this educational session. A number of both British and Japanese friends in U.K. also joined the event to help the staff with their work.

Based on the plan drawn up by Mrs Ann Montgomery, Professor John White, Doctor and Mrs Montgomery and the Director of Three Wheels undertook a preliminary trip to York in January. Reverend Keimei Takehara and two Japanese members of staff from Japan also travelled in advance to York to make the final arrangements for the trip.

This year's Spring School was a great success. The teenagers thoroughly enjoyed their journey to York where they visited York Minster, the Railway Museum, the old wall walk, Rievaulx Abbey and several other places of interest. They also enjoyed sightseeing and meeting friends both in York and in London. From a spiritual point of view, what was particularly impressive during the Spring School was that the young people studied a sutra known as *Bumoonjukyo* (a sutra that teaches how much parents have done for their children) and were able themselves to express their own personal gratitude to their parents.

(K. T. Sato)



Gunnersbury Park Cultural Centre

At the request of Phillida Purvis and Liam O'brien, the initiators of the project for a major Japanese Centre in Gunnersbury Park, Taira Sato and John White, who was asked to chair the formal meetings, have, during the past year, been actively involved in the planning process. Although there has been considerable progress, there is still a long way to go.

Following their external renovation and complete internal re-design, the Centre would occupy the two listed stable buildings beside the planned re-creation of the late nineteenth century Rothschild Japanese Garden. There would be a separate Kyudojo, and a Budo Hall in the south block would serve a wide range of martial arts. The north block would house a cultural centre with a similarly wide spectrum of activities, together with suitable catering and leisure facilities. As can be imagined, the bringing together of all the separate interests involved has been a complex process.

As soon as the architectural plans have been completed and the project costed, a formal request for their approval will be submitted to the Borough Councils of Hounslow and Ealing, with whom there has been close contact. Then, if all goes well, the difficult process of fund raising will begin,

The significance of such an unique Centre for the local British and Japanese schools and communities, as well as for the capital at large, can hardly be over-estimated and, as its close neighbour and nearest Buddhist organization, Three Wheels will have an important part to play.

(John White)



The Breath in the Flute

In the coming weeks, Shunjusha, a major Japanese publisher, will be bringing out in a single volume ninety two poems written by John White and selected and translated by Taira Sato.

In this joint publication, initiated and financially supported by Shogyoji as part of the celebrations of the fiftieth anniversary of the death of Daigyoin-sama, the English and Japanese versions of the poems will be printed next to each other.

The title of the book, which is being edited by Yukiko Sato, Taira's daughter, and copies of which will be available at Three Wheels, is taken from the *haiku* which John White presented to Chimyo Takehara-sama on behalf of the College on the occasion of their first meeting at UCL in 1992.

**The breath
in the flute**

**is the sound
of life stirring,**

**springtime
and sadness.**

(John White)



Three Wheels Website

As a result of the hard and skilful work of Wajun Sudo, Keimei Takehara, Naoki Eri and Akira Sato, and the efforts of its various contributors, the design of the Three Wheels Web Site, to be visited at <www.threewheels.org.uk>, should be completed before the end of the year at the latest.

The Trustees were shown the projected layout at the Fifth Meeting of the London Shogyoji Trust in May, 2001 and asked three expert members, Frederick Adkins, Stephen Montgomery, and John Read to act as an informal advisory group. As a result, a number of helpful comments were forwarded to the design team. Once the web site, which will be updated monthly, is up and running, comments, and suggestions from readers of the Newsletter will be most welcome.

(John White)



All donations are welcome

Three Wheels, 55 Carbery Avenue, London W3 9AB
Tel: 020 8248 2542, Fax: 020 8248 2578
E-mail: threewheels@threewheels.org.uk
Website: www.threewheels.org.uk

Registered Charity No. 1076610