



Three Wheels NEWS



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Praying for World Peace and International Reconciliation The 159th London Eza

On a sunny and warm afternoon on Sunday 4th September, many people gathered for the 159th London Eza, to Pray for World Peace and Reconciliation, and to remember those soldiers who took part in the Second World War. Many people came in person, and it was probably the largest gathering for an Eza since before the pandemic. There were many distinguished guests attending, including representatives from the Japanese Embassy, representatives of other Buddhist Societies, and Venerable Monks and Nuns from other Buddhist Denominations. Many people also joined online, and even before beginning, there was a very warm and friendly atmosphere.

To begin the meeting, an opening address was given by Mr Akihiro Tsuji, Political Minister of the Embassy of Japan in London. He thanked Rev. Sato for organising this special Eza, now held in person for the first time in three years since the pandemic began, and remembering how important it is to promote peace and reconciliation to the world. Mr Tsuji then spoke of not forgetting that the peace and prosperity Japan and the UK enjoy today was built on the precious lives and the suffering of the war dead, and that today's strong UK - Japan relationship is based on the efforts of the people of both countries to overcome the past and to achieve reconciliation. Mr Tsuji concluded by saying that with the troubles the world is facing today, it is so important to work together to promote world peace and prosperity.

After the opening address, the Service to the Buddha was held, and incense was offered in remembrance and gratitude to the war dead. The service incorporated a special memorial to those who had done so much for the reconciliation movement, namely Prof. John White and Prof. Ian Nish, who had passed away within the last year and Mr Maurice Franses who had been involved with Three Wheels reconciliation activities since the very beginning.

After the Service had finished Mr Andrew Webb read out a message from The Very Rev. Michael Iprgrave, Bishop of Lichfield Cathedral. He thanked Rev. Sato

for holding this important Eza and said how vital it was, particularly at this time, to seek peace and reconciliation in our world, and to remember those who have died. He expressed his appreciation to Rev. Sato and all his colleagues engaged in this noble cause. Rev. Kemmyo Taira Sato, head priest of Three Wheels gave a talk entitled *Let's Pray for World Peace and Harmony in*



Mr Akihiro Tsuji giving his opening address

Diversity. Rev. Sato began by telling us that this year's ceremony was to remember, among many others, Prof. John White, a war veteran who had poured an enormous amount of spiritual energy into the establishment of Three Wheels and its reconciliation movements, and for Prof. Ian Nish, who made an invaluable contribution to the reconciliation movement of the BCFG (Burma Campaign Friendship Group). He also reminded us that it was the 13th memorial service for Mr Maurice Franses, another war veteran who had worked tirelessly for the BCFG ever since the organisation was first established. Rev. Sato then said that the world is currently facing countless tragic conflicts, including the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the oppression of the people of Myanmar.

Adding to this Rev. Sato said that each individual's attainment of inner peace is the foundation stone of

their sincere prayer for world peace. In the realisation of genuine love through the attainment of inner peace, loving oneself and loving others do not contradict one another. In Mahayana Buddhism, the bodhisattva's ideal is to benefit oneself and others simultaneously. There is no contradiction in this because the true self is "no self" or "selflessness". In this true Oneness they are neither one nor two.

Rev. Sato went on to say that at the request of his dearest friend, the late Prof. John White, he is currently translating the letters of Shinran Shonin, and read out two letters which show the vital importance of attaining inner peace. To conclude his talk Rev. Sato asked that, together, we all pray for those suffering extreme poverty and adversity and entrust ourselves absolutely to Amida Buddha.

Following Rev. Sato's talk, Mrs Phillida Purvis of the International Friendship and Reconciliation Trust, paid tribute to Prof. Ian Nish, who had recently passed away at the age of 96. Prof. Nish, who was a pre-eminent scholar of Japanese history and British-Japanese relations, was in many ways instrumental in helping to bring about peace, friendship and exchange between Japan and Britain. Being a historian he also believed that the dark years and actions that occurred should not be overlooked or forgotten, but that lessons should be learnt, and to move on in friendship, making sure such things never happened again. Prof. Nish had said "It is the steps taken towards reconciliation which are important".

Speaking next was Dr Desmond Biddulph, President of The Buddhist Society, who had just returned from being on retreat to immediately attend the meeting. He talked about Buddhism being a peaceful religion, but that due to the three poisons of Greed, Anger and Ignorance it was not always so easy to be peaceful people. He said that repentance for our bad actions, words and thoughts was very important, but again that that was also not

always easy for us to do. He finally again paid tribute to Prof. John White who was such a splendid human being. Mr Richard Pe Win, Representative of The Myanmar Buddhist Society, then talked about the very sad current situation in Myanmar. Despite this, he said that even war and oppression were impermanent and would eventually change into better times. He also spoke of the importance of continual mindfulness of the actions of our own body, speech and mind.

Mr Sam K then said that the meeting had made him think more about impermanence, and how impressed he was that the war veterans had been able to overcome their blind passions and be able to reconcile with their former enemies. Mr Andy then talked about a Buddhist man from the Ukraine who had become caught up in the current conflict. He had asked his teacher for advice and was told that he should do whatever he has to, but to try not to get caught up in the blind passions, and not to see the "enemy" as any different from himself.

Afterwards, the Venerable Dr Sumana Siri, a Monk originally from Singapore, spoke about the importance of the transformation of good thoughts into good actions, and to understand how to bring this about. He said sometimes large organisations with noble aims failed to make any real progress in certain situations. He finished with a quote from Mahatma Gandhi. "Remember your Humanity, forget the rest".

The whole Eza really reinforced how important working towards World Peace and Reconciliation is, and that the whole meeting, held in an atmosphere of gentleness and friendship, showed us how it must be possible.

Chris Dodd

**"The more I'm aware of my ignorance, the more I feel the light of Amida."
The 30th Shokai Retreat**

At the opening ceremony of the retreat Mr Pedro S, a Dharma-friend originally from Brazil who has been attending Three Wheels for one year, gave the traditional Vow of Sincere Practice on behalf of all the participants. Thinking about his arrival in London and meeting with Three Wheels and its Sangha, he remembered a quote from the Rev. Ricardo Mário Gonçalves:

"I have always [experienced] Buddhism as the 'hit the road' religion, the journey religion. [But] as time passes, we discover that more than an

external journey, there is an internal journey (the 'inner trip') during which you search for yourself."

Pedro said, "this external and internal trip is much better when we have good friends by our side. Let us vow never to take the Sangha for granted, never to think of ourselves as an island, never to forget the truth of interdependence." This Vow had a big impact on Dharma-friends, one of whom expressed repentance for taking the Sangha for granted and treating it as a 'right' rather than a gift.

As usual, prior to Shokai we held a number of online Zadan meetings in order to start to reflect on the retreat theme, which this time was Shinjin (Faith).

Mr Andrew W spoke of how when he entered the precincts of Shogyoji temple recently, being greeted by Dharma-friends, it naturally “lifted the hard burden of suffering” he had been carrying within himself. This reminded him of “how, in the past, Prof. John White had travelled to Shogyoji literally at the very risk of his life ... [with a] pure will to establish and maintain this unbroken continuity of spiritual exchange with Shogyoji to the very end of his life.” Also reflecting on Dharma-friends who have passed away in recent times, Mr Andy B spoke about the process of grieving about Ms Mika Aoki’s death, and how Rev. Ishii helped him notice the problem of his attachment. Andy said, “I was focusing on the illusory contents of my own blind passions. Once Rev. Ishii helped me see my attachment, the dark void of Mikasan’s absence suddenly appeared as a bright fullness.” He added that this experience reminded him of Rev. Sato’s words about the death of his master D. T. Suzuki:

“Through this event of the great change called ‘Death’, the working of eternity that Sensei embodied was clearly demonstrated in the midst of our everyday life, that very working that arises of itself and gathers in and purifies all that comes into contact with it.”

Mr Christopher D described an automatic revolving door at his office that turns by itself when you enter it but sticks closed if you try to touch or push against it. The difference between being able to go through the door or not depends on knowing how it works and trusting in it. “I feel I am often pushing too hard on the door that leads to Shinjin with my own self-power”, he said, “and if I could just let go and really entrust myself, it might open itself. But still, I push the door.”

Ms Tina S also shared a very clear metaphor, saying, “When gardening I noticed a caterpillar. A caterpillar when going into their cocoon has [absolute] faith. I acknowledge that sometimes the caterpillar may be eaten or may not survive, but they still go into the cocoon with certainty that they will come out and when they do eventually come out then they are a magnificent butterfly. The lesson that we should take from the caterpillar to butterfly example is that we should have faith in what we do.”

Unfortunately, there is not enough space to quote all of the Dharma-friends here. However, to conclude this summary of the Zadan impressions, Sam quoted Rev. Sato, who

was in the same pre-Shokai group as him, as saying:

“Taking refuge in the ‘invisible other’ means ‘beyond my consciousness’, beyond thought. In that momentary instant of taking refuge, the mind is pure. If you think faith is something you can grasp, it is not. It is something you experience, a gift of Amida. Our every moment of living is important to become aware of our actual reality, our blind passions.”

On Saturday we received a wonderful Dharma talk from Rev. Kenshin Ishii entitled, ‘Awakening to Faith’ in which he covered various topics such as: the meaning of Hoonko Otorikoshi, how to become free from our blind passions, ‘spiritual birth’, interdependent origination, and solving our karmic problems in daily life. It is impossible to summarise his talk here but two parts that really impressed Dharma-friends were his comments:

“The reason [people] do not feel that they need help by Amida is that they are not aware of the cause of their sufferings. [They] feel that their sufferings are caused by others and circumstances. Let us remind ourselves that the fundamental purpose of listening to the Dharma is to become free from the restrictions of our blind passions, the cause of all sufferings.” “What D.T. Suzuki and Rev. Kemmyo Sato teach is the importance of awakening to the reality of life. To have such awakening, we ordinary people need someone who can open our eyes. If I am respectful and careful towards others, we will awaken to the fact that they are entirely beyond our consciousness. Such an encounter gives us an enormous effect and awakes us from our self-centred delusion to the wonderful reality of life. This is the moment of true encounter or attaining Other Power faith.”

Rev. Ishii also clearly clarified the meaning of ‘retrogression’, which has been a topic on Dharma-friends minds during our study of Rev. Sato’s translation of Shinran Shonin’s letters. Rev. Ishii and Rev. Sato told us that while there is no retrogression within Amida’s given-mind of awakening, which is received in the one-thought moment of faith-entrusting, nonetheless we are still afflicted by the waves of anger and greed up to the end of our lives. However, Rev. Ishii reassured us, saying:

“When we awaken to this sad fact and accept it as our karma under the light of Amida and repent for it, we re-feel the warmth of Amida’s embracement

here and now. For me, what Other-power faith means is to become able to say sincerely, humbly and respectfully “I am sorry”, “Thank you” and “Yes, please”, right now through awakening to myself and Amida’s love and compassion without any reservation and excuse. The sincerity, humility and respect are all gifts given by Amida.”

Thanking Rev. Ishii for his talk on behalf of the Sangha, Mr Andy B said that we often hear the teaching of “Thank you and Sorry” in our community but the addition of the word “Yes, please” by Rev. Ishii makes clear the connection of repentance to the ‘Great Living’ (*daigyo*) of Nenbutsu. As Rev. Sato says, “The devotee’s way of living after attaining faith is a manifestation of Amida Buddha, the Buddha of Eternal Life, through his own individual life... the pronouncing of the Nenbutsu as an expression of gratitude to Amida Buddha.”

On Saturday evening, the Sangha had a chanting lesson led by Rev. Ishii in which we practiced chanting the *Kada* verse that would be used at the *Hoonko Otorokoshi* (Memorial for Shinran Shonin) ceremony the following day. Through this practice we learnt more about the meaning of ‘harmonising with Dharma-friends’, ‘not leaving others behind’, and also ‘expressing gratitude with our whole-being’. At the final Zadan meeting of the retreat on Sunday morning, Mr Christopher D summarised several important points which he had digested during our shared time of introspection, saying:

“Chris said something seemingly very simple but that gave me real pause for thought. He said “faith is connected with selflessness”. For me this was perfectly complemented by a D. T. Suzuki quote that Sam spoke about, “Instead of Amida getting in our life or our being, our being is carried away by Amida.” I believe this was expanded on yet further when Kei said “The more I’m aware of my ignorance, the

more I feel the light of Amida.” Mr Andrew W added that he had been very impressed by a line from Rev. Ishii’s talk, “It is always said in Shogyoji that we should not be satisfied today with the previous attainment of faith.” He said that without routinely listening to the Dharma he would not be able to become aware of the gap that can appear between himself and the truth, or of his attachments and blind passions. Echoing Andrew’s words, Mr Sam K offered gratitude on behalf of all the Dharma-friends, saying:

“I would like to express deep gratitude to Ven. Chimyo Takehara and all Japanese Dharma friends for their wonderful support of the Three Wheels Temple and our 30th Shokai retreat. Also, to Rev. Sato, Rev. Ishii and Mrs Sanae Ishii for their teaching and support on this wonderful spiritual journey... I am so grateful for the opportunity to be able to attend this Shokai and take some more steps on the Pure Land path with Dharma-friends.”

Andy B



The participants of the 30th Shokai Retreat

“Live the Nenbutsu of gratitude quietly and with love” The 160th London Eza

The 160th London Eza and 2022 Hoonko Otorikoshi service took place on Sunday 23rd October 2022 and a number of young guests and newcomers brought a lively, bright energy to the proceedings. Also joining the meeting were the participants of the preceding Shokai retreat, who, together with all the participants, joyfully expressed their gratitude to Shinran Shonin, founder of our tradition, through their chanting of the Hoonko liturgy.

After the Hoonko service, Mr Andrew Webb invited Rev. Kemmyo Taira Sato, Director of Three Wheels, to give a talk entitled ‘*On the Nenbutsu of Gratitude*’. Andrew said that during his translation work Rev. Sato found many mistakes in older English editions of Shinran Shonin’s letters. It is Andrew’s view that these errors are one of the reasons for the unfortunate, commonplace perception among some Western Buddhists and scholars that Rennyo Shonin taught a different Dharma to that of Shinran Shonin. Andrew said

that studying Rev. Sato's new translation clearly showed the oneness and continuity between the two masters.

At the start of his talk, Rev. Sato noted that his work to translate Shinran Shonin's letters was something he was undertaking to fulfil the last request of his friend Prof. John White, late secretary and trustee of Three Wheels, London Shogyoji Trust. Through his dear friend's wish, he has been able, he said, to "renew on a far deeper level my understanding of several important features of Shin Buddhist teaching." Of these features, the present talk would focus on the 'Nenbutsu of gratitude'.

Firstly Rev. Sato pointed out that the phrase 'most humbly and respectfully' (*anakashiko ankashiko*) which is so familiar from Rennyō Shonin's Letters (*Ofumi*), which we read daily, originates in Shinran Shonin's own letters. "Rennyō Shonin, a most loyal admirer of Shinran Shonin, simply copied his predecessor's usage of this modest phrase."

Rev. Sato went on to explain that, "the Nenbutsu of gratitude flows forth from the extreme joy of attaining the true faith of entrusting oneself to Amida Buddha". However, he added that it is important to "notice the key distinction between the Nenbutsu, pronounced at the moment of attaining faith decisively, and the Nenbutsu to be said after the attainment of Faith." The former refers to the 'one-thought moment' of attaining true faith, and the latter to our expression of gratitude for this awakening.



Rev. Sato giving his talk "On the Nenbutsu of Gratitude".

As Rennyō Shonin said, "[the Nenbutsu pronounced after the attainment of faith] should be understood solely as a grateful response to the Buddha for what he has done for us." Shinran Shonin's letters also highlight the fact that even this latter Nenbutsu which "we pronounce with gratitude after the awakening of faith and throughout our lives is also [solely] the working of Other Power."

Rev. Sato also made the important point that because

Shin Buddhism is based on Other-power, the notion of 'gratitude' in our tradition "does not embrace any sense of moral obligation or responsibility, rather its essence lies in the experience of awakening and the love that springs quite naturally from that experience."

Next Rev. Sato further explained that the Nenbutsu of awakening and the Nenbutsu of gratitude, both based upon Amida Buddha's Other-power, correspond to the 'self-benefiting and other-benefiting' dimensions of Amida's Original Vow. It is this universal vow and prayer that Shinran Shonin expresses in his letters 3, 9, 10, 13 and 16, such as; "[we] ought to say the Nenbutsu with the utmost sincerity, especially to save [slanderers of the Nenbutsu]", and "those who are absolutely sure of their birth and are mindful of what has been done for them by the Buddha, should say the Nenbutsu with heartfelt gratitude and in the spirit of 'may there be peace in the world and may the Buddha-dharma spread widely'".

In conclusion, Rev. Sato said, "the Nenbutsu of gratitude for what has been done for us is not simply an expression of our own personal gratitude but also an expression of our deepest prayer for the universal deliverance of all sentient beings. This prayer comes to us as a gift from Amida Tathagata when we respond to his original Vow, in other words, to the dynamic working of all fundamental truth, "Oneness of All Individual Beings Just as They Are." Following Rev. Sato's talk there was time for a discussion and a communal meal. During the discussion,

Mr Christopher D said that he was so impressed by Shinran Shonin saying that we should pray for those who slander the Nenbutsu that it left him speechless. Mr Sam Kelly echoed this feeling, noting that the period in which Shinran Shonin was writing was even more troubled than ours, and especially for Nenbutsu followers, but even in such circumstances Shinran Shonin still said to pray for the slanderers. Sam said this clearly showed the truth of the "Profound prayer for universal salvation without discrimination."

Mr Chris Dodd highlighted Sensei's phrase, "Oneness of All Individual Beings Just as They Are". He said it is so wonderful to find ourselves already embraced by the Buddha in this world of oneness of self and other, which is not 'our own world' but a gift.

Gary, a follower of Honen Shonin, said that he was still struggling to understand Shinran Shonin's teaching.

Rev. Sato said in reply that many Shin Buddhists think Shin Buddhism is different from Honen Shonin's teaching but that isn't right. Shinran Shonin quoted Honen Shonin even at the end of his life, always returning faithfully to his master. Sensei said that Honen Shonin was converted to

Other-power Nenbutsu through reading Master Shandao, but when we read the latter's teaching which Honen Shonin received, we can see that it perfectly accords with Amida's Vow of entrusting faith. Rev. Sato added, "Honen had many disciples, some who understood him better than others, please be careful about which you listen to."

Mr Andy B asked a question about how we should share our joy of faith with others. Rev. Ishii said, "Whenever we think 'I heard', 'I know', we already have a bad tendency to newcomers. If we intend to teach, we are already in darkness. The initial impulse to share our joy comes from the Buddha, so we just need to express our gratitude not as words to others but towards the Buddha. We need to just listen to the dharma and express our gratitude and repentance. That listening to the dharma naturally helps others."

Rev. Sato concluded the discussion by telling us, "Nenbutsu of gratitude refers to the rest of our life after attainment of

faith. Gratitude means humble and respectful. No pride, no attachment. Live the Nenbutsu of gratitude with your friends and families, quietly and with love, doing for the doing."

Finally, a number of visitors and newcomers introduced themselves. Pearl, said that she had been coming to the temple for one month. She first heard about Shin Buddhism from her family who live in Kyoto and said that it "really resonates" with her. Kazuki a great-grandson of an old friend of Rev. Sato, was also visiting. He is priest and graduate of Otani university who is in the UK on a working holiday. James, a Royal Holloway student, also introduced himself. He is the son of Mr Simon Martin who helped make the Three Wheels Zen garden many years ago. James said, "I am studying ethics but I realised I don't have a foundation for that, so I wanted to look into it. Today's talk gave me a good foundation".

Remembering John

The 1st Memorial Meeting for the Late Prof. John White

On Sunday 6th November 2022, Three Wheels held the first Memorial meeting to celebrate and commemorate the Late Prof. John White who passed away exactly one year before. This very special and moving meeting called, 'Remembering John', brought together old friends of John with members of the Three Wheels and Shogyoji Temple Sanghas. It was an extraordinarily fitting tribute to Prof. John White that this meeting could bring about such a special encounter between us all. It was surely a true embodiment of the spirit of 'Harmony with Diversity' that Prof. White had taught and practiced with us for nearly thirty years.

Several days before Shogyoji Temple held a formal memorial service for Prof. White and today Rev. Kenshin Ishii led a service in the Buddha-room in which the participants could burn incense and remember with deepest gratitude everything that Prof. White had done for us over so many years. Following the service, we listened to a reading in English and Japanese of the very first talk which Prof. White gave at Shogyoji Temple in 1993.

This remarkable talk was composed after Prof. White's very first encounter with Ven. Chimyo Takehara, the Head Priest of Shogyoji and contained Prof. White's personal expression of his very profound awakening to the truth of life. He would continue to explore and deepen this awakening during the series of talks he gave every year up until his death. Rev. Kemmyo Sato later described this encounter between Prof. White and Ven. Takehara as an "epoch-making event". Always looking towards the future, Prof. White stated in this talk his life-long aim of bringing about true encounter between individuals in



The late Prof John White

order to transform and enrich both self and others saying,

"Whether in individual men and women, in nations or cultures, it is the richness of diversity which alone is the basis of a unity that is worth having - a true harmony, and all of us are united as teachers in trying to pass on the new knowledge that we have gained, and the ways in which the problems that face us might be solved."

Next various guests who had a long relationship with Prof. White were invited to share their memories of his remarkable personality and life. Dr. Stephen Montgomery first met Prof. White during the early 1980s and was full of warm memories of their friendship which spanned nearly forty years. Together they worked very hard together for the modernisation of UCL and later for the establishment

of the Three Wheels Sangha. Pausing and looking out towards the Zen Garden, Prof. White's greatest creation, Dr. Montgomery said with visible emotion that the Zen Garden itself is John. Prof. Hideaki Nagase recalled how John had first befriended him at a restaurant in South Kensington and they immediately formed a long and fruitful friendship. Their long conversations and dinners together irrevocably changed Prof. Nagase's outlook on the world.



Rev Ishii read out his letter of thanks through the smoke of incense offering

From Japan, we first heard from Mr Kenji Toda whose encounter with Prof. White sparked the chain of events which led to the creation of Three Wheels. In 1993, Mr Toda met with Prof. White and his colleagues and told them about the history of the Shogyoji Gagaku music orchestra. This deeply impressed Prof. White and led to the orchestra being invited to UCL to perform at the unveiling ceremony of a monument to the first pioneer Japanese students who arrived in London in 1863 and 1865. Mr Toda recalled Prof. White's first encounter with Ven. Takehara in which the latter asked Prof. White if he had a teacher. Prof. White replied that he had no teacher as everyone around him were his teachers.

Mr Masayuki Ogawa recalled Prof. White's strength of personality and creativity during the long and arduous work they completed together to build the Japanese Zen Garden at Three Wheels which was based on Prof. White's unique design and insight. Although they originally differed on whether the design could ever work as a Zen Garden, Mr Ogawa became so impressed by Prof. White's spirit that their mutual encounter led to the project becoming a great success. Mr Ogawa demonstrated how his memory of Prof. White continues to live within him by toasting a photograph of him that he keeps on his desk.

Rev. Kenshin Ishii read his personal letter of thanks to Prof. White sincerely expressing his gratitude for the spiritual awareness he had received from him, not only during his lifetime, but through carefully reflecting over the past year on some important teachings of Prof. White's that remained vividly in his mind. Remembering

how Prof. White always said that the Zen Garden was not a copy of an original Japanese design, as a copy can never be as good as the original, Rev. Ishii realised that:

“John did not create a copy of Shogyoji Sangha, nor did he create a new Sangha in the UK, but he expanded Shogyoji Sangha to the UK.... This very place right here, that I have been given to practice the Buddha-Dharma, is itself the Shogyoji Sangha which has been expanded through the hard work, love and compassion of Venerable and Mrs. Takehara, Rev. and Mrs. Sato and you, John.”

We were next delighted to receive a special address written by Ven. Chimyo Takehara for the occasion which began with his moving statement that he had been, “Respecting Prof. John White as a bodhisattva from the very start of our encounter”. Ven. Takehara then recalled how one of Prof. White's poems helped save a late Dharma-friend from the effects of a long-lasting suffering she experienced in her life following the Second World War which she was unable to resolve until very close to her death.

On re-reading this poem, Ven. Takehara saw how it condensed three fundamental Buddhist principles namely, the impermanence of all beings, the no-self of all beings and the tranquillity of Nirvana. This led Ven. Takehara to experience an entirely fresh new feeling of “Great Love” emanating from these teachings of the Buddha as expressed in Prof. White's poem. Ven. Takehara then expressed his absolute confidence that, “Prof. White's innumerable poems and pure verbal teachings will infinitely encourage us to go forward as the message from the Tathagata. This is why I call him Bodhisattva”.

After saying goodbye to all of the many participants from the UK and Japan who joined the meeting on Zoom, the personal recollections and tributes to Prof. John White continued over a light meal in the Buddha-room of Three Wheels. Listening to everyone's words it was apparent that each person had a unique and precious memory of Prof. White that continued to strongly illuminate them.

Thank you very much indeed for inviting me to this memorial ceremony. I was very grateful to hear of Rev. Kemmyo Sato's momentous decision to hold this meeting every year in which we can continue to listen to the talks Prof. White left us and reflect on everything he did and continues to do for us. Prof. White taught us until his very last moment that interpersonal encounter between Three Wheels and Shogyoji Temple was the most important thing we can do. I felt that this memorial meeting was a fulfillment of this fundamental wish.

Andrew Webb

A Year in Sangha The 161st London Eza

On the chilly afternoon of December 11th, about 30 people gathered – online and in person – in the Buddha room of Three Wheels for the 161st London Eza. As this is the last Eza of the year, it incorporated two aspects. The first was a short religious ceremony, while the second was a relaxed end of year party. The Eza was opened with soulful chanting of the Shoshinge and Wasan together, and a beautiful reading of Rennyō Shōnin’s Ofumi in Japanese and English by Rev. Ishii and Chris D. respectively.



Mr Andrew Webb giving his talk “My Year in Sangha”

After the service, Mr. Andrew Webb gave a talk entitled, *My Year in Sangha*. The talk was Andrew’s thoughtful and introspective reflection on his experiences in the Three Wheels and Shogyoji Sangha over the past year. Although Andrew wrote the talk to express only his own feelings and experiences, it seems as though it encapsulated the major events in the collective life of the Sangha over the past year as well as the personal experience of many in the Sangha. Running through the entirety of Andrew’s talk was a recurring point about his feeling that he often forgets the teachings that he receives in the Sangha. In expressing this, I feel Andrew was putting into words my own experience and perhaps that of others in the Sangha.

Andrew’s summary of the year began with his reflections about the precious opportunity he had to travel to Japan with his family to participate in the Summer Training Assembly at Shogyoji Temple. Andrew reflected on the circumstances over the past three years that have made travel within London, let alone intercontinental travel, difficult. These include his personal family circumstances, as well as global events like the COVID-19 crisis and the conflict in Ukraine. Andrew’s reflection helped to remind us of the impermanent and unreliable nature of this Samsaric world, and how this makes every opportunity to listen to the Dharma something precious not to be passed over lightly.

Andrew shared with us how his various apprehensions about travelling to Shogyoji could all be interpreted as manifestations of an attitude of doubt towards those around him. Although these doubts lifted for him once he arrived at Shogyoji, Andrew recounted a teaching with regard to doubt that he received from Ven. Chimyo Takehara. This teaching was “the importance in daily life of putting all these [doubting] thoughts aside and single mindedly taking refuge in Amida Buddha”. Even within Andrew’s spiritually rich talk, this teaching struck me with its profundity. In our unstable and unreliable world, our faith in Amida Buddha gives us an unshakeable foundation upon which we can really stand. Andrew told us how a small group of English speaking Dharma-friends formed at Shogyoji’s Summer Training Assembly to welcome him. He gave us the wonderful news that this group has begun translation of a textbook by the Dharma Lord, His Eminence Kōken Otani, into English at the Winter Training Assembly. It is very exciting that English speaking Dharma friends will be able to receive His Eminence’s teachings in future, and we all feel gratitude towards these Japanese Dharma friends for their efforts.

Andrew went on to summarize the major events in the collective life of the Sangha since his return from Japan, and how he experienced their spiritual import. These included the 30th Shokai retreat on the theme of Faith in Shin Buddhism, the first memorial of Prof. John White’s death and the fourth memorial of Mrs. Hiroko Sato’s death, both pioneers of the Three Wheels Sangha.

Andrew also discussed Rev. Sato’s ongoing translation of Shinran Shōnin’s letters, which lead to Andrew extemporizing on Rev. Sato’s translation of the Japanese word *hakarai*. While previous translations have rendered *hakarai* as calculation or contrivance, Rev. Sato has opted for the more neutral term “arrangement”. This expresses better the symmetry between our own deluded self-power arrangements and the Other-Power arrangement of Amida Buddha. Andrew related this to his own anxieties prior to his pilgrimage to Japan. His talk about his attempts to force the world to conform to his wishes rather than letting go and entrusting to Amida Buddha resonated deeply with me, as if it was advice from Andrew given directly to myself.

After Andrew’s talk there followed a series of comments from Dharma-friends. The atmosphere produced by their comments showed that I was not alone in resonating deeply with Andrew’s talk. Almost all the Dharma-friends who spoke expressed their desire to travel to Shogyoji Temple in the next year. Mr Andy B talked about how his own spiritual experience has always been enhanced

and elevated by his two-decade long friendship with Andrew. Mr Neil C, a Dharma friend joining online from America, expressed understanding and compassion for Andrew's difficult family situation as he himself has similar difficulties. Ms Kei S, who will visit Shogyoji Temple soon, talked about how she felt that she took her ability to visit Shogyoji Temple for granted. Mr Shinjiro Watanabe, joining online from Japan despite suffering from COVID, talked about how Andrew allowed him to reconnect with the Sangha in the UK, despite Mr Watanabe's not having been in the UK in 25 years.

After the comments in response to Andrew's talk, the religious portion of the afternoon meeting was closed with announcements from Rev. Ishii and a moving reflection from Rev. Sato who talked about how, while scholarly work was important, it must always come second to faith and that he felt that he had not been placing faith first of late.

After the close of the religious meeting, the end of year

party was held. This was particularly significant, as it is the first end of year party that Three Wheels has been able to hold in three years, since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. This included musical performances from Ms Aya (playing the cello) and Mr Chris D. (playing the guitar) of Christmas songs, as well as a performance of an Okinawan folk song with Mrs Yoko D. providing vocals. Members of the students group raised funds for the repair of Three Wheels by selling cupcakes they had previously prepared.

In conclusion, this last Eza for the year was spiritually fulfilling. I am personally thankful for the opportunity to write this report, as it allowed me to re-read Andrew's talk, and really dwell on what he had to say. His discussion of focusing on doubting all those around us when we should simply be trusting Amida, and our constant attempts to arrange everything around us when really much is out of our hands, resonated with me personally.

Max N.

Awakening to the Reality of Interdependent Origination The 162nd London Eza

On Sunday 26th February 2023 we were welcomed to Three Wheels for the 162nd London Eza. In contrast to the cold winter weather outside, the atmosphere in the Buddha-room was spiritually very warm and full of light with both new participants and old gathering to join in the opening service. The meeting following the service was chaired by Mr Andy B whose energy and enthusiasm, together with the careful planning and preparations made beforehand by Rev. Kemmyo Sato, Rev. Kenshin Ishii and Mrs Sane Ishii, helped create a truly memorable Eza.

We listened to a talk given by Rev. Kenshin Ishii entitled, Awakening to the Reality of Interdependent Origination. With deep introspection and insight into the core teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha, Rev. Ishii reflected on the meaning of awakening to the selfless truth of Interdependent Origination and its deep connection to the teachings of Shin Buddhism. During his talk, Rev. Ishii expressed his joy and gratitude at the important opportunities he was given in Sangha that allowed him to receive, "the beauty of oneness in Interdependent Origination".

Rev. Ishii took as the starting point of his talk the life of Shakyamuni Buddha and began by recounting the story of The Four Sights. This story recounts how the Buddha was awakened to the reality of sufferings in the world of transmigration and the possibility of a way to be free from them. This the Buddha finally attained through his enlightenment and taught to his disciples as The Four Noble Truths. Included within

the Four Noble Truths is the Noble Eightfold Path and its "right practices" which lead to Enlightenment, a world in which life and everything within it, was described by Shakyamuni Buddha as being, "Delightful".

Rev. Ishii then illustrated to us the meaning of the word "right" in Buddhism, a term which provides the key to understanding how the Noble Eightfold Path is related to the Nenbutsu practice in Shin Buddhism. Due to the working of our blind passions, our perspective and understanding is self-centred and not genuinely "right". This means in life that, "We believe what we see is true and real, yet it is not". For example, in the Three Wheels Zen Garden we only see the surface of the parts of the rocks which are visible to us and we are blind to their true reality. The same is true of our own minds as what is most difficult to see is ourselves. Therefore, when we encounter a personal problem in life, our self-centredness and attachment to our limited viewpoint becomes even stronger. It is only when we are illuminated by an external factor, such as the words, actions or attitude of a teacher or Dharma-friend that we can realise that our own viewpoint and understanding is partial or wrong.

Rev. Ishii returned to the example of the Three Wheels Zen Garden to look at the meaning of Interdependent Origination. This is a primary teaching of Shakyamuni Buddha that is also central to our lives as Shin Buddhists. Not only, Rev. Ishii said, does the garden contain the thousands of various physical materials from which

it was constructed, but also the great effort and love of those who worked for its creation and continue to work for its maintenance. Within that deep history the garden also embraces each of us who visit it. Therefore, to know the garden in its entirety, we also need to awaken to all the invisible things which are part of it. Rev. Ishii then shared some personal spiritual encounters in his own life and those of Dharma-friends which clearly showed that, “Interdependent Origination means a truth that everything exists by mutual help and support in harmony within diversity”. The external factor or encounter with another person which illuminates us, becomes entirely one with us because it fundamentally changes our way of thinking and behaving. Encounter is, therefore, “Awakening in gratitude to the reality of Interdependent Origination”.

Mr Andy B thanked Rev. Ishii for giving such a profound and concise talk which encompassed the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha, Shinran Shonin and those he had received from his own teachers and Dharma-friends in the temple Sangha. Andy felt that the talk reflected Rev. Ishii’s more than 15 years within Three Wheels and was an expression of everything that he had done for us during that time. Mr Christopher D was reminded of how he once felt angry that his work colleagues kept questioning the way he had completed a project but later realised they were correct, and his way of thinking was wrong. Christopher then felt annoyed and embarrassed with himself, both for making the initial mistake and also for not taking his colleague’s questions seriously. Rev. Ishii’s words that if we practice in a self-centred way it is no longer “right practice”, made Christopher realise that all of the emotions he felt at that time were driven by ego and a strong attachment to self.

Mr Sean S recalled his visit last year to Auschwitz. This was an event which opened his eyes to the most extreme human suffering, something he previously only understood indirectly from historical accounts of what happened there. Mr Stephen G who was attending the London Eza for the first time related his experience of cleaning the Zen Garden the day before. When he first looked at the Zen Garden it looked spotless and not in any need of cleaning. However, when he looked closely at the places which were initially hidden from his sight, he found lots of petals which needed to be carefully removed.

Rev. Kemmyo Sato felt that through listening to Rev. Ishii’s talk he was witnessing the birth of a Bodhisattva. The entire content of Rev. Ishii’s talk was one with his living experience of true faith, a oneness that expresses the truth of Interdependent Origination. After listening to the reading of the Ofumi at today’s service, Rev. Sato realised that the faith which had been transmitted to him, had been successfully passed on to the next generation without

any obstruction. This transmission was further confirmed through Rev. Ishii’s talk, an event in Sangha which brought to mind a pivotal encounter between Dharma-mother Ekai and Ven. Chimyo Takehara when he became her spiritual successor. At that moment Dharma-mother Ekai felt she was embraced by the parental love of the Buddha and realised her most important work had been accomplished.

We were next very happy to hear the impressions given by Miss Hitoe Ishii and Miss Aya Watanabe who are both 20 years old and long-term residents of Three Wheels. They both undertook Introspection Sessions at Shogyoji Temple last year and recounted with deep and warm emotion what they had been awakened to during this very special time. Hitoe-san’s starting point was the many questions she had in her mind about what direction she should take in life following her graduation from university. During her introspection she discovered that although her life was embraced by the boundless love of her parents, through her own doubt she kept many worries that beset her mind hidden from them. On awakening to this, Hitoe-san felt all the dark clouds in her mind suddenly disappear and she was living beneath a light filled sky.



Miss Hitoe Ishii reading her impression of her Introspection Session at Shogyoji Temple

On hearing of Hitoe-san’s experience, Aya-san was strongly motivated to undertake an Introspection Session so she could discover what was hidden in life from herself. This led her to discover the most important reason for her coming to the UK to study and live at Three Wheels, which was not to attain academic success but to pronounce the Nenbutsu together with Dharma-friends at Three Wheels. This, Aya realised, was her parents and grandparents real wish for her.

Rev. Yuichi Kuniyoshi then gave his self-introduction to the Eza. Yuichi-san is a young priest from Shogyoji Temple who has been studying English and American literature at university in Tokyo. At Shogyoji, Yuichi-san was able to hear lots of reports from Three Wheels Dharma-friends that expressed their joy and gratitude at being able to practice

Buddhism here. This gave rise to a serious question in his mind as he wondered what it was that motivated western people, who weren't brought up in Shin Buddhist families and had no previous connection to the Buddha-Dharma, to want to practice it so seriously. This led Yuichi-san to ask to come and stay for a short period at Three Wheels so that he could encounter how Buddhist faith is practiced here. Yuichi-san expressed his gratitude for the encounters he had been having at Three Wheels and all the valuable spiritual training he had been receiving from Rev. Sato and Rev. Ishii, which had changed his way of thinking.

Finally, we were very happy to welcome two new participants to the London Eza who were part of the UCL Student Buddhist Group. The previous day the Student's Group had visited Three Wheels and very much enjoyed the talks they received from Rev. Sato and Rev. Ishii about the history of Three Wheels and the Zen Garden. This made them want to come back and join in the London Eza

so they could experience a Sangha activity for themselves. This London Eza appeared as a precious jewel in the history of Three Wheels which was illuminated with the truth of Interdependent Origination through the talk given by Rev. Ishii. As this truth is impossible for me to awaken to through my own limited understanding, I saw how much I need everyone's help in Sangha to realise my ignorance and attachment. This is something hidden to myself but plainly visible to others through my actions. The impressions given by Yuichi-san, Hitoe-san and Aya-san also taught me that faith is not something to be taken for granted but requires sincere dedication to seeking the truth of life through listening to the Buddha-Dharma within the Sangha. I am deeply grateful to have been given such a special opportunity at the London Eza to receive the boundless love and compassion of Amida Buddha which shone through everyone's words and actions.

Andrew Webb

A Poem by Prof. John White

**You of pure
faith,**

I

**who am certain
of nothing**

**travel
the one
road.**

A haiku by Prof. John White from the very first talk he gave at Shogyoji Temple during his second visit there in 1993.

Editors' Note.

For comments, criticisms, and questions concerning the Newsletter or if you want to provide material for inclusion, please contact Three Wheels Temple.

Edited and created by the Three Wheels Editorial Committee.

All donations are welcome

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