



# Three Wheels NEWS



London Shogyoji Trust

April 2012

Number 21

## HOONKO OTORIKOSHI: Memorial Service for Shinran Shonin

### ‘Understanding Religious Practice’

The 100<sup>th</sup> London Eza took place on a beautiful summer day, part of a weekend which saw the highest temperatures ever recorded in October in the UK. It was fitting that a milestone such as the 100<sup>th</sup> London Eza should coincide with a record breaking weekend. To mark the occasion, Hiroko-san had produced a decorative cloth for the Buddha shrine using material donated to Three Wheels, which made the shrine look even more stunning than it usually does.



The Three Wheels Buddha Shrine

Andrew Webb chaired the meeting, thanked participants for joining us, and noted that this *Eza* corresponds with the *Hoonko Otorikoshi* (yearly memorial service for Shinran Shonin) which is our most important meeting of the year from a spiritual perspective. He commented that this year in particular was special as it coincided with the 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Shinran Shonin’s death. Andrew then invited Rev. Sato to make his presentation.

The talk was entitled ‘Shinran Shonin’s Repudiation of Pride in the Meritoriousness of Religious Practice’, and outlined ongoing discussions about the difficulties of translation and the importance of finding the right words to convey the true spirit of the teachings to an English-speaking audience. The talk looked at one important passage in particular which is necessary to understand the distinct character of Shin Buddhism. This passage is from the Smaller Amida Sutra which has attracted attention due to some apparent distortions in existing translations which could cause the reader to misunderstand Shinran’s teaching.

Rev. Sato noted that the word ‘Virtue’ is a much clearer translation of the Japanese word *kudoku* than the often used ‘Merit’ which may lead to an emphasis on future expected reward. It is clear to see how this interpretation could lead

to a sense of self-consciousness rather than ‘selflessness’ which is the essence of Buddha-Dharma according to the quoted passage from Rev. Chimyo Takehara, Head Priest of Shogyoji Temple.

Rev. Sato emphasised his gratitude to Prof. John White for his assistance – both generally, and specifically in identifying issues in English translation. He also added that to do our best is also important – not in a sense of getting a reward for ourselves – but as an expression of gratitude to the Buddha. Though we often get it wrong, we come back to the Buddha to say ‘Sorry’ and ‘Thank you’ in recognition of all that has been done for us – both by Dharma friends and teachers, and also our families and others who enable us to practice together.

A message of support was then read out from Dharma-friend Rev. Fons Martens of Jikoji Temple in Antwerp, Belgium, wishing us well, and that while sorry he could not join us, congratulated Three Wheels on reaching the landmark of 100 London *Eza* meetings.

Rev. Ishii then shared some images and videos from his time in Japan earlier in the year when he had joined the *Goenki* (750th Memorial) ceremony in Tokyo accompanying Rev. Chimyo Takehara, Head Priest of Shogyoji Temple along with other priests to the first part of the 750 year anniversary celebrations. It was a wonderful insight into the event, and



The new statue of Shinran Shonin

the projected images brought to life what a special ceremony this had been. It was also moving to see so clearly the new statue of Shinran erected in the hall. We also saw a short extract of the talented dancers from Shogyoji Temple that had performed a public dancing display. Rev. Ishii had also shared the Dharma talk by His Eminence whereby we are encouraged to take the chance during this important year to

reflect on ourselves

We also learnt of the planned trip to Shogyoji Temple that is being organised for November 2012 to join in the memorial celebrations. Andrew Webb is coordinating the arrangements, and he invited any Dharma friends who might consider joining the trip to let him know so that he can keep everyone apprised of progress.

The meeting ended in the usual manner with food and drinks having been prepared so skillfully by Hiroko-san, Sanae-san

and other helpers, and attendees chatted informally – both in the Buddha room and out in the garden enjoying the warm weather. During this time we were treated to some musical performances from the children including playing their violins. With such talented youngsters in the community, along with the spirit of positive goodwill and friendship that we experienced, Three Wheels can surely look forward to the next 100 London Eza meetings and more!

Matthew Abliges

## THREE WHEELS ACTIVITIES

### ‘Friendship, Respect and Equality’

The morning of the 101st London *Eza* began with cleaning the houses and sweeping the grounds, with the residents joined by a number of visitors who had arrived the previous day. The team worked together, enjoying the early morning fresh air and conversation as the last of the autumn leaves were swept and gathered, leaving the gardens and surrounding roads neat and tidy to welcome *Eza* guests later in the day.



Andy chairing the Eza

A *Dharma*-meeting had taken place the previous evening, in what is hoped to be the beginning of a new addition to the Three Wheels schedule. The Saturday evening meeting enabled some new *Dharma*-friends to properly introduce themselves and meet some *Samgha* members for the first time. Mr and Mrs Moylan were visiting Three Wheels with their three children for their first *Eza* weekend. Several participants shared how they had found Three Wheels warm, family orientated and open atmosphere to be a positive environment to practise Buddhism and also to enable children to join in as much as possible and to make friends themselves while also learning about Buddhism.

Andy B. chaired the *Eza* and welcomed guests to Three Wheels. As usual the December *Eza* is the final meeting of the year, and is followed by a celebration to mark all the positive developments over the past year.

Andrew Webb gave the main talk entitled ‘I have no disciples – some reflections on friendship, respect and equality in Shin Buddhism’. It built on Rev. Sato’s recent commentary on the *Tannisho* entitled Great Living in the Pure Encounter between Master and Disciple. Andrew clearly explained how the initially surprising assertion that he had no disciples

whatsoever, clearly illustrates Shinran Shonin’s ideal of spiritual friendship. Andrew also provided useful quotes from other sources including the Upaddha Sutra where the Buddha says that, ‘... it is the whole of this holy life, this friendship, companionship and association with the good.’

After the talk, Rev. Sato explained how touched he had been during his recent stay in Japan by the sight of his long standing *Dharma*-friends preparing for the visit to Toyko for the 750th anniversary celebrations. He also shared how he had attended the 700th anniversary celebrations alongside Ekai-sama (Rev. Sato’s late master), and how he felt the weight of time and how so many people had benefited from her love and guidance.

Rev. Ishii commented that the talk had reminded him of his ordination and how part of his given name means disciple of *Shakyamuni* Buddha. He also said that he had been touched by how Japanese *Dharma*-friends had made the 750th anniversary service available to us through the internet and how so many people had benefited.

The *Eza* meeting was followed by a shared meal where a number of guests had generously brought food offerings, to be enjoyed alongside food prepared at Three Wheels. A light-hearted quiz had been prepared by Rev. Ishii in the Three Wheels tradition which was undertaken during the meal to everyone’s enjoyment. A number of participants then demonstrated their musical and dancing talents, as the meeting ended marking another year of activities and positive developments at Three Wheels.

Matthew Albiges



Children playing

## ‘The Future of the Temple’ The 102<sup>nd</sup> London Eza

Prior to the meeting thirteen *Samgha* members stayed for the weekend in order to help prepare the temple and to participate in a *Zadan* (group discussion) meeting. This informal ‘Eza Eve’ retreat was organised by Mr Matthew Albiges, a resident of *Tenrin Taya* as a way to help bridge the six month gap between the more formal spring and autumn *Shokai* retreats.

The main focus of the Sunday *Eza* was a talk by Prof. John White on the subject of the future of the *Shogyoji Samgha*. This talk had been recently presented at the head temple in Fukuoka, Japan. As Mr Andrew Webb, chairing the meeting said, the talk was a challenging one but given out of concern and compassion for the future of the community.



**Prof. John White**

Prof. White discussed five main areas of concern:

- 1- The way in which successful spiritual movements tend to become increasingly embroiled in worldly or outward activities such as building programmes and finance which often leads to “laxity and luxury, and all too often corruption”
- 2- An excessive emphasis on ceremonies and memorials which potentially place enormous demands on the priesthood and on resources to the potential detriment of the day-to-day spiritual activity of the *Samgha*
- 3- The ageing of the original members of a spiritual community and the challenge of passing on the movement adequately to a younger generation
- 4- The need to keep up with positive developments in the wider culture and society, in particular with reference to giving women opportunities to take leadership roles.
- 5- To make sure that translations of key Shin Buddhist texts are accurate so that the transmission of the tradition to non-Japanese cultures does not lead to harmful misunderstandings counter to the core teachings of Shinran Shonin.

In summing up Prof. White emphasised two main criteria for the well-being of the Shogyoji Dharma movement;

a- “close attention” to the needs and education of people, especially those who are often overlooked such as women and the young,

b- “measured and controlled” change “under the aegis of wise leadership” rather than “change forced upon the community at some moment not of its choosing.

Following Prof. White’s talk there was a lively discussion period where various interesting points were raised. After the discussion Rev. Kemmyo Taira Sato thanked his dear friend Prof. White for his talk and said that he felt that he had received it as John’s will or legacy to him. He then discussed a number of other important developments as follows.

Firstly, there was a meeting at Shogyoji on 29<sup>th</sup> January to discuss the project to erect a monument for Professor Alexander Williamson and his wife Catherine. Professor Williamson was an academic and scientist who helped and supported five students from Choshu in 1863 and 19 students from Satsuma in 1865 during their stay in London. In particular when one student Kosaburo Yamazaki became terminally ill Professor Williamson and his wife Catherine invited him into their home and took care of him to the very end of his life. Moreover Professor Williamson helped to build a grave for him, the first Japanese grave in Europe.

On 29<sup>th</sup> January 25 important people such as representatives of various organizations in Satsuma, Choshu and Hizen, descendants of the students who travelled to this country 150 years ago and historians in this field gathered at Shogyoji Temple to discuss the project to erect a monument to Professor Alexander Williamson and his wife Catherine as an expression of gratitude to them for what they have done for Japanese people. It was decided to establish a monumental committee in order to build a monument with gratitude to them for what they have done for Japanese people. Rev. Sato was very impressed to hear his master Rev. Chimyo Takehara say at this meeting that, “This monument should be a place where we can encounter the unconditional love or the great compassion beyond discriminations,” and also “the monument is as important as the *Stupa of Namuamidabutsu*.”

Prof. Nagase added that he is in discussions with various interested parties to see if it will be possible to establish a scholarship or exchange program in Prof. Williamson’s name so as to carry on the scientific and cultural exchange to which he was committed.



**Rev. Washo Shinohara**

The second piece of news that Rev. Sato shared was that he and Prof. White recently spent two and half days in meetings with Professor Masahiro Shimoda in Tokyo to discuss many serious errors that can be found in English translations of major Shin Buddhist texts.

Finally to close the meeting a twenty year old student and priest Rev. Washo Shinohara introduced himself to the *Samgha*. He is currently staying at Three Wheels to help with

the forthcoming Spring School and will be returning to the UK in September to study at a British university.

As is traditional the London *Eza* was followed by a communal meal together and friends old and new mingled together happily in the *Taya* house and garden.

**Andy B.**

*Editor's Note: The full report of this Eza weekend can be found in the Activities section of [www.threewheels.co.uk](http://www.threewheels.co.uk)*

## THE 8th SHOKAI RETREAT 'Sincerity in Shin Buddhism'

### Friday 21<sup>st</sup> October

On Friday, we all met up in the kitchen, full of warmth and joy in being together again. I reminded myself, that my purpose for attending is to be more mindful in the company of others, to be a "truer person". I prepared to reflect during this *Shokai* on my own selfishness.

We attended the evening service and thanked everyone at Shogyoji Temple for their constant care and vigilance over us. Chris Dodd of "Vow of Sincere Practice" reminded us to face and not runaway from our problems. Rev. Sato's welcome message explored the difference between self power sincerity and Other Power sincerity which is given to us by Amida Buddha and the need to face our karmic resistance to allow other power to flood in above all, that sincerity is always found within our interpersonal relationships.

After dinner, we went to our respective *Zandan* (discussion) groups. In general everyone in the group wanted to experience the dharma, but was finding it difficult to do so. Rev. Ishii pointed out that "We listen to Dharma through our karma, that is the problem!". Later on the group agreed that we need to "actively listen" to others, and that without others input we cannot see ourselves. Recognising how we filter what we hear and suspending preconceived ideas about people is an important part of opening to others.

In the light of working on our motivation, Rev. Ishii asked us "What drove us, westerners to choose Buddhism?" The response came that for us the motivation came through happy encounters but mostly reading about it. Rev. Ishii pointed out to us that we didn't choose to follow Shin Buddhism but that Amida had chosen us. We are reminded that practice of the Dharma is not found in books, but in life experience. Before I retired for the night I reminded myself that today I learned that the more I try to be sincere with myself through 'self-power', the less I succeed.

### Saturday 22nd October

Our morning began with half an hour helping to clean the *Taya* houses, after which our morning service was held. The Buddha room was filled with the beautiful, powerful sounds of the chanting. We appreciated again that there are so many people, young and old present at our service. The 5th Letter of Fascicle 2 of Rennyo Shonin's Letters was read both in

Japanese and English and we were reminded by it of the impermanence of life 'ending at any instant when breathing out fails to wait upon breathing in.' The Letter reminded me deeply that the path is one of constant attention and self-awareness.

After breakfast we listened to Rev. Ishii's talk 'My Pride Illumined in the *Samgha*.' Rev. Isshii said that he was going to speak of Chapter 5 of 'Great Living' and the chapter of the *Tannisho* therein from his experience of the living teaching of his own teachers, rather than simply presenting Shinran Shonin's teachings, as he said, 'for me to understand the hearts and minds of those who had raised me in the *Samgha*.'



**Working in the garden**

For me one of the most powerful and striking things Rev. Ishii said – something which has now changed my thinking and way of life – was this : having pointed out how difficult it is to love all sentient beings equally, he showed us how helpful it is to be aware of all the love that others offer us.

He then went on to give us the meaning of 'to attain Buddhahood,' which his teacher, the Venerable Takehara, taught him was to become Amida's hands and feet – the movements and workings of Amida in the world.

Our afternoon was devoted to gardening work which provided a good natural balance to the mental concentration demanded from the talk. In the evening we enjoyed the service followed by a very peaceful and intense meditation led by Mr. Dave Z and Rev. Sato who both supported us with their inner strength.

The last activity of the day was the meeting of the *Zadan* Groups where we reflected on Rev. Ishii's talk and issues

arising from it. These groups brought us closer together and allowed us to be more open. As Andrew said to me later – ‘in that group with you was the first time I ever really met you.’ I am so grateful for that and the love of Hiroko and the other members of the group that enabled that level of encounter, which is not easy for me.

### **Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> October**

After the morning work practice (*Sagyō*) we attended the morning service. Reverend Sato discussed the meaning of “selflessness” which he explained was the core tenet in the philosophy of Emptiness, By entrusting ourselves to Other-Power, Rev. Sato explained, we become selfless and awakened to the truth of “interdependent origination “

After Breakfast Mr Andy B gave a talk on “Sincerity in Shin Buddhism.” Here are some of the important points from his talk:

Master Shan-tao’s commentated on the meaning of “right practice” in Pure Land Buddhism and clarified that what is given constitutes our aspiration; it is all true and real. Further, what is true and real falls in two types; the true and real attained through self-power and the true and real given by Other Power. Reading Master Shan –tao’s words Shinran Shonin recognised that the Sincere Mind described in the Original Vow is not a reference to our own sincerity but to the Buddha’s sincere mind that is given to us.

Further Shinran Shonin helped to re-affirm that the story of Dharmakara’s Pure Practice and awakening was always intended as a gift to us and was never meant to diminish or devalue our own seeking after the truth. Shinran Shonin points out that the gap between the pure practice of Dharmakara and our flawed practices serves as an infinitely bright mirror in which our blind passions and delusions are continually revealed and in being seen abandoned.

Lastly Andy quoted Roshi Uchiyama and reminded us that though we are plagued by so many problems when we reflect

and begin to see things through Buddha’s eyes they appear as mere trifles. We suffer from what we do not need to suffer from and we do not suffer from what we must suffer from.

At the conclusion of Andy’s talk, Rev. Sato expressed his deepest gratitude to Andy for his efforts in giving this talk on the meaning of Sincerity and the clarity he had given to this difficult topic.

Responding to Andy’s talk someone spoke about the fear of facing oneself and how pride stops us from sharing with others. Rev. Sato replied by saying: “Welcome your problems for through them you are given an opportunity to grow in the Dharma”.



**The Shokai participants**

Next was our closing service in which we thanked each other with deep gratitude. Mr Ant P. gave a wonderful talk of thanks expressing our gratitude towards Shogyoji Temple for making this retreat possible and the great effort made by others to support us. Finally we shared lunch together before leaving. Someone said before departing “I wish I could live like that everyday.” To which someone else responded “It wouldn’t be the same if you did”.

**Jocelyne S and Louise V**

---

*Editor’s Note: This is an extract from a letter sent by one of the Shokai participants to Rev. Sato.*

25<sup>th</sup> October 2011

Dear Rev. Sato,

It was so good to be at Shokai and I left to travel home with feelings of joy in my heart.

I just wanted to share with you some of my thoughts on returning from Shokai and to express my gratitude to you for your teaching during Shokai and for sending me your talks on Other Power and Buddha Nature. They have helped me very much and given me much to contemplate.

Shokai was a wonderful retreat. To be with so many Bodhisattvas was a great privilege. I was thinking of Rev. Isshii’s wife, Sanae, - I think she is very courageous – to come to this foreign land and to give so much to looking after us and in service to the Dharma.

Please give my thanks to your wife Hiroko. Her talk to us at the *Zadenkai* (group discussion meeting) – especially in relation to her parents and the advice she was given ‘to become a parents to her parents’ is very helpful and given me much thought. It has led me to read again “The Sutra on the Gravity of What Has Been Done for Us by Our Parents” that you sent

me a little while ago.

Please also thank Rev. Isshii. His talk was very special – he also was very courageous. I came across the following passage in Dogen Zenji’s *Shobogenzo* – fasc 92 – *Ippyakuhachi Homyomon* (“The One Hundred and Eight Gates to What the Dharma Illumines”) Trans by Rev Herbert Nearman

“Attaining unimpeded eloquence is a gate to what the Dharma illumines for it creates delight in all sentient beings”

We all experienced delight at Rev Ishii’s talk and thank him with bows.

I am grateful to all who made Shokai possible.

I am mindful that Shokai has been possible through the support of the head priest of Shogyoji, Ven. ChimyoTakehara, and his wife, Bomori Sama, and I thank them both.

Namuamidabutsu

With Gassho,  
Duncan

## OTHER ACTIVITIES AT THREE WHEELS

### ‘Nembutsu in the Samgha’ New Year at Three Wheels

Three Wheels was grateful to welcome all of the participants to the 2012 New Year’s Service (*Shushoe*) which again was a very well attended event that included a number of guests visiting for the first time. Reflecting on what has been an eventful and exciting past year of activities at Three Wheels Rev. Sato expressed what he described as his “indescribable gratitude” to all of the *Samgha* and supporters of Three Wheels for everything they had done to help the temple over the past 12 months.

Following the chanting of sutras in the service before the Buddha Shrine, Rev. Sato and Rev. Ishii performed the traditional *Otoso* ceremony in which everyone received a small drop of sake poured by the priests. This special service performed every New Year in Shin Buddhist temples, represents receiving the teaching of Shinran Shonin, the founder of the Shin Buddhist tradition.

Rev. Sato then gave a Dharma talk on the subject of *Nembutsu*, which means pronouncing the Name of Amida Buddha, “*Namu-Amida-Butsu*”. The essence of the Shin Buddhist tradition, Rev. Sato explained, is salvation through pronouncing *Namu-Amida-Butsu*. *Namu-Amida-Butsu* means to take refuge in Amida Buddha and is an expression of Amida Buddha’s unconditional love through which he vowed not to enter Supreme Enlightenment unless all sentient beings are saved through pronouncing his Name.

Rev. Sato then recounted a special moment during his visit to the Higashi Honganji Head Temple in Tokyo last November for the 750<sup>th</sup> Memorial Service to Shinran Shonin. Travelling to Tokyo by coach with members of the Shogyoji Temple *Samgha*, Reverend Sato realised he was surrounded by friends in the *Nembutsu*, some of them he had known for over 50 years. Each one of them, despite their own individual life situations and problems, had not run away from the reality of their lives but took refuge in Amida Buddha. They had all

also been supporting Rev. Sato throughout his life and Three Wheels in various ways since its founding 15 years ago.

Before inviting the younger members of the *Samgha* to reveal their New Year resolutions, Rev. Sato concluded his talk by telling us his own which was to “never forget my own ignorance so that I can live humbly and happily together with all of you”. Then each of the children gave their own resolutions for the coming year which encompassed learning to think about others, helping their mothers and keeping their rooms tidy.

Rev. Sato concluded the meeting by announcing that he will be giving a series of meetings during the coming year at the Buddhist Society to review his completed translation of the ‘Letters’ by Rennyo Shonin and to discuss any remaining problems with the text before it is submitted for publication.

Afterwards, a delicious New Year meal full of traditional Japanese dishes was enjoyed by all, together with ample time to enjoy conversation and reflection with others.

Andrew Webb



The *Otoso* ceremony

## Garden Open Days 2012

As part of the National Garden Scheme (NGS), we are happy to announce that Three Wheels will be opening its Zen garden to the general public on two weekends this year.

The open days are scheduled for the 19th and 20th of May (Saturday and Sunday) and the 16th and 17th of June (Saturday and Sunday). On each day the garden will be open to visitors from 2:00 to 5:30 pm. Prof. John White, the designer of the garden, is again able to give talks on the making and design of the Zen garden. We are also delighted to be able to serve Japanese green *macha* tea and sweets by tea masters in full traditional Kimono garments followed by tea ceremonies held at regular intervals during the event. Please spread the word to your friends and family. We hope to welcome as many visitors as possible in support of this worthwhile cause.



Prof. John White giving a talk in the garden

## Recent Activities

### **Weekly Ladies Meeting**

I would like to thank all the members of our weekly Ladies Meeting who have been greatly supporting Three Wheels. This year we started a new series of meetings in preparation for Shinran's 750th Memorial Ceremony which will be held in November 2012. At the same time we had a reading session on the Supreme Primate's new book entitled "Shinran's Teaching Passed on from Generation to Generation". Our tea master also kindly gave us some lessons on how to conduct a Tea Ceremony.

### **Children's and Students' Meeting**

We have been very successful in holding many activities including *mochi* making, Japanese calligraphy, paper craft and finger knitting. I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude for all the contributions and support provided to maintain and run our activities. At the same time the Student Meeting, and now the quarterly Student Retreat (for ages 10 and over) are continuously developing. Later this year the upcoming Student Retreat will coincide with the Spring School where Japanese students visit Three Wheels. I am also happy to report that we held a Children's Retreat

(up to 9 years old) on the 12th October 2011. This event was suggested by mothers who seeing the example of the Student's Retreat asked if their children could also have a similar event. As a result, we organized a sleep over event. As some of the children were very young, all of their mothers also stayed over making the event even more meaningful and special. After the children finally went to sleep, the mothers got together and had a deep spiritual discussion until late at night (if not early morning!). Mums as well as children had such a wonderful time throughout the event and we plan to repeat this activity regularly as part of our Children's Meeting events.



Rev. Kenshin Ishii with the children in the Zen Garden

On the 9th February 2012 30 children aged around 7 years old visited Three Wheels together with their enthusiastic teachers and helpers to learn about Japanese culture. They observed our Zen Garden and during a discussion about the



The children during the Tea Ceremony

meaning of it asked many questions about the structure and making of the garden. In the Three Wheels Buddha-room the visitors had the opportunity to observe a Tea Ceremony conducted by two tea masters dressed in traditional Japanese kimonos. As the children excitedly tasted the tea some loved it but others found it too bitter. Nevertheless they thoroughly enjoyed their new experiences at our temple. Prior to this in November 2011 40 children of around 4 years old from a local nursery school visited Three Wheels. They all enjoyed a short meditation session before having a discussion session with Rev. Sato while viewing the Zen Garden. We are sure that through their encounter with Rev. Sato these young children were able to learn about the importance of one's life.

**Kaori Punwani**

## SHIN BUDDHIST GLOSSARY: ‘On’

The word ‘on’ 恩 originally came from Chinese but over time was completely absorbed into the Japanese language. The upper half (因) of the Chinese character means “cause” or “reason” and the lower half (心) signifies “mind” or “heart.” Taken as a whole, the symbolic meaning of the character is literally “keeping the causes in mind.” In this case the symbol for “cause” signifies the causes that account for one’s present existence. In the context of Buddhism, the original Sanskrit for the Chinese expression “one who keeps the cause in mind” is thought to have been Sanskrit *kr̥tajña* or Pali *kataññū* meaning “one who is aware of what has been done for them.” In that case one must admit the Chinese translation of the original Sanskrit *kr̥tajña* does appear rather successful. From very early on in Buddhism it has been considered extremely important for Buddhists to keep in mind what has been done for them.

How to translate the Buddhist term ‘on’ 恩 into English, however, is quite another matter, because there really is no adequate English equivalent. It is said that in Buddhism in general there are four kinds of ‘on’ 恩: 1) that of one’s parents, i.e. what has been done for us by our parents, 2) that of the king, i.e. what has been done by the king in his role as a symbol of state, 3) that of all sentient beings, meaning

what has been done for one by other people or other living beings, and 4) that of the Triple Treasure (Buddha, *Dharma* and *Samgha*), signifying what has been done for a seeker after truth by the Triple Treasure. There really is no single English word that covers these four fields. The word ‘on’ 恩 has thus been rendered variously as benevolence, grace, favour, benefit, kindness, gift, indebtedness and so on. Going back to the original Sanskrit meaning of ‘on’, the translation that most adequately covers the wide range of meanings we have looked at is, “What has been done [for me or for us]”.

One of Shinran Shōnin’s Japanese hymns (*wasan*) is closely related to this unique word ‘on’ 恩:

What great compassionate work has been done for us by the Tathagata!

We should try and return it in gratitude, even if this ends in crushing our bodies.

What virtuous work has been done by the great teacher and the patriarchs as well

[for our salvation]!

We should try and return it in gratitude, even if this ends in breaking our bones.

## POET’S CORNER : John White

I swim  
in the calm sea  
of existence

where everything  
changes

and there is  
no change,

where nirvana  
is now

and the great storms

do not even

ripple  
the surface.

*Editors’ Note.*

*For comments, criticisms, and questions concerning the Newsletter or if you want to provide material for inclusion, please contact Dr. Lucien Chocron, email: [lucienuk03@gmail.com](mailto:lucienuk03@gmail.com)*

*Edited and created by: Mr. Andrew Webb  
Dr. Lucien Chocron*

**All donations are welcome.  
Cheques payable to  
LONDON SHOGYOJI TRUST**

**Three Wheels  
55 Carbery Avenue, London W3 9AB  
Tel: 020 8248 2542  
Email: [threewheels@threewheels.co.uk](mailto:threewheels@threewheels.co.uk)  
Website: [www.threewheels.co.uk](http://www.threewheels.co.uk)**