

Remembering my Teacher

by Milton Moon ©

My teacher died in 1992. I am old now and
but he is clearly alive in my mind.
My Medical Note said Lacuna Infarct,
but unconfirmed.
MRI was not advised due to Stapes implants
but the syndromes and symptoms
suggested problems,
'blurred-speech' in particular indicating
damage to the speech circuitry whilst
leaving perception and memory near to normal.
At ninety-two years one accepts lapses
and speech is hardly important
even though the content is mildly of interest.

Religious matters aren't everyone's 'cup of tea'
but a sojourn in the isles of Japan for a year
close on fifty years ago provided a chance
of indulging combining and contrasting interests.
Kobori Nanrei was a genuine Zen master,
also the abbot of a culturally-important sub-temple
of the famous Rinzai temple and monastery
Daitokuji of Kyoto.
He had surprising and personal developments
beyond the traditions of Rinzai Zen
which also released me, eventually,
from the confines of my own restrictive thought
and bonds which hampered
my clarity of seeing clearly.

Self-delusion is common
especially with those of sincerity
believing in their own inspired aspiration.
Within the 'flow of life' as we sometimes call it,
between being born, and living life
then vanishing from life there's plenty
of scope for delusion, by another or others,
as well of self.

Ordinary life is called Samsara
this 'flow of life' between birth and death
that separates liberation of attainment
and entry into nirvana.

But a cautionary note
It is not the final end;

it is what some call
the sighting of 'The Other Shore.'
There are lots of dangers in the shallows
before the safety of the shore is reached — but
even the 'seeming safety' of the shore
seems to conceal hazards.

Samsara is life, both good and bad:
no one knows why either happens but
Chaos seems to rule as to why some who are
undeserving are rewarded and those of
innocence are grievously tortured.
Even those who have glimpsed the Other Shore
and speak with pride and authority
on their attainment are perhaps at
greater risk than those whom they
wish and hope to guide: there are
hazards lurking in pride.

Meditation is arresting the madness of Mind;
the slowing-down of movement that separates
jumble into individual component parts.
At times the parts disappear and absence of thought
reveals void-like 'aliveness' that is beyond thought.
When that happens — if it happens —
the ancient advice holds true
'Keep it a secret, especially from yourself.'

The miracle of that moment
changes dimension of thought itself
and lasts moments, hours and even days.
It takes special knowledge to confirm and
confirmation and corruption are both possible
But self-affirming and self-delusion
are the most serious sins of all.

In the days of the ancient Masters
'seekers' knew solitude was the secret
and sought escape from the busy-ness of life
seeking life in far-away mountains and deep
in the wilderness, beyond the daily chores
or incessant chatter of ordinary life.
Buddhism foretold this present period
known as the Age of Mappo
when solitude is hard to find.

The Buddha told the story
of a bodhisattva who made vows, that
when fulfilled he would create a Pure Land
where personal attainment was possible
whatever the obstacles.

The vows were eventually fulfilled
and the Pure Land emerged and in its
mystery and beauty, it is somewhere in
the Western Cosmos and it is said that
the Buddha who resides there
is known by many names:
in Japan he is known as the Buddha Amida
and the doctrine of truth revealed
in the Pure Land Sutras.

My own teacher
teaching still, after his death,
after long years of meditation,
realised there is another Way
before the Other Shore is 'sighted'
and self-reliance or conceit is disciplined.
The Buddha taught the reliance on
the teachings of an earlier Buddha, Amida.
Whether or not you do take his advice
your own Karma will decide.
But first, the Karmic Law applies
"What you sow you must reap."
There's no escape from Karma.

Amida, mindful of his vows —
particularly the eighteenth vow —
even the most evil of person,
if they call his Name, with earnest appeal,
will begin the long or short journey
to enter the Pure Land.
In Japan the calling of the Name
is known as the Nembutsu
and the 'calling' itself is
"Namu Amida Butsu",
you can say it once, say it ten times
or hundreds of times daily.

Some say the Pure Land is here,
on earth and in our Minds —
the Minds of no limit.
Years have passed before acceptance

of my teacher's viewpoint –
and his suggestion of myself teaching –
but I have read of his life
and of his teachers' lives
no disloyalty can I detect.

The Age of Mappo surrounds us
both comforting and shaming:
if I read my teachers' minds aright
it is easy to accept the comfort
and rationalising the shame.

I respect and bow low before my teacher
a Rinzai priest, former roshi and abbot of Ryokoin
a sub-temple at the Daitokuji, Kyoto,
Kobori Nanrei Sohaku 1918 – 1992.