

THE OTHER SHORE

a meditation sequence in untrammelled verse —
a potter in Japan

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By the same author:

The Living Road—a meditation sequence. 1994, Millenium Books.

The Zen Master, the Potter and the Poet. 2006, Axiom Publishing.

Zen and the taste of tea, by Kako. 2009, Axiom Publishing.

The Cloud Barrier, the meditating mind, by Kako. 2009, Axiom Publishing.

A Potter's Pilgrimage, 2010, Wakefield Press.

Wabi and the Chawan, an essay, 2009, The Australian Ceramics Association.

Dedications

To my mother, Victoria Jane Moon (Kaighin) 1889-1951 a rare and wise teacher.

Also my wife 'Bette' Moon (Pestell) 1926 - 2015 who died before this text was finished.

'Bette' Moon didn't need to read these words because she had already discarded those 'things' to which most of us cling. Her ego horizons had crumbled and in so doing glimpsed the 'other shore.' I acknowledge her as a teacher who taught by example.

My first teacher in this and other texts was a blind person Charles Bruce who denied the extent of his blindness and about whom I know almost nothing. *'...when the student is ready the teacher appears.'*

To my '*roshi*' teacher in Japan, the late Kobori Nanrei Sohaku, 1918-1992 Abbot and *osho*, of the Ryokoin, sub-temple of the Daitoku-ji, Kyoto. Learned in Buddhist history and the Japanese sense of aesthetics and especially, *cha-no-yu*, the tea ceremony.



'Outside of Mind no other thing.' Kobori Nanrei Sohaku, 1974

**‘...words which stick
like clay on the fingers.’**

Richard Kelly Tipping, 2012.

**‘...as if your life had been dropped (like a pot) and the scattered
remnants reassembled rather as an arbitrary mosaic
than as a faithful jigsaw puzzle.’**

Donald Brook, 2013.



Kobori Nanrei Sohaku, 1918 - 1992, Ryokoin, Daitoku-ji, Kyoto, Japan

By way of introduction.

My mother chose my name;
 I found out why *this* particular one
 when I discovered the book.
 Old enough to pry
 in special cupboards
 it was there;
 old-time padded covers,
 big as the family Bible,
 gold embossed title
 'Paradise Lost.'
 I always thought,
 with a sense of entitlement,
 it would come to me.
 Old, possibly valuable,
 I don't know where it ended up.
 I wasn't there when
 things were divided.
 Other hands took it
 and a half-century later
 still wondering where it is,
 my name still there
 in fading gold.

My mother loved poetry,
 thoughts in lines held dear,
 reflecting dreams,
 hopes for a perfect world.
 Hoping too for children
 who would do nothing
 other than God's will.
 Six children of her own,
 two more besides
 meant keeping dreams in rein.
 She was a 'religious';
 cooking meals
 sweeping paths
 bound her to duties
 to be fulfilled
 before distant Paradise
 be gained.
 She used to quote,
 "where two or three
 are gathered together
 in My Name,
 there am I also."
 She knew that He knew;
 that's all that mattered.

She knew all of us;
sagacious in her knowing.
She knew human weaknesses,
searching desires,
greed and covet-ness.
Wise in judgements,
and careful advice,
secretive of things
she knew were sacred.
A mystic in many ways;
after all she had been
to death's door,
coming back after glimpsing
Paradise.

'when the student is ready the teacher appears.'

The teacher: AUSTRALIA.

Blind! Blind enough
to stumble over a parked car.
Never excused or
explained his blindness,
only on occasions like that.
Thinking back, his eye-complaint
is probably curable today
but that was over
a half-century ago.

A mystery man really;
seemed to emerge from nowhere.
Wild hair, as though combed with fingers,
tallish, angular frame,
shambling gait,
strange way of talking;
long silences
as though more normal
than speech.
A vocal impediment of sorts,
no identifiable accent,
(educated English of sorts)
no one knew from where,
it didn't seem right to ask.
Impressive in his oddity,
quietly isolated and apart;
hints emerged in dribs and drabs,
but that's all.

He had lived in the East,
(the Far East, as Europeans say)
mainly China and India:
a correspondent of some sort.
Well informed on Chiang Kai-shek,
and the rise of Mao.
Little respect for ruthless ambition,
more interested in the speculative
than the social or political,
preferred the searching thought
and insights of Lao-tse to
the social dictums of Confucius.
He knew the Buddhist sutras,
knowledgeable about the sects they founded,
and their travels to other places.

He had taken instruction
 (mentioning Ch'an, in passing);
 spoke little about this,
 not from coyness, but respect:
 there were rules about idle talk,
 especially transmission.
 His blindness was recent:
 he had come to this country
 with his wife
 '*as luggage*' said
 with a certain irony.
 Refused help,
 there was something he could do;
 teach of course.
 At those times few
 had the interest or dedication
 to learn what he knew,
 or for that matter,
 measure the gems he offered.
 One cannot learn from a sage
 if one cannot recognise sageness.
 He himself had been taught
 '*reveal not*
to those who cannot know,
will not know,
or in knowing
will corrupt what they know.'
 Accident or synchronicity,
 despite his hesitance,
 and reluctance,
 he was my first teacher,

Death came
 unexpectedly and suddenly:
 heart failure someone said.
 At his funeral few spoke;
 what can one say
 about someone who
 emerged from the mists
 returning when the time was right.
 Time is *never* right of course;
 taking another view,
 time is always right in ways
 not yet understood.
 There are always questions
 but few can answer.

His teaching had finished,
 (or perhaps not)
 one is never sure about these things.
 He taught

there are many ways of
 reaching within to
 an inner understanding;
 in fact too many ways to explore.
 One should be careful to restrict
 the colours on the palette:
 ask any artist,
 too many mixed together
 make a turgid grey.

One thing is often recalled.
*"...regarding the big questions,
 you must discipline your conceit,
 know that you do not know.
 "Do not offend against the
 light of your own understanding:
 learn you must not confuse
 the datum of value
 which fixes your measure
 with the value of the thing
 you are measuring."*

*Sometime in the sixth century
 Seng ts'an, the third Zen Patriarch wrote
 'a tenth of an inch's difference
 and Heaven and Earth are set apart,'*

*It is said...
 anything done with deep reflection,
 looking within, going within,
 can take you through
 the mists of uncertainty.
 To penetrate the mystery
 genuine seekers and teachers
 know this gift lies beyond
 calculation and intention.
 Spiritual insights
 rise beyond our deepest thoughts
 and if you listen within
 there are vague echoes
 of who and what we are,
 and what we might be,
 suggesting substance and shape
 to our personal evolution.
 No one knows so much
 they can answer how or why
 except it happens 'of itself'
 as a gift,
 not by contrivance,
 but from somewhere
 beyond conscious knowing.*

*Consciousness is a mystery:
 Many wise people
 — speculative thinkers —
 have long considered
 it might even exist
 as a physical reality,
 somewhere 'out there,'
 a dimension we don't
 yet know how to access.
 Many dismiss the idea, but
 it is better not knowing
 than believing one knows it all.*

*".....no one understands,
 or can explain 'first cause.'
 "...before the Beginning?
 anything? Anything at all?
 "...what about Emptiness? Space?
 aren't they something?
 "...you tell me, what is Emptiness?
 what is Space?
 "...and beyond Space?
 "Nothing? No thing?
 "...is there such a thing
 as No thing?
 "The only truth is,
 no one knows all there is to know,
 not even the cleverest of the clever."
 "What is truth?
 "...what one insists is truth
 today may not be so tomorrow."*

*"One wonders
 whether atheists are
 'fundamentalists
 with closed minds?'
 "Agnostics one can understand.
 "Sceptics?
 do they just doubt
 or do they have 'closed minds?'
 "Atheists should question and
 define their atheism;
 sceptics should be sceptical
 of their scepticism.
 "It is healthy to doubt
 but not at the risk of
 making a 'belief' of disbelief."*

*"It is the time of Mappo:
 as has been foretold.
 "During this period of decline,*

*the Path — all spiritual Paths —
 will be strewn with rubbish,
 hidden from ordinary sight.
 “Everyday life is
 in most respects a lesser life.
 The ‘Way’ most believe now
 is the materialist Way,
 the ‘I’ ‘Me’ ‘My’ way,
 mostly leading no-where.
 “Most forget, when you die
 you take nothing with you,
 except what you are.”*

My first teacher died
 over a half century ago
 but is still a teacher.

Kyoto, JAPAN. 1974

Tilling the soil,
 someone others had spoken of;
 a person I never thought
 I would meet.
 Middle age, slim of build,
 deft movements,
 impressive even from a distance.
 Dressed in faded grey *sagyogi*,
 working clothes.
 On a shaven head,
 a small skull cap;
 little protection from the sun,
 but then, it was Winter:
 The garden, neatly ordered,
 professional,
 straight rows,
 parallel mounded waves,
 vegetables soon for harvest,
 more than the needs of a single temple.
 A rural scene,
 surprisingly unexpected,
 stark contrast to
 the classic Zen garden,
 maple trees, trimmed
 bamboo-edged paths
 fronting the temple entrance
 we had by-passed.

A Saturday afternoon;
 had we come unannounced?
 Hoping not, preferring to avoid
 Ill manners
 or misunderstandings;
 phantom memories recalling other visits
 so many years earlier:
 circumstances very different,
 an 'occupier' then,
 an unwelcome intruder.
 No need for concern,
 my elderly companion was known:
 an academic and long-time resident,
 and a Westerner;
 he would be forgiven
 a casual transgression.
 Surely, not the usual way
 one meets an important Zen Master.
 The gardener was *osho and*
 abbot of this sub-temple,
 one of the most famous in Kyoto.
 Gently chiding my companion
 for absences
 from temple participation
 the temple master listened
 with polite interest
 the introduction of a stranger,
 reason for this impromptu visit.
 Living at another Rinzai temple,
 a huge library but no teacher.
 (the temple-abbot recently deceased)
 there was need of scholarly direction,
 never contemplating instruction
 from this eminent man.
 Of high scholarship,
 knowing the history of Buddhism;
 knowing equally of other religions,
 hopefully he might offer advice.
 He taught *Shodo*, calligraphy,
Sumiē, ink painting.
 Also a potter, a hobbyist
 and knows about 'tea'
 and much else about culture,
 he would have much
 to teach me.

Eager Westerners
 from all parts of the world
 beat upon this temple door;
 sincere, some hoping,
 others a casual interest

stories to tell
when they returned home.
The Zen master had a reputation
for not being overly welcoming.
Assessment would be swift;
many would-be students
went elsewhere.
My first teacher
had learned from teachers of China;
(and Zen was born of Chinese Ch'an.)
Following the time of Mao
this Zen Master
was one invited to China
to advise on salvage
and reconstruction
after the wanton
destruction and chaos
of the Cultural Revolution:
surely my old teacher would be smiling.

Unimpressed
or simply not interested
the extent of my reading,
asked probing questions;
I was interested in Zen?
how Buddhism had
moulded Japanese aesthetics,
especially Tea and pottery,
my stay in Japan was for a year?
I could come,
there was a condition;
I was to learn
as a monk would learn,
experiencing directly
daily meditation,
learning with mind and body
knowledge gained within.
He held up an open hand,
with thumb and forefinger of the other hand
grasped the end of the little finger:
*"A finger tip taste is useless;
do not come at all if that is all you want."*

The Teacher Appears...

*Sitting in silence;
 large square cushions,
 long table-height padded benches
 two sides only of the dim-lit room.
 Looking downwards
 dark-coloured large stone-flags,
 surprising and unexpected.
 Looking upwards,
 a softly darkish void;
 sole candle flame flaring
 white, yellow-edged:
 faint perfume, burning incense,
 threads of smoke
 cotton-thin strands
 in straight lines
 into the void above.*

*A wall,
 small framed shadow paintings;
 shoji-screens,
 horizontal oblongs
 reminiscent of tatami,
 opaque dull-white paper
 tautly-divided thin wooden strips,
 an illusion of strength
 despite the frailty.
 Outside, soft-edged patterns,
 flickering shadows
 vague and unshaped
 shades of faint grey to darker grey
 forming and reforming*

*A sliding door opening briefly,
 glimpse of lightly falling snow
 icy white on azalea green:
 a sudden agitated streaming
 of incense smoke,
 candle flame flickering;
 the door slides shut.
 Silence, stillness,
 a return to the void within.*

*Half-closed eyes,
 soft slow-focus inward;
 Emptiness? Nothing? No thing?
 A word! A Koan! ONE!
 One? Number One?
 Only One? One what?
 Duality of One and Others?*

Just 'ONE.'
 Painful legs, aching body
 The master says
 "look within, stay within."
 ONE! Always ONE?
 Only ONE?
 One as part of something?
 Of what?
 One as a part of All?
 All is ONE? ONE is all? Just ONE?
 Nothing else? Just ONE.

Minutes become hours,
 adding upon hours,
 mind searching
 clarity of emptiness;
 clarity beyond thought,
 the void of No-Thing.

On the edge of a precipice
 surrounded by mists,
 gaping emptiness below.
 Where am I?
 Which is front? Which is back?
 Death below? A call for help?
 No one to hear,
 no one can hear.
 Nothing? No-thing?
 Within the fear is One,
 beating like the heart,
 ONE, within and all about.

"Take the thought within;
 take the thought above
 and beyond,
 but still within.
 Merge with the thought,
 become the thought.
 Think of a place within,
 feel with that place.
 Feel ONE in that place;
 Let ONE expand,
 softly, slowly.
 ALL is ONE?
 Become ONE until
 ONE becomes you."

The master demands
 "Show me ONE."
 ONE is everywhere?
 ONE? What is ONE?

Why ONE?
 How does one show ONE?
 Where is ONE? When is ONE?
 How is ONE? NOW is ONE?
 NOW? NOW-NESS?
 Just NOW!
 JUST? JUST NOW?

That word 'just' —
 what does it mean?
 Say slowly and very softly,
 'I know that I do not know.'
 'Just Now?' Just?
 Do not attempt an answer.
 Know that you do not know?
 An answer will come, eventually,
 'of itself.'

The mind knows much more
 than ephemeral fragments
 floating on the surface.
 Sometimes, surprisingly,
 simple revelations come
 in a language never learnt
 or now forgotten.
 One doesn't always need words
 revealing an answer.
 Pretend nothing, claim nothing.
 Pretending ignorance
 can be worse
 than pretending clever knowingness.
 Pretend nothing at all;
 you ARE what you ARE.
 At this very moment
 you are You,
 this very moment is
 the Nowness of ONE.

You can fill your head with facts,
 can you remember them?
 Go inside your mind,
 beyond ordinary memory
 from the depths of silence
 the truth may come:
 the truth is in the silence.
 The lessons learned beyond words
 remain as part of you.
 There are teachers within the silence,
 and beyond the silence.
 you are part of Oneness
 The Zen Master's Oneness of ONE.



Buddha Kiln (known as a Kiln God)

The Potter: the Chawan and Cha-no-yu

*The drinking of tea —
the sharing of tea
at times a meditation.
This I have learned:*

Tea came to Japan
from China.
If Shinto is the beating heart,
Buddhism is the soul of Japan
moulding and shaping sensibilities,
the very islands,
irregularly shaped,
splashes of salty drops of water,
teardrops of legend and myth.

Tea, when it first came
was expensive;
a new culture, playful interest
for the wealthy and privileged.
Others of vulgar inclinations,
delighted in diletantism, lavishness,
pretension and exclusivity .
The rich, behaving richly,
collected *meibutsu*,
coveted items for envy,
(from China of course).
Spending fortunes
on halls of splendour.
More refined awarenesses
enjoyed the newness,
the history, the thoughtful potential

This sober creativity
came from Buddhism,
in temples tea as relief,
from hours of meditation,
taken in silence,
disciplined ceremony, imported
from China with the leaves.
Tea seeds in different soil
enriched a newer flowering
and lingering scent.
Cha-do, the sacred
soul of *Cha-no-yu*
became the new
cultural measure.
The ceremony of tea
nurtured by psychic traces,
changed in essence.

The words, '*cha-do*'
and '*cha-no-yu*'
both loosely translated
'the art of ceremonial
tea making.'

The difference, as subtle
as the tea flavours, the
'do' is a 'road'
a 'way to' or 'way of'
giving *cha-do*
different emphasis
and moral meaning,
the purer scent of
sacred incense.

In *Cha-no-yu*,
Cha-do became the
spiritual presence,
the soul of *Wabi*.

Wabi tea
now hundreds of
years in age
means many things,
(either vaguely interpreted
or carelessly misunderstood.)
Tea can be far from *wabi*:
socially gracious, well-groomed,
cushioned with comfort,
befitting high aristocracy,
self-importance:
true *wabi* suggests
'noble poverty'
genteel decay,
a crumbling wall,
missing capping tiles,
un-tended gardens
tangles of withered grasses;
hidden or forgotten
stone *Jizo-sama*
sculpted for a child the
fullness of life denied,
gone like a wisp of incense.
'*Sabi*' (often coupled with '*wabi*')
means the 'alone-ness' of life,
the *wabi-sabi* of true contemplation
and compassion itself.

Wabi tea has many poseurs,
misunderstood?
pretence or prestige,
false social pride,
few sensitivities or

sensibilities awakened,
rarely a link to deeper
layers of understanding
of consciousness itself.
There are no absolutes
of course.

Wabi tea,
practised in a grass hut
a *soan* setting,
the *chawan*
chosen with care,
expressing innocent life and use:
a *yama-chawan*
(a bowl for staple diet —
rice perhaps)
made by farmers with
little skill and fired in
primitive kilns.
The Tea-masters though,
with keen eye,
and practised sensibilities
know in this chosen bowl
there was no
forced irregularity or
pretended innocence.
True *wabi* can't be made,
True *wabi* is beyond
calculation or intention;
true *wabi* happens
'of itself.'



dated 1742. Genbun 6th Year. April. Emperor Sakuramachi, (1720 -1750)

"incense was dispersed for the soul of the young girl." (San Ko Do Jyo)

Zen in the Ordinary World — a return...

“Stay and perfect what you have found!”

It was time to go home:
 from silence to
 a clash of cultures.
 The Airport lounge;
 a Sunday,
 strident colours,
 assorted shorts,
 tee shirts,
 thongs on feet,
 silly hats,
 dressed for the beach?
 over-weight humans,
 over-weight confidence,
 talking loudly.
 My home? My country?
 The habits of the inner mind
 retreat to a hidden depth,
 recalling the master’s stern comment
 at carelessly-strewn shoes;
 “Is that your Mind.?”

The silence comes and goes
 but always returns — always.
 The Zen master has gone;
 he too comes back when needed.
 The mystery of One-ness;
 the one-ness that is the essence of
 the mystery of consciousness.

The master never spoke
 of ‘enlightenment.’
 If Zen practice has a sin —
 and it has ample —
 claiming ‘enlightenment’
 is the most serious one.

What is Enlightenment?
 A sudden flash of insight,
 understanding and awareness
 happening in the shortest moment of time,
 lasting days or even weeks,
 defying description,
 beyond intelligence
 beyond intellectual comprehension;
 vaguely within memory,
 something once known,
 distant yet familiar,

long dormant, now alive again?
 It happens more often
 than we think,
 (not always a religious experience)
 at times
 dissipating quickly,
 fading as ordinary
 life momentum returns —
 inbuilt habits re-asserting authority.
 Rarely does it disappear totally,
 even though
 beyond clear recall.

Kyoge betsuden

Furyu monji

Jikishi ninshin

Kensho jobutsu.

*'A special transmission beyond the scriptures,
 no dependence on words or letters,
 direct pointing to the soul of man,
 seeing into one's own nature
 and the attainment of Buddhahood.'*

Although Zen,
 these words
 hold true for all religions.
 Buddhahood! God-ness!
 By whichever name
 the essence is the same.
 Some can't see it;
 many aren't ready to see it
 and some won't see it,
 but it is there to see.
 It is said;
 when you exhaust your looking
 it reveals itself,
 no one need tell you;
 'you know within yourself
 whether the water you drink
 is hot or cold.'
 Just look within, listen deeply
 and more importantly, *hear clearly.*

This 'looking within,'
 this 'hearing' within'
 is called Meditation,
 It is not a mystery.
 You cannot pretend
 or make it happen.
 Like listening to music;
 you open yourself
 and let it come to you.

My first teacher said,
(repeated many many times)
'discipline your conceit,
know that you do not know.'
 A half-century passed
 his words still ring in my ears.

Many years later
 a second teacher became
 part of my evolution:
 priest, trained and disciplined in
 the strict order of Rinzai Zen Buddhism.
 I could not understand
 his answer when asked
 (before a world audience)
 'who, in his opinion had
 made the major contribution
 to Buddhism in Japan?'
 His answer was both direct,
 and unexpected ;
 'Shinran Shonin of course.'

A senior Zen monk?
 an important Buddhist scholar?
 acknowledging Shinran Shonin,
 a twelfth and thirteenth Century
 Pure Land teacher as the one
 who had the most influence
 in the development of Japanese Buddhism.?
 Clearly my journey was not yet finished;
 'when the student is ready
 the teacher appears.'

The Pure Land — Amida's Buddha-land, **Gokuraku. the land of Utmost Bliss**

Consciousness is vastly deep;
 measurement cannot contain or limit
 the permutations of the movements:
 both within and without —
 they are beyond description.
 The five senses can know so much
 and so little. The fringes of our
 awarenesses, sensitivity, sensibilities,
 are not pure knowledge
 often claimed to be,
 but at times, within the words
 handed down from times past
 we reach the edges of truth.

According to myth and legend
 as old as Buddhism itself,
 many Buddhas have
 embraced the compassionate obligation
 to lead human beings to fulfilment.
 In Mahayana thought
 there are a myriad Universes
 and many Buddhas — all have
 pointed the way to enlightenment.
*'They appear from 'such-ness,'
 emerge from 'thus-ness' and
 'were made to become so';
 a mystery beyond comprehension.*

*'If when I attain Buddhahood,
 the sentient beings of the ten quarters
 who sincerely entrust themselves,
 and aspire to be born in my land,
 performing even ten 'nen'
 'taking refuge in my Name'
 should not be born there,
 may I not attain supreme enlightenment.
 Excluded are those who
 commit the five grave offenses
 and slander the right dharma.'*
 Known as *Amitabha* and *Âmitayus*
 Buddha of Immeasurable Light and Life;
 (in Japan he is known as *Amida*.)
 In his bodhisattva stage, as *Dharmakara*
Hoozoo (J), Dharma Storehouse,
 he made forty-eight vows, proclaiming
 until these were fulfilled
 he would not attain perfect Buddhahood.

Gautama Siddhartha ,
 the Buddha of our time and place
 taught there were many Ways
 of attaining fulfilment
 one of which was *Amida's 'Pure Land'*.
 Some believe this is an actual place,
 but for others it is a higher state
 which is above and beyond
 any description, where perfection
 can eventually be realised 'of itself.'
 For many of stubborn denial,
 ask 'why this teaching?'
 when other teachings inspire and
 challenge both intellect and
 human behaviour thus making
 attainment a worthwhile goal,

This Pure Land teaching,
 seemed so simple — much too simple,
 and much too easy —
 for serious consideration.
 Rejection, for some, was a matter of pride
 or fundamentalist conceit.
 But for many, needing refuge,
 gladly accepted the teaching
 and saying the *Nembutsu*,
 '*Namu Amida Butsu*,'
 'taking refuge in *Amida*' brought solace:
 in simple faith it was complete in itself.
 Others although trusting the Buddha,
 still found this teaching,
 a challenge for acceptance.
 Many others, saying the *Nembutsu*, and
 having lived with doubt,
 and struggled with doubt,
 suddenly, in a mysterious way,
 in an instant moment,
 speculation, doubt and pride disappeared.
Namu Amida Butsu, was no longer
 an appeal to the Buddha
 or the Buddha calling us,
 but the Buddha calling the Buddha,
Amida, already within us and all about;
 '*of all difficult things (to understand)*
this still is the most difficult.'

Buddhism postulates two ways
 to enlightenment.
 In Japan the way of the 'self',
 termed *jiriki* — said to be the sages' way —
 is the well-earned path to enlightenment.
 The *jiriki way* demands the highest concentration,
 the scrupulous self-scrutiny,
 inner strength and truthful purpose,
 a *bodhisattva* idealism.
 One is required to polish
 the ego-protective armour patiently;
 by purposely removing rust and grime
 hoping to reveal in the shining burnish
 a glimpse of Buddhahood itself.
 How many, even the most determined,
 have the purpose or honesty,
 and intensity of commitment,
 or personal possession
 to follow this path to the end?
 Many delude themselves that they can,
 only, in their pride and delusion
 they increase their karmic burden.

In contrast to the *jiriki* Way
 is the way of *tariki*,
 the path of Other help.
 By saying *Namu Amida Butsu*,
 Shinran Shonin taught that
 ‘with a mind that is sincere,
 a mind that is deep, and a
 mind of aspiration for birth’
 even those of evil burden —
 suddenly, beyond mystery and miracle —
 the distant Amida’s buddha-land
 is revealed. This land of ‘Utmost Bliss’
 is beyond human imagination.
 and some mistake this for the end,
 the *Other Shore* finally reached,
 but that ‘which you have sown
 you must still reap.’

*‘What is a mind that is deep?
 what is a mind that is sincere?
 what is a mind of aspiration?’*
 Ask, but do not answer.
 Truth and righteousness are rare,
 the path to the enlightenment
 of highest consciousness is
 strewn with entangling brambles;
 hindrances to the sign posts
 pointing the Way ahead.
 Ordinary life’s swiftly changing fullness,
 demanding entertainment,
 challenging attention; little wonder that
 the ‘self’ binds one to ‘self’.
*You don’t call the Buddha
 nor does the Buddha call you,
 The Buddha calls the Buddha,
 the Buddha within
 the Buddha without
 and all around.*

What must I know?
 what must I need to know?
 The personal seeking, the purity or impurity,
 the striving for what you hope,
 does not determine the answer.
 No one can tell you nor teach you
 One can lead you, or suggest direction
 but cannot supply the answers you seek.
 The enigma is in Amida’s vow:
 ‘entrusting?’ *self-help? other-help?*
 the answer is within the *nembutsu*.

Namu Amida Butsu?

How many times should one say it?
 Once? Ten times? A hundred times?
 Say it as grateful worship?
 or obedient consent?
 as often as doubt remains?
 When it is time — but only then —
 finally relinquishing self-power
entrusting in 'Other Power',
 the clouds of doubt will disappear,
'in the shortest moment of time'
the Buddha within
hears the Buddha,
the Buddha, 'within and all about.'
 As Shinran Shonin teaches,
'Buddha fills the hearts and
minds of all beings'
 even though you do not know it.

Shinran Shonin taught,
'you yourself cannot do it,
it comes from 'Other Power,
the Power of the Vow.'
 You yourself must *learn* to learn,
 to *'dwell within'* and *'hear within.'*
 relinquishing attainment itself.
 You yourself must learn to
 await the answer, and
 become the answer.
 The mystery most do not know,
 you already *are* the answer:
 this is the Highest Learning of all.

Epilogue

Does consciousness have
a physical reality? Our thoughts?
do they have physical form?
Everything endlessly moving,
endlessly reshaping;
might the conscious world
also change?
Clever people probe questions
speculating in a language
most do not understand.
No one knows what
happens when we die?
The body will go as
circumstances dictate.
Your consciousness too
fading and dividing

*will go where it must go,
 as atoms do and molecules,
 and all forms known and unknown.
 Everything belongs somewhere.
 Everything becomes something else,
 nothing is wasted, forming and reforming.
 What remains when we have turned to dust
 or powdered ash, the 'who we were?'
 or the 'what we were?'
 The highest wisdom says it is better
 to go empty-handed',
 yet most cling to something precious,
 Rich man, poor man,
 beggar man, thief'
 clasping, clutching, clinging,
 loosing grasp in death —
 but still bound*

*What is the ultimate?
 Whatever it is,
 we can neither understand
 nor comprehend?
 The Name beyond names?
 calling? listening? hearing? answering?
 Understanding is not the point:
 Namu Amida Butsu,
 beyond ordinary understanding,
 the mystery of consciousness,
 within and about, total entrusting,
 the Buddha's 'skilful means,'
 the answer comes 'of itself.'
 Higher knowledge,
 learning beyond words or names:
 'of all difficult things
 this is the most difficult.'
 Know that you do not know.
 'Dwell within'
 listen within,
 and 'hear' within.*

*"Oh Bodhi,
 who has gone, gone, gone
 to the Other Shore,
 gone beyond the Other Shore
 thus fulfilled."*

About the author.

Milton Moon, who was born in Melbourne in 1926, is one of Australia's senior potters. In his early days, during service with the Royal Australian Navy, he first visited Japan and felt then this country was to have significance in his life.

He worked in broadcasting then television for thirteen years during which he renewed an interest in the written and spoken word.

He has been a potter for over sixty years, receiving many awards including a foundation Churchill Fellowship; a Myer Foundation Geijutsu Fellowship; an Australian Government Creative Fellowship as well as an Order of Australia (AM). He was made a Member of Honour of the International Academy of Ceramics in 2015.

He has been to many countries, learning and observing. He has visited Japan many times and during the period of 1974 whilst undertaking the Myer Foundation Geijutsu Fellowship he studied Zen meditation with the late Kobori Nanrei Sohaku, osho and abbot of the Ryokoin, a sub-temple of the famous Rinzai Temple, Daitokuji, in Kyoto. He maintained contact with his teacher until his death in 1992, something of which is documented in his Axiom publication, *The Zen Master, the Potter and the Poet*. 2006.

In his later years, apart from articles and essays, he has returned to writing. latterly to writing in verse form, which he calls 'untrammelled' verse.

Milton Moon lives in South Australia where his son Damon also lives with his wife, the violinist Lucinda Moon. His wife Betty (Bette) Moon died in June 2015.

Acknowledgement:

I am eternally grateful to my Zen and Pure Land friends.

Firstly I am indebted to a fellow-student, neuroscientist James H Austin MD, when in 1974 we took instruction at Ryokoin at the Daitokuji. His writings, since that time, have deepened my continuing interest into consciousness itself.

I value the friendship of psychiatrist and psychoanalyst and Zen teacher of the Ordinary Mind Zendo in New York, Barry Magid, with whom I exchange continuing, and hopefully endless, emails. His books are both wise and commonsense Zen gems.

I am also grateful to Zuio Hisao Inagaki, Professor-emeritus of Ryukoku University, Kyoto, for the books he has kindly sent me over the years, included amongst which are the published writings of his Jodoshinshu priest father, Zuiken Saizo Inagaki, the first of which he inscribed 'in memory of the late Harold Stewart'. Stewart, the Australian poet, and a long-time resident of Japan wrote to me over a period of fifteen years patiently explaining points of Pure Land thought.

I value a friendship with Dennis Hirota which has continued over many years. More than anyone else he has developed my understanding of the teachings of Shinran Shonin, Jodo Shin and Pure Land studies in general. He has kindly sent me, and also made available to me by email, many of his own insightful writings and translations. Dennis Hirota is Professor-emeritus of Shin Buddhist studies at Ryukoku University in Kyoto. He is also a cha-jin, author and translator of Japanese Shin Buddhist philosophy and aesthetics.

Lastly, I am sure that my late Zen '*roshi*', Nanrei Sohaku Kobori (1918—1992) would approve the unplanned promptings leading to my own greater understanding and development.

'When the student is ready the teacher appears.'