
Accompanied by a peaceful and fearless spirit

Kusen by Frauke Bleßmann – Cologne, April 2020

It is a deep human need to feel secure ... Having a well-structured life provides this feeling to most people. But security is only a construction of the mind: nothing remains as it is, everything is subject to the law of impermanence and continuous transformation.

We live here, in a place of our planet where most of us have never had personal experience of war, of state violence such as dictatorship or other types of catastrophe. Of course, everybody has his/her own problems in life, usually induced by the personal view of our ego on a situation. And mainly, these problems are difficult to solve because we tend to dramatize them and invest a lot of energy in them.

Lately, I often met people who look at the situation in which the pandemic has brought us with a look of anxiety, of anguish: most often less out of fear of contamination than because of the restriction of their freedom and the changes in their daily life structure. But true freedom in the spirit of Zen has nothing to do with external factors. We are truly free when we are no longer dependent on these factors, when we accept things as they come, and when we detach ourselves from our ideas about freedom.

Our life is just like a river: it gushes out of a spring, then flows, for a longer or shorter period of time, constantly facing obstacles, until it finally flows into the sea. We can therefore consider the current situation as an obstacle on our Way, an obstacle that we must find a way to deal with. It is up to each individual to live his/her life, to take it in hand, to get around obstacles and solve problems.

As practitioners of the Zen Way, we have the opportunity to accept reality as it is. In any case, we have no influence on various things... But we can continue our practice of *gyoji* and zazen together and be there for each other, live as Bodhisattvas and reach out to our environment with compassion and wisdom. As Master Dogen used to say: "One person who practices zazen has an effect on the whole universe ". Thus, in the present situation, we can have an effect on our immediate environment.

Here is an excerpt from a kusen by Master Yuno Rech:

"During zazen, it is not necessary to think about Buddha or about *satori*. It is enough to clearly observe what is happening in us, here and now. We see how our thoughts and feelings appear and disappear, and we become One with the impermanence of all the phenomena that compose us.

If we fear this impermanence and reject it, we suffer. On the other hand, if we accept it, we are freed from all fear. We are freed from the Poisons of our mind, from greed and hatred: greed for what we want to achieve and hatred of everything that prevents us from obtaining what we desire.

As long as we are dominated by these Poisons of the mind, we live in *samsara*, in a succession of joys and misfortunes. Deep down inside, there is always a certain anxiety, because we know very well that what we cling to will not last. But if we learn to adapt to this impermanence, not only will it no longer cause us worry and suffering, but it will instead become our best friend. Because as a result, we can also be sure that what is causing us to suffer at the moment will not last, just as a mother says to her crying child: "It's nothing. It will pass".

It is in this newly found peace of mind that we realize that - deep down - nothing is missing. Not only do we no longer need to be afraid of losing what we hold on to, but we no longer need to chase after any object of desire. We leave "the realm of having" behind us and harmonize with our inner nature. This nature is not "something", it is the basis of our existence, in complete interdependence with all beings.

This is what is called "the Buddha nature". Those who awaken to it leave the Poison of ignorance behind and can live with a peaceful and fearless mind".