



**Incense burning, I sit alone under an old pine tree.  
The wind is blowing, the fresh, cold morning dew soaks my monk's robe.  
One day I got up from my zafu and walked down into the blue valley.  
As I left, in the bottle, I scooped the morning moon from the river.**

**Daichi**

Dear all,

Meiho Missen Michel commented on this poem by Master Daichi 21 years ago in a kusen. As with all of Daichi's poems, this one also describes in depth our practice, Zazen, as well as continually returning to, and immersing oneself in, everyday life, society.

**Buddha said: Life is not a problem to be solved, but a reality that is there to be experienced.  
The reality which we experience, perceive, in and through our Zazen.**

Last year, in 2020, we saw that through the virus that whirled around, but also slowed down, our life, we were literally catapulted out of our daily practice and our customary daily routines. And we were very directly and immediately made aware of *mujō*, impermanence, that perpetual change which we are all subject to. This is why it is important to find one's way back to balance, to our normal state of being, as Master Deshimaru and later Michel kept reiterating, to the normal state of body and mind. Master Deshimaru's teaching was based on *mushin*, *mushotoku* and *gyōji*. Sitting daily in Zazen, without nurturing any expectations, without fleeing anything, without clinging onto anything, for nothing exists which one could attach oneself to or not attach oneself to. At the same time, we cannot remain seated in Zazen all the time, but we keep returning to the daily routine, to family,

work, to social life – supported by the pure, stable, clear mind of Zazen, which beams out far into everyday life.

**Buddha also said: Take the time to sit quietly every day and listen to things. Pay attention to the melody of life which resonates inside you.**

Everything that arises, that takes form, must in turn pass away. Although we can comprehend this mentally, part of us does not really want it to be true. It remains an abstract concept, far away from ourselves, and this leads to an eternal struggle, to pain, to suffering in ourselves, which we then end up trying to drown out, to cover up with activities, with movement, with illusions, with information, with superficial desires, which – as soon as we believe we have attained them – immediately evaporate again, like perpetually emerging fata morganas. No sooner do we appear to have attained and touched them than they vanish before our eyes, which leads once again to pain, grief, anger and suffering.

**Buddha said: Every life has its degree of suffering. Sometimes it is this very suffering that brings about our awakening.**

He also said: **Do not dwell in the past, do not dream about the future. Concentrate on the present moment alone.**

Sitting in Zazen we can become one with ourselves, become profoundly acquainted with ourselves, and in so doing – naturally, intuitively – become one with the 10,000 things around us, beyond time and space. We can leave behind our ‘small me’ and entrust ourselves to the cosmic order.

It is enough to accept our life, the daily hurdles and challenges, from one moment to the next, and surrender to the moment, in which we simply do what needs to be done.

Step by step, breath for breath, point by point, this produces intuitively, naturally and by itself the line of our life, always in the presence of the here and now.

Being mindful of oneself, mindful of others. By continuing to reflect on ourselves, to sit in an upright Zazen posture, courageously facing the inner mirror, the reflection. Opening oneself up to that which transcends our personal thoughts and ideas. In this way we can let our ‘true self’ arise and at the same time open ourselves up to all others in a natural and intuitive way and bring about true encounters. True encounters that are not only based on just external and personal interests such as background, recognition, looks, feminine, masculine, youth, age, rich, poor. Transcending all differences makes it possible for us to accept all differences. Even different challenges such as age, illness, frailty, death.

The Covid-19 virus, which is well and truly playing havoc with our life, should nonetheless not let us become angry or resigned unnecessarily to fighting or unnecessarily burying our heads in the sand. It is important to continue to return to balance in ourselves and to engage in a deep exhale and embrace the contradictions in our life.

What are the causes of appearances, of the virus, how can we learn how to deal with it in our lives, here, now?

In the virus situation there is a lot for us to learn if we engage with the circumstances, which are as they are, accept them, not suppress them, not fight them. At the visible level there is an operation underway to work on scientific solutions, on research into vaccines and medicines, so that there is as little sickness and death as possible. But apart from those who are dying from the virus, the suffering is just as great for those who are dying from other diseases, the many who die of starvation day after day, who face a daily fight for their existence – far away from us, and yet also nearby – people who are not well psychologically, who are in decline, being forgotten, although they need our help precisely in these times. For everything that we lose sight of because it is not being discussed does

not seem important enough, or because everything quickly becomes too much for us, will catch up with us later. It will come back like a boomerang, 'paff', and we are then all stunned by it and feel unpleasantly surprised and blindsided and treated unjustly.

It is important not to be fixated on anything and not to nurture a one-sided view, but to open our gaze, our horizon, and capture everything in one glance, like the broad blue sky, untouched by the many clouds, large and small, that appear and then roll on by. It stays ever calm, clear, broad and blue.

Sitting in Zazen we can see without looking, hear without listening, feel, sense, without touching, think beyond thinking. We can then recognize the whole iceberg with one glance, not just the tip, but at the same time the whole, much larger and therefore dangerous mass underneath. Even if we cannot get the iceberg out of the way, we can deal with it better, sail around it, if we perceive it in its entirety.

Back to the lines from Daichi's poem **On Mount Hosan**.

**Incense burning, I sit alone under an old pine tree.**

In Zazen, 'in the forest of old trees,' in the Dojo, we can be profoundly, intimately alone with ourselves, with our true nature, and at the same time be in unity with the others.

**The wind is blowing, the fresh, cold morning dew soaks my monk's robe.**

This means being in natural harmony with the cosmic life, the laws of the cosmos, without putting anything in its way with our ego, but in accordance with our true nature. In this way every action becomes intuitively, naturally, consistent with our karma. The quiet life on Mount Hosan, Zazen, Rohatsu, Ango.

**One day I got up from my zafu and walked down into the blue valley.**

We cannot stay in Zazen forever. We have to get up and walk down into the blue valley, back into the phenomena, to the conflicts, the chaos of society, of daily life.

**As I left, in the bottle, I scooped the morning moon from the river.**

The moon is the symbol of awakening, of Satori. How can we continue with the Zazen mind in everyday life? When we engage fully with Zazen and fearlessly with ourselves, we can experience this awakening, yet we can never capture it and never own it as something that is 'ours.' Zazen is the source of the pure, clear, endless Buddha mind, which does not move and will not be moved, which observes and stays calm, without fear and without being deceived by the phenomena.

This means: keep coming back from the quiet, the calm of Zazen, of hermitage, from the mountain, into the blue valley and do not forget to scoop the morning moon with the bottle as you leave, even if you can never own the truth. It is a matter of repeating the experience of Zazen, which remains in us and comes out in the necessary moment.

Old systems, old ways of thinking, are disintegrating, imperceptibly, irrevocably, and new ones are emerging. Even if the world does not always turn the way we wish, it turns nevertheless and we with it, everyone.

In the Maka Hannya Haramita Shingyō, The Sutra of the Greatest Wisdom, it says at the end:

**Gya tei gya tei, ha ra gya tei, hara so gya tei, bo shi so wa ka** – 'let us go beyond, everyone go beyond united as one, and even go beyond the going beyond.'

Everyone united as one, not just in world politics, but also in the small things, in the visible as in the invisible, in completely everyday life. In this way it will be possible to taste true joy, happiness and deep peace, which all beings long for. When we give our all in the present, today, this will have an impact on the future and even on the past. Being is time and time is being, beyond space and time and eternity. We should appreciate, keep realizing, that we practice and sit not just for ourselves, for our personal wellbeing, but that this sitting in 'emptiness,' since Buddha Shakyamuni, is dedicated to

all beings. In the deep confidence that this wisdom transcends us, beaming out for the entirety of the universe.

With heartfelt greetings in gasshō,

Eishuku Monika Leibundgut

