

## **Funeral Service for Erica, Deutschherrnkapelle, Saarbrücken, March 19<sup>th</sup> 2011**

Dear Jörg, Family, Friends and Mourners.

Death is not the *end* and not the *beginning*, it is yet *another transition*. For what we *truly* are, our *mind*, is *immortal*.

It is this conviction which has given you, Jörg, but above all Erica *assurance* over the past weeks which took away all threat from death. It was not blind action which was called for, but a *joint effort in preparing* the transition to a new phase, to the next chapter of a never ending story.

And we had the chance to experience how *calm* and *serene* and how *graceful* Erica mastered this transition.

I remember very well when I first met Erica. It was on June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2008 when we had a visitor in our Saarbrücken centre, a travelling teacher who was supposed to hold a public lecture on the fundamentals of Buddhism. Jörg had only just joined our motley bunch of Diamond Way Buddhists and it looked like his wife and daughter wanted to check where he was hanging out. So there was this petite woman with a stern look on her face mockingly following the explanations of the lecturer who was a true Rhinelander, cheerful and quite flippant – and I had the impression that he could not score any points with Erica (and by the way neither with Helen). Even more so Erica seemed very disapproving, and I thought to myself: “No way, we will ever see you again.”

How wrong I was! This little woman wanted to dig deeper. I assume this was always the way she was. We met several times afterwards and I got to know a person who was very *vulnerable*, *constantly battling* with herself and the world – but at the same time always searching for answers and solutions.

Obviously she found what she had been looking for, fortunately, because during the following months she was faced with enormous challenges: Her breast cancer had grown into a powerful, malignant force and Erica was ready to fight: she gathered information demonstrating a *scientific fighting spirit*, she participated in the latest clinical studies, she just never gave up.

When her medical condition deteriorated in the course of her therapy she simply abandoned her treatment and looked for *alternative options* which led her to the Philippines and her condition (albeit only for a little while).

During that time we rarely saw her, but when we did she *never seemed discouraged*. This is because together with Jörg and other friends from our Sangha (which is what you call a Buddhist group) she had participated in a *Phowa* course in *Karma Guen*, a large meditation centre near Malaga. There she became familiar with a tremendously *powerful* meditation which specifically serves as a preparation for your own dying process. In the course of numerous (and definitely strenuous) hours of practice you learn to put your consciousness into a very joyful and pleasant space / state. It is this the *best insurance* you can obtain on earth – for you do not have to *believe* in some joyful experience, because you have *already experienced* this feeling of great bliss during meditation. This gives you certainty, it makes you calm and it takes away the fear of what is awaiting you when you draw your last breath.

And let's be honest, we're all sceptics and only believe what we see ourselves. As a conventional medical practitioner I am particularly prone to such behaviour.

Four days before she died I visited Erica at her home and I was prepared for the worst. Only too often had I seen the agony at the hospital: painkillers make the body languid and the mind dull and in waking hours there is this strong inner resistance coupled with anger and panic.

But no longer did Erica need to fight. Her body exhausted, she revealed herself to me as a peaceful, calm, almost content person of remarkable *presence and clarity* – and this was precisely what I saw on her face that late evening of February 20<sup>th</sup> when we meditated together beside her bed after she had died to support her transition: *peace, serenity and clarity*. For all those who were present at that hour, this experience was an enormous, joyful gift.

And so my memory of Erica will always be that of a *formerly angry* fighter who was capable of leaving this life as a serene person without reservations, for she knew this was not going to be *her* end but just *one* end.

Death is another transition, for what we truly are – our mind – is immortal.

Dear Erica, on behalf of all our friends from the Saarbrücken Sangha, I say farewell and wish you all the best for your journey.