

The Four Vows – SHIGUSEIGAN

Opening Poem for Lectures on the Four Vows

However numberless sentient beings may be,
our vow to liberate them is firm.
Steady and painstaking in our silent sitting,
we focus on practicing the Way.
We must sever our limitless deluded attachments
And reveal the innate truth in all people!

We are receiving from society through karmic affiliations and if we are not aware of this, then we only follow our own attachments. We have to see how much we receive through the grace of society.

If you do not feel this, then you are not aware of how much you are being supported by society, then we are also not aware of the joy of life.

Today we are at a time of strong ego, also education is stressing this aspect. But if we do not know what this ego is about, then you will see things upside down. For all of us to help each other in this.

7 Billion people are living on this planet, and they all support in their own ways, in their own jobs society. From nature we receive in grace as well, if we are aware of this, we see that this is the natural way of being. Even if we eat meat or fish, they are for free given to us by nature. The person fishing, raising and preparing the meat - for those people we pay. The cow or the fish never receive any money, same as the vegetables and rice. We only pay for the farmer, yet not for the crops of nature. This grace given to us by nature is huge, the heat of the sun we receive for free, the oxygen is free as well. Closing our nose, we will die after a minute of not breathing. All things received by nature, we do not pay for. We need to see our responsibility for it.

This is our reality that we constantly receive from nature. Human's desires and ego though have created many problems, making mistakes. These mistakes blur our true mind, that is why it is important to know how to align your mind.

In the olden days people knew how to repent. They would use different ceremonies, praying to God, naming their mistakes, cutting the finger and writing a sutra with one`s own blood. This does not happen much nowadays, yet religion is based on this aspect. We all have done personal mistakes, yet it cannot be a repentance of form, we need to feel this from within our mind. There is this possibility in daily life as well.

Today we have gathered here, over 20 people to practice zazen, we take as important to purify our mind. It says in the sutras: if we repent, we can see the truth in everyone`s mind, and that is our joy. Zazen is bringing for the wisdom which is in our mind. Buddha Nature, Pure Mind - the place before we add anything to this very moment. Our egoistic view is being put aside, and we simply see, simply hear, yet where does this moment of awareness come from?

For example the surface of the water will create waves if the wind blows, but according to where the wind comes from, the waves are different. The waves are part of the water, are an expression of the essence of the water. We get sad, lonely - but this is just like the different winds blowing on the water. One mind moment not coming up yet, that is the depth of mind. The different waves are not our true nature, but the base is found in the depth of the ocean. That is why we do not need to take this wave as most important, and we need to return this wave even one moment sooner back to its true essence. The water is full and complete in itself, that experience is zazen. To become aware of the mind which exists before anything came forth, that is our true immovable mind. That is what we work on.

In daily life we cannot stop thinking, but if we get moved around by the waves, we lose our trust in the truth of our mind. That is zazen. Don`t imagine that there is nothing in your mind, but see the changes in your mind as expressions, not as the true mind. That is our true source of mind. For realizing this, we do zazen.

In daily life we have many thoughts, far too many, so we are filled with thoughts and cannot see clearly anymore. We have almost lost this ability. So there are constant thoughts, yet they also created stress on us. It is not about some difficult repentance, but about letting go of these thoughts that create a complicated world, that make us do mistakes. These thoughts that have become too many, we cannot return to our true mind. So we do zazen, align our breathing and clear our mind as far as we can. That is what is necessary. Zazen is not about the form, but about letting go of thoughts in our mind. If we cannot let go of these many thoughts, making them less, purifying our mind in

this way. Sitting zazen is not the point, but purifying our mind is. We can do this 24 hours a day. Sitting is Zen, Standing is zen, all day long it is the practice of zazen. Our mind can be quiet and settled all 24 hours of the day. This is the practice of zazen.

Zen Master Dogen said: To study the path is to study the self. To study the self is to forget the self. To forget the self is to be enlightened by all things. To be enlightened by all things is to remove the barrier between self and other.

He explains in details how we can practice zazen. If we want to awaken to the wide wisdom the same as that of the Buddha, we cannot continue our attachments, but we need to make ourselves less. Or else we sit zazen and become stronger in our attachments. Our attachments are the source of the problems, yet if we make ourselves less, which is the focal point of zazen, then we can sit for all of society. If we use this point of practice, the question: what can we do for all of society, these feelings and thoughts at the same time purify our mind and make our many thoughts less. Thanks to the development of medicine, because of good food, our lives have become longer. The age expectancy for women is 84.-85 and for men 78 years. To live 80 years is a long life, yet the moment comes when we need to return our body.

Like Ikkyu said in his last poem: "This borrowed body, now and here, I thus return it. "This body has supported our work for society, I am thankful for its support, but today I return it. And thus Ikkyu san died.

We all do die. We have received a body from our parents, and we have ups and downs, yet for sure will need to return our body. Our body has many wishes: it gets hungry, wants to eat well, wants to live in a nice house, wants warm clothes, wants to stay healthy.....it has all kind of attachments and thoughts. It only has attachments which are about gathering. Yet life is about plus minus zero. We keep gathering yet do need to return our body at one point.

Yet if we have a wise mind, then we can touch other`s minds, and thus our mind stays alive in other people`s mind. Or someone who has studied, they can pass on this knowledge to others. One body might die, but like a candle, while it is burning, it disappears, yet this light is what shines on others, and can light the next candle. This can be passed on endlessly. Our life is plus minus zero when we return our body when we die.

Someone said: Life is short, yet art is long.

If we live in a way that we can pass on wisdom and joy to others, then that remains forever. It is not about a form, yet about the mind that is being passed on until eternity.

We repent, we align our mind, the true mind of humans is very deep, a place that is not stuck on an ego, but is taking in all of the universe, the empty mind of zero is our true mind. Just like there are still stars being born in the universe, we hear and see using our five senses, in our mind there should be nothing, yet from that place true love comes forth. This is our truth. If we try to protect our mind, our position, then we suffer because we can't let go of these ideas.

If we decide to do something, we will always hit some barrier. Care givers have burn out, that pure wish to help becomes more and more difficult, and the structure of the system does not support the devoted heart of the person. It is not about our position, yet about a higher view. Those people who experience burn out show us that we can not only be concerned about our own wish and agenda, but we need to have a bigger vision. Behind the wish to want to help society is huge love. Yet that wish to work for all beings has to be realized, not only in this life time, but until the end of time.

We have two ways of seeing: one way which is based on our personal experience, yet there is also the way to see from this huge mind.

Here we come to the four vows:

Sentient are numberless. I vow to liberate them.

Desires are inexhaustible. I vow to put an end to them.

The Dharmas are boundless. I vow to master them.

The Buddha's way is inexhaustible. I vow to become it.

These four vow apply to all human true heart.

Sentient beings are not only human beings, all life is included, and all of these we want to liberate, not creating further suffering. And this is done with a heart filled with love. In our mind we have unclarity and dark wishes, yet all of these attachments need to be let go of. To not get stuck on these we vow to cut these

desire. Our wisdom and knowledge are different. But using the knowledge of the internet, if there is no base of wisdom, we cannot use it well. We need the wisdom to see and love the world in a huge way, we need to dig deeper in our mind. And for walking the Buddha`s path we all need to walk together. We deeply believe in everyone`s truth, in that pure mind, never putting that second. These are the four vow that help us align our life in society.

Sentient beings are numberless. I vow to liberate them
Desires are inexhaustible. I vow to put an end to them.
The Dharmas are boundless. I vow to master them.
The Buddha`s way is unsurpassable. I vow to become it.

Today we will see what the four vows are actually saying.

In this world constantly sentient beings are being born. 7 Billion people, and in a few years it will be 10 billion.

But it is not only about human beings, the Buddha would use a stick that had rings attached to it when walking. This is to protect small animals from being stepped on, and would scare bigger animals away. In the olden days, paths were made by people walking along, so on these earthen paths, the small animals were scared away. Nowadays we disinfect water so that we can drink it. In the olden days, when the water seemed clear, one would drink it, but often it also had small insects in it, which should not be drunk.

One day the Buddha was walking with Ananda. The Buddha picked up a small amount of earth on his fingernail and asked: what is more, the earth on my nail or on the whole planet? - Honorable One, of course, it is many ten thousand times that of the earth of the planet. - Exactly that is how rare it is to be born as a human being.

In one cup of water 500000 planktons can be found. That shows how immeasurable much the sentient beings are

But even just looking at the 7 Billion people on this planet. They all have problems and challenges. they all of course do want to be happy, but they have confusion, suffering and doubts. How can we liberate these people? Here the Buddha said: It is of course about liberating people who are outside of us, but

these can actually be found in our own mind. We all have these problems, and if we have not resolved them, can we really do anything for others? It is important to work for the liberation of others. If we do not do this, then nothing will come from it. But our mind needs to be pure, needs to have all confusion resolved, and our character, our being, that alone can give peace and a settled mind to others. We might fight for peace, but at times these movements turn violent. We might work in the best way we can, yet peace becomes more complex if it is not build on a clarified mind. And then it is better not to participate in these kind of movements. That is why the clarity of mind is so important. Like caregivers. They look after people who are in need of physical support, going shopping, helping with chores, but the caregiver gets too tired, and they become irritated, forgetful about the job at hand. We in our mind, whether we can really be there for the other person or not, is a slight difference in our heart. Thus the Buddha is saying, we cannot only look at the people outside, but need to also liberate these various aspects in our mind. The Buddha at age 35 years realized enlightenment and from then on until the age of 80 year when he entered Nirvana in Kushinagara, he gave a huge amounts of teachings and sutras. This is so that all humans may awaken to the truth. This truth, this huge energy is supporting all of us. This huge wisdom is what the Buddha realized when he awoke. He never said: I am enlightened, but rather: How wondrous, how wondrous. All beings are endowed with the same pure mind I just awoke to.

Not because of training, but we all have this wisdom in our original mind, yet we are not aware of this. Why do we not notice this? because we are attached to the idea about ourselves, and we love ourselves more than others. So that mind, which loves all sentient beings, is connected to all beings, that is what the Buddha awoke to. Open your eyes, open your ears: You can see and hear the suffering of this planet? Why can't you hear? Just because you are so involved with yourself. We can see it, we can hear it. If we hear it, then we will want to do something about this, then our wisdom comes forth naturally. All sentient beings, all life has the same life energy. These are the words the Buddha leaves behind. If it is all about one's own position, then the Buddha, who was a prince, could have done anything in his life that he wanted, his life was cared for, yet he didn't stay there. He could stop at his own happiness alone. That heart of the Buddha that felt for all sentient beings is what made him become ordained and take that step to work for all humankind.

The Buddha did say: It is not me who is liberating others, but everyone has this wisdom in their mind, only because of egoistic attachment do we not see. The Buddha's work is like the sun. Shining equally on all living beings, on a flower seed, on rice grains - if they do not have their own life energy to sprout, the sun cannot do anything. It is only due to the sun and rain that the seed sprouts. The seed receives these circumstances, these karmic conditions. That is what the Buddha says clearly. We need to believe in the Buddha Nature of all beings,

or else we cannot support the sprouting of Buddha Nature in all beings. There are over 20 people here, everyone decided to come here on their own, taking their own steps to get here. That is the expression of everyone's wisdom. We might want to help others, yet these efforts need to also purify our mind. Not only giving food and shelter to others. People when receiving things, they might actually destroy the desire of that person to work for themselves, so we need to always look carefully in which way we give to others.

How then can we work for the liberation of others? We think that we are most important. We don't even know whether our self is real, yet in our confusion we believe we are most important. These are the sentient beings in our mind. Here we can only sit zazen, practice sushokan, and when we align our breathing, and slowly our perception of self becomes weaker. The empty mind, the pure mind becomes stronger. While we sit, we forget ourselves. We forget that we were most important. That is pure mind. And from there the feeling that we need to protect ourselves becomes weaker. We always want the best for ourselves, we take first, if someone does better than ourselves, we get upset and start to gossip. These sentient beings are in our mind. And from there even poison arises in our mind, and we might feel like wanting to kill. We need to liberate our own mind. Looking at the facts: How can we liberate? That is the focal point of Buddhism. What is the true way of seeing? We need a clear and open mind. The Buddha said: The person winning can't sleep at night, because they think they need to protect their position, and the one who lost can't sleep because they feel upset because they lost.

To be free from all obstructions is our true mind. In our mind we keep that purity as most important. From there we liberate all sentient beings. We need to see how many of these sentient beings are in our mind. We want the best gain, we hold on to our happiness and spit out bad words. They are countless, but to want to liberate these, that is our true way of being as humans. They are countless. If we experience this quiet state of mind, from there we can liberate these beings inside of ourselves. But then people ask: Do you only care about yourself? But if someone is not clear in mind, how can they be settled in society and work for others with kind and loving eyes and words? They might be working, but it can only be done from a warm heart if unnecessary things have been let go in one's mind. Otherwise it is based on ego, on a wrong view, while thinking it is correct. In our mind, the empty state of mind, we need to see how from there we can quieten our mind and reflect society as is. From a serene state of mind, we notice the different aspects of mind arising. To see these clearly is our true wisdom. Not coming from an emotional place, but from that quietness, from there we can use our Hannya Wisdom freely without being moved around by circumstances. The Buddha is saying, as long as we think of our self, then we cannot act freely as from that mind of wisdom that knows

from the origin everything is empty. Not from an unsettled mind can we liberate other people. We need to liberate ALL sentient beings. But that is difficult, so we start with our mind filled with troubled sentient beings, and from there the eyes of wisdom start to work, without being thrown around by challenges.

This is the main point of the four vows.

So until we have liberated ourselves, we can't work for others? That is not what this means. We can work for others, yet we cannot get stuck on these efforts, saying I have done so much, that would be a big mistake. This is how people see it easily. While working in society we cannot forget our true most important work. This is what the Buddha is saying: liberate your own mind. Because problems and violence arise not from nowhere, but from the unclarity in mind, from an unresolved mind. We need to take responsibility and offer this to society. We need to do this work even one day sooner in society, and for that we practice zazen, that emptiness of mind, and thus strengthening our hugeness of mind. These are the four vows, and simultaneously we liberate also sentient beings in society. They are the same aspect. We have too many extraneous thoughts, but if we are free from them, the people will around us also will feel that freedom.

Yesterday we talked about how ever many sentient beings there might be outside, yet we do need to not only liberate these beings as an idea. Yet it is known that this is close to impossible to liberate all beings.

The path of the Bodhisattva says, if we make a roof that covers the whole world, then we can go anywhere without getting wet. Yet that kind of a roof is impossible to build, but if we always carry our umbrella, then it is as if we are always under a roof.

If we wanted to cover the whole planet with a leather layer, we would not need any shoes, but if we wear shoes then it is as if the whole planet were covered with leather.

In that way to want to liberate all beings is close to impossible, but if we have realized the Buddha Mind, then we can give this Buddha Mind to others, and the other person will be touched by the same feeling. And thus, also bringing forth their own Buddha Nature.

This is the important point of the Bodhisattva path. The wish, the vow and determination, to while living with all sentient beings, to pass on this experience of Buddha Nature.

How can we realize the four vow? By always doing zazen and purifying our mind, and from there we can bring forth our Buddha Nature, from that serene state of mind Hannya Wisdom arises.

Desires are inexhaustible; I vow to put an end to them. This is the second line of the Bodhisattva vows. Desires never end. They are based on instinctual desire, greed hate and ignorance, the three poisons seen in Buddhism. There is a cell for example. For it to stay alive is the quality of the cell. The cell will not want to die. The desire to live is our basic true nature. If this becomes unclear, if we do not feel this desire to live, people commit suicide. They do not necessarily want to die, but do not know what living is about. The cats and dogs as well, all animals, they search for food to survive. Even a kind dog will bite if you take his food away. If we close our nose for a minute, the body will react in a way so that it can survive. This is deep in our unconsciousness. From there we move without awareness, this is coming forth from a place of darkness in our mind. The base of our emotions are to be found there, and from there desires arise. They were not there from the beginning, they have no true essence. They are not a clear outcome of understanding. Desire are said to be 108, but maybe they are even more. They do not come forth because of how we perceive our life, how we want to live our life. So we are not able to face the desires straight on. If we try to stop these desire, actually there is no way to stop them. That is not the purpose of Buddhism, yet we need to be aware of the working of desires and the wish to live in our subconscious.

Like a child wants something, it does not let go of wanting something. we might buy it for the child. But if it is something that would not be good for the development of the child, so if the parent doesn't buy it, the child cries even more. So a wise parent tries to get the attention of the child, showing it something of interest, and for even just a moment the attention of the child will be moved away.

In that way we practice zazen, and the desires and unclarity in our mind will not become totally resolved, but we move our attention away from them. And more and more we realize that it is not about these desires

We do sports, climb a mountain, we do something to take away our attention from those desires, since we cannot face them straight on.

In the practice of zazen we become aware of our wisdom, not only our life being moved around by desires.

Desires and emotions are bringing unclarity to our true nature. Yet we do not be attached to this, like the light of the candle bringing light to the deepest darkness, that is Prajna Wisdom. Prajna wisdom can align the desires and emotions. That is how the desires are seen in the Four Vows.

Desires are the waves on the water, one appearance of water. The waves do not exist of themselves. If we try to smoothen the waves, if we try this straight on, this is not possible. Yet by doing zazen, we let go a little of our thoughts. And when we let go of the thoughts, the feelings and emotions become more quiet, just like the waves, the emotions have no root of themselves, so they become quiet of themselves. And from there we suddenly realize that the desires were never real.

That is: desire are inexhaustible, I vow to put an end to them.

Now we come to the third line, the Dharmas are boundless I vow to master them. The Buddhas left behind many sutras, yet it is not about studying these. Of course, there is also the philosophy of Buddhism, and many scholars study the sayings of the Buddha. But this is not the four vows. By realizing the Mind of the Buddha, we can actually return to the four vows.

All beings are endowed with the same pure mind, the original mind, yet due to attachments we cannot see this. Yet we have this Prajna wisdom inside of us, it is only being covered by attachments and unclarity. This is how to study the Dharmas. Awaken to our true Nature is studying the Dharmas.

The sixth Patriarch only hear one line and from there he realized enlightenment. He could see in one instant that the changing mind is of no real essence, and thus he realized kensho, awoke to his true nature.

Rinzai says it simply: In one moment of clarity, we are one moment of Buddha Nature. In one moment of no judgment, we are one moment of Buddha Nature.

We all can awake to this true nature, returning to this mind, that is our true being.

Bankei Zenji said: What my parents gave birth to is the unborn mind. There is nothing but this. But because we have choices, that is why we cannot enter the mind of the Buddha. The unborn mind is where there are no distinctions, no self separate from others.

To realize one`s own Buddha Nature is studying the Dharmas.

The Buddha`s path is unsurpassable, I vow to become it.

This is not a path somewhere outside, it is the path in our mind, where we deeply believe and trust in the truth. From there our life becomes clarified. Unsurpassable means, there is nothing beyond-above, neither below. Neither small nor huge, having gone beyond all concepts, this is the Buddha`s path. Letting go of ideas of man, women, eye color, body height - here it is not about the form but about how we can realize the Buddha mind beyond these distinctions. Having let go of all ideas, all dualism, that is the Buddha`s path.

The four vows are not some ideas, but are about how we can actually realize the Buddha Mind, showing us directly how we can walk this path.

For this we need first of all to repent. We cannot think of ourselves as being special. there cannot be any religion without repentance, without reviewing our behavior. We first of all need to become aware of our mistakes. We do not want to see these mistakes, but if we do not see them, we can`t really awaken. Once we are able to see our mistake, we also become aware of the fact that there is no one who has not done any mistakes. We place ourselves below all sentient beings, we prostrate to all of them. From this honest state of mind, the Buddha`s path becomes clear. True thoughts come forth from there. We need to let go of extraneous thoughts as well as enlightenment. We might see heaven as something better than hell. So we still hold on to some dualism, this is not the true mind. We do need to let go of all attachments. Or else we believe that only we know best. And become more distant to society. Of course even more so we need to let go of unnecessary thoughts. From there wisdom coming forth naturally is our truth. To believe we can still hold on to kensho, it is not the true mind, our original mind. Because in that mind, there is no up or down, unsurpassable, including all and everything. We all have this state of mind.

We cannot judge people, that person being bad and difficult. That is not Buddha Nature. No heaven, no hell - there is the Buddha`s path. All attachment has been let go of. This is our true being, in each moment we need to let go of good and bad. Of course, they exist. We live in a world of birth and

death, of gain and loss, we are aware of this but wanting to hold on creates confusion.

Like Rinzai said: do not add any second thought moment. Simply see and hear as it is. Perceive without adding judgment. Once we enter the second mind moment, we become confused and unclear. As it arises, to perceive it. That is Buddha's nature at work. But once we add our agenda, we become unclear. So we need to do zazen, but being attached to doing zazen, again this also brings forth unclarity. Our true mind, staying with it constantly, this is the force of a seed to sprout. It waits on the ground for the sun and water, receiving the grace of nature, and from these karmic affiliations, the seed can sprout. This life energy is called Ganshin. Not for a certain purpose, but bringing forth the energy of pure life, to become its quality to completion is the purpose of the seed. A morning glory seed has already the fully blooming morning glory in its essence. We as human beings also have Buddha Nature already in our seed of life. Love and compassion is our true mind, wisdom and emotion joined are compassion for ourselves and others.

Desires, greed and hate are part of our being, yet the base of our being is compassion. To purify our mind so that it may return to pure compassion. We have received a body and thus also received these inherent desires which we need to purify and return our experience in this body to pure compassion.

The question is whether we purify and believe in Buddha Nature or whether we get squashed by the desires, this is the crucial question in our life.

Closing Poem for Lectures on the Four Vows

The true Dharma flourishes, but prospering also are obstructive forces;
Dark clouds throw shadows causing feelings of frustration.
If you don't know what the Way to enlightenment,
Raise your own lamp and see what's right under your feet!

Q Is it correct to feel compassion first for ourselves before feeling it for others?

A Compassion is not made, but at a certain moment brings forth the feeling. Compassion is always present, and when needed it will arise.

Q Holistic, emotional and spiritual healing - does it interfere with zazen? Do they create karmic interferences, for example if you heal someone who was supposed to die?

A Asian way of healing is concerning the whole person, taking all aspects into account. If someone who was about to die and is being kept on artificial life support, then only the body stays alive while they can't die. That is why nowadays people speak up about not wanting life support. Of course no one wants to die, yet it has to be seen clearly what is the natural flow for human beings. In Western medicine it is often seen as a failure when someone dies even though it would have been their natural point of death.

This question of course does not apply for zazen, because zazen is about purifying the mind. This cannot be confused.

Q It actually is a personal question. When I was born, I should have died. Thanks to an operation I survived, so should I have died?

A You had life energy otherwise you would have died. Hippocrates said: if someone does not have life energy, he cannot be helped.

Q When I have a cold, my nose is stuffy, how can I do my sussokan when I can only breathe through my mouth?

A Sussokan is not about doing it with mouth or nose.

Q What do you think about ceremonies for people who have died, like ghosts?

A Better that I answer, I will take the answer of the Buddha. The Buddha never once talked about life after death. Whether the spirit gets attached to a life

person, whether ceremonies help - the Buddha was asked the same question, because at the time of the Buddha these ceremonies were around. The Buddha never once answered these questions. Not because he didn't know the answer. The questioner though thought that the Buddha didn't know the answer, so he asked one more question to check the Buddha.

So the Buddha said: throw that stone into a well, can a Baramon Monk bring that stone forth again? - The monk said: Of course not, that would be strange. - Even when a sutra is being read, the stone will not come back. So the person wondering about these questions has unclarity in his mind, and that is where they should be placing their focus.

Today medicine has developed and society has become complicated yet from there we feel easily stressed. When we are born, we are born with the tendency of one of the three different problems of mind, depressed, epilepsy or schizophrenic. In medicine nowadays they are still studying the DNA and one day it might be possible to heal sicknesses through DNA treatment. We all have one of these sicknesses, and most lives end without these sicknesses coming forth. But through stress they become real and we need to see this seriously and take action upon this. We need to see ourselves clearly in this. When we return to a healthy state of mind, then we will know it for ourselves.

When we for example are depressed, and do not take our medicine, it might get worse.

We need to know how our mind works and make efforts as to how we can stay healthy in mind, using psychology to support the healthy state of mind.

It cannot be said that ceremonies will lead us to a healthy state of mind, but we need to take actual steps for finding solutions to these possible sicknesses of mind. The problems of mind have no form, our body only is of form. If we do not treat the appearances of sickness of mind, the mind becomes used to these nervous system imbalances if it is not being treated right away. we do not need to be shy about this, but the sooner we get treatment then it is easier for our mind to return to a healthy state of mind. These problems of mind are of form even though they seem to be of no form. We need to treat them as problems of form and thus can not use spiritual practice which is about no form.

It is like with cancer, the earlier it is being found and treated, the better. In the same way, also psychological problems of our mind are of form, and need to be treated in their correct way.

Q When doing a retreat, I was feeling quiet and suddenly also very scared, but thinking about it later, maybe that was my real mind of nothingness?

A That is different. We cannot imagine nothing, we can only create a shadow in our mind. Maybe it was just like makyō, something that your mind created. We usually see and hear, perceive things as they are. But when we sit zazen we can experience to be flying, to be falling deep into the ground, or we see figures on the ground. These are things stored in our subconscious, and come forth when we are deep and quiet in our mind. Yet that is still only a shadow, a deep state of mind, but if we get stuck there, we can't go any further.

There are people who can tell the future, some hearing this might think that is great. But to actually go there and experience it for ourselves is different to fortune telling. In that way we might like the makyōs on the way and thus get stuck there, not being able to move along, because we like the appearance, the shadow we perceive. To not get caught on this, it is important to find a true teacher.

