

**Shunryū Suzuki-rōshi**  
**SANDŌKAI LECTURE VI**  
**Wednesday, June 10, 1970**  
**Tassajara**

[This lecture is concerned with the following lines of the *Sandōkai*:

*Shiki moto shitsuzō wo kotonishi,*  
*shō moto rakku wo kotonisu.*  
*An wa jōchū no koto ni kanai,*  
*mei wa seidaku no ku wo wakatsu.*

Things have various natures, various forms.  
There is good and bad, taste, sound, and feeling.  
In darkness, superior and inferior cannot be distinguished;  
in brightness, the duality of pure and impure is apparent.]

In my last lecture, although I did not literally explain about those sentences, but I almost explained about it.

*Shiki moto shitsuzō wo kotonishi. Shiki moto shitsuzō wo kotonishi.* *Shiki* is, you know, in *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*. *Shiki soku zeku. Shiki.* Same character as *shiki*. *Shiki moto shitsuzō wo kotonishi. Shiki* means, you know, "form and color." It has two meanings: form and color. Things which—form and color. *Shitsuzō wo kotonishi, shō moto rakku: Shō* [is] in *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*. We have many [of] this character—*shō*, voice, which is the object of, you know, ears. *Shō moto—shitsuzō wo kotonishi—rakku wo kotonisu:* means that whatever you see, you know—*shitsuzō—shitsu* means "quality" or "nature." "Quality" or "nature" is *shitsu*, like human nature or buddha nature or good nature, evil nature. Nature is *shitsu*. *Zō* means "figure."

So in things there is various— Things has various nature and various figure, various forms. And voice— When you hear voice, voice has— some voice is good and some voice is not good: agreeable or disagreeable. *Rakku* means— Something which you care for is *raku*.<sup>1</sup> *Ku*<sup>2</sup> is something which will create some bitter feeling or, you know, some —not—"suffering" is too big word, but, some, you know— It will create suffering. This is just— He is now talking about just form and voice, but same thing is true with taste, or sound, or know [no?]-or his feeling or taste. There is good taste and bad taste, and good sound and bad sound, and good feeling and bad feeling—something agreeable idea or disagreeable idea. There are many things.

<sup>1</sup> *Raku* (Jap.) = comfort; pleasure; relief.

<sup>2</sup> *Ku* (Jap.) = agony; pain; anxiety; worry.

And we suffer from it, you know. When you hear something good you will enjoy it, but when you hear something bad you will be annoyed or you will be disturbed by it. Although, you know, for usual person, you know, things happens in that way. But if you understand the reality completely, you know, you will not be bothered by it, because—and here is the reason is here.

We understand things in two ways. One way is, you know, as I told you in last lecture, to understand things in darkness. And the other understanding is to observe things in term of good or bad. That is— There are two ways of understanding. And we know that— We— Things themselves has no good or bad, you know. It is— Things are not good or bad. It is we people who discriminate things [as] good or bad. So things are not— There is no good or bad in things themselves. But we create— We discriminate things in term of good or bad.

So if we know that, you know, we will not suffer so much: "Oh, that is," you know, "what I am doing. Not things itself has no good or bad nature. To understand in this way is to understand things in utter darkness. You do not, you know, involved in dualistic understanding of good or bad.

So *An*, or *An wa jōchū no koto ni kanai*. *An* is "darkness." Darkness include, you know, include good and bad. In the dark, superior or inferior cannot be distinguished. Here this word, *jō—jō* is, you know, "superior," and *chū* is "middle," but [laughs] actually it means—*jōchū*—superior, middle, and inferior. So *jōchū* means, actually, "superior and inferior," not "middle," you know. It is not so usual to say "superior or middle," you know [laughs]. When we say "superior," it is more natural to say "inferior," but as this is a kind of poem, and so sound—*jō*—it is better sound to say, you know, *jōchū* rather than to say *jōge*,<sup>3</sup> you know. *Jōchū* —if we say *jōchū*, means you feel, you know, better. *Jōge* is too much discrimination, so he says—he used *chū* instead of *ge*. *Jōchū no koto ni kanai*.

*Koto* is "words." This [pointing to *ku* character on the blackboard]<sup>4</sup> is also "words." Utter darkness—superior—good words and bad words will be—will not make—will not disturb you. It means that it will not make much sense, you know, or you will not be bothered by it, you know. You will not be affect[ed] by good words or bad words.

This [*kanai*] means "to include," or "to fit," you know, together. *Mei wa seidaku no ku wo wakatsu*. *Mei* is "brightness." Brightness will— In the brightness only duality of pure or impure is apparent. In the brightness—*sei* is "pure," and this [*daku*] is "impure." Pure word— There is pure

<sup>3</sup> *Ge* (Jap.) = lower in quality or position; inferior.

<sup>4</sup> From contemporaneous transcript by Marian Derby. *Ku* is in the next line.

word and mud—muddy [laughs]—muddy word [laughs]. Pure word and, you know, nasty word [laughs]. In brightness we have dualistic, you know, words. Duality of the pure and impure.

This is— Here [pointing to *mei*], same words but this means "to make it clear" or "to become apparent." [*Waka* is the same character as *mei*, but as a verb it means "to make clear" or "to become apparent."<sup>5</sup>] This two words [*koto* and *ku*] is "words." This [*koto*] is "words." This [*koto*] is more short—one words, maybe. And this [*ku*] is longer "words."

Anyway, in brightness there is only—there is dualistic words become apparent. In this way, we should, you know, understand things.

"Positive way" and, you know, "negative way," we say. Positive way—and positive way is to acknowledge, you know, things in term of good or bad, beautiful or ugly, good student or bad student. If you make, you know, good effort you will be a good student. To acknowledge the effort is, you know, positive way. Negative way is [laughs], you know, "Whatever you say, you will get thirty blow" [laughs]. "We do not accept anything." That is negative way. Positive way and negative way is, you know—should be, you know—sometime positive, sometime negative. We must have that kind of, you know, means of treating things.

But, you know, actually, you know, even though we [are] mad at someone, it does not mean, you know, he do not acknowledge. Because he knows him so well, so [laughs] sometime he will be angry with him. When you know he is very good, but sometime he will be very lazy [laughs]. Then, you know, [the teacher] will hit him. Sometime we will, you know, praise him or we will encourage him, but, you know, it does not mean we are using different quite method or quite different attitude. The understanding is the same, but the ways of, you know, treating him is different. For someone who sees things only, you know, [in a] negative way and become always—who is always, you know, pessimistic, you know, we will encourage him. But if he is too good [laughs] or too bright, then a teacher will be always scold him [laughs]. That is sometime our way. But originally it does not— Our way is— Our understanding is not different. But usually we [are] very much attached to bright side of things and dark side of things.

Do you know famous kōan? A monk asked a master, "It is very hot. It is very hot. Is it possible to," you know, "to feel better?" And the master said, "Why don't you go to somewhere where there is no cold weather or hot weather? Why don't you go there?" [Laughs.] The disciple said, "Is there somewhere," you know, "where there is no cold or no hot?" The master said, "When it is cold you should be a cold Buddha. When it is hot you should be a hot Buddha." [Laughs.] That was the answer.

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<sup>5</sup> From original transcript.

You think, you know, there is somewhere—if you practice zazen—you will attain, you know, some stage where there is no cold or no hot, or no pleasure or no suffering. You may think. So you ask him, yeah, "If we practice zazen, is it possible to attain that kind of," you know, "attainment?" But, you know, the true teacher may say, "When you suffer you should suffer. [Laughs.] When you feel good you should feel good." You should, you know, be a suffering Buddha. Sometimes you should be a crying Buddha sometime. Or you should be a very happy Buddha sometime.

But, you know, at the same time, the happiness, you know, in its true sense is not exactly the same happiness which usual people have. There is some difference, little bit difference, and that little bit makes a great difference [laughs]. Little bit different. He knows. Because he knows both side of the reality, you know, he has that kind of composure. He will not be disturbed by something bad, and he will not be extremely, you know— He will not be ecstatic, you know, about things. And he will have true joy, which will always [be] with him. And basic, you know, tone of life is same. And on it there is some, you know, good melody or sad melody. That is, you know, more-or-less, something enlightened people may have. That is the feeling some enlightened people may have. And how— It does not mean, you know— It means that, at the same time, when it is hot, you know, or when you are sad, you should be completely involved in sadness without care for something happy. When you are happy, you should just enjoy the happiness. But [laughs], you know, the — We are— Why we can do so is because we are always prepared for everything. Even though the circumstances changes all of a sudden, you know, you don't mind. Today you may be very happy, and next day we don't know what will happen to us. But we should be— When we are ready for things which will happen tomorrow, then, you know, we can enjoy today completely.

Actually how you can do it is not by, you know, [studying a] lecture [laughs] like this, you know, but your practice. So this is Sekitō's words, but later, you know, in— Sekitō Kisen Daioshō, Yakusan Igen Daioshō, Ungan Donjo Daioshō, Tōzan Ryōkai Daioshō. Tōzan is fourth generation from Sekitō, and [in] Tōzan's time people stick to this kind of game, you know: brightness or darkness. And they were very much interested in talking about, you know, bright side and dark side and middle way. And they lost the point—how to, you know, obtain this kind of freedom from things.

So later, you know, Dōgen-zenji did not use this kind of words so much. Dōgen-zenji rather put emphasis on to get out of those words. How to get out of those words is to appreciate things moment after moment. That is more Dōgen's way. So he rather put emphasis on— You know, he

is more interested in the kōan like: "When it is cold, you should be a cold Buddha. When it is hot, you should be a hot Buddha." That's all. Just hot. [?] To be completely, you know, involved in what you are doing is more Dōgen's way—without, you know, thinking about those things—and because this kind of, you know, attainment will be obtained by actual practice, not by those words.

But this kind of words will help, you know, your understanding of things. When you are very much dualistic, when you are get into confusion, it may help you. But sometime, you know, you may be interested in talking about those things, you know, then we will lose our way. We should be interested in actual zazen, not in those words. And we should not [be] interested in to talk about those things—rather to be involved—rather we should practice actual zazen.

So Dōgen-zenji's way is to, you know, to find the meaning in each being—like a grain of rice, you know, or a cup of water. A cup of water, you may say, is things, you know, which you see in brightness. But if—when you respect, when you pay full respect to the grain of rice, you know, it means actually when you respect it, as you respect it as you respect Buddha himself, that is, you know, you understand a grain of rice as a, you know, as absolute. Only when you do so—when you live in a dualistic, you know, world—completely involved in it—then you have—at that time you have absolute world at the same time in its true sense. When you practice zazen, you know, without seeking for any enlightenment or anything, then there is true enlightenment. That is more like Dōgen-zenji's way.

If you have questions, please ask me. *Hai.*

### Question/Answer Session

**Student A:** When something happens and I feel pain from it, part of me feels it, and part of me is trying to understand it at the same time. And I don't know whether that's because I am afraid of just letting go and feeling just pain, or whether that's wise understanding, you know. It's always— It's half and half. Like, it's not just pain, and it's— It is dualistic and I don't understand it. It's divided, I think.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Hmm. Do you know why? [Laughs.] That is the point. When your, you know, feeling is divided, sometime you try to understand it, and sometime you, you know, feel. You, you know, make yourself feel, you know, whatever it is. But sometime you try to understand, you know, what is this feeling. What is the other side of the feeling, or something. Is that what you mean?

**Student A:** Yeah. Lots of the times it goes together, though, at the same time. I mean, like—

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Uh-huh. How? Will you explain it more?

**Student A:** Well, actually I can explain it better in pleasure than I can in pain. Like when I'm enjoying something, or when something gives me pleasure, and I want to— Like, it gives me such pleasure that part of me is saying, "Now, don't forget," you know, "everything dies." And my words are there, but also the understanding is also there. It's like half and half of me— Sometimes—and it's at different times—sometimes I completely just try to feel. I just let it in as much as it will come. Other times, I try to understand it. But most of the time, it's like half-and-half in the same experience. Like, part of me is opening to just let whatever's happening happen, and then part of me is saying, "Now, don't forget," you know, "this is the way things are, that [snaps fingers] like that, and it's gone." I feel like you've sort of already explained it when you said, you know, it's not just words, and if your base is really there, then the top of it can just move around, and it doesn't make so much difference what you do. Perhaps you've already answered me.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Mmm. You know, it is— You have that kind of problem, you know, because you are involved in just personal, you know, problem—problem just for yourself. So you have that kind of problem, you know. It is, you know— As long as it means that— As long as you are involved in personal problem, you know, it is whatever understanding you may have, that is just, you know— That understanding is, you know, only in bright side in its worst sense [laughs]. It doesn't, you know— The other side of it is not bright side or darkness— absolute. It is so, but because you are involved in personal practice, you know, you have no chance to realize the other side of it.

We are talking, you know— When we talk about this, you know, we are talking—I am talking as if I am an enlightened person, and you are listening to it as if you are enlightened person [laughs]. In other words, you know, all of us are bodhisattva, and as a bodhisattva we are discussing, you know, this kind of problem. But when you apply this kind of talking just for intellectual understanding or just [to] your problem only, that is—you have no chance to understand this [thumps something—perhaps book]—the other side of it. That is why you have that problem. It is good, you know. If you [are] really practicing bodhisattva way, whichever side it may be, it is okay, you know. When you criticize yourself, it is okay. When you do what you want to do, that is also okay. You are not doing two different things. According to the situation, you are doing something good always. But because, you know— Why you don't have the confidence in your, you know, in your activity or in your life is because you are—your practice is involved in selfish practice. Okay?

**Student A:** I— That's something I don't understand. I really don't understand where the boundaries of selfishness are.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Hmm?

**Student A:** I don't understand where selfishness begins and ends, you know. Like— I feel— Well, like, my whole life I was taught that if you can't help somebody, then don't do anything, you know?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Mm-hmm.

**Student A:** And I wouldn't— I couldn't understand, you know, how you could help anybody—how, you know— How are you going to help anybody? How would you possibly know what if [when] something is helpful to another person? And the only thing that I've ever come up with is to feel myself as a person, whatever bounds that may have—to be whoever I am and to just be human. And that is— I don't know how far that extends. I don't know what Margaret Crowley [?] is or how far she goes or how little she is.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Mm-hmm.

**Student A:** But I feel like the only way that I can possibly understand what human life is is to be human—to feel what it is to be human. And I don't understand when you say that that is selfish—to just experience everyday life.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Mm-hmm.

**Student A:** I don't understand that.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Mm-hmm. Don't understand, yeah. Because you don't, you know— You have— Your confidence is not big enough, strong enough. You say, you know, "I don't understand. I don't understand." That is what you are saying, you know. "I don't understand." What does it mean? If you don't understand, that is okay. Anyway, as long as you are here, you should do what you should do. You see?

**Student A:** But what is it that I should do? I—

**Suzuki-rōshi:** To follow our schedule, practice zazen, and chant sutra. That is what you should do here. So you are very well protected here. In city life, it is not so simple, you know. When you are in city, you are—our practice cannot be so simple. So it is difficult to criticize people, as [Grahame] Petchey<sup>6</sup> said, you know, who is in city, who is involved in

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<sup>6</sup> Grahame Petchey was a student of Suzuki-rōshi and the first president of San

family life, or, you know—it is very difficult. So here you are completely protected, and in this well-protected Tassajara, you should practice our way. You see? You want to, you know— You are trying too much, you know. Tassajara practice and city practice, and you want to attain everything in one place, you know. So that is why you are mixed up. "Human." What does it mean, you know? There is no human life except zazen or eating. [*Tape turned.*] ... city life. So there is no problem, even though you go to city life. Even though you have more complicated life than this. Okay. Same. You are still trying to, you know, feel something which is impossible for you to feel right now. As Dōgen-zenji said, "There is no bird which fly," you know, "after you know what it is," you know [laughs]. Only way is just— This is, you know, our—should be our way: "Just fly." [Laughs, laughter.] Okay?

**Student A:** I don't understand that last statement you made.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Ah. You are, you know, I think you are fighting with something. You don't— You— Why don't you fly just like this? You are making yourself, you know, feel bad. That's all. "You don't understand." Because you try to understand, you don't understand. If you just [are] involved in our practice day-by-day, you know, when you get up, you should get up. Just get up. Okay? "What shall I do? I am very tired," you know [laughs]. So that is why you have, you know— Then you may think next time, "To become tired is some— I have some reason why I am tired. And when, maybe, when it is tired, you know, to stay in bed is human nature [laughs]. Why is it bad to stay in bed?" Something like that. There is no, you know, limit.

Oh, there is very, you know, interesting story. In China, in war period when the six powerful countries who were fighting—and king of the Sei, you know, wanted to invade the kingdom of Gi. But there were very good minister, and, you know, he wanted to persuade his king not to invade another country. So he talked about— He started to talk about the wonderful dog. And it was a good hunting dog. His master, you know— The dog's master set the hunting dog after—to catch a hare. Both, you know, both hare and hunting dog were very good. So even though the hunting dog was good, he couldn't catch him, you know. So at last, both hunting dog and hare tired out and dead [laughs]. And who gets, you know? No one gets any benefit [laughs] by setting a hunting dog after a hare. Except the, you know— If someone picked, you know, dead hare and dead dog up, he may be the only one who gets some benefit [laughs]. He talked about that kind of famous hunting dog. But he did not, you know, his master did not stop invading the neighboring country, you know. There is famous story.

We are something, you know, doing something like that. There is no end

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in chasing after: What will be the true way? What is human nature? Too much, you know— Our effort should not be directed in that way, or in this way, you know. Those things. Although I am explaining it, but we should not be— We shouldn't— Just try to understand or— It will help, you know. But you—we shouldn't think this is only way, this is the best way to understand Buddhism. So maybe because I am explaining this, so I am maybe—I am encouraging you to think about [laughs] your problem. But it is not so, actually. Okay? [Laughs.]

**Student A:** No [she laughs].

**Suzuki-rōshi:** "No." That is want of, you know, spirit of real practice. Okay? If you come here, you should practice hard. Just practice. Practice is first, okay? Forget all about human nature [laughs, laughter]. Human nature is in your practice. There is nowhere [else?]. Okay? *Hai*.

**Student B:** When I am fully awake I have, maybe, a little control over my desires, but in the mornings [laughs, laughter]—

**Suzuki-rōshi:** That is what I am saying. In the morning you have trouble. I know that [laughs, laughter]. So that is why I say, "Get up!" [Pats on table four times.]

**Student B:** And how do you do that?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** How you do that? Just do it. Or else someone will go and hit you. [Picks up stick. Makes a sort of humorous growl. Laughs, laughter.] Okay? [Laughter.] Great—

**Student B:** I "just got up" I think a couple of times, you know—

**Suzuki-rōshi:** That is good.

**Student B:** —jumped out of bed. But it was really— It was such a big thing that— [Laughs, laughter.]

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Yeah, that is big thing [laughter]. So if you can get up, you know, pretty well, I think your practice is almost okay [laughs]. That is very good chance to practice our zazen, you know. Just get up. Okay? That is the most important thing.

**Student B:** It's like I hear the bell, and as soon as I hear it there's this big thing—

**Suzuki-rōshi:** I don't hear anything from it. [Laughter.]

**Student B:** —and I just—I don't want to move. [Laughter.] Then I

should get up before I hear the bell. [Laughs, laughter.]

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Okay? I am very strict [laughter] on that point. *Hai.*

**Student C [David Chadwick]:** Rōshi. You've made several comments on—concerning attitude toward the words behind you. [Presumably on the blackboard.] Does this— Does what you have said apply also, say, to the *Heart Sutra* and to all sutras?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Yes.

**David Chadwick:** Okay. You're not making any comment—any particular comment on the *Sandōkai*.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** No.

**David Chadwick:** Okay.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** No particular comment. Same thing. *Hai.*

**Student D:** I was only sitting zazen for some years, and then a student here— People sometimes ask me questions about our practice, and about my practice, and why I am doing what I'm doing.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Mm-hmm.

**Student D [Gerry --]:** For example, someone may say to me, "How long have you been sitting zazen? How long have you been practicing?" And, at such a time, I may think, "Well, Gerry, you could say you've been practicing from beginningless beginning. And perhaps from my experience and from my intellectual understanding at the present time, I might expound on beginningless beginning. Or I might say, "Oh, three years or four years." I wonder, in such circumstance, if I say one thing or the other, there will be some communication and some information exchanged about one thing or another. But if I say, "Two or three years," it's very straightforward.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Mm-hmm.

**Student D:** It's quite to the point, and it's true, and it's perhaps more honest. If I say "beginningless beginning" and speak about such a thing, it may be that I know quite well something intellectually about that. But to truly understand that requires considerable confidence. And if I don't have the confidence at the particular time the question is asked, how shall I answer such a question?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** *Mmm.* It's up to you [laughs]. Yeah. It is, you know—

If someone who want to understand intellectually what is our practice, maybe we have to answer more intellectual way, even though it will not help completely. Intellectual understanding is important, but sometime, you know, you are okay, you know. You hesitate to give some intellectual understanding, so that is okay. But if you become proud of, you know, your intellectual understanding, it may be big mistake, I think. So how you answer for such question is very difficult. But if you understand the intention of making question for you, maybe, I can—you can answer in some appropriate way, I think. *Hai*.

**Student E:** Rōshi, when you study a book, what does the book give you? You.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Give me?

**Student E:** Mm-hmm.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** *Mmm*. Mostly, you know, if you— I study various teachers' way. Now, for me it is necessary to know about various Zen masters. For you, maybe, it is not so important. But for me, I must have some clear picture of what I'm talking about. Or else we—I cannot say anything [laughs], you see? That is why I study before lecture. And my teacher always told me, "Even though it doesn't help," you know, "before lecture you should study." [Laughs, laughter.] *Hai*.

**Student F:** Could you speak a little on the nature of sound and of noise?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Sound and noise [laughs]? Some sound, you know— When you, you know, listen to it, you know, when you listen to it in zazen, you can distinguish sound from noise, you know. If you want to— Why I discriminate your sound or noise, you know, is because I want to, you know, I want to encourage your practice as a teacher. But, you know, sometime I don't— I just practice zazen. Just practice zazen with you, forgetting all about teacher or disciple [laughs]. Sometime. Sometime, you know, I feel I have to help you, so I, you know, discriminate your practice. Sometime I correct your posture, you know. But sometime I don't, because I want to sit, maybe, you know, with you. I think if I sit with you, you know, anyway, I am helping you, I am quite sure. But sometime I think it is necessary to correct your posture and to listen to you [hit] *mokugyō* or drum or bell.

It is not so easy— It is quite easy to tell, you know. You know, it is like to hand sutra cards for people. When you receive it, you know, the feeling you have, you know, is sometime, you know, maybe, you know— Sometime it is because of your, you know, disturbed mind, you may not feel so good. But if it is handed to you, you know, with some good feeling, you will naturally feel good. The way of talk, you know,

everything is said. So, you know— In Japan, the— In bus station or in, you know, in train station they are clipping our ticket, you know. Someone, you know, will give you very good feeling just, you know, clip: "*Hai. Hai. Hai.*" You know [laughs]. There is big difference in the way they clip our ticket. [Laughs.] I am talking about that kind of thing.

Oh. [Apparently discovers how late it is.]

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Sources: Contemporaneous transcript by Marian Derby; City Center transcript entered onto disk by Jose Escobar, 1997. Verbatim transcript (checked against tape) by Bill Redican 6/1/00.