

Shunryū Suzuki-rōshi
SANDŌKAI LECTURE IX
Saturday, June 20, 1970
Tassajara

[The following lines of the *Sandōkai* are discussed in this lecture:

Line 27 *Meichū ni atatte an ari,*
Line 28 *ansō wo motte ō koto nakare.*
Line 29 *Anchū ni atatte mei ari,*
Line 30 *meisō wo motte miru koto nakare.*

Line 27 Within brightness actually there is utter darkness;
Line 28 but you should not meet someone just with darkness.
Line 29 Within darkness there is brightness
Line 30 but you should not see others only with the eyes of brightness.]

First I will explain the two terms *mei* and *an*, "brightness" and "darkness." Brightness means relative, dualistic world of term and words, you know—the thinking world or visible world in which we live. And darkness means, you know, absolute world where there is no exchange value or materialistic value or spiritual value even—the world our words does not reach—the world our thinking mind cannot reach. Beyond words, beyond thinking there is world. This is the world of absolute—the opposite to the world of relative or dualistic world.

And it is necessary for us who live in realm of—realm of duality to have good understanding of the absolute, which may be the idea of deity or god, usually. But in Buddhism, we do not, you know, have any idea about deity or about god because the absolute is the absolute because it is beyond our understanding or dualistic thinking. But we cannot deny this world of absolute, or a kind of idea of deity.

But as people may say, Buddhism is atheism. Maybe so, you know, because we have no particular idea of God. We know there is, but we don't want to know what it is, because we know that the absolute is absolute because our dualistic mind cannot reach. And we know that our—we know the limit of our thinking mind or intellectuality. Buddhists intellectualize our intellectuality, so we do not say anything about the absolute. But there is. That is what we mean by *an*. *An* is, you know, "darkness, utter darkness."

Mei is "sun and moon." *Mei*—the character *mei* is—means "sun and moon":



[*mei*]

This [*ari*] is—this word—"there is," you know—this is verb "is"—"there is":



[*ari*]

[Line 27 *Meichū ni atatte an ari,*
Line 28 *ansō wo motte ō koto nakare.*
Line 29 *Anchū ni atatte mei ari,*
Line 30 *meisō wo motte miru koto nakare.]*

"Within"—this [*chū*] is, at the same time, "middle." This is *masani*¹ [*atatte?*]*—it means that—"actually." "Actually in—within—within brightness, mei, masani, actually, within brightness, mei-chū, and there is darkness, utter darkness." The brightness means relative world, and relative world—"within relative world there is utter darkness."*

This is a literal translation. But it doesn't make sense [laughs]*—literal translation doesn't make sense. "Within relative world there is—there is darkness." So we must—we must—we must understand the actual meaning of this character ari, "there is." "There is"—"There is"—you know, your—your—when you say "there is," you know, "there is something—there is something on the table, on the earth, or in Tassajara," "there is something in Tassajara or on something [or] in something."*

¹ *Masani* appears in Line 34; it is possible that Suzuki-rōshi was skipping down to that line, per Japanese poetic practice.

But this—in this case, this *ari* is different character from another character of *ari*. This character means, you know, this is—this part of the character *ari* means, you know, "flesh" or "skin."



[*ari*, character for "there is"]



[Root for "flesh"]²



[*hada*, character for "skin, body"]

So already a part of it, you know, not just "there is something," but that the way it exist is closely related to, you know, "something."

So—*mei*, "brightness and darkness is not, you know, in—in brightness there is darkness. This is more dualistic understanding, but when we use this [*ari*] character, you know, closer relationship darkness and brightness. Like, you know, I have my skin [laughs]. I have my skin, you may say. You may say, "I have my hand." [Laughs.] Yet your hand is, you know, a part of you. Your skin is a part of you.

So actually, you know, there—it—it is not any more dualistic, you know. You yourself—skin is you yourself; your hands are your hands. But you say—I don't know why—"I have two hands." But hands may say [laughs]—I have—hands, you know, may feel very funny [laughs, laughter]. "Oh, I am, you know, a part of you, you know, and you say you have two hands. What does it mean? Do you mean you have four hands instead of me [two]?" you may say.

So, if possible, I think you must have another character for "have," you know. Chinese people has two characters. When we say, "There is a stone or book or the table," they use another character, *zai*:



[*zai*]

And when we say, "We have two hands," we use this character [*ari*]—[which means] "there is" too:

² From Andrew N. Nelson, *The Modern Reader's Japanese-English Character Dictionary*, 2nd edition, p. 738.



[ari]

We say "there is," actually, "two hands": *nihon te ga arimasu*—you know, "there is two hands"—*anata ni wa*—you know—"you—in you there is two hands," we say. In that case, the character we use is this [ari].

So it means, anyway, the very close relationship between brightness and darkness. And actually darkness itself is brightness, actually, you know. Dark or bright is within your mind, you know, because within your mind you have some standard or degree or measurement, you know, how bright this room is, you know. If it is, you know, usually—unusually bright we say this room is bright. If it is unusually dark, you know, you say it is dark. But it is, you know—you can say this room is bright; at the same time, you c- [partial word—"can"]—someone may say, this room is very dark." Someone who came from San Francisco may say, "Oh, Tassajara is very dark." Someone from—came out of cave, may say, "This Tassajara is very bright, like a capital city." So bright or dark is not—is within ourselves—within. Because we have some standard we say bright or dark, but actually brightness is darkness and darkness is brightness.

So even though we say "utter darkness," it does not mean there is nothing in utter darkness. There is many things. But when you have bright light you will see many things, in term of, you know, Caucasian or Japanese, you know. That's all—man and woman, stone or lamp. This kind of thing exist in brightness.

But when we say da- [partial word] "utter darkness" or "world of absolute," which is beyond our thinking, you may think this is some world which is quite different from our actual human world, but this is also a mistake. If you understand in that way—if you understand darkness in that way, that darkness is not which [what] we mean by darkness.

You prepare, you know, various—you will—I think you are preparing some dishes for Ed—Ed's wedding, you know. You may, you know, dish out various, you know, food in separate, you know—this is dessert, this is salad, soup, you know, in different dishes. That is brightness. But actually, when you eat, [laughs] you know, in your mouth various food will be mixed up. There is no dessert or no soup or no bread. All mixed up in your tummy.

At that time it works, you know. When it is clearly dish out, it is not yet working. It is not actually food [laughs]. Food is, you know, brightness. And when it is in your tummy, you know, it is darkness. But even in darkness there is lettuce and soup and everything in your tummy [laughs, laughter]. Same thing—same thing, you know, changing its form, it start to work.

So utter darkness, actually—things happens in its true sense. In brightness, you know, you feel good and you feel as if you have a big dish, you know, but food is not serving its—their own purpose yet. That is brightness.

So when you don't know what you are doing, actually you are acting fully, with full mindedness—with full mind. When you are thinking, you are not yet, you know, start to work. You are not yet working on it. So actually when we, you know, start to work, there is bright side and dark side. Both dark side and bright side is there. When you are actually practicing Buddhist way, there is bright—bright side and dark side, and relationship between darkness and brightness is this [*ari*] relationship, like a relationship between skin and our body. You cannot actually say this is skin and this is body.

So—

[Line 28] *ansō wo motte ō koto nakare.*

Nakare is "not"—"do not." *Motte* "with." *Ansō* "dark side, dark outlook." "Do not"— This is *ō*. *Ō* means "to meet" or sometime "to treat." "To meet and treat," you know. "To own [?] and treat." Or "to meet and treat," or "to meet and treat someone like your friend."

So you should not treat things just, you know—you should not treat or understand, maybe—*ō*.

This character *ō*—*au*, "to meet, to encounter," means like, you know, a mountain or like a cloud to meet a mountain. You know, *ō*. Here is mountain, you know, Tassajara mountain. Here is cloud. And cloud from ocean will meet mountains. This kind of relationship is *ō*.

With the understanding of brightness—darkness, you should not meet with things, you know. With understanding of brightness—darkness, you should not meet people. [Laughs.] If you, you know, meet people with blind—with your eyes shut, you know, ignoring your friend, you know—how old is he or how handsome he is [laughs], ignoring all the characteristic of your friend, you should not meet friend. It is because that is just one-sided understanding, because, you know, in the darkness there is brightness. In the darkness, even though you understand the

intimacy—intimate relationship between you and your friend. But friend is friend; you are you, you know.

It is maybe one very close relationship, so maybe relationship will be one like husband and his wife. But husband is husband, and wife is wife. That is real relationship. So don't meet your friend without understanding of brightness of duality, you know. Close relationship is dark, you know, because if your relationship is very close, you know, one with him or her, very close, but you are you and your friend is your friend. So you should not meet with someone with the idea of darkness only. So you should not meet someone—someone is, you know, abbreviated [understood]. You should not meet someone with darkness. *Sō* means "characteristic" or "outlook."

And this is—and next one [line] is:

[Line 29] *Anchū ni atatte mei ari.*

This [Lines 29 and 30] is opposite [of Lines 27 and 28]. *Masani—an—an* is "darkness." Again, this third line [Line 29] repeating same thing in different way. Now "In the darkness there is brightness." Same thing, you know. In the darkness—in the darkness, even, you know, [when] we are in intimate relationship, there is, you know, man and woman, which is brightness, duality of man and woman. So, you should not say, or you should not see the other—see others with the eyes of brightness only, because the other side of brightness is darkness. Darkness and brightness is two side of one coin.

We are liable to be caught by preconceived idea. If you, you know, have—if you experience something bad with somebody—"Oh, he is a bad person. He is always," you know, "mean with me. Always mean with me." That is to say, he, you know, see people with just brightness, you know: "He is always mean." But it cannot be so. You should know why he is so mean with you, because the relationship is so close, you know, so intimate [laughs]. So it is easy for him to be mean with you. It is easy to [be] mad at you, you know. If you are quite stranger, you know, you cannot—he cannot be so angry with you. Because your relationship is so close, so intimate, relationship is not—is more than relationship of the two persons. It is just one.

So when, you know, he is angry [laughs], you will be angry, that's all—because you are one. So when one is angry, the other will be angry. So you—if—when you understand in that way, you understand the other side of the brightness, which is darkness. "Oh! He is so angry with me because he is so close to me." If you understand in that way, even though you have become angry, you will not feel so bad. This is rather difficult, you know. When you think, "He is bad," it is difficult for us to

change the idea of "He is bad." But it cannot be so. Sometime he was bad, but now we don't know whether he is good or bad. We should see.

So we should not cling to the idea of darkness or brightness. We should not cling to the idea of equality or idea of diversity or differentiation. But this is pretty difficult. It seems to be pretty difficult. Most people, once he has some grudge with someone, it is almost impossible to change their relationship. But if we are Buddhist, we should be able to switch our mind from bad to good and from good to bad. If you are able to do so, "bad" does not mean bad, "good" does not mean good anymore. But at the same time, good is good and bad is bad [laughs]. Do you understand? [Laughter.] In this way we should understand our thinking—our relationship between—between us.

The—there is some poem: [*Tape turned over.*]

The mother of blue mountain
and the son of—or children of white cloud.
All day long they live together,
and yet they do not know
who is mother and who is children, you know [laughs].

The mountain is mountain, and white cloud is white cloud floating back and forth, you know [laughs], around the mountain like a children. There is white [blue] mountain, and there is white—there is blue mountain and there is white clouds. There is, but they don't know that they are white cloud or blue mountain. Even though they don't know, they know well—so well that they don't know.

That is the experience you will have in your zazen practice. You will hear insects and stream. Actually you hear it. But you are sitting and stream is running. You are sitting and stream is running. But actually you are hearing it—you hear it. Even though you hear it, you have no idea of stream or no idea of zazen. You are just on the black cushion. You are just there like a blue mountain with white cloud.

Now this kind of relationship [is] fully explained in those four lines [27-30]. The translation goes: "Within—within—within brightness there is darkness. Don't be attached to the darkness," you know. "Within the darkness there is brightness. Don't see—" I forgot. "Don't see with—"

Student A (David Chadwick): Rōshi, are you talking about Blyth's translation?

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm.

David: He says the same thing—Blyth.

Suzuki-rōshi: Oh.

David: "Don't be attached to the brightness."

Suzuki-rōshi: Uh-huh. That is Masunaga's translation. Translation cannot be, you know, perfect. It is difficult, you know [laughs]. You know, it is impossible, you know [laughs]. No words for this kind of expression or *ari*. *Ari* means "nothing." "There is" means "there is no." "Brightness" means "darkness." [Laughs.] Then, you know, "brightness" doesn't mean anything if it also means "darkness." [Laughs.] That is why I said "double-edged,"³ you know. Brightness? Darkness? Which is it? What is it? But there is brightness and darkness.

There should not be any question [laughs] on this point, but if you have some question please ask me [laughter]—if you want to get hit! [Laughs, laughter.]

Student B: Rōshi, what about focus?

Focus?

Yeah. Like you say, "The clouds don't know they are the children of the mountain," and vice-versa. But we humans, when we unwrap our *oryoki* bowls, we focus on doing that, not listening to the stream—a different activity.

Suzuki-rōshi: No. Same activity.

Student B: For me it's different.

Suzuki-rōshi: [Laughs, laughter.] That is why you get stuck. [1 word inaudible—"sorry"?]

Student B: If I [1-2 words inaudible] deserve [?] it.

Suzuki-rōshi: To you it is different [laughing], that's right.

Student B: I'm not focused, you know.

Suzuki-rōshi: When you really focus on it, there is—there is brightness and darkness. When you are thinking, you know, about it, there are two side. Now you are asking question, you know. When you ask question you are thinking [laughs], so, you know, you know, it is hard for me to answer for your question. So I may be very angry with you. This is only way. [Laughs, laughter.] If you get hit, you will stop thinking about it.

Student B: Probably.

³ See SR-70-06-03.

Suzuki-rōshi: [Laughs.] Probably.

Student C: Rōshi, why do we shave our heads?

Suzuki-rōshi: Hmm?

Student C: Why do we shave our heads?

Suzuki-rōshi: [Laughs, laughter.] So that you can, you know, your thinking mind can go as smoothly as like this [rubbing his shaved head with his hand]⁴ [laughs, laughter]. Very smooth. Bright, dark, you know, very smoothly—because, you know, [two words unclear; then makes *shhh* noise, imitating razor]. To get rid of ornament, you know—unnecessary, you know, we should not have anything which is not necessary [laughs, laughter—a student may have done something]. Some other questions?

Student D: Rōshi?

Suzuki-rōshi: *Hai.* Oh.

Student D: In the *Diamond Sūtra* it says that if you're suffering misfortunes in this life it is because of sins or mistakes you committed in past lives, and that by suffering these misfortunes now, you will work out these mistakes or make retribution for them, you know, atone—atone for these mistakes or sins and open the way for enlightenment. I don't—it seemed like a very heavy load when I read it [laughs], you know. I didn't understand it. I didn't—it added a new dimension [laughs] to my problem [laughter].

Suzuki-rōshi: It will help, you know. Because, you know, that you suffer now means, you know, not because someone make you suffer or—but you caused your suffering. So that is why you suffer. If you understand in that way, you have no complaint. And at the same time, we say if you understand only in that way, it is—you understand things this way, you know—you understand your life just from the viewpoint of, you know, suffering or karma, you know, in that way—dualistic way why we suffer. "What should we do?"—like this [gestures?]. That is to be caught by the idea of karma.

Student D: Idea of calm or karma?

Suzuki-rōshi: Karma. You are caught by some idea already if you think in that way. So we should be free from that kind of one-sided view, which is this side [gesturing?]. Even though we say "karma," you know, karma doesn't exist. Even is we say, you know, karma doesn't exist,

⁴ From early transcript.

then you may say whatever you do, it's all right, you may say. That is— That means that you are caught by the idea of darkness.

So the real way is like, you know—the other day I said—I told—I discussed—we discussed about earwig [laughs], you know—why we kill earwigs. We have to kill them, but, you know, but you shouldn't say it is all right to kill them, you know. It is not all right [laughs, laughter]. Both, you know. You have to kill it, but it is not all right to kill it. We should understand our activity from both sides. If you don't feel so good, you should make more effort. You should find out how to, you know, how not to disturb earwig [laughs] and protect your vegetables. Even so, you will, you know, you waste too much time. If you waste too much time, Tassajara student cannot eat anything [laughs, laughter]. So anyway, you have to continue, you know, to make—to find out some good idea one after another. That is our way. *Hai*.

Student E: Rōshi, what is the difference between understanding things from both sides, or understanding our activities from both sides, and not understanding things at all—not understanding our activities at all?

Suzuki-rōshi: Oh—not understanding at all is [laughs]—no need to talk about. But that is not true, you know. If you tell them—if you see—if you have chance to listen to lecture or listen to—read some books, you will un- [partial word]—we will understand. But to understand intellectually—intellectual understanding is understanding of—hmm—ah, this is difficult to translate— Understanding of— You know, truth—truth is truth. But when you understand truth by your mind, truth which you have in your mind is also true, you know. There is no two truths—only one truth is truth. But the truth which you have—which you understand with your mind is not true with your actual activity or actual feeling or actual life, because our actual life does not go so easily as you understand. You know this is perfectly—this is perfect truth. But for us it is not true [laughs], you know. We cannot act in that way.

So there is two kinds of—way of understanding the truth. One is intellectual truth, which is called *honbunjo*. *Honbunjo*. Understanding of original [one word unclear] words—*honbun*—*hon* means "fundamental." *Bun* means "judgment"—"truth which is true—which is always true." Whether we understand it or not, truth is true, you know. "We understand," we say, but that understanding is just intellectual understanding. That understanding is right, whether we understand it or not, whether Buddha appear in this world or not, the truth is truth, you know.

But truth for us, actually, is—for Buddha it was true, but for us it is not true, you know. We cannot accept truth as it is, so for us it is not true. So that is truth in our practice. From viewpoint of practice, truth is not always true, so we should not mixed—mix up two truths: truth which is

always true [and] truth which is true with Buddha or with some people but not true with beginners. Does it make sense? *Hai*.

Student F: Reverend Suzuki? Is that difference between— Buddha stressed the difference between *sammā-samādhi* and *samādhi*. Is that the difference? Being—

Suzuki-rōshi: *Samādhi*?

Student F: *Samá*,⁵ "equanimity," or "right *samādhi*"—

Suzuki-rōshi: Mm-hmm.

Student F: —and *samādhi*, which was—

Suzuki-rōshi: I don't understand Sanskrit, so—

Student F: Hmm. *Samādhi* is "truth," and *samá* is "equanimity" or "right."

Suzuki-rōshi: "Equal"?

Student F: Equanimity or rightfulness. And Buddha stressed in his time that many of the religions in his time had attained *samādhi*—many people had attained *samādhi*—but Buddha did not accept this *samādhi* and—until it was set round with equa- [partial word]—a univer- [partial word]—equanimity. Is that what you just said?

Suzuki-rōshi: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. You know, to stress some picture is not our way, you know. We more— We put more emphasis on actual, you know, our actual life. That is practice. That is why we must practice even though we have—all of us have Buddha nature. That is true whether Buddha said [it] or not. That is true. But unfortunately [laughs], you know, for most of us it is not true [laughs]. I don't know why, you know. *Hai*.

Student G: Rōshi, when one comes to see the darkness in the light and the light in the darkness, do they finally become the same thing—

⁵ The student may have been asking about Pali *sammā* as well as Sanskrit *samá*. The Pali *sammā* means "supreme," "perfect," or "right"; the corresponding term in Sanskrit is *samyak*. *Samá* means "equability," "equanimity," or "impeturbability" (Monier-Williams, p. 1152). *Sammā-samādhi*, or "right concentration," is the last link of the Eightfold Path. *Sammā-samādhi* has been defined as "concentration of mind associated with wholesome (*kusala*) consciousness, which eventually may reach the absorptions (*jhāna*)"—Nyanatiloka, *Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines*, 4th edition, Kandy, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society, 1980, p. 109.

darkness and light—or do they always remain separately darkness and light?

Suzuki-rōshi: Darkness? No.

Student G: Do they become one—do they become the same thing?

Suzuki-rōshi: Yes. Yes. Same thing—

Student G: Yes.

Suzuki-rōshi: —you know, but our lazy mind, you know, separate darkness from brightness, and we seek for darkness. But that is still lazy—to seek for, you know, the mind—to seek for darkness or absolute. So to plunge into the bright brightness, to find darkness in brightness, or to find out buddha-nature in our—in perfect zazen is our zazen. Anyway, whether you are sleepy or not, you know, good students [laughs] or bad students, you should sit. That is only way to have darkness in your bright brightness—dualistic practice.

Okay.

[Bell rings. Chant.]

Sources: Contemporaneous transcript by Marian Derby and City Center transcript entered onto disk by Jose Escobar, 1997. Transcript checked against tape and made verbatim by Bill Redican (10/16/00).