

VII.

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NOTE: This lecture covers the following lines: SHIDAI NO SHO
 ONOZUKARA FUKUSU, KONO SONO HABA O URU GA GOTOSHI, HIWA
 NESSHI, DAZEWA DOYO, MIZU WA URUOI, CHI WA KENGO.

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As we have big blackboard I want to explain these characters (the Chinese characters and the Japanese pronunciation.) These characters are, of course, Chinese characters, but Japanese people read these characters in Japanese, without changing the order of the characters (written order of the characters). How we read these characters is... (Here Roshi gave an explanation of the difference in reading the original Chinese text in Chinese and in Japanese. A direct translation of this part of the lecture would be rather confusing because he pointed to characters so often, but an example of one line given below may help in understanding:

Original Chinese Characters:

Chinese reading of the Characters (Japanesized-Chinese or "on" reading):

Japanese grammatical changes and additions:

Simple English Translation:

SHI DAI NO SHO, Nature of four elements. NO means of. ONOZUKARA means naturally. FUKUSU means resume. This (GOTOSHI) means like and this (KO) means child. This (URU) means have or obtain and this (SONO) means that or his. (HABA) means mother. KONO SONO HABA O URU GA GOTOSHI. The Japanese order of words is different from the Chinese order of words, which is something like English. So we call these words OKURIGANA, words which are peculiar to Japanese language. This (NO) means of. This (SHO) is subject, and the word (NO) makes this word (SHIDAI) adjective of this noun (SHO). SHI DAI NO SHO, Nature of four

elements. ONOZUKARA, naturally FUKUSU, resume. KONO SONO HAH
 O URU GA GOTOSHI, like a child get his mother. HIWA NESSHI,
 KAZEWA DOYO, MIZU WA URUOI, CHI WA KENGO, fire heats; wind
 blows; water wets; and earth is solid.

So we read Chinese scripture in two ways. Sometime in
 Japanese (demonstrating how the Japanese will read the Chinese
 characters in a different order from that in which they are
 written). Our eyes should go back and forth like this
 (demonstrating). Sometime this word (character) may be two or
 three lines ahead, and after reading two or three lines we
 have to come back to this (character). Rather complicated, but
 we have been reading in that way when we read Chinese language
 and Chinese books.

Tonight I must explain SHI DAI, four elements. Buddhists
 have idea of elements of various being. We count four elements:
 fire, water, wind and earth. These elements have their own
 nature. We shouldn't say so, but tentatively we think these
 four elements have their own nature. Nature of fire is to make
 things perfect, like you boil something. By heating things
 they will be more mixed up, or perfect, we say. Anyway perfection.
 And wind brings things to maturity. I don't know why, but
 wind-nature encourages things to be more mature. (Comparing
 character for fire with character of wind). Little bit different
 from this word. This (character for air) is more organic
 activity. This (character for fire) has more chemical activity.
 And this, nature of water is to contain things in it. Wherever
 you go there is water. So we rather think opposite way. Water
 contains everything. Instead of saying that there is water in
 the bulk of the tree we may say water contains bulk of the tree,
 leaves and everything. So water is some great, big being in
 which everything exists. We exist in water. And solid nature is
 the element of earth. Earth does not mean land, but some solid
 nature of the material is earth. So, according to Buddhists,
 if you divide things into the smallest piece imaginable (I
 don't know English term for it)...

Student: Atomic?

Roshi: Something like that.

Student: Molecule?

Roshi: Atom, maybe. But that is not final piece. That final piece is called GOKUMI. GOKUMI is the smallest piece imaginable. That final being has these four nature.

So we say final atom consists of these four elements. This is something like modern physics. I don't know how to explain it because I don't know the proper words...plus and minus and what final atom consists of is plus and minus. And these (sentences) are something like that. And it is strange enough to say they have same idea. Modern physics think final being has no weight or no size. It is just current. We Buddhists think in that way. Although final being has those four elements, and accordingly we can say final piece consists of four elements, but that is not some solid being. When we reach to this nature of being that is just Emptiness, we say. So when we come to this idea we come to the idea of Emptiness. Those elements is not something which exist actually...some materialistic being. It is something which is not material, which is just energy. So we call it GOKUMI.

So this is four elements (characters for fire, wind, water and earth) but we add one more, and we say five elements. Four elements has one more which is Empty Nature. So that HIWA NESSHI, KAZEWA DOYO, MIZU WA URUOI, CHI WA KENGO) is empty, all empty. Even though it is empty, from Emptiness these nature will appear, will come into being. And as soon as those four nature come into being we form idea of element or final piece. And material consist of those elements. That is Buddhistic understanding of being. So it looks like we are explaining, talking about, some material, but when we come to this idea of elements, those elements are not just material. They are both spiritual and material. And when we come to these elements thinking mind is included. So we say it is Empty. So when we say the idea of Emptiness it includes both material and spiritual, objective and subjective world. And Emptiness is final Being to which our thinking mind cannot reach.

So SHIDAI NŪ SHŌ, nature of four elements, naturally in itself (ONŌZUKARA). You can say Empty, but here he says, resume to its own nature (ONŌZUKARA FUKUSU). It means to come to Emptiness. (KONO SONO HAMA O URU GA GOTOSHI). Just like a

child has his mother. When there is a child there must be his mother. Without mother there is no child. That child is here means that mother is here. That Emptiness is here means that the four nature is here. Even though four nature is there that is nothing but tentative formation of the final Emptiness. That is same thing as a child has its...his own mother.

All those four sentences finally, what they mean (what he is talking about) is dependency of being. Although there are many elements, those elements, originally, naturally, resume to their own nature. So although there are many things, each one of them is independent. And a child is independent, even though he has his own mother. And fire is independent with its nature of heat; and wind is independent with its nature of moving; and water is independent with its nature of moisture; and earth is independent with its nature of solidness. So it means everything is independent. And these four sentences follow the ten sentences which are talking about truth of independency. In this SANDOKAI, Sekito is explaining the reality in two ways. Now he is explaining reality from the viewpoint of independency (four elements are independent). Although it has its own source, although he has his mother, a child is independent. Fire is independent with its nature of heat; water is independent with its nature of moisture; and earth is independent with its nature of solidness.

(Reading from Masunaga's translation and adding his own interpretation now and then) Here translation goes...I don't know who's translation it is) "The characteristic of the four elements drew together"...resume itself...resume its original nature, maybe, which is Emptiness, "like a child returning to its mother." This is rather poor translation, maybe. Like a child has its mother is more accurate. That there is child means that there is mother. That is what he means. "The heat of fire, the moving wind, the water wet, and the solid earth." It is better to put period here (after earth). And maybe, like a child has its mother. And fire, element of fire has its nature of heat. The element of wind has its nature of moving; the element of water with its nature of wet; the element of earth with its nature of solidness are independent, maybe. If

you put period here (after earth). And has its own nature.
 (The sentences he was referring to were punctuated in the following way):

"The characteristics of the four elements draw together
 Like a child returning to its mother.
 The heat of fire, the moving wind,
 The water wet, and the solid earth:"

Then maybe it makes clear sense. (Putting the period after earth instead of after mother)

"Eyes to see, sounds to hear, and smells--
 The sour and salty taste on the tongue.
 But in each related thing,
 As leaves grow from roots,
 End and beginning return to the source.
 'High and low' are used respectively:"

This is for the next lecture but I will read it (the corrections) so that you can understand the previous sentences better. It is better to put period here (after "respectively").

Those six sentences mean the understanding of independency. Things exist in two ways. One is independency, and the other is dependency or interrelatedness. But although they are interrelated, they are independent. Each one of you are independent, but you are related with each other. Even though you are related with each other you are independent. So you can say both sides. So all these sentences expressing the idea of reality from the side of independency.

Do you understand what he means? Usually when we say independent you have no idea of dependency. That is non-Buddhistic understanding. Buddhist always know reality; we understand things completely so we will not be mixed up. We will not be confused by saying dependency or independency. If someone says, "Everything is independent." "O.K. That is so." And if some other person says, "Things are interrelated," "That is also so." We understand both sides. So whatever you say that is O.K. But if someone stick to some one-sided idea we may say, "NO!" He will say, "Everything is independent." We will say, "No!" If you stick to the idea of independency of the being only I will say to him, "No, you are wrong!" And if someone else stick to the idea of dependency then we will say, "No, you are wrong!"

There are many koans like this. If the final karmic fire burned everything up, at that time whether Buddha Nature still there or not, that is question.¹ And sometimes he says "Yes, it exists." But some other time someone came and asked him, "When the karmic fire burned everything up, what will become of the Buddha Nature?" "It will not exist," he may answer. Both is true. People may ask him, "Then why did you say it will exist?" Then he will get a big salp. "What are you talking about? Don't you understand what I mean?" Buddha Nature will not exist is right and will exist is also right.

From viewpoint of independency everything exist with its Buddha Nature, even whatever happens to this world. But, even so, nothing exists when we see from the viewpoint of Utter Darkness or Absolute. Then nothing exists. That which exists is Nothingness, or Darkness in which many things will exist, or what you see, or what you say about it is Nothing. There is no way to explain things individually. This is just intellectual explanation. But here we have actual feeling. What kind of feeling you will have about things you see, what kind of difference you have, from the understanding of usual person of just understanding of being, should be discussed more. If we see things which happen, at that time, when you see them, you will appreciate things which you see, and you will appreciate, one by one, everything. There you have pure gratitude. Even though you are observing one piece of flower, just one flower, that one flower include everything. It is not just flower. It is the Absolute; it is Buddha himself. We see in that way. But at the same time, that which exists is just flower and there is no one to see and nothing to be seen. That which exists is just flower. That is the feeling we have in our practice and in our everyday activity. Wherever you work you have this kind of feeling, a continuity of that kind of refreshed, pure gratitude. So to see, to treat things, is to treat Buddha's equipment, for us. We understand in this way.

But when we memorize something, when we think about something in term of duality, we observe things intellectually

¹From Blue Cliff Records, Koan #29, page 111

and understand things intellectually. Even though we understand intellectually we do not stick to the idea. That understanding should be improved, day by day, by our pure thinking. And we do not stick to old stump (stump of the tree). We do not sit on the same stump.²

We say, "You cannot catch fish in the same place." Today fortunately you could catch a big fish at some certain place, but tomorrow you should fish some other place. Or we say, "To cut boat to remember where we are." (laughing) Boat is actually going, so even though you cut boat to remember place... "Oh, there is something beautiful, and we should remember that beautiful flower," but even though you cut the edge of the boat ...what do you call it?

Student: Rail

Roshi: Maybe rail of boat...it doesn't help. Because boat is going. But usually we do so. "Oh, that was very good," and we cut the railing of the boat to remember something. This kind of teaching suggest our foolishness, and what is actual Buddhist life. We should not wait here, sitting on the same stump. They will not come to the same place so sitting on the stump with gun is very foolish. It is a good example of thinking mind. Even if it is so, we should appreciate what we see right now. "Oh, beautiful flower!" We have full appreciation of it, but we should not cut the railing of the boat, or we should not wait for her coming, standing at the same place. She may come by this time of day, but sometime she may come, and sometime she doesn't come. I have some experience like this. I would wait for her coming sitting...(laughing). Sometime she may come; sometime she may not. So if she come we are lucky. If she doesn't you shouldn't complain. (laughing)

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The questions were directly related to the lecture but were quite long.

²From an old Chinese story about a hunter who returns to his old hunting grounds.