

SANDOKAI LECTURE V

by

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The following lecture is fifth in a series of lectures on the Sandokai which Suzuki-roshi gave at Tassajara in the summer of 1970. The Sandokai is a dharma poem by eight century Zen Master Shih-t'ou Hsi-ch`ien (Sekito Kisen). This lecture covers the following lines of the poem:

*Shiki moto shitsuzo o kotonishi
Sho moto rakku o koto nisu
An wa jochu no koto ni kanai
Mei wa sei daku no ku wakatsu*

A tentative English translation of this passage might be:

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

Shiki moto shitsuzo o kotonishi shiki means "form and color." It has two meanings. In the *Heart Sutra* we have this character *shiki-shiki soku ze ku*, form is emptiness. *Shitsuzo*: *shitsu* means quality or nature, such as human nature or Buddha nature, good nature or ill nature. *Zo* means figure. So things have various natures, various forms; this is "i." In the next line, *sho shiki moto shitsuzo o kotonishi* means voice or sound, the object of the ears. *Raku* means something which you care for. *Ku* is something which creates a bitter feeling, or suffering. Suffering is too big a word; anyway, some bad feeling. Here it is talking about just form and voice, but the same is true for taste, or smell, or physical feeling. There is good taste and bad taste., good sound and bad sound, good feeling and bad feeling, agreeable idea and disagreeable idea. There are many things. And we suffer from them. 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. For usual person it happens in that way, but if you understand reality completely you will not be bothered by things. And the next phrase gives the reason: *an wa jochu no koto ni kanai*.

We understand it two ways. One way is, as I told you in the last lecture, to

understand things in darkness *an*. And the other understanding is to observe things in terms of good and bad. And we know that there is no good or bad things themselves. It is people who discriminate things as good or bad. By discriminating things we create good or bad.

If we know that, we will not suffer so much- "Oh, that is what I am doing"-things in themselves have no good or bad nature. To understand in this way is to understand things in utter darkness. Then you are not involved in dualistic understanding of good or bad. So we have *An wa jochu no koto ni kanai*. "In the dark superior or inferior cannot be distinguished." This word *jo* is "superior" and *chu* is "middle," but actually it means superior and inferior. When we say *jo*, superior, it is more natural to say *ge* inferior, but as this is a kind of poem it is better style to say *joge*. *Joge* has a feeling of too much discrimination.

Koto is "words." This *ku* is also "words or phrases." In utter darkness, good words and bad words will not disturb you. This *kannai*, means to include, or to fit together. *Mei wa sei daku no ku o wakatsu*. *Mei* is brightness. In brightness only the duality of pure or impure is apparent. *Sei* is pure and *daku* is impure. There are pure words and muddy words. In brightness we have dualistic words, the duality of pure and impure. Here, *wakatsu* is the same character as *mei*, but as a verb it means to make clear or to become apparent. So, in brightness dualistic words become apparent. In this way we should understand things.

Positive way and negative way, we say. Positive way is to acknowledge things in terms of good or bad, beautiful or ugly, good student or bad student. If you make good effort you will be a good student. To acknowledge a student's effort is positive way. Negative way is, whatever you say you will get thirty blows. We do not accept anything. That is negative way. Positive way and negative way-sometimes one and sometimes the other. We must have some way of treating things.

Even though we are mad at someone, it does not mean we do not acknowledge him. Because a teacher knows a student so well, sometimes the teacher will be angry with him. The teacher knows that the student is very good, but sometimes the student will be very lazy. Then the teacher will hit him. Sometimes we will praise or encourage him, but it does not mean we are using different methods or attitudes. The understanding is the same but the way of treating or expression is different. For someone who sees things only in a negative way, who is always pessimistic, we should encourage him. But if he is too good or too bright, then the teacher will always scold him. That is our way. Our understanding is not different, but usually we are very much attached to the bright side of things or the dark side of things.

Do you know this famous koan? A monk asked a master, "It is very hot. Is it possible to feel better/" and the master said, "Why don't you go somewhere where there is no cold weather or hot weather? Why don't you go there?" The disciple said, "Is there somewhere 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." That was his

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

At the same time this happiness in its true sense is not exactly the same happiness people usually have. There is some difference, a little difference, a difference that makes a real difference. He knows. Because we know both sides of reality we have that kind of composure. He will not be disturbed by something bad, and he will not be ecstatic about things. He will have a joy, a true joy, which will always be with him. Although the basic tone of life is the same. And on it there is some good or bad feeling. That is the feeling enlightened people may have. It means, when it is hot, or when you are sad, you should be completely involved in sadness without care about something happy. When you are happy you should just enjoy the happiness. If we can do so, it is because we are always prepared for everything.

Even though circumstances change all of a sudden, and you don't know what will happen, still, when we are ready for things which may happen tomorrow, then we can enjoy today completely.

Actually how you can do it is not by studying a lecture like this, but by your practice. These are Sekito's words, but later, in Tozan's times (Tozan was the fourth generation after Sekito) people were very much interested in talking about the bright side and the dark side and middle way, and they stuck to this kind of game. They lost the point of how to obtain this kind of freedom from things.

So later, Dogen Zenji did not use these kinds of words so much. Dogen Zenji rather put emphasis on how to get out these words, how to appreciate things moment after moment. That is more Dogen's way. So he put emphasis on koan like "When it is cold you should be a cold Buddha; when it is hot you should be hot Buddha." That is all. To be completely involved in what you are doing is Dogen's way, without thinking about various things. And this kind of attainment will be obtained by actual practice, not by those words.

Words will help your understanding of things. When you are dualistic, when you are getting into confusion they can help you. But sometimes you will be interested in talking about these things, and you will lose our way. We should be interested in actual zazen, not in these words. We should practice actual zazen. So Dogen Zenji's way is to find the meaning in each being-a grain of rice, or a cup of water. You may say a cup of water or a grain of rice is something which you see in brightness. But when you respect, when you pay full respect to the grain of rice, I mean when you actually respect it as you respect Buddha himself, then you will understand a grain of rice is absolute. When you live completely involved in the dualistic world then, at that time you have the absolute world in its true sense. When you practice zazen without seeking for

enlightenment or anything, then there is true enlightenment. That is Dogen Zenji's way.

QUESTIONS

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 trying to understand it is because I am afraid of letting go and just feeling the pain, or whether that is wise understanding.

Suzuki-roshi: You have the problem because you are involved in a problem for yourself. As long as you are involved in personal problems, whatever understanding you may have, that understanding is only on the bright side. You have no chance to realize the other side-darkness, the absolute. When we talk about this I am talking as if I am an enlightened person and you are listening to it as if you are an enlightened person. In other words, all of us are Bodhisattvas and as Bodhisattvas we are discussing this kind of problem. But when you apply this kind of talking just for intellectual understanding or just for your problem only, you have no chance to understand the other side of it. That is why you have that problem. If you are really practicing Bodhisattva way, whichever side it may be, it is o.k. When you criticize yourself, it is o.k.; when you do what you want to do that is also o.k. You are not doing two different things. According to the situation you are doing something good always, but the reason why you don't have the confidence in your activity or in your life is because you are involved in selfish or personal practice.

Student B: When I am fully awake I have, maybe, a little control over my desires, but in the morning.....

Suzuki-roshi: That is what I am saying. In the morning you have trouble, I know that. So that is why I say, "get up!"

Student B: How do you do that?

Suzuki-roshi: Just do it. Or else someone will go and hit you!

Student B: I just got up a couple of times-jumped out of bed. But it was such a big thing!

Suzuki-roshi: Yes, Big thing. So if you can get up pretty well I think your practice is almost o.k. That is a very good chance to practice our way. Just get up. O.K.? That is a most important thing.

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