

**Shunryū Suzuki-rōshi**  
**SANDŌKAI LECTURE VIII**  
**Wednesday, June 17, 1970**  
**Tassajara**

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

Line 21      *Manako wa iro, mimi wa onjō,*  
Line 22      *hana wa ka, shita wa kanso.*  
Line 23      *Shikamo ichi-ichi no hō ni oite,*  
Line 24      *ne ni yotte ha bumpusu.*  
Line 25      *Homatsu subekaraku shū ni kisu beshi.*  
Line 26      *Sompi sono go wo mochiu.*

Line 21      For eyes there is color and form, for ears there is sound,  
Line 22      for the nose there is smell, and for the tongue there is taste;  
Line 23      Each being comes out from the root  
Line 24      as branches and leaves come out from the trunk.  
Line 25      But both root and end should return to their original nature.  
Line 26      The words we use are different—good and bad, respectful and  
                  mean—but through these words we should understand the  
                  absolute being or source of the teaching.]

In last lecture I explained the everything—independency of everything. "Independency of everything" means—of course, things are interdependent with each other, but at the same time, each being is independent because each being include the other being—the rest of the being. So when each being include whole world, then each being is actually independent. But at the same time, you know, each being, you know, looks like— When each being understood, you know, in term of big or small, black or white, heavy or light, man or nature—

[Aside.] It is working?

**Student:** It doesn't sound like it.

Hmm? Oh. And that is the sound. Can you hear me? No. Huh? Oh. I must make—okay.

**Student [to other students]:** Perhaps you could move forward to make two rows.

Will you come nearer to me?

**Student [to other students]:** Come forward.

Sit one more row between. Okay. Yeah. Please come nearer as much as possible. [Sounds of movement.]

In *Sandōkai*, you know, actually, [Sekitō is] talking about reality and the people, you know, forgetting all about this point, involved in some, you know, getting to discrimination which school of Zen is right—right or wrong, you know. Southern school or Northern school. This kind of dispute were all over. So that is why Sekitō-zenji—

Can you hear me now [laughs]? No?

That is why Sekitō-zenji wrote this poem. And here he discuss from the viewpoint—he is talking about reality from viewpoint of independency, you know. So when we talk about, you know, independency, the Southern school is independent, you know. Northern school is independent. But there is no reason why we should compare two. Northern school represent, you know, all Buddhism. And Southern school include all the Buddhism. When, you know, both school is expressing whole Buddhism in their own way, you know, there is no reason why we should compare.

Rinzai school, you know, has its—has their own approach to reality, and Soto school has our own approach to the reality, you know. When they have—when there is—when approach is different, there is no reason why we should compare. That is the point, you know.

Sekitō-zenji is pointing at this point, talking about what is reality. He actually do not talk about Northern school—dispute of Northern school or Southern school. But actually, talking about what is reality and what is Buddha's teaching in its true sense. He is, you know, pointing out at the mistake, you know, of the two schools at that—at his time.

Anyway, tonight—those three [couplets] we explained—I explained already four sentences—four clause—clauses. And now tonight I want to explain six more clause [lines] which denote the reality from the viewpoint of independency—independency. Here he says: "Eyes—"

[Line 21] *Manako wa iro, mimi wa onjō,*

is "eyes." "Eye—eyes to see, ear to hear sound." For eyes there is color or form. This *shiki* [*iro?*]<sup>1</sup> means "color and form."

[Line 21] For eyes there is color; for ears there is sound and voice.

[Line 22] And for nose there is smell; for tongue there is taste of salt or sour.

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<sup>1</sup> S.R. said *shiki*. Derby MS gives *iro*.

This, you know, means—it looks like, you know, he is talking about duality or dependency—dependency of dharma of eyes and its object. But actually, when, you know, we—even though you see something, you know, if you see things in its true sense, there is nothing to be seen or no one to see, you know, actually. But when you analyze, there someone who is seeing something and something which is seen by us—by eyes. This is only one activity—only one, you know, activity could be understood in two ways. I see something. But actually when I see something really, you know, there is no one who is seeing it and who—nothing to be seen, actually. Both is true, and he is talking about oneness of the form and eyes here. That is how, you know, Buddhists observe things. But sometime we observe—we understand things in its dualistic sense, but we don't forget to—dualistic understanding of "I see" or "someone is seen by someone—something is seen by someone is some interpretation—something which our thinking mind produce. Subjective—subject and object. But subject and object is one. So subject and object is one and two. Or that is our understanding. One and many. One and two.

So he want to say is for eyes, there is form; for ears there is sound and voice. But actually, there is no two or—there is no form or no eyes. When you say "eyes," eyes include form. When you say "form," form include eyes. If there is no form, nothing to see, you know, eyes is not eyes anymore [laughs]. Because there is something to see, eyes become eyes. Same is true with ears and nose. Dōgen-zenji says, "If there is no river," you know, "there is no ship." Even though there is ship, that is not ship [laughs]. That will be a house [laughs, laughter]. Because there is a river, a ship becomes ship. Same is true with our eyes.

Usually, you know, non-Buddhists why, you know, they become attached to objective world or something they see, is they understand only one way, you know. "Here is something very good," you know, "or sweet. I have to eat," you know. And we understand something exist here without, you know, us—whether we try to eat it or not, the cake exist. That is normal way of understanding. But cake is—become cake because we want to eat it. So we make cake, you know. There is no cake, actually, without us. When we understand in that way, we are not—we are seeing cake, but we are not seeing cake [laughs]. That is how we keep our precepts, you know.

We, you know, we kill some animal. Maybe we may kill some animal or worm or insects or earwigs [laughs, laughter]. But when we think, you know, "I am killing earwigs are here," you know, "many. So this is very harmful one, so I have to kill this one," you know. When you understand in that way, you understand things only dualistic way. So— But, you know, actually earwig and human being is one—not different. Even it is impossible to kill, you know, earwigs. Even though we think we killed it, you know, actually we cannot. It is not possible, even though you smash

it [thumps fist on floor or table, laughs], it is still alive. That tentative form of earwig may vanish, but actually whole world—as long as, you know, whole world, including us, is exist, we cannot kill it. When we come to this understanding, we can keep our precepts completely.

But even so [laughs], you know, we should not kill, you know, anything without any reason or with some convenient reason—making some reason why I should kill: "Because," you know, "earwig eats vegetables, so that is why I must kill them." And "It is nothing wrong to kill animals," you know, "so I am killing the earwig."

With this— With some reason, you know, you kill an animal, that is not our way. Actually, when you kill animal, you don't feel so good. That should be, you know— That is also included in your understanding. "Even though I don't feel good, I have to kill. Even though it is not possible," you know, "tentatively I am killing animal." In this way, whole world, you know—something is going in the big world.

So without sticking to any idea of killing or not killing, or without, you know, with some reason why we kill or why we don't kill—if you observe our precept in that way, that is not actual way of observing precepts. How you observe precepts is to have complete understanding of reality is how you don't kill. Do you understand? In other word, how you understand, you know, my lecture is how you don't kill [laughs]. How you practice zazen is how you do not kill animal. In other words, you should not, you know, live in the world of duality only.

We should observe our world in two ways: from—one is from dualistic, you know, way; the other is from the viewpoint of absolute. So, "It is not good to kill," is right. It is not impossible—and "Even though you think you kill, you didn't kill." That is another side. So, you know, even though you break your precepts, you are violent [have violated] your precepts—after doing it, if you feel very sorry, you know—"Oh, I am sorry" [laughs]. If you say "I am very sorry" to the wigs—earwigs, you know, then that is Buddhist way.

In this way, our practice will go on and on and on. You may think, you know, if you—if there is precepts we should observe it literally, or else we cannot be Buddhist. Or, you know, if you feel good when you observe some precepts, that is not Buddhist way—our way. Our way is, you know, sometime we may kill animal. But to feel sorry, that is our way. To feel sorry is included in our precepts. That is how we observe precepts. And, you know, this kind of activity will go on and on and on. And everyone is, you know, involved in this kind of activity. Everything is doing this kind of thing. But way they do—the feeling they have may be—may not be same. One will be, you know— One has no idea of precepts or attainment. The other has trying to make themselves feel good [laughs] by some religion or precepts—observing precepts. That is

not Buddhist way.

Buddhist way is, in one word, *jihī*. *Jihī* is to—to encourage, you know, to encourage people when they have good feeling and to get rid of their suffering. To help to get rid of their suffering. That is true love. It is not just to give something, or to receive something, or to observe precepts, or to attain something we do not practice our way. We practice our way as things, you know, naturally is—are going. And to follow people, and to suffer with them, and help to relieve their suffering, and to encourage people to go on and on and on. That is Buddhist way. That is how we observe precepts.

So, you know, we see something but we do not see something. We feel always oneness of the subjective world and objecting world. Oneness of eyes and form and color. The oneness of the taste and mouth. So we do not, you know, especially we don't have to attach to something especially. We don't have to feels especially good, you know, because of Buddhist practice. When we practice our way in this way, there—we are all independent. That is what he [Sekitō] is talking about.

And:

[Line 23] *Shikamo ichi-ichi no hō ni oite,*  
[Line 24] *ne ni yotte ha bumpusu.*

*Ichi-ichi*: "Each dharma." Dharma means eyes, nose, tongue, ears, or form, or taste, small or taste or sounds is—all those things are dharma. "Each being, each dharma has its own—is—has a root which is buddha nature, which is world of oneness," you know, "which is absolute, which is buddha nature. Each being comes out from—from the root like leaves, you know, comes out from the root or trunk."

So we—when we see many things, we should not, you know, just see things as it is, but we should know how each things exist. Because of the root, we exist. Because of the absolute Buddha nature, we exist. When we exist—understand things in this way, we have oneness, you know. When I am here, you are there. When there is man, there is woman, you know. But woman is independent and man is independent. So there is—when something happens, there is always oneness of the subjective world and objective world.

So:

[Line 25] *Hommatsu subekaraku shū ni kisu beshi.*

*Hommatsu*— *Hom* is "root," and *matsu* is—*matsu* is "end." "Root and end," we may say, but "both root and end should reduce to—should resume to the original nature."

[Line 26     *Sompi sono go wo mochiu.*]

"The words we use is different—good words and bad words, good words—respectful word and mean word—but through those words, we should understand—we should understand—the absolute being or source of the teaching." That is, you know, what is said here. [*Sentence finished. Tape turned over.*]

[Aside:] Are you recording?

[Inaudible answer by tape operator.]

This is okay. Aha.

In one of the—in *Bonmo-kyo*—*Bonmo-kyo* is the important scripture of precepts. In *Bonmo-kyo* it says, "To see—to see is not to see [laughs], and not to see is to see [laughs]." Do you understand? "To see is not to see. And not to see is to see." You know, that is how we, you know, observe "don't act in unchaste," you know, act, you know.

To see a woman [laughs], you know, is not to see the woman [laughs]. To see the woman is not to see the woman. Not to see the woman is to see the woman [laughs]. Do you understand? To eat fish, you know, or meat—to eat meat is not to eat meat. And not to eat meat is not to eat meat [laughs]. To— You understand precepts only one way. "Not to see—not to eat meat" is how you observe precepts. But not to eat, you know, meat is to eat meat [laughs]. You are eating meat.

There is two monks, you know, once travelling together. And there were a big river, where there was no bridge to cross. So they were waiting on the one side of the bank. While they were waiting, a beautiful woman came [laughs]. So they were very much encouraged to cross the river with her. And, at last, one of them, you know, decided, you know, one of them carried her on his back and crossed the river. The other monk, after crossing the river and on the way to somewhere, the other monk became furious [laughs]. "You are," you know, "you are a monk! You violate precepts", you know, "not to see or—a woman. As a monk, it is not so good. Why did you do that?"

The monk who helped [laughs] the lady said, "You are still carrying [laughs] a woman. I forgot about her long long time ago. You are still carrying—you are still violating the precepts" [laughs], he said, you know. Maybe to, you know, it is not completely right to help her, you know, as a monk. It may be, you know, it may not be perfectly right. Even so—even so, as a man—as a—as a—as all human being are our friend, we should help them, you know, even we violate Buddhist precepts we should help her. But if you think about it, you know,

uselessly, you know, when there is no need to think about, to think about it, you know, is—is actually violating the precepts.

So to see—to see a woman is not to see the woman. To help her actually is not—actually he is not helping her, you know. When— Just because to help her if you cross [with] her on his back is—actually he is not, you know, helping her. Do you understand? He is not helping her. So not to help her, you know, is to help her in its true sense.

When you are involved in dualistic sense of violating precepts, or man and woman, or monk and layman, that is violating the precepts and [is a] poor understanding of Buddha's teaching. That is why—how we sit, you know. We just sit, without any idea of attain—any idea of attainment, without any idea of doing anything, just to sit is our way. To be involved—completely involved in sitting meditation is our zazen—without any idea of attainment, any idea of waste of time or meaningful, you know, practice. Just to sit is our way. And this is how you keep our precepts.

Sometime we will be angry, and sometime we will smile. Sometime we will [be] mad at people—your friend. Sometime you will give a kind words to them. But, you know, actually what we are doing [is] just to observe our way.

[Sighs.] Okay? [Laughs.] I cannot explain it so well, but I think you must have understood what I mean. Do you have some question? I have some more time. *Hai.*

**Student A:** [One-two words unclear] you were talking about just before. But I—I don't feel as though that Buddhism or talk about Buddhism or *Sandōkai*—I don't feel how it's the same as my life or my practice. I feel some separation between what I do—sitting zazen or eating, and so on—and then some talk. And it seems just like maybe talk is about what I've been doing or haven't been doing. But—Somehow it seems like it's—it's like something else. It is way out there.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Mm-hmm. Way out, yeah. Yeah. Maybe so. I felt in that way [laughs] for pretty long time [laughs, laughter], you know. I think so—I agree [laughs]. You know, it is rather difficult to, you know, to give you actual feeling, you know, by lecture, you know. That is why, you know, the old masters, you know, twisted their [students'] noses or hit at [laughs]—hit at them. "Right here!" you know. "What are you thinking about?" That is— In short, that is the point. I am going round and round the point, you know, so I am using words. We say, "to scratch itchy fingers [toes] on the shoes [with shoes on]" [laughs, laughter]. I am scratching itchy fingers on your shoes. How about it? It doesn't— It doesn't help you so much, maybe. Even so, I have to talk [laughs]. *Hai.*

**Student B:** Rōshi, when you said that we can't—like when we kill an earwig or any insect or anything like that, when you said that we can't kill it because as long—

**Suzuki-rōshi:** You cannot—

**Student B:** —as long as everything is here it can't die.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Mm-hmm.

**Student B:** Does that like say that each moment will always be—each thing will always be that thing, and it's like—

**Suzuki-rōshi:** It is—

**Student B:** —this lecture will always be this lecture?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** It is so, you know. It is so when you see things, you know, as-it-is, it is so.

**Student B:** But even— Even if, like, the body of the earwig dies, you're saying that— Well, what happens to the earwig's karma?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Karma [laughs]?

**Student B:** Where does the earwig go?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Earwigs go to the source of the reality [laughs, laughter]. They know where to go [laughs, laughter]. So when we speak in this way, what you will feel [laughs]—but it is something. Just talk, you know. But when you suffer a lot, you know, it will be a great relief to know that. *Hai.*

**Student C:** Rōshi, what is the difference between you and me?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** [Laughs.] Ah. There is difference and no difference [laughs]. That will be the answer, you know. That is why, you know, we practice together. And because we are not different we practice. So if one side is missing, we cannot practice. If you are quite different from me, there is no reason why you should practice with me. Because we are same— If we are same, if we are truly same, there is no reason [laughs] why we practice together. Because we are different, we practice our way, and because we are same, originally same, we practice our way. So not different and different. This kind of thing is something which you do not know, you know.



Last—Oh— The teacher Trungpa<sup>2</sup> was referring to this point. Our traditional practice start from this, you know, source of the teaching which is nothing, which is absolute, which is non-duality.

But usually when you practice something, you are attracted [to] something, you know—eyes or nose, taste or form, you know, not by this [may have pointed to the character *shū* on the blackboard] original source of the teaching. The original source of the teaching is not something which could—can be told, so we say, "tongueless speech." "Tongueless speech." We are talking about something which it is impossible to talk. That is called *teishō*, you know, not lecture [laughs]. We can explain those words, but by those words we are explaining [that] which is empty. So we call the— words, "the finger pointing at the moon." If you understand what is moon, finger is not necessary anymore. So what you should understand is not—is not my words. But, you know, you should realize by your true experience what we—I mean. So you do n [partial word]— You have— You are blank [laughs], you know, you are blind in—on this point, so you feel I am talking about something, some words, you know, in some sophisticated way. So it looks like very, you know, so-called "Buddhistic way," you know. Buddhistic way is not those words but the thing which we really mean. *Hai*.

**Student D:** In killing the earwig, there is no words or memories or anything. There is just the experience of killing the earwig. Is that the teacher that leads to the source—that leads you the experience of the source?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Yeah.

**Student D:** Is the experience of killing the earwig, not the talk about it, the teacher?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Yeah. You know, and at that time, you know, you shouldn't feel like Buddhist or good monk or sinful monk, you know [laughs], or violating your precepts. You should, you know—when you are working in the garden, you know, for some purpose you should be involved in that activity completely. Sometime you can—you may be mad at the earwigs [makes humorous growling noise, laughs], you know. But no one can blame you if you, you know—no one can say anything—criticize you. You should have that much confidence, you know. If you are expelled from Tassajara because you killed a—a lot of earwigs [laughs, laughter], you should go, "Okay. I will go." That's all. You—you—you must have, you know, not confidence—it is more than confidence, you know. You don't have to fight with anyone. If you have

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<sup>2</sup> Vidyadhara the Venerable Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche (1939-1987), a Trungpa tulku in the Kagyu lineage. According to an early transcript, he gave a talk at Tassajara the previous evening.

that much, you know, understanding in what you are doing, that is good. That is our way.

**Student E:** When we say that we don't harm sentient beings, or earwigs, or anything else, do we say that because it's impossible to harm them, or because it's wrong to harm them, or both?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Both, yeah. We should know that is not possible, you know. Why it is not possible not to kill is because that is words. Words cannot reach so—that area. But only when you [are] caught by words, you know, you say "possible" or "impossible." That is how, actually, you live, you know, every day—killing something, sacrificing something. You just apply Buddha's teaching to give you some good excuse, that's all. And you feel good, you know: Very superficial understanding of Buddhism. So both is true, you know. You—We super [partial word]—Even though it is superficial understanding, we cannot help feeling bad when you kill something. You don't feel so good.

But even though you don't feel so good, that does not mean that you are doing something wrong—because you are not killing, actually. But if you, you know, say, "Because I am not killing anything, so it is okay to kill" [laughs], that is wrong because you stick to the words or precepts, which is just words. It is not true heart of Buddha's—true feeling of Buddha.

**Student F:** Rōshi, every animal has a way of living, of eating, of raising its young, of relating to the world, that is in keeping with its particular dharma or the *dao* of its being. Does not man have a specific and particular way of living, and eating, and raising his young, and relating to each other that is in keeping with his dharma or his *dao*?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Yeah. Not absolutely, but, you know, we have to make best effort to keep, you know, dharma. That is, you know, those words. Words is necessary. Even though it is necessary, you shouldn't think this is complete, you know. We should make constant effort to produce new dharma, one after another. Produce new dharma, new precepts.

We say, "this is human life," you may say. But that human life is for today, not for tomorrow. Tomorrow we must have more improved, better way to live. This kind of effort should be continued. That is why we have bad feeling, you know. If we have some bad feeling, it means something. So we should improve our way. And—but you should not expect any perfect dharma, you know, in term of "you should do" or "you shouldn't."

So there is—no one can insist [on] their own way, but we should appreciate their effort to improve our dharma. That is Buddhist way. Does it make some sense [laughs]? *Hai*.

**Student G:** Can the true dharma be passed on if the disciple does not surpass the teacher? You say that we must always, every day, improve our way, make the best effort. And I've heard you say, "For the true teaching to be passed on, the disciple must surpass the teacher." Can we carry on the dharma even if we don't surpass the teacher?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Yes. Yeah. "Surpass" [laughs] is also dualistic word, so we shouldn't stick to [laughs], you know—our—I—there is no reason why I—if you surpass my, you know, me, there is no reason why I don't feel so bad or so good, you know. Actually, that—which is better is just words.

**Student G:** To have the same— I mean, to have the same understanding as the teacher's. The same understanding would be something that would be static or fixed. It wouldn't be something that we're changing. So if we were to have your understanding right now, tomorrow, that would be—what would that be?

**Student off-mike:** Impossible. [Laughter.]

**Suzuki-rōshi:** [Laughs.] Not easy, so—even, you know, to create one page of the new dharma is very difficult. Even though you feel you sometime you invented something new [laughing], but Buddha is always waiting, you know: "Come here." But you feel you invented something new, you know. But Buddha is here: "Oh! You come here. Good boy." [Laughs.] "I have some more things for you. Come nearer to me," Buddha will say. So it is very hard to surpass his teaching. [Laughs, laughter.]

Ooo-kay. [Said in mock resignation.] [Laughs, laughter.]

That is more valuable than my talk. [Laughs, laughter.] [May have been speaking to the tape operator or tape recorder itself.] You are very good disciple.

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Sources: Contemporaneous transcript by Marian Derby; City Center transcript entered onto disk by Jose Escobar, 1997. Transcript checked against tape by Bill Redican 6/5/00.