

70-06-27.S11 [70-06-27]

SANDOKAI LECTURE XI

by

Shunryu Suzuki-roshi

Tassajara, June 25, 1970

Note: This lecture covers the following lines of the Sandokai- Bammotsu onozukara ko ari masani yo to o yubeshi jison sureba kangai gasshi ozureba senpo saso.

Tonight's lecture will be about how we observe everything and with what kind of understanding we should treat things. But before I talk about the value of things, I think I must explain the important words. *Bammotsu onozukara ko ari...Bammotsu* is "myriad things;" "many things," or "All things." *Ari* is "has." *Onozukara* means "naturally." *Ko* means "function" or "virtue." Because something has a function, that function will be its virtue or value. When we say value, mostly we mean exchange value, but *Ko* has a wider meaning. Sometimes *Ko* may be merit or what someone did during his life, in our society or community. This *ko* includes all these things like virtue or utility, merit or deeds. *Bammotsu* includes human beings, mountains and rivers, stars and sun. It includes everything. "Everything has function." and because of that function each thing will have value or virtue for us. You may wonder, "function of what? It is the function of something." That something could be *Ri*.

I have to use several technical terms tonight. For instance, if you see something...(the sound system is suddenly turned up and Roshi hears his own voice coming back from the loudspeakers.) Oh! You hear a voice. You think you are listening to me, but actually what you are listening to may be my voice, or it may be the function of the electricity of the machine. That electricity will be the function of some universal entity of electricity which covers the whole world. So actually you are not listening to me but it is more like listening to the voice of electricity, to the voice of the Universe maybe. This is one understanding of my lecture. And another understanding will be that you are listening to my nature, the kind of nature that I have. and you are listening to the nature of electricity. So when you see or listen to something, already you have an idea of the whole universe.

When we understand things in that way, we call it the understanding of *Tai*... *Tai* means "body," but it is a more ontological big body which includes everything. And the nature of *Tai* is *Sho* (not the *sho* which is in the text here). But that *Sho* does not mean particular nature. It is the basic nature of everything. And when we understand things as something beyond our words, we call it *Ri* or truth. This *Ri* is not the truth we usually understand when we say "true character." it is something beyond our idea of good and bad, long and short, right and wrong, something which includes all the various

meanings of things.

In the second line, we have *Yo*, or "function." this word is related to *Ri*, while *Ko* is related to *Ji*, or "things." they look like they are the same, but *Yo* is more the function of truth or *Ri*, and *Ko* is the function or virtue of things. We use *Ko* for many purposes, but as a Buddhist technical term, this *Yo* is mostly related to *Ri*. Here Sekito is talking about the oneness of *Ko* and *Yo*; "the virtue of things. And the truth applies itself to each occasion and every thing." It may not make much sense, so I will translate literally. "*Bammotsu onozukara ko ari.*" "There is virtue in all beings," or, "amongst the many things, each has its own virtue." "*Masani yo to sho to o yubeshi.*" *Masani* means "actually" or "naturally." *Beshi* means "you should;" *Zu* means "say." *Yo* means "its applications." *Sho* means "this place." Here it says "you should see," or "you should notice." So it is the same thing. You should notice the application of the truth and where it is applied. So when you see things, you should know that there the true teaching reveals itself, and you should see in what place the truth reveals itself.

sometimes we use *Ko* and *Yo* together. *Koyo*. When we say *Koyo*, we understand not only each thing just as we see it, but also we understand the background of each thing which is *Ri*. and you should know how to use things. To know how to use things is to know the teaching, or the way things are going, which is *Ri*. So to understand things means to understand the background of everything; and to understand the value of them is to understand how to use them in the right way according to the place and the nature of each thing. That is to see things as they are. Usually, even though you say, "I see things as they are," you don't. You see one side of the truth, one side of reality, not the other. You don't see the background which is *Ri*; you only see things in terms of *Ji*, of each event, each thing, and you think each thing exists in that way, but it is not so. Each thing is changing and is related, one to another, and each thing has its background. There is a reason why all things are here. So, to see things as they are means to understand that *Ji* and *Ri* are one, that distinction and equality are one, that the application of the truth and the value of things are one.

For instance, we think the whole universe is only for human beings. Nowadays our ideas have become wider, and our way of understanding things becomes freer, but even so, our understanding is mostly based on human-centered ideas, so we don't see or appreciate the true value of things. You have many questions to ask me, but if you understand this point clearly, there is not much to ask. Most of the questions and problems are created by human-centered selfish ideas. "What is birth and death?" That is already a very self-centered idea. Of course, birth and death are our virtue. To die is our virtue; to come into this world is also our virtue. And we see how things are going, how everything is appearing and disappearing, becoming older and older, or growing bigger and bigger. In this way, everything exists. So why should we treat ourselves in a special way? When we say "birth and death," it mostly means to us the birth and death of human beings. when you understand birth and death as the birth and death of everything, including planets, vegetables, or trees, it is not a problem anymore. If it is a problem, it is a problem of everything including us. A problem of everything is not a problem anymore. So almost all of the questions come from a narrow understanding of

things. a wider, clearer understanding is necessary. You may think that talking about this kind of thing does not help you at all. As a selfish human being, it may be hard to be helped. Buddhism does not treat human beings as a special category. we treat human beings in a deluded egotistical way when we put them in a special category. That is human nature. You accept that way of thinking and do not reflect on our human nature and you seek some truth outside of yourself. That is not possible anyway, because the background is wrong. you do not try to find some confidence within yourself.

So here it says, "everything, all beings, have their own virtue." As human beings, we have some nature. according to that nature, we should live like human beings. Only when we live like human beings who have selfish human nature are we following the truth in its greater sense, because then we take our nature into account in our judgement. So we should live like human beings in this world. We should not try to live like cats and dogs who have more freedom and are less selfish. Human beings should be put into a cage, an invisible big cage. Dogs and cats have no special cage or morality. they don't need any teaching or religion. But we human beings need religion. We human beings should say, "excuse me," but dogs and cats don't need to. So we human beings should follow our way and dogs and cats should follow their way. This is how to apply the truth for everything.

If we observe the human way and dogs and cats observe the animal way, it looks like the human way and the animal way have a different nature. But, although our natures are different, the background of our natures is the same. Because where we live and the way we live is different, the application of the truth should be different. So human beings have their own mechanism and animals have their own mechanism. But, even though the way of using it is different, we are all using the same electricity. That is the application of the truth. This is actually what Sekito is talking about. We should not be attached to the difference of the usage because we are using the same true nature, or Buddha nature. We are actually doing the same thing. But according to the situation, we will use the Buddha nature in different ways. That is how to find the true nature within ourselves in everyday life.

The next two lines are: "*Jison sureba gasshi ri ozureba senpo saso.*" *Ji* means "various things and events," including things you have in your mind, the things you think about. *Ri* is "something beyond thinking, beyond our understanding or perception," and, again, *Ji* and *Ri* are the same thing, but we must understand it in two ways. Our understanding should not be limited to the area of *Ji*.

"*Jison sureba kangai gasshi.*": When there is *Ji*, there is *Ri*, as a container and its cover meet together. *Ri* is understood in this third sentence. That I am here means that the true Buddha nature is here. I am the tentative expression of Buddha nature. I am not just I. It is more than I, but I am expressing true nature in my own way. That I am here means that the whole universe is here, like where there is a lamp {referring to the kerosene lamp on the altar}, there is kerosene oil.

And where there is *Ri*, there is *Ji*. "*Ri ozureba senpo saso.*" The way *Ri* accords with *Ji* is like two arrows meeting in midair. "*Ji*" is understood in this fourth line. There is a story for this. In old China, in the war period, there was a famous archery master, Higi. His disciple, Kisho, who was also a very good archer, became ambitious and wanted to compete with his master. So, he waited with his bow and arrow for his master's coming. Seeing the disciple, the teacher also took his bow and arrow and tried to hit first, but both of them were so good and quick that the arrows met in the air. S-s-s-s-ssssst!

There is some reason, for instance, that I am old. Without a reason, I would not have become old. And without reason, I would not have become a youth. With the same reason, I became old, so I cannot complain. The background of my being old is the background of my being raised up as a beautiful boy [laughing]. I am supported by the same background, and I shall also be supported by it even when I die. That is our understanding.

To accept things as they are looks very difficult, but is very easy. If it is not easy, if it is difficult, you should think about why it is difficult. "Maybe," you may say, "it is because of my shallow, selfish understanding of myself." And then you may ask, "Why do we have a selfish understanding of things?" But a selfish understanding of things is also necessary. Because we are selfish, we work hard. Without selfish understanding, we cannot work. So we need some candy always, and that candy will be selfish understanding. It is not something to be rejected, but something which helps you always. So, you should be gratified for your selfish understanding which creates many questions. They are just questions and they don't mean much. You can enjoy your question and answers, you can play games with them, but you should not be so serious about it. That is the understanding of the middle way.

We can understand the meaning of this middle way as *Ri* as emptiness and *Ji* as somethingness. Both are necessary. Because we are human beings and our destiny is to live for maybe 80 or 90 years, we must have some selfish way of life. Because we have a selfish way of life, we will have difficulties which we should accept. When you accept in that way, it is the middle way. You don't reject your selfish way of life, you accept it, but you don't stick to it. You must enjoy it. You must enjoy your human life as long as you live. That is the middle way, the understanding of *Ri* and *Ji*. So, when there is *Ri*, there is *Ji*; when there is *Ji*, there is *Ri*. To understand in this way is to enjoy your life without rejecting problems or suffering.

Suffering! I noticed something very important which I have not emphasized so much before. Suffering is a valuable thing, I understood it today when I was discussing it with someone. Our practice could be the practice of suffering; how we suffer will be our practice. It helps a lot. I think most of you have suffering, as you have pain in your legs when you sit. And in everyday life you have suffering. Bishop Yamada [Bishop of North America for Soto Zen in the early sixties. He led some sesshins at Zen Center. The Bishop resides in Los Angeles.], do you know him? He put emphasis on *unshu*, which Hakuin Zenji practiced for a long time. Hakuin suffered from consumption when he was

young and he conquered his illness by the practice of *unshu*. *Unshu* means putting emphasis on the outbreath..."m-m-mmmm-."

Student A: Groan?

Suzuki-roshi: Groan? When you suffer you say "m-m-m-mmmm-."

Student B: Sigh?

Suzuki-roshi: No, not sigh.

Many Students: groan?

Suzuki-roshi: More strength-like a tiger in pain.

Student D: growl?

Suzuki-roshi: Growl? [Laughing] He always said your breathing should be like the breathing you have when you suffer. you should put more strength her in you lower abdomen and take as long time in exhaling. You should say "m-m-m-mmmm"silently, otherwise, it is not *unshu*. when you repeat this *unshu* as if you are suffering from something physically or mentally, and your practice is directed just to the suffering you have, then that can be a good practice. It does not differ from *shikantaza*.

But when your suffering is just centered in your chest and your breathing is shallow, this is agony. When you suffer completely, you should suffer from your lower abdomen. "M-m-m-mmmm." You feel good when you do that. It is much better than saying nothing or just lying down.

Bishop Yamada always had difficulty until quite recently. Now he is, maybe, over the cloud. But when he was in Los Angeles, he suffered a lot. But at that time, I had not much experience of suffering, and I could not understand; I could not agree with his practice of *unshu*, like a sick person. "M-m-m-mmmm." "What is that practice?", I thought. But i found out why he had that kind of practice and i found out that it helps a lot. Of course, he understood what suffering is. No one enjoys suffering, but our human destiny is to have suffering. So, how we suffer is the point. We should know how to accept our human suffering, but we should not be completely caught by it. That may be Bishop Yamada's practice.

So, to find the oneness of *Ri* and *Ji*, the oneness of joy and suffering, the oneness of the joy of enlightenment and the difficulty of practice is, in one word, our practice which is called the middle way. Do you understand? Where there is suffering, there is the joy of suffering, or nirvana. Even if you are in nirvana, you cannot get out of suffering. Nirvana is "complete extinction of desires," we say, but what that means is to have

complete understanding and to live according to it. That is zazen. You are sitting upright. You are not leaning over to the side of nirvana, or leaning against the side of suffering, You are right here. So, everyone can sit and can practice our zazen.

There is no time to have questions and answers. I am following Sekito's poem line by line, but actually it is necessary to read it straight through from beginning to end. If you talk about it piece by piece, it doesn't make much sense. My next lecture will be something like a conclusion of all the lectures I have given so far. Sekito is very strict in the conclusion, very strict. You cannot escape from him. You cannot say anything or else you will feel his big stick. In his time, the Zen world was too noisy, so he became very angry about it. "Shut Up!" is what he said, actually. So, I should not talk so long. Maybe it is already too long. Excuse me.

EZT – early SFZC transcript – 70-06-27
