

SANDOKAI

Lectures given by Suzuki Roshi at Tassajara  
(transcribed and very slightly edited by Marian Darby)

I.

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I am so grateful to have chance to talk about Sandokai... one of the most important teachings for us. And it's meaning is so deep and the expression is so smooth, that it is pretty difficult to have some feeling when you read it. Sekito... Sekito Musai, Daishi (his posthumous name is Musai, Daishi) and he is the grandson of the sixth Patriarch, and the son of Seigen, the seventh Patriarch. As you know, under the sixth Patriarch there were many disciples, but the most important disciples are Nangaku and Seigen...Seigen and Nangaku. And later, under Seigen, Tozan appeared, and under Nangaku Rinzai appeared. And Rinzai and Soto is the most powerful schools under the Sixth Patriarch.

Sekito's way, or Seigen's way, is more gentle in comparison to Nangaku's way. And Seigen's way may be, you know, elder brother's way who is mostly gentle. Nangaku's way is maybe, like second boy or third boy's way, who is rather naughty. (Laughter). You know, in Japan, mostly if someone is very gentle he may be the first son, and sometimes the first boy is not so "able". We say "Soryo roku".....(Soryo means first son and roku means not so bright.) The first one, the first boy, is mostly very gentle, and we understand in that way when we talk about Soto and Rinzai. Tatsugami, Roshi put emphasis on Men mitsu no kafu, more Soto way. "Menmitsu" is "very careful" and "very considerate"... "very careful in doing things". That is more Seigen's way. Anyway, Sekito, who wrote the poem is the grandson of the Sixth Patriarch. His way, in

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one word, is to find everything in his mind. So, in other words, to have the Great Mind which includes everything is his way of practice. So if you read his Sandokai you will understand this point clearly.

Usually, our understanding is...Even though we say to observe things as it is, actually we are observing things as it is because when we think, "Here is my friend; there is a mountain; there is the moon..." When we say so the friend or mountain or the moon is not the moon itself, or the mountain itself, or your friend himself. You think your friend is your friend. The moon you think is the moon. It is not actually the moon itself, or friend himself, or mountain itself. You think, "Here is I and there is mountain." In this case when you observe things in that way that is dualistic way of observing things... "Here is I; there is mountain. I must climb up that mountain when I go to San Francisco. San Francisco is there. So after climbing up that mountain I have to go to San Francisco which is Bay Area." That is how we understand things. That is not actually Buddhist way of observing things. We find the mountain or San Francisco, or the moon within ourselves, right here. That is our understanding. That is the Big Mind within which everything exists. To see things is not like to find out things which is in that self...one, two, three, four...(laughter). Most people understand this way, but in that case..."I am here; my mind is here, and there are many things in that self... one, two, three, four..."

Sandokai..."San" is "things". Sandokai..."San" is "three". "Do" is "sameness". "Do" means "same". You know, to identify something with something else is "Do". "San" is "three". "Do" is "oneness" or "one whole being" which means "Great Mind". "San" is "many beings". "Kai" means...Actually we think there is one big whole being which includes everything and there is many things which we find in one whole big being...great being. Even though we say "many things" (or actually it is many parts of one big...one whole big being, including all of us). So if you say, "Many" that is many. If you say "one" that is one. Many or one is the different way of describing one whole being. To have complete understanding of this relationship

between one big being and many things which exist in one big, whole being is "Kai". "Kai" means "to shake hands". "Hi, how are you?" When you shake hands you feel really one; you have real feeling of friendship. So many things and one whole being which includes many things is a good friend, or more than a friend because it is originally one. If you say "Many" that is many. If you say "one" that is one. So two names of same things should be very good friend. It is originally more than good friend. So we say "Kai". "Hi, how are you?" That is "Kai". This is the name of this sutra...Sandokai.

Originally this title is the title of Taoist book, but in the same title he describes Buddha's teaching. In almost the same way, and under the same title. That is what he tried. And what is the difference between Taoism and Buddhism...Do you know? Does someone know what is the difference? Very similar. If you read it as a book it is, maybe, the same, but the way we read is different. When Buddhist read it that is Buddhist book. When Taoist read it that is Taoism. It is actually same vegetable, but if Buddhist eat it that is Buddhist food, and if ordinary people...vegetarian people eat it it is vegetarian food...just food. There is that kind of difference. The way we eat food is not just because the vegetable, a kind of vegetable, has some particular nourishment, yang or acid or alkaline. To eat food is part of our practice. That is the difference. For sake of practice we eat food; not just to take nourishment. To help our way, to practice Buddha's way we eat food. Not just to support ourselves as a human being or a kind of animal like fish. That is to eat food or to understand food or things as something which exists without much relationship, or not much contact with practice is Taoist way. And Buddhist way is "to practice our way we eat food." So it includes always our mind, our practice. (Not small mind...Big Mind which includes things). And if we think, "This is just vegetable" that is not our way. We must treat things as a part of ourselves which exist in our practice or in our Big Mind. Do you understand this point? In another word, small mind means mind which is under limitation of desires or some particular emotional

understanding or discrimination of good or bad..."This is good or this is bad." So actually, even though you think you are observing things as it is, actually you are not. Why? Because of our discrimination, or because of our desires we are not observing things as it is. So Buddhist way is, after trying very hard to eliminate this kind of emotional discrimination or prejudice of good or bad...to see things as it is. After doing so it is possible to see things as it is.

So when we say "things-as-it-is" means to practice hard to get rid of our desires...(not to get rid of our desires... not to get rid of...but to count our desires...to calculate. If there is computer you must put in all the data. One of the data will be our desire (this much desire and this much nourishment, and this kind of color and how heavy it is.) So we should count our desires in it. Then you will see the thing as it is. So usually we don't count our desires. Without reflecting on our selfish judgement we say, "He is good or bad." Someone who is bad to me is not always bad. To someone else he may be a good person. In this way we see things as it is. So when we understand the mind transmitted from Buddha to us we can see things as it is. This is Buddha Mind.

Shikudo daizen no shin. "Shikudo" is "India". "Daisen" is "Great Sage". "No" is "of". "Shin" is "Mind" (Big Mind) which includes everything. "Daizen no shin". "Mind of Great Sage in India. "Shikudo Daizen no shin". That is the Buddha's mind which includes everything. In other words the mind we have when we practice zazen is the Great Mind in which we don't try to see anything. We stop thinking; we stop emotional activity; we just sit. whatever happens to us we just sit. If something happens we are not bothered by it. It is like something in the great sky. The sky doesn't care, whatever happens in the sky, what kind of bird fly, the sky doesn't care. That is the mind transmitted from Buddha to us. when we sit, maybe many things will happen. You may hear the sound from the stream. You may think of something, but your mind does not care. Your Great Mind is there, just sitting. Even though you don't see things or don't hear, you don't think you are hearing anything, you don't think you are thinking some-

thing, maybe something is going on in the Big Mind. And that is the way (how) we observe things. We don't say "Good or bad". We just sit; and we enjoy things; but we have no special attachment to it. At that time we have full appreciation of it, that's all. One after another things will happen to us in that way, with full appreciation. That is the mind which is transmitted from Buddha. That is, at the same time, how we practice zazen.

So if you do not practice zazen, even though you enjoy some event or something, later it will cause some trouble. (Laughter) Do you understand this point? I think you have various experiences of this kind. Because you think, "This is it. It should be like this." (Laughter) If someone make some opposition to you, you will be angry. "No, it should be like this. Zen Center should be like this." Maybe so, but it is not always so. If time changes, if we Zen Center students lose Tassajara, move to some other mountain, the way we have here cannot be the way. We will have some other address. So we shouldn't stick to some particular way and we should always open our mind to observe things as it is, and to accept things as it is. Without this preparation if you say, "This is mountain; this is your friend; this is the moon," the moon will not be the moon itself. That is the difference between so called naturelism and Buddhist way.

So Buddha's teaching is the teaching of, or study of human nature (how we should study, how foolish we are, what kind of desire we have, or what kind of preferences we have, or what kind of tendency we have.) So my moto is...I can't know how to explain. My moto is...I'm always careful, I always remember (to use your expression) "to be liable to"... "To be liable to" read like this. We are "liable to" say... We should remember this expression, "liable to" or "tendency". You may say tendency is also the thing itself, but if you say so it means that you ignore yourself.

When I was preparing for this lecture someone came and asked me about self-respect. "What is self-respect?" "What is self-respect"? How do we obtain self-respect?" Self-respect is not something which you can feel you have. Do you understand?

When you feel, "I have self-respect", that is not self-respect anymore. When you are just like this, without thinking anything, without trying to say something special, just to talk what I have in our mind, and how I feel, then there is naturally self-respect. So when we are closely related to you all, and to everything then I am a part of one big, whole being. When I feel something I am not exactly...maybe almost a part of it, but not quite. When I don't feel anything and when I do something without any feeling of doing something, then that is you, yourself. When you are completely with everyone you don't feel who you are. That is self-respect.

So when you feel you are someone you have to practice hard; you have to practice zazen harder. Actually, as you know, it is very difficult to sit without thinking, without feeling. When you don't think, you will feel, you will sleep. Without sleeping, to be you yourself, without thinking, that is our practice. When you are able to do that you will be able to say things without thinking too much, without having any purpose. Just to express yourself you speak; you do something. That is self-respect. That is complete self-respect. So how you obtain this kind of self-respect is, maybe, to practice zazen. To be strict with yourself, especially to be strict with your tendencies. Everyone has their own way which is peculiar to himself, and which is not universal to everyone, so we must know that. But if you try to get rid of it, to try not to think in your practice, to try not to hear the sound of the stream, that is not possible. It is impossible. So let your ear hear it; let your mind think about something, but without trying to think, without trying to hear, or without trying to stop it, that is practice.

So more and more you will have this kind of habit or strength, or whatever you say, or power of practice. If you practice hard you will be like a boy or a girl, or children, maybe. When we are talking about self-respect some bird was singing outside..."Peep-peep-peep" (laughter) That is self-respect. "Peep-peep-peep" It doesn't mean anything. Maybe he was just singing, or even without trying to think it goes "Peep-peep-peep". In various way. If you hear it...we couldn't

stop smiling. We cannot say it is just a bird. It controls whole world, whole mountain. That is self-respect.

So that we can have this kind of everyday life, this kind of practice we study hard. When we come to this point, there is no need to say, "One whole big being" or "bird" or "many things which include one big whole being." It may be just a bird; it may be just a mountain; or Sandokai. If you understand this point there will be no need to recite Sandokai. "Shikudo dai zen no shin..." This is Chinese. It is Chinese or Japanese. It is not matter of Chinese or Japanese. It is just bird. But this is just my talk. It does not mean much. we say, "Zen is not something to talk about. It is something which you experience in it's true sense." And which will be very difficult. Anyway this world is difficult, so don't worry. Anyway this world is not so easy. Wherever you go you have problems. You should confront with problems. So it may be much better to have this kind of problem rather than mixed up various kinds of problems.