

XII.

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Note: This lecture covers the following lines of the SANDOKAI:
 KOTO O UKETE WA SUBEKARAKU SHU O ESHUBESHI. MIZUKARA KIKU O
 RISSURU KOTO NAKARE. SOKU MOGU DO O ESUZUNBA, ASHI O HAKOBUMO
 IZUKUNZO MICHI O SHIRAN.

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Tonight's lecture, and one more lecture, will be the concluding lectures of the SANDOKAI. And here it says, (reading the characters on the blackboard) KOTO O UKETE WA SUBEKARAKU SHU O ESHUBESHI. KOTO means "words". UKETE WA, "to receive" or "to listen to." This (the character for UKETE WA) looks something like a hand. It means that "if you receive the teaching you should (SUBEKARAKU means "you should") SHU O. SHU means "source of the teaching which is beyond our words. ESHUBESHI means "to have actual understanding of it." So "If you listen to the words you should understand..." E is understnad. SHU, "the source of the teaching." Usually we stick to words and because we stick to words it is difficult to see the true meaning of the teaching. So we say, "Words or teaching is the finger pointing at the moon." If you stick to the finger pointing at the moon you cannot see the moon. So words are just to suggest the real meaning of the Truth. So we shouldn't stick to words, but we should know, actually what the words mean.

At Sekito's time many people stuck to the words, or to each Zen Master's personal characteristic of them. Each Master had, at that time, their own way of introducing the real teaching to the disciple, and they stuck to some special teacher, some particular way, so Zen was divided into many schools. So it was very hard for the students to know which was the true way. And actually, to wonder which was the true way was already wrong. Each teacher was suggesting the true teaching by his own way, so each teacher was suggesting the same truth, the same source of the teaching which was transmitted from Buddha. Without knowing the source of the teaching, to stick to words was wrong, and actually that was what the teachers of his time were doing (or the student's way of studying Zen). So he said, "If you receive

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words you should understand the source of the teaching." The source of the teaching is the teaching which is transmitted from Buddha, and which is beyond each one's own way of expressing the teaching or suggesting the teaching. (Pointing to the characters on the blackboard.) These are Chinese characters but the Japanese people read them in the opposite way. (In a different order than they are written.)

The next sentence is: MIZUKARA KIKU O RISSURU KOTO NAKARE." "You" is understood in this sentence. "You should not..." NAKARE means "not," "should not." KIKU means "rules." RISSURU means "to establish." MIZUKARA means "by yourself." "You should not establish rules for yourselves." It means that you should not establish some rules for yourself, and you should not stick to them, or you should not be bound by them. That is what most people do. You say, "This is right" and "This is wrong." When you say so you establish some rules for yourself, and because you say so naturally you will stick to them and you will be bound by them. And this is why Zen school...Zen teachers were divided into many ways, Soto, Rinzai, Obaku, Unmon, Hogen, Igyo. There were many schools. Originally it was one teaching, but they established, or their disciples established one school and stuck to their family way, and were bound by their family way. That is how Zen schools were divided into many schools. The reason why Zen school was divided into many branches is because they stuck to their understanding and they thought that was Buddha's teaching. In other words, they stuck to the fingers pointing at the moon. If three people are pointing at the same moon, each person has his own finger, and if this is teaching there are already three schools, but the moon is one. (Laughter)

So he says, "Don't establish your own rules for yourself." NAKARE means "do not." MIZUKARA is "for yourself" or "for himself." KIKU means "rules." This is very important in our practice. We are liable to establish our rules. "This is rule of Tassajara" you may say, (laughing) but rules are the finger to have good practice in Tassajara, according to the situation. Actually rules are important, but you should not think, "This is the only way; this is the true permanent teaching; You shouldn't understand in that way. In everyday life it is true. You shouldn't stick

to your own understanding of things. Something which is good for someone is not always good for someone else. So you should not make special rules for everyone, but even so, rules are important. They are important, but when you stick to them, and when you force the rules on others too much it means "to establish rules" and to force the rules on others.

So once you enter some monastery you shouldn't say, "This is my way." If you come to Tassajara you should obey Tassajara's rules. You should not establish your own rules for yourself. What you should do at Tassajara, through Tassajara rules, is to see the actual moon. This is how you practice zazen at Tassajara. Rules are not the point. The actual teaching the rules will catch is the point. So by observing rules you will understand what is the real teaching. From the beginning this point is, maybe, missing in almost all of us. Most of the people start to study Zen to know what is Zen. This is already wrong. It means that they are always trying to provide some understanding or rules for themselves.

The way you study Zen should be like a fish picks up its food. (Demonstrating) They do not try to catch anything. (Laughing) They just swim around. And if something good comes... (opening his mouth quickly and closing it again with a snap) While you are following Tassajara rules, even though it is so hot, anyway you are observing Tassajara rules, eating in the hot zendo, like a fish swimming around. And if something good comes... (opening his mouth quickly and closing it again with a snap) And as you are doing so you will get something. I don't know whether you realize it or not. Anyway, as long as you are following rules you will have something. Even though you don't have anything, or you don't study anything, actually you are studying, like a fish who doesn't know what he is eating. That's all. In that way we should study. To understand does not mean to understand something by here (pointing to head).

If you ask the question, "What is good?" of a Zen student, the Zen student may answer, "Something you do is good and something you don't is bad." (Laughing) That is the answer. Something you do is good and something you don't is bad. That's all. You don't think so much about good or bad. So Dogen, Zenji says,

"The power of 'Do not' is good." That is something intuitive, the very inmost function of ourselves, (innate nature). Our innate nature has some function. Before you say, "Good or bad." That function appears to be sometimes good and sometimes bad. We understand in that way. But that innate nature is beyond the idea of good or bad. So when you start to wonder why we practice zazen in such hot weather that is the first step to the confusion. (Laughter) We should be like a fish, always swimming around in the river. That is a Zen student. Dogen Zenji said, "There's no bird that flies after knowing what is the sky and where is the limit of the sky." They just fly in the big sky. That is how we practice zazen.

So you should not make some rules for yourself. Or you should not try to make rules for yourself. These are very strict words. It looks like it doesn't mean much, but actually, when he says so he is waiting with a big stick. (Laughing) If you say something he answers, "Don't make rules for yourself! Don't try to understand by your head." He is waiting like this: (Holding up the pointer like a big stick ready to strike the student.) So when he says so we cannot say anything. "Hai" That's all. You shouldn't even say "Hai!" You should do things like a mule or ass. You may say, "This is absolute surrender," but it is not so. It is the way to understand what is the teaching. (Pointing to the character SHU) When we say, "The source of the teaching" we are liable to wonder what it is, but the source of the teaching is not something which you can understand by words, but something which you have when you do things quite naturally and intuitively without saying good or bad.

Time is always going on and on. We have not much time to say, "Good or bad." Moment after moment we should follow the flow of the time. You should go with the time. You don't have time to say, "This way or that way." When you become tired of doing something you may say, "This way or that way," (just to kill time) but actually when you see the vegetables in the garden which are almost dried up in the hot weather you do not have much time to say what will be the appropriate thing to do for today. While we are discussing we are becoming more and more hungry. So the kitchen people should go to the kitchen and prepare food

for the next meal. That is the most important thing. But it does not mean it is a waste of time to think about it. It is good to think about it, but we should not stick to words, or stick to rules too much. This is a very delicate point. Without ignoring rules, without sticking to the rules, we should continue our Tassajara practice. This is the way Sekito is suggesting.

And he says, SOKU MOKU DO O ESEZENBA ASHI O HAKOBUMO IZUKUNZO MICH O SHIRAN. SOKU means "antenna of the insects." MOKU means "eyes." So it means to use our eyes and our five senses. MOKU means "eyes." SOKU means "sense organs." DO O ESEZUNBA..." DO is TAO. E means "understand." ESEZUNBA, "not." "If you don't understand Tao with eyes and sense organs..." ...ASHI O HAKOBUMO IZUKUNZO MICH O SHIRAN. ASHI means "foot." HAKOBUMO means "to carry on" "to go." ESEZUNBA means "how." "How could you do that" is the meaning of this word, IZUKUNZO. MICH is "way." SHIRAN, "to know." "If you don't understand TAO ("Way")...If you don't understand the Way, how could you, even though you move (or you operate) your foot..." HAKOBUMO is "operate"..."how could you know (SHIRAN is "know") (MICH is "Way")..."how could you know the Way?" So it means that the only way is using your five sense organs, eyes and sense organs. Wherever you go using your sense organs like eyes, and nose, and at the same time, simultaneously understanding the source of the teaching...If you don't do that, even though you practice (ASHI O HAKOBUMO, "to operate your feet means to practice.") So, "even though you practice you cannot know the true way." MICH O. MICH, "True way." MICH O SHIRAN.

So the most important thing is not rules but to find out the true source of the teaching with your eyes, with your ears, wherever you are. This is how you understand the source of the teaching. That is a more direct way of knowing the source of the teaching. Without trying to establish some particular way for yourself. So "if you stick to words, and if you do not see the true way by your eyes, by your nose, ears, or tongue, sticking to some rules, and ignoring, actually, direct experience of everyday life, even though you practice zazen it doesn't work," he says. So without saying "Rinzai or Soto" or "this or that way" to have some direct experience of everyday life is the more important thing, and that is how we understand the true source of

the teaching transmitted from Buddha. That is the conclusion of the SANDOKAI.

So the true way could be a stick. The true way, the original way of Buddha could be a stone. Like Unmon said, "It may be toilet paper." (Laughing) "What is the true way?" or "What is Buddha?" Buddha is something beyond our understanding, so Buddha could be everything. Instead of Buddha we just say, "toilet paper" or "Three pounds of hemp" as Tozan said. So if someone asks you, "Who is Buddha?" the answer may be, "You are Buddha, too." That will be the answer. Then if someone asks, "What is mountain?"

"The mountain is also Buddha." That will be the answer. So in Japanese, MOMATA. MOMATA is "also." You shouldn't say, "This is Buddha." If you say, "This is Buddha" that statement will lead to some misunderstanding. So, "This is also Buddha." If you say so it is O.K. It does not mean you don't stick to lamp. (Referring to oil lamp on the altar.) But lamp is Buddha. If someone asks, "Where is Buddha?" you may say, "Here is Buddha, too." If you say, "too" it is O.K. It is not so definite... "Too". So Buddha may be somewhere else too.

So the secret of the perfect Zen statement is, "It is not always so..." These are Tassajara rules, but it is not always so. As long as you are at Tassajara this is our rule, but it is not always so. You shouldn't forget this point. So this is also Buddha's way, Buddha's rule. If you say so there's no danger, or you will not invite any misunderstanding. And this is how you get rid of selfish practice. Even though you think you are practicing Buddha's way you are liable to be involved in selfish practice when you say, "The way should be like that." Even though you say, "This is our Tassajara way" you should definitely say so, but you should be ready to accept some other's way too. This is rather difficult; to have a very strict strong confidence in your actual practice, and to be flexible enough to accept another's way too, is rather difficult. You may say that to be ready to accept another's teaching is not a strict way. But unless you are ready to accept another's practice you cannot be so strict with your own way, or else strictness becomes stubbornness. Only when you are ready to accept someone's opinion you could say definitely, "You should do so!" Even though you say so it means that if

someone else comes I will observe his way or else you cannot be so strict with yourself. Do you understand this point?

So usually strictness means to become rigid, to be caught by your own understanding, and to not provide any room for other's understanding. That is the usual way. That is not our way. So my master always said (if someone asked his opinion about some matter) "If you ask me, my opinion is THIS!" (hitting the table with his stick) (laughing) When he said so he was very strong. Why he could be so strong was because he said, "If you ask me..." So that is our way. So, to be just yourself is to be ready to accept another's opinion too. That is a very important point. So each moment you should intuitively know what you should do, but it does not mean you should reject someone else's opinion.

In some translation it says, "KJTO O UKETE WA..." KJTO means "forementioned things or words." How many words I don't know but it is not so. This has a wider meaning. KOTO is, maybe, the words in the SANDOKAI, but also it is various words we use, and it may include various ideas which we have, or we may have or things we see, or things we hear. So KOTO includes everything. And ASHI O HAKGBUMO means "practice." SOKU MGKU is "our everyday affairs" "our everyday life." "In everyday life there is Tao, and if you do not practice our way in everyday activity there's no approach to the True Way." That is what he means. (pointing to first line.) "Don't stick to words!" (Pointing to second line) "Don't make your own rules and force the rules on others." It is not possible to force any rules on others because each one has his own way, and each one should have his own way. That is the conclusion of the SANDOKAI.