



## SANDOKAI LECTURE IV

This is the fourth in a series of lectures by Suzuki-roshi on the Sandōkai, a dharma poem by the Chinese Zen Master Sekitō Kisen, which is chanted daily at Zen Center.

This lecture covers the following lines of the text:

*Mon mon issai no kyō  
Ego to fu-ego to  
Eshite sara ni ai-wataru  
Shikara zareba kurai ni yotte jūsu.*

In the last lecture<sup>1</sup> I explained *ri* and *ji*. The usual person sticks to *ji*, 'things.' That is quite usual. Characteristic of Buddha's teaching is to go beyond 'things.' 'Things' means various beings, the ideas we have, and material things. Even though we say truth, truth usually means something we figure out, something we think. But in Buddhism truth that we can figure out or think about is also

*ji*. When we go beyond subjective and objective worlds, beyond *ji*, we come to understand oneness of everything, oneness of subjectivity and objectivity, oneness of inside and outside.

For instance, if you sit *zazen* you are not thinking anything and you are not watching anything. Your focus is four or five feet ahead, but you do not watch anything. Even though many ideas come we do not think about them—they come in and go out, that's all. We do not entertain various ideas—we do not serve them food or anything. If they come in, O.K., and if they go out, O.K. That's all. That is *zazen*. When we have this kind of mind, our mind includes everything. Even though you do not try to include everything, actually everything is in your mind.

Another side we find is that we do not talk about things which have no relationship with us. We are not concerned about and do not expect something which may exist beyond our reach. Whatever we talk about at that moment is within our minds. Everything is in our mind. But usually you think there are many things, and I am thinking about this, and this, and this. In the cosmic world there are many stars, but right now we can only reach the moon. In a few years we may reach some other stars, eventually we may reach some other constellation. But we Buddhists do not think in that way. We think our mind pervades everywhere, reaches already, includes already, the stars; so our mind is not our mind, our mind is something greater than the mind which we think is our mind. This is Buddhist thought. In Buddhism, mind and being are one; not different. As there is no limit in cosmic being, there is no limit in our mind; our mind reaches everywhere. Our mind and outward being are one. So if you think, "This is mind," that is so. If you think, "This is some other being," that is also so. But actually when Buddhists say "this" or "that" or "I,"—that "I," or "this," or "that" includes everything. Listen to the sound.

The other day I explained what is sound.<sup>2</sup> Sound is different from noise. Sound is something which comes out more real, which comes out from your practice. Noise is something more objective, something which will bother you. Noise is more objective being; sound is both objective and subjective. So if you hit drum, the sound you make is the sound of your own subjective practice, and it is also the sound which encourages all of us. Sound is subjective and objective.

We say *hibiki*. *Hibiki* means 'something which goes back and forth like an echo.' If I say something I will have feedback, back and forth. That is sound. Buddhists understand everything, every noise, as a sound which we make. You may say, "The bird is singing over there." But when we hear bird, bird is "me" already. Actually I am not listening to bird. Bird is here in my mind already, and I am singing with bird. "Pe-pe-peep." If you think when you are reading something, "The bird is there, blue jay is over my room, blue jay is singing, but its voice is not so good." When you think in that way, that is noise. When you are not disturbed by blue jays, blue jays will come right into your heart, and you will be a blue jay, and the blue jay will be reading something, and then the blue jay will not disturb your reading. Because you think, "Blue jay is there, blue jay should not be over my room"—thinking in that way is more primitive understanding of being.

We understand things in that way because of our want of practice. When you practice zazen more, you can accept things as your own, whatever it is. That is the teaching of *ji ji muge*<sup>3</sup> from the Kegon Sutra. *Ji ji* means 'being which has no barrier, no disturbance.' Because it is interrelated completely closely, it is difficult to say, "This is bird, this is me." Or "That is bird, that is me." So it is difficult to separate the blue jay from me. That is *ji ji muge*.

So here we have *e-go*, and here we have *fu-ego*. *E-go* is a very special technical term of Buddhism or Zen. *Go* is 'mutual, each other.' The character *go* is made in this way: 互. The two parts of the character are interrelated. *E* 廻 means to go round and round. This part of the character 廻 means 'to go round or to meet,' and this part 回 also means to go round. So this is *e-go*. And *fu* is 'not.' Not *e-go*. Although things are interrelated, or because things are closely interrelated, everyone, every being, each being can be a boss. Each one of us can be boss because we are so closely related. So if I say "Mel," Mel is already not just Mel.<sup>4</sup> He is one of Zen Center students, so to see Mel is to see Zen Center. If you see Mel you understand what Zen Center is. But if you think, "Oh, he is just Mel," then your understanding is not good enough. You don't know who Mel is. So if you have good understanding of things, by things you will understand whole world. Each one of us is the boss of the whole world. Thus understanding this way it is not interrelated, it is independent.

*Suzuki-roshi's stone garden at Tassajara.*



We are independent, each one of us is completely independent, absolutely independent. There is nothing to compare with you. You are you, just you. We have to understand things in both ways. One is interrelated, to understand things as interrelated being. The other way is to understand ourselves as quite independent from everything. When we include everything we are completely independent because there is nothing left to compare with you. Do you understand? If there is only one thing, how can you compare things to you? Because there is nothing to compare to you, this is absolute 'independence,' *fu-ego*, not interrelated, absolutely independent.

*Mon mon issai no kyō*: these are rhetorical words. *Mon mon* means 'gates,' that is, our eyes, our nose, our ears; all the sense organs are gates. And for the gates there are sense objects. For eyes something to see, for the ears something to hear, something to smell for the nose, something to taste for the tongue. In this way the five sense organs have five sense objects. This is Buddhist common sense. The purpose of referring to these things is just to say "everything." Instead of saying "everything," we say *mon mon issai no kyo*, the five sense gates and five sense objects. All these things are interrelated, and at the same time they are independent. It is the same thing as saying flowers, and trees, and birds, and stars, but instead of this we say *mon mon issai no kyo*.

So the various beings which we hear are interrelated, but at the same time, each being is absolutely independent and has its own value. This 'value' means *ri*. *Ri* is that which makes something meaningful, which is not just theory. This term *ri* is rather difficult to understand. It may take time before you understand *ri*. Even though you don't attain enlightenment, you already have enlightenment, we say. That enlightenment means *ri*. That something exists here means it already has some reason why it exists here. And because of that reason it makes some sense. I don't know what sense. No one knows, but there must be some reason. And everything must have some virtue for itself. It is very strange that no things are the same; one is different from another. So there is nothing to compare with you. You have your own value. And that value is not comparative value or exchange value; it is something more than that. So when you are just on the cushion you have your own value. And because that value is related to everything, that value is also absolute value. Maybe it is better not to say too much.

And here again, *eshite sara ni ai-wataru*. *E* means 'interrelationship,' and *ai-wataru* is 'going on and on, everywhere.' Birds come from the south in the springtime and go back in the fall, crossing various mountains, rivers, and sometimes oceans. That is *wataru*. This part of the character 涉 is 'water.' And this part 步 is 'to walk.' So to cross many places, water and mountains, by foot or by boat is *wataru* 涉. So things are interrelated endlessly, going everywhere.

*Shikara zareba kurai ni yotte jūsu* means 'and yet it stands, it dwells, or stays, in its own position.' *Kurai* is 'position'; *yotte* is 'rely on.' So it means, if the bird stays some place, at some lake, for instance, his home is not only the lake, but also the whole world. That is how a bird flies and lives in its world. So everything is interrelated. 'And yet, they stay in their own position'—they are independent.

In Zen sometimes we say, “*Nin nin koko heku ryū bankin*: ‘each person is steep like a cliff.’ No one can climb up on you. You are completely independent. You are like a steep rock. And yet you are interrelated. This is the right understanding. But when you hear me say so, you should understand the other side too. That is *hibiki*. If you understand one side of the truth only, you don’t hear my voice. We say *kotoba no hibiki*. *Kotoba no hibiki* means ‘the other side of the words.’ We say, “If you don’t understand Zen words, you do not understand Zen.” You are not Zen student. Zen words are different from usual words. We say, “double-edged sword.” It cuts both ways. You may think I am cutting this way, but no, actually I am cutting that way. Watch out for my stick. Do you understand? Sometimes I scold my disciple, “No!” The other students think, “Oh, he is scolded,” but it is not actually so. Because I cannot scold the one over there, I have to scold the student who is near me. But most people think, “Oh, poor guy, he is being scolded.” If you think in that way you are not a Zen student. If someone is scolded you should listen; you should be alert enough to know who is scolded. We are trained in that way.

When I was quite a young disciple, we went out somewhere with our teacher and came back pretty late. There are many venomous snakes in Japan. And my teacher said, “You are wearing *tabi*<sup>5</sup> so you should go ahead. As I am not wearing *tabi*, a snake may bite me, so you go ahead.” So we walked ahead of him. As soon as we reached the temple he said to us, “All of you sit down.” We didn’t know what had happened, but we all sat down in front of him. “What silly guys you are,” he said. “When I’m not wearing *tabi*, why do you wear *tabi*? So I gave some warning to you: ‘I am not wearing *tabi*.’ If I say so, you should notice. You should have taken off your *tabi*. But without any idea of that, you walked ahead of me. What silly boys you are.”

We should be alert enough to hear the sound of the words. That’s all. We should realize something more than is said.

One night at Eiheiji<sup>6</sup> I opened the right side *shoji*<sup>7</sup> because it is a kind of rule to open that side, but I was scolded. “Don’t open that side,” one of the senior monks said. So the next morning I opened the left side, and I was scolded again. “Why did you open that side?” I didn’t know what to do. Yesterday when I opened the right side I was scolded, and today when I opened the left side I was scolded again. I couldn’t figure out why. But at last I noticed that the first time a guest was on the right side, and the second time a guest was on the other side. So both times I had opened the side where the guest was. That was why I was scolded. At Eiheiji they never told us why, they just scolded us. Their words were double-edged.

These words *mon mon issai no kyō, ego to fuego to* are also double-edged words. *E-go*, interdependency; and *fu-ego*, absolute independency. This side is interdependence and this side is absolute independence. Everything which we hear, which we see, is interdependent and independent. Interdependence goes on and on everywhere, and yet things are independent, things stay in their own place: *shikara zareba kurai ni yotte jūsu*. That is the main point of the *Sandōkai*.

Do you have some questions?

Student: Does *e-go* mean 'the bird is the whole world'; and does *fu-ego* mean 'the bird is just a bird?'

Roshi: Yes, bird is just bird. In the Prajna Paramita Hridaya Sutra we say *shiki soku ze ku, ku soku ze shiki*: form is emptiness, emptiness is form. *Shiki soku ze ku*—form is emptiness—is *e-go*. And 'emptiness is form' is *fu-ego*. (Knocking). This is *fu-ego*. You cannot say, you know. It is difficult to say what it is. (Another knock).

Student: Is there any particular reason why we strike the bell on the word *mon of mon mon issai no kyō*?<sup>8</sup>

Roshi: To hit bell, means to produce independent Buddha one after another. Gong. Buddha. One independent Buddha appears. Gong. Next independent Buddha appears. When next Buddha appears, the last Buddha disappears. So each, one by one, striking one after another, you produce Buddha, one after another. That is our practice.

Student: Roshi, today someone said, "No students, no teacher; no teacher, no students." Someone was saying, "Well, what makes the Roshi?" And someone else said, "Because he has students." You can't be the Roshi without students. Students can't be students without the Roshi. They are both independent because they are together.



Roshi: Yes, together. Without students, no teacher. And student encourages teacher. It is very much so. I know that if I have no students I may goof off every day. Because I have so many students watching me, I must be doing something; I must study so that I can give a lecture. If there is no lecture, I will not study. But at the same time I shall be very much ashamed of myself if I study just to give lecture. So usually, when I study for lecture I go off in another direction, following something interesting, and most of the time I don't study for the lecture.

But still, if I don't study I don't feel so good. Because I feel I have to prepare for the lecture, I start to study. But as soon as I start to study, I start my own study, not for giving lecture. In this way things are going on and on, endlessly, and it is good, you know.

Someday, what I study will help students. I don't know when. Just to feel good we study, and just to feel better we practice zazen. No one knows what will happen to us after sitting one, two or ten years. No one knows. No one knows is right. Just to feel good we sit zazen, actually. Eventually that kind of practice of purposeless practice, eventually will help you in its true sense.

#### NOTES

1. *Wind Bell*, Fall 1975.

2. At the end of the last zazen period of the day, the big drum at the back of the zendo is hit. The night before this lecture was given, Suzuki-roshi stopped the student hitting the drum, and while everyone continued zazen, explained that hitting the drum should be sound, not noise.

3. *Ji ji muge* is usually translated 'mutual interpenetration,' one of the central concepts of the Kegon, or Hwa-Yen, school of Buddhism. The Zen school utilizes many of its technical terms and images.

4. Mel was a student sitting right in front of Suzuki-roshi.

5. *Tabi* are a kind of slipper, usually white, worn on formal occasions. The monks were probably returning from performing a Buddhist ceremony, and had not removed their *tabi*.

6. Eiheiji: one of two head training temples of the Soto Zen school.

7. *Shoji*: sliding rice-paper doors.

8. During the chanting of the *Sandōkai*, the *keisu* or gong is struck at specified places in the text.