

MODEL SUBJECT NO. 30
JOSHU'S LARGE RADISHES
Commentary by Reverend Shunryū Suzuki-rōshi
Zen Center
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NOT VERBATIM

There is no Introductory Word to Model Subject No. 30 from the *Blue Cliff Records*, but I will apply the following statement from a *Buddhist Guide for the Layman* by Sita Paulickpulla Renfrew [publisher: Cambridge Buddhist Association, Cambridge, Mass.] as an introduction.

According to Buddhist ethics, no person or authority can ever impose upon another any code of conduct lower in morality or humanity than the individual himself wishes. Neither can anyone make another act on a higher plane than the individual himself desires. Each individual can act only according to the level of his state of evolution, and he has to live by the consequences thereof.

Main Subject from the *Blue Cliff Records*:

Attention! A monk asked Joshu, "I hear by rumor that you were at one time closely associated with Nansen. Is that so, or not?" Joshu replied, "Chin-shu produces very large radishes."

Appreciatory Word by Setcho:

Chin-shu produces large radishes. Monks everywhere have taken this as a model for replies. It is obvious from ancient to modern times that one cannot ask a swan why it is white or a crow why it is black.

A rascal, a rascal! He has already twisted the monk's noses.

Notes by Master Suzuki:

A student who is familiar with his own true nature will become familiar with his teacher's true nature as well as the true nature of a radish-the true nature of all existence. It is true that there should be no problem merely because one thing happens to be big and another small, or one person the teacher and another the disciple, if their true nature is the same. But what will happen if a swan is black and a crow white? It is natural for a swan to be white and a crow to be black. This is Buddha Nature.

Do not say there is no need to practice Buddhism because we have Buddha Nature intrinsically. There is Buddha Nature (eventually there

is happiness) only when a swan is white, a crow is black, a human being is a human being, and a Buddhist practices Buddha's way of life.

If a Buddhist does not behave like a Buddhist, one cannot say he is a Buddhist, or a Christian. Who is he? There is no composure. Eventually he will be unable to be aware of his true nature.

In *Shōbōgenzō* "Raihai-tokuzui,"¹ Dōgen-zenji says when you meet with a right teacher, who teaches you highest wisdom, you must not consider his caste or race, nor attend to his favorable or unfavorable appearance, nor consider his shortcomings. You should be respectful of him only because of his true wisdom. You should not have a feeling of aversion, but serve him and bow to him truthfully.

If you practice Buddhism without hypocrisy but with truthfulness, this truthfulness penetrates into the innermost nature of all existence and will encourage man and nature; and the true nature of man and nature will encourage your sincere practice.

This sincerity accepts the level to which we have evolved, wakes up our slumbering moral faculties, and extends our true nature beyond the discrimination of good and bad, perfect and imperfect. You will always have a good reaction with continuous Zen practice.

This transcript is a retyping of the existing City Center transcript (thought to be based on notes by Baker-rōshi). It is not verbatim. No tape is available. The City Center transcript was entered onto disk by Jose Escobar, 1997. It was reformatted by Bill Redican (10/27/01).

¹ Suzuki-rōshi wrote his graduation thesis on this fascicle of *Shōbōgenzō*.