

Shunryu Suzuki Lecture from the December, 1964 Wind Bell

An edited summary of a lecture. Corrected by Gordon Geist using the Shaw translation.

MODEL SUBJECT NO. 75 FROM THE HEKIGAN ROKU (BLUE CLIFF RECORDS)

Introductory Word:

The Treasure sword always is present (beyond oneness and duality). It is a life-taking sword and yet a life-giving sword. Sometimes it is here (in the teacher's hand) and sometimes there (in the student's hand); but this make no difference. Gaining or losing it and its positive and negative use are at each other's disposal. Just consider! How do you make good use of the Treasure Sword without attaching to the idea of host and guest, or integration and disintegration?

Note by Reverend Suzuki:

In the last Wind Bell, in the discussion of Model Subject No. 73, I explained the Middle Way or negative aspect of life, which provides us with the full meaning of life in various circumstances. In this Introductory Word, Engo presents the same aspect under the name of Treasure Sword.

These subjects are koans to which Zen students devote themselves with great effort. It is important to confront yourself with the experiences of the old Zen students by reading these stories over and over again. I shall be very glad if you will give my writing your critical attention.

Main Subject:

Attention! A monk from Joshu's temple came to Ukyu's place. Ukyu asked him: "Is there any difference between my way of Zen and that of Joshu?" The monk said: "No difference." Ukyu said: "If there is no difference, why don't you go back to Joshu?" and then he gave this monk a good slap. The monk said: "If your staff had an eye to see, you could not have delivered such a wanton blow." Ukyu said: "Today I have given a wonderful slap," and he gave the monk three more whacks. The monk went away.

The story to this point is perfect, but it continued in this way: As the monk was leaving, Ukyu said: "Originally a blind staff was something with which to slap someone." The monk turned back and said: "A man with a dipper is handling the situation." (This means Ukyu has taken some leadership in the situation). Ukyu said: "If you want the staff, this jungle monk will let you have it." The monk came up to Ukyu, seized the staff and gave him three blows. Ukyu said: "Oh the blind staff! The blind staff! The monk said: "Here is someone who has been hit." Ukyu said: "This monk was hit without reason." The monk immediately made obeisance to him. Ukyu said: "Well, well! Is this all?" The monk went out with a roar of laughter. Ukyu concluded, saying: "So it is! So it is!"

Note by Reverend Suzuki:

As you know, after an unknown southerner came to the north and received the transmission from the Fifth Chinese Patriarch, Zen divided into two schools: the Southern School and the Northern school. The Ukyu of this subject was a southerner and a disciple of the fifth Patriarch. The difference between the Northern and Southern Schools was as great as that between a dragon and a serpent. The Northern School was called the Gradual School while the Southern School was called the Sudden School.

A monk came to Ukyu's place from Joshu's temple hoping to study a different way of Zen. Ukyu gave the monk an unexpected question. He asked if there was any difference between his own way of Zen and the way of Joshu. But the monk's answer, that there is no difference, is not at all a common answer, when there is indeed a great difference. This monk might have been an extraordinary one. Only a tactful master like Ukyu would have been able to manage him. Thus Ukyu acknowledged the strength of the monk and gave him the meaningful slaps. The monk appreciated the meaning of the tactful Ukyu. There is not the slightest gap between these two masters' activities.

However, in the realm of the ultimate integration of the powers of teacher and student, one goes with the other. (Refer to **Chan and Zen Teaching**, Second Series, p.127, and to my interpretation of Model Subject No. 73 in the last Wind Bell). In this realm, nothing takes its own form. The absolute negative aspect is the opposite of the first part of this subject where a good teacher gave a good slap to a good monk; and in the second part, an aged Ukyu was slapped by a bad student with a blind staff. But nothing is wrong with these tactful masters. Sometimes positive, sometimes negative, sometimes in order and sometimes reversed, their great activity has no special regulation. When such activity of two masters ceases to be curious, you will get the gist of our traditional way. All the mysterious powers and faculties depend upon this secret.

The blind staff in this Model Subject means right Dharma—which can be likened to an invisible wedge for the dualistic world: a wedge which gives rise to good and bad, love and hatred, favorable and adverse: the dualistic conflict of the amicable worldly affairs; and yet which keeps the strict unity of our existence.

In the second part of this subject, the situation between the master and the monk changed under the blind staff. The monk seized the staff and struck Ukyu who had offered his own staff to him. Here Ukyu said: "Oh, the blind staff! The blind staff!" The monk said: "Here is someone who was hit by it." Ukyu said: "This fellow (Ukyu) was hit without reason." Here we see the blind staff playing the leading part of the role. Ukyu was at one with this monk, and the monk was at one with the blind staff, the symbol of the traditional way. In Engo's Introductory Word, by the 'Treasure Sword' he meant this blind staff. (See Introductory Word to this subject).

The monk immediately made obeisance to Ukyu. Ukyu said: "Well, well! Is that all?" The monk went out with roaring laughter. Ukyu concluded the subject saying: "So it is! So it is!" This 'So it is' is not simple. Let us see Setcho's appreciatory word.

Appreciatory Word:

It is easy to attract (a serpent by calling with a flute). It is difficult to turn loose. Look carefully at the well-integrated power (of the two). Even though the kalpa-stone is hard, it may be worn away. Even though the ocean is deep it may be dried up. But Ukyu's way will never cease. Oh aged Ukyu! Aged Ukyu! One after another, how many variations have you in your way? If only you had not given that dipper to the monk. (Setcho is creating a problem for us students).