

HOW TO GET ZEN ENLIGHTENMENT

— ON MASTER ISHIGURO'S FIVE-DAYS' INTENSIVE COURSE FOR ITS ATTAINMENT—

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I

Westerners have mostly approached Zen Buddhism through the writings of Dr. Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki. Suzuki's contribution in this respect is incomparably great. He is not only the highest Zen philosopher, but also the best example of Zen personality. When Dr. Clarence H. Graham of Columbia University stayed in Kyoto as a lecturer of the American Studies Seminar in the summer of 1952, the writer introduced him to Dr. Suzuki, who was also lecturing at Columbia and who happened to come to Kyoto with Karen Horney. They talked together about one hour, and after that Graham said to me that "he (Suzuki) is one of the most charming persons I ever met." Then the writer said to him, "that is Zen personality." Suzuki is now in his ninetieth year and still active, continuing his study and writing. When the writer met him in New York in 1956, he asked the writer to get for him Trigant Burrow's book "*Science and Man's Behavior*" and Franz Alexander's book "*Fundamentals of Psychoanalysis*." When the writer met him in December last year, he was physically and mentally in very good condition. He is so-to-say the Zen 'personality' itself.

But Dr. Suzuki is not a Zen master who trains disciples in monasteries.* Here arises some limitation in the understanding of Zen among Westerners who have approached Zen through his books. Many of them have read Suzuki's writings, and understood the Zen way of thinking quite well, some of them like Dr. Fromm even extremely well, but most of them have no Zen training.

As Dogen (1200-1253), founder of the Soto sect of Japanese Zen Buddhism, said, Zen should be mastered through two ways: one, by hearing and studying doctrines and teachings, the other by training and practising. There are some Westerners who have had Zen training in Japanese monasteries, and most of them have practised even more earnestly than many of professional Zen monks. But generally speaking, Western people cannot have such a time-consuming training. Therefore, it is quite natural for Westerners to wonder if there could be found any way to attain Zen enlightenment (*satori* in Japanese, which means literally 'to have insight'), (if possible) in a shorter period of time than they are often told is necessary.**

* Of course, Suzuki knows his limit, and when someone wishes to have Zen training, he usually introduces the client to the master of a Zen monastery.

** Dr. Bruner asks Zen Master Hisamatsu about the methods of teaching (cf. page 104, this issue). "May I ask a rude question? How do you teach? I as a university professor give lectures or seminars, direct theses. What do you do?" It would have helped Bruner's understanding of Hisamatsu's methods, if someone explained him about the activities of "*Gakudo-Dojo*" ("Association for Self-Awakening") lead by Dr. Hisamatsu. It has more than hundred members and their activities consist of regular meetings (every Saturday, *zazen* and discussions on Zen) and special training sessions (one week, in April, July and December, *zazen* training and *mondo*: i.e. questions and answers between the master and the disciples.) Hisamatsu has another group, "*Shincha-kai*" ("Society of Mind and Tea"), and their activities consist of trainings through *zazen* and the tea ceremony. Such special trainings might not enter Bruner's teaching methods.

Satori is said to consist of "seeing into one's own nature (*kensho*).¹" Then the problem is: are there no means to see into one's own nature in a shorter time?

II

In one of the most important sutras of the Pure Land sects of Buddhism, "*Kan-muryojukyo*" there is written: "One can realize Buddha in one to seven-days' practice." We can find interesting references in Hakuin's writings in this respect. Hakuin (1685-1768) was one of the greatest Zen masters in Japan who lived in the Tokugawa Period, and we have a number of his teachings which are very interesting from the psychological point of view. When he was young, he suffered from heavy neurasthenia and tuberculosis caused by excessive Zen training, so serious that all the physicians gave up hope for his recovery. But he did recover miraculously, by following the teachings of a hermit and by practising a special breathing technique and autosuggestion, which may be comparable with Schultz's autogene training. He wrote of his experiences in a pamphlet, "*An Idle Story in a Night Boat*," and this teaching has helped many patients of neurasthenia in Japan to recover, among whom there is such a distinguished medical scientist (bacteriologist) as Dr. Kenzo Futagi. '*Hitori-anna*' (auto-massage) which he taught is surprisingly similar to the techniques of progressive relaxation of Edmund Jacobson. During the "*rohatsu sesshin*," (the severest Zen training session in a year, in memory of the day of Śākya Buddha's enlightenment) a story of Manabe no Heishiro is often told to the trainees. He was a common man who became Hakuin's disciple and, it is said, attained Zen enlightenment in two days' and two nights' intensive practice, but usually this story is not considered seriously. Is it really possible to attain Zen enlightenment in two days and nights? If so, Westerners will very willingly participate in such Zen training sessions.

We can find references of similar implication in some of Hakuin's writings. Hakuin wrote in his article "A letter in reply to the question: 'Which of *nembutsu* and *koan* is the superior?'" (in his book "*Orategama*") "Here is one who is concerned with Joshu's *MU*, and another who practises *nembutsu*. If in the former, one can not fully concentrate on his practice and cannot persevere he would not be able to succeed even if he continues for ten or twenty years. The *doer* of *nembutsu* may be able to attain samadhi, and to solve the great matter of rebirth in the Pure Land, by the revelation of the wisdom of Buddha in three or five days or at the most before ten days, if he concentrates himself on calling Amita Buddha's name with an undistracted mind, neither concerned with the Defiled Land, nor seeking the Pure Land, and if he pushes forward tenaciously with one rush. What is the new birth in the Pure Land? It is nothing but "seeing into one's own nature."

Hakuin emphasizes the fundamental identity of the ultimate stage of main religious teachings.* In his letter to an old nun of the Nichiren sect of Japanese Buddhism (also in "*Orategama*"), he mentioned Confucianism, Taoism, Shintoism, and the chief sects of Buddh-

* Dr. Tetsuro Watsuji, distinguished philosopher of culture, compared the three main sects of Buddhism with the three main religions of the world: Shin sect with Christianity, as religions of other power, i.e. one is saved with the mercy of the Supreme Being (though there are also important differences between God and Amita Buddha; Nichiren sect with Islam as fighting religions; and Zen as the most typical of Buddhism. Hakuin preaches the fundamental identity of these sects.

ism as being identical in the ultimate stage of their spiritual training, and that one can reach samadhi by concentrating on reciting *Namunyo horengkyo* all the time as well as through Zen.

Here comes a question if there can be found any way to attain samadhi in such a short period as three to five days? To this question, Master Ishiguro answers affirmatively.

III

Master Horyu Ishiguro is a Zen master belonging to the Soto Sect, and one of the highest disciples of Master Sogaku Harada. When the writer met Dr. Bernard Phillips, Professor of Philosophy at the University of Delaware, in 1954 in Kyoto, he spoke to the writer on the question "What is the difference between Yoga and Zen?"* "Zen aims at awareness, while Yoga aims at ecstasy." And he added his impression on Japanese Zen training, saying that "the guidance of Master Harada of Hosshinji Monastery (Obama, Fukui-ken) is excellent; he is training his disciples most strictly, always encouraging them saying '*Isshokenmei! Isshokenmei!*' (for your life! with all your might!), while in most of other monasteries Zen monks are falling into a dose." When the writer visited Mrs. Beverly White in St. Paul, she was proud that she had had an experience of *kensho* (seeing into her own nature) under the guidance of Harada. It is widely known that Master Harada has been training his disciples most effectively, and many of them have been able to have the experience of *kensho*. The writer visited his monastery in October last year, and could see just a bit of his way of guidance. Finding it very thorough and well formulated, the writer wished to return in order to experience the whole seven days' session. But Harada is now very old (eighty-eight years), and Master Shonen Morimoto of Nagaoka Zen Dormitory (near Kyoto) and Master Soen Nakagawa of Ryutakuji Monastery, Mishima, at the foot of Mt. Fuji, suggested that he see Master Ishiguro's way of guidance which seems to be one development of Harada's way of training. The writer visited Ishiguro in March, had a talk with him, and found that his view was quite modern and coincided with most of our views. It was also told that in May last year Mr. Manuel Chenaille from France could have an experience of *kensho* in five-days' session as the No.1 of foreigner under his guidance. Then the writer decided to join the April training session with some of his students. Twenty-three students and one businessman from the Kyoto area attended the session, and two students and five others from the Tokyo and Nagoya areas came to join them. The training was held from April 3 to 7 at Myoo-ji Zen Monastery, Sekigahara, which is located between Nagoya and Kyoto.

Ishiguro's principle lies in concentrating the beginner's training on the adjustment of mind. Then he allows his students to take six hours' sleep at night, and take rest after each meal. The quality and quantity of three meals were not bad. In "*Zazenyojinki*" (Points to watch in zazen) by Keizan, one of the successors to Dogen, it is repeatedly emphasized that zazen is not mere austerities; for example, "The cushion which one sits on should be thick: zazen is a comfortable way." "Don't practise zazen where it is too light or too dark, too cold or too hot, . . ." "Lack of clothing, lack of food, and lack of sleep . . . these are the three lacks. They become a source of idleness." Ishiguro pays special attention to these points, esp. in his guidance of beginners. He allows some students who have found it very difficult to sit cross-legged (*paryanka* or *half paryanka*), to sit on a chair. In the beginning, he emphasizes

* Dr. Phillips was studying Zen as a Fulbright professor at Nara Women's University, after one year's stay in India where he studied Yoga.

the arrangements for mental adjustment, without forcing other trifles.

The second characteristic of his method is the thoroughgoing formulation of steps in the training. He begins as do other Zen training methods with "*Susokukan*" (method of counting breathing) and proceeds to the practice of "MU." MU means literally "nothing," and it is usually understood as coming from the Koan of the Chinese Zen Master Joshu. When a monk asked Joshu: "Has a puppy Buddha nature?" Joshu replied: "MU (None)." But as the first step in Zen training, the meaning "nothingness" does not matter at all, and the "MU" is just a call, identical in essence with "OM" in Yoga practice. They are calls fit for concentration of the mind. Ishiguro sets up a number of steps in MU practice and it begins with a calm call similar to chanting, and ends with a vigorous energetic cry accompanied by high muscular tension in face, shoulders and arms. The first step may be called Nembutsu Zen, the second Yoga Zen, and, omitting the intermediate steps, the last step, having been named by the Master *seishi** practice, *Niwo*** Zen. At the height of this vigorous practice, the tension is suddenly released, and at this moment the student usually experiences "*kensho*" (seeing into one's own nature) with guidance from the master. A detailed explanation of the process is forbidden by Master Ishiguro for the reason that it would induce other people to misunderstand the guidance. But the writer will trace the process psychologically, comparing it with the writings of Hakuin.

"Those who wish to witness the Profundity, one hundred out of one hundred, one thousand out of one thousand, can have their eyes opened if the Great Doubt can present itself. When the Great Doubt presents itself, it is empty and boundless on all sides, it is beyond life and death, it is like lying in thousands of layers of ice, sitting in a crystal vase, it is to feel extremely clear and cool, extremely neat and clean. All is forgotten, when sitting, standing is forgotten; when standing, sitting is forgotten. There are no feelings any more, and only one MU prevails. It is as if standing in the boundless heaven. In such a situation, if one rushes forth at a stretch, without fear or reflection, one will feel suddenly the crushing of the wall of ice, the breaking down of the palace of crystal, and will have the greatest joy which has never before been experienced in his forty years, nor even been heard of. At this time one realizes that life and death or nirvana are all like a dream of the previous night, even the immense number of the worlds are like foams in the ocean, all the sages and saints seem nothing but flashes of lightening. This is called the period of "reaching the bottom of ourselves, attaining the glorious enlightenment, throwing off all the cumberances on the ego." One cannot tell it to others, nor explain to others. One can only grasp it by experiencing, as one feels for oneself cold and hot by drinking water. It is to melt all the space in a wink and to look through all times, from past to future in one thought. Is there any joy comparable to this in the worlds of human and heavenly beings? These achievements can be reached in only three to five days, if students proceed earnestly. How can the Great Doubt present itself?

* Ishiguro named his method "the method of *Kannon-Seishi*," after the names of two famous Bodhisattva: *Kannon* (originally, *Avalokēśvara*) means in Japanese "to observe sound," and *Seishi* (originally, *Mahāsthāmaprāpta*) means "force comes," though the original meanings have had deeper implications. Ishiguro intends to express the characteristics of his training method with these terms.

** *Niwo* is the personage standing at the gate of a Buddhist temple, symbolizing force, dignity and indignation against evils.

One should concentrate oneself on MU of Joshu, in spite of the quietness or the turmoil of the environment, and throw off all the feelings or ideations. Then almost anyone of them can have the Great Doubt present itself to him. If one hears about the situation of the Great Doubt or the Purity of Purities one might think it suspicious and view it as fearful and weird. One should expect some difficulties in the process of attaining such a precious inner experience common to all the Buddhas. There are many people who have become concerned with the training of MU practice, produced the Great Doubt, and had achieved the ultimate joy after experiencing it.

“But we have heard of only a few who could get strength by repeatedly calling Amita’s name. Eshin-sozu, whose intelligence, virtue and faith were very well known, would have been able to reach enlightenment in a month or two, or at the most in half to one a year, but instead had to exhaust forty-years of the prime of his life, in devoting himself to the daily calling of Amita’s name and chanting of sutras. This difference is due to the existence of the Great Doubt. Then one should realize that the Great Doubt is a wing for the flight to enlightenment. Honen-shonin, who was high in morals, full of compassion, diligent and valiant, and said to have used his eyes’ own light to read sutras in the dark, would be able to finish the great matter immediately and to succeed to attain the new birth in the Pure Land, if he had had something of the Great Doubt. It would be needless for him to regret that the rope is too short to draw water from the deep spring. It is perhaps due to the fact that the MU practice is easy to arouse the Great Doubt, but calling the Amita’s name is rather difficult to induce it. . . .” (Which of *nembutsu* and *koan* is the superior?)

An important characteristics of Zen in getting enlightenment and peace of mind is the establishment of a methodology. Hakuin emphasizes this point. Bankei (1622-1690) was a great Zen master, who lived almost at the same time as Hakuin, enjoying popularity among the people; but his teachings could not develop after his death owing to the lack of a methodology which could be followed by his successors. Hakuin’s guidance with stepwise advancement of Koans has been criticized as too formal, but it could not be denied that this technique has helped the succession of and development of Zen training. Ishiguro has planned to formulate more definitely the technique and has established a five-days’ intensive course to reach *kensho* (seeing into one’s own nature). Hakuin told his disciples that he had six or seven great *satoris* (enlightenment) and numberless small *satoris*. As to the enlightenment which Ishiguro helps his students to have, there occurs a question whether it can be considered as the true *kensho* or not. To this question Ishiguro tells his students that this is only a glimpse of one’s own nature. He explains it by the ten stages of Zen training, which is described in the “*Ten Ox-herding Pictures*,” and identifies it with the third stage, “Seeing the ox.” Generally speaking, the true *kensho* might be localized at the eighth stage, i.e. “Both the person and the ox go out of sight.” But it is not unfair to call the special egoless samadhi experience at the last stage of Ishiguro’s intensive course “a glimpse of one’s own nature.” Some of the reports of the students who participated in the session, will show this.

“That morning was a very fine day. After the *kensho* I went to a wash-room. Then the sky through the window seemed extremely beautiful, and the tranquility of nature felt more deeply than ever. Generally speaking, the mind had become clear in a high degree after the *kensho*, and still now it is felt, though it tends to gradually weaken.”

After the *kensho*, "A feeling of joy is prevailing which is lasting and calm rather than a temporary and exciting." "I could see everything before the eyes candidly and without any preconceived ideas, and with the suspension of all thinking activities."

"The mind became clear and serene, and a kind of joy was felt, with a force coming up from the bottom of the belly. It was felt everytime the devotion of *zazen* proceeded."

"When I was practising the method of *seishi* with all my might, I could reach the situation of the perfect no-mind in its climax. . . . I had experiences of high serenity of mind two times exclusive of the time of *kensho*. The first time was at the beginning of the MU practice on the third night. Everything before the eyes looked so beautiful, and I wondered if I could reach *kensho*. That serenity lasted until the next morning. The second experience was on the last (fifth) morning. During all the time when we were weeding and then taking pictures, I wondered at the beauty of the world which I could never experience before, and felt the limitless sympathy and love to everything in nature, a murmuring brook, grasses, stones, and so on."

The following is the report of a graduate student of psychology (K.N.) :

"On the fourth evening, U. and N. told me that they were returning home, as they could have the experience of *kensho*. The fact that some of our intimate friends already attained the goal stimulated and encouraged me. I did not yet know what sort of experience the *kensho* was, but this inflamed my fighting spirit and I thought that the important matter for me was to become one with the sound "MU-UWA" itself with my whole mind and body. Drowsiness left me completely. Calling voices of others did not disturb me any more. Now I wonder if it was due to the situation the act consciousness of 'hearing' was no more there. It was not certain what duration of time passed, but the scenery before my eyes came to change (the forms of things became unclear — though I gazed at a point before me with eyes widely open — , and the visual field seemed darker.) At the same time the orientation became indistinct, and the consciousness of self as well as the feeling of sitting on the chair (he was using a chair) was lost; and the head, esp. the back of it was felt cooler and lighter — this is my feeling which came afterwards on my reflection — . It was quite sure that I was at that time "MU - UWA" itself. Then I came to myself, recovered the consciousness of myself. In the meanwhile how much time has passed, I did not know; it seemed as if it were just a moment, or as if it lasted longer. It is quite sure that the condition which surpassed the lapse of time continued for some time. I felt relieved. All the foggy and gloomy cumbrances which surrounded me cleared up and I felt so refreshed. . . . (As the effect of the training and *kensho* he adds:) 1. Fighting spirit was aroused. 2. The power of concentration increased. 3. Self-control against the commotion by external stimuli was achieved. 4. I came to have force in the lower belly. 5. I am no more troubled by other's criticisms, and can remain calm."

The writer himself had very vivid characteristic experiences described by Hakuin as : "sitting in a crystal vase," and "a person at the bottom of Great Death," just after the climax of the strenuous *seishi* practice which was going on in all group of trainees. All the trainees had entered the last stage on the fourth afternoon, and the atmosphere grew fully charged; then the master stopped the calling of MU. Overall stillness prevailed. And when the writer returned to the usual silent *zazen* with eyes open, then that state of mind appeared and lasted

until the notice of the beginning of *dokusan* (individual interview with the master). The writer thought, if he could continue that state to the maximum, he would be able to proceed to the experience of the "collapsing of the palace of crystal," that had also been described in Hakuin's letters. At the time of the interview the writer could have another experience of concentration on the "now-and-here" with the guidance of the master, which may be called a kind of samadhi and a glimpse of his own nature. The writer is planning to study these experiences with the methodology of experimental psychology, and hopes to publish detailed report in the near future.*

The above is not a systematic, strictly psychological description. It is rather a mere note. But the writer believes that this technique of reaching *kensho* opens an important, fruitful way of psychological approach to Zen training. Besides that methodology, Ishiguro's way of explanation of the two aspects of mind is interesting and instructive. He takes a simile of the cinema screen. Though there appear so many different scenes and personalities on the screen, it returns to its original blank after the movie. The fundamental mind, which is often called Buddha Nature, is compared to this screen, and *kensho* is nothing but to see or witness this mind or True Self. If one realizes the existence of this mind, one will be able to use the mind without tumult or oscillation. Master Ishiguro emphasizes this kind of use of mind in comparison with the usual use of mind, full of commotion. There occurs a problem how this fundamental mind, or so-called "one's own nature," "True Self" (in Dr. Hisamatsu's meaning), or the "Supreme Self" in Yoga**, should be considered. This is not only a psychological problem, but also a difficult problem of philosophy or theology. We psychologists hope to clarify it as far as we can from the psychological point of view, and leave further discussions to the philosophers or theologians.

* Miss Y., graduate student of Buddhism at Otani Buddhist College, joined the May session in Tokyo for the second time, and phoned to the writer on her return home with great exaltation that she could proceed further and reach a higher stage of samadhi.

** It is another stimulating project for us to conduct a comparative study with Yoga training. Japanese Zen scholars have not shown much interest in Yoga, and Western scholars who have studied Yoga have had no contact with Zen training. That is the reason why the comparative study has not developed, but this will open a channel for adapting Zen to the modern man.