

**THE ISHIGURO TECHNIQUE**  
**— AN INTENSIVE COURSE OF ZEN TRAINING —**

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I introduced the five days' intensive course of Zen training devised by Master Horyu Ishiguro of Tokyo in our *Psychologia* in 1959 (Volume II, No. 2). Since then Master Ishiguro has been developing his technique in the line of *shikan-daza* (just concentrating to the proper sitting) of Soto Zen. In these four years several foreigners came to attend the training sessions of Master Ishiguro, and most of them could succeed in attaining considerably deep *kensho* (seeing one's own nature, or if I characterize it as a psychologist, the supreme experience of the self and the world presents itself) experience. We can mention the names of Dr. Jack T. Huber of Adelphi College, L. I., New York, Dr. T. A. Munson (psychiatrist) of La Jolla, Mr. R. W. Mattson (clinical psychologist) of San Diego, among others.

I am going to write "Zen — A psychological view —" in Volume VII of this journal following Dr. Maupin's article "Zen Buddhism — A psychological review —" in August issue of the *Journal of Consulting Psychology* in 1962, and then I wish just to write another introductory comments on the Ishiguro technique here. It will help our readers to get some more information about the technique, because Master Ishiguro is planning to visit the United States in 1964 (tentatively planned for May through July).

In my visits to the States in 1960 and 1963, I had opportunities to hear the use of LSD 25 in getting some religious experiences. In *Psychologia* also Dr. Van Dusen, Dr. Jordan and Dr. Holzinger published their experiences on the use of LSD 25. I myself tried once a small dose (50 gamma) and Dr. Sahoda, my collaborator, also tried 100 gamma recently. I wish to discuss about this problem in my coming article, but I must say that there are still some troubles on the use of LSD or similar drugs, while there are almost no problems on the use of the Ishiguro technique physiologically, and it would be far more recommendable as a short cut to attain Zen *kensho* experience. It uses muscular tension, and there may be some danger for these patients with high blood pressure and heart diseases, but otherwise it is quite appropriate. Dr. Huber just dropped in and participated Master Ishiguro's training session on his way to Burma. Perhaps he recollected my talk on the Ishiguro technique which I had in the summer of 1960. He had not expected to have any special experience, but followed obediently and truthfully the instructions of the Master, and at last he was surprised to reach such unique state of mind which he had never experienced before. This shows very well that it is not so difficult even for Westerners to reach *kensho* in five days, if they follow Master Ishiguro's guidance without doubt and prepossessions. The success of Dr. Munson and Mr. Mattson will corroborate it.

I found a very good description of the progress of training in a magazine of Master Ishiguro's Zen group and we give it in the following in English translation.

AUGUST TRAINING SESSION AND AFTERWARDS  
Shuichi KITAHARA

More than twenty people attended the August training session of Daikoji Temple, and the training hall was full. I wondered if the Master would be able to give careful guidance individually. However I made up my mind to follow obediently the direction of the Master for five days without doubting, relying all on the Master.

The first, the second and the third stages passed quite naturally, no troubling ideas appeared during the sitting from morning to night, and I was at ease with the hope that something would happen. During that time noises were not so much annoying, but sometimes the neighbor troubled me by his humming voice, and my warming-up seemed to have troubled the neighbor. I had confidence, however, in the success of these first three days at least.

When I proceeded to the fourth and the fifth stages, and on the fourth day, some anxiety or irritation appeared with the doubt, whether it was all right with so little time left, or it might not give any change from the previous state of mind even if I continued the training.

I had some feeling of the queerness of the utterance of voice during the training. It disappeared soon, only my anxiety remained. In the afternoon of the fourth day I told the Master about it. He encouraged me, saying "You should not expect something special. Go straight forward!" I renewed my efforts and in the meantime something dark and dusty in the brain seemed to go away with the calling voices. I told about that to the Master and he approved it: "It's all right! Straight forward!" I went on my zazen practice with all my might, then some feeling such as 'that of emptiness and serenity' began to appear. I reported it to the Master and he encouraged me, saying: "Good, good! Straight forward!" And the fourth day came to end.

In the morning of the fifth day, I got up at five and began to sit. I returned to the state of the previous night. And unexpectedly soon a conversion came. In less than ten minutes I reached a wonderful state of mind. It was quite different from any which I had experienced in *seiza* (sitting quietly) or other practices. It was a state of mind, uncomparably quiet, clear and serene, without any obstruction. I gazed it. Entering this state of mind, I was filled with the feeling of appreciation, beyond usual joy, on my reaching such state of mind, and tears began to flow from the closed eyes. I read before some reports of tears on such occasions, and wondered how sentimental they were. But now I myself could not stop tears. Warm tears gushed out incessantly from the closed eyes. Of course I was choked with emotion. I wiped often my tears with a handkerchief and sat silently until *dokusan* (personal interview). It was a surprise for me to see me with such abundant tears.

Even more surprising to see was a change undergoing in my mind than tears. The calling voices of the participants which sounded quite strange and the noises of electric cars passing by the Temple which had been annoying, became suddenly quiet. The sound was heard clearly but no more annoying. All noises became quiet and transparent and passed through the mind. The bell-ringing of the Master, the noise of striking something, all were heard calmly and quietly. The queer roaring voices of some people which had been formerly annoying were now accepted rather with sympathy, and I sincerely hoped for their

success. In a word, a state of mind of forgiving all, sympathizing all, and further free from all bondages, has been developed. This had never been known to me before.

At the personal interview the Master explained that state of mind very kindly and his words: "This is just the beginning of the proper training" appealed to me deeply. The thin, small figure of the Master seemed so noble and great. It was as if I could peep into the depth of the Master's personality a little. Breakfast was finished, and the next sitting began. Tears came out no more. The feeling of the surprise also was no more there. The change in the basis of mind, however, was so clear to me. At the talks during the recess and after the end of the *sesshin* in the afternoon, I heard someone say that they could not have any sudden change in their mind and they could not believe in any 'exaggerated' reports. I was wondering if there were so much differences in quantity even though the same in quality, or large individual differences in their susceptibility to inspiration. I just listened to their talks without any comment on my being so much moved and my tears.

I returned home next noon, leaving Tokyo by night train, passing through the Tokaido and the Chuo Lines. It was happy that the car was not so crowded and I continued my sitting on the seat, and could maintain the state of mind developed during the *sesshin*. I attended my conference the following day, but I could keep my calmness through the conference.

Since then I have sat every morning and evening for more than two weeks, but I have found that I could not have enough time. I sat for a piece of line incense. During the five days of the training I sat with closed eyes, but now I sit with opened eyes following the Master's advice. In the beginning it took about twenty minutes to enter the proper state of mind with opened eyes, but now it takes only ten minutes. The mind becomes clear more easily when I practice the *seishi* technique, exerting myself to the utmost than through the *kannon* technique. If I continue the practice for one year, I believe that I shall be able to enter the supreme state immediately. I will make efforts to be able to act in everyday life with such basis of mind. I hope to attend the Master's *sesshin* once again in the meantime.

I appreciate very much the meals carefully prepared by the Temple during the training session; I praise the sincerity and enthusiasm of the young people, both male and female, through the *sesshin*, while a couple of elderly people of experience and status, to my regret, lacked seriousness and sometimes indulged in vain talks criticizing the training without real participation and understanding. Chattering should be prohibited more strictly.

(Translated by **Sachi Toyomura**)

Mr. Kitahara is a high school teacher at Nakatsugawa City, Gifu Prefecture, north of Nagoya. The *seishi* technique is characteristic of its use of muscular tension, and the *kannon* technique of its use of concentration to the humming or calling voice accompanying the breathing. These voices sometimes disturbs the concentration of other participants, or stimulates the feeling of queerness in newcomers.

Ishiguro, Horyu. *The scientific truth of Zen.—The principles and methods of scientific Zen—*

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