

PRIMARY POINT

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HOW CAN SITTING SAVE THIS HUNGRY WORLD?

(Taken from recent talks given by Zen Master Seung Sahn at the Providence Zen Center.)

Q: What can we in America do to stop the starvation of the world?

SSN: Did you have dinner? (Yes) Did you clean your bowl? (Yes) Good. So why is there this kind of problem? In this world, cause and effect are very clear. Everything has a primary cause. If you understand it, and remove it, then the problem will also disappear. We can save money and send food over to Africa and India, that's okay. But many problems will remain.

Taking away the primary cause is very important. It's like a game of pool. You hit the ball directly into the pocket, and that's one ball in the pocket. But the high-class technique is to hit this ball and that ball and other balls, so that all of them go into the pockets. Zen-style action is like that: we can give money to help hungry people, but if we hit people's hungry minds, we can help change their minds so that they can help their own country. The high-class technique is to help people help themselves.

Nowadays, many of the people who say they want world peace are afraid of nuclear weapons. What they want is not to die, not to lose their good situation. That is not correct world peace. Most of the politicians talk about world peace that way. Russia says, "We want world peace." America says "We want world peace." Which world peace is correct? These are mind hungry people, who make bombs and nuclear weapons. They talk about world peace, but it's only a world peace of the tongue, not a true world peace.

There are also many people in this world who don't want world peace. They think the world is so evil that it should be destroyed. They also only want to keep their own good situation, so their world peace is only for themselves, not for other people. This is also not correct world peace.

"I want world peace only for myself"—this kind of mind is unbalanced. Take away this mind hunger, and the problem of body hunger will also disappear. If we love each other, help each other, and become harmonious with each other, then world peace is possible.

"Take away mind hunger, and body hunger will soon disappear. Then world peace will be possible."

There are two kinds of hunger in this world: body hunger and mind hunger. Body hunger is easily solved: just feed people. But mind hungry people need food for their minds. People with mind hunger do not die. They want power, and then they want more power. They say things like "My way is correct, your way is not correct!" They want to control this world. They don't want to lose their good situation.

You must understand this world. America makes many bombs and nuclear weapons. Why? It is not at war. If these weapons are not used, they eventually decay. But because America makes them, Russia must make them. The Communist countries have less money, so they must take money from other things in order to make weapons. Eventually their economy begins to break down.

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INTEGRITY AND FAMILY LIFE

(The following talk was given by Master Dharma Teacher Lincoln Rhodes at the Providence Zen Center on February 27, 1983.)

There are two things that appear in this world: all the ups and downs, happiness and pain, good and bad; and then something else that doesn't change like that. (Hits the floor with his stick) Bang! Bang! "Just like this" doesn't have ups and downs. Sometimes you see a bird that had died, and sometimes you see a beautiful red bird on your feeder. One is beautiful and one isn't. One makes you happy, one makes you sad. But the real bird is just there. Our true self doesn't have ups and downs, it is also just there. As soon as our thinking appears, then we have all the opposites.

Recently I read an article by Buckminster Fuller, in which he used the word "integrity." He wrote about the time when he was 27 years old. He had experienced many failures in his personal life and was about to commit suicide. As he was about to do it, he said to himself, "I could do this, but the world is really going to be at a loss, because even though I've had all these failures, I've learned a lot from them. The world won't

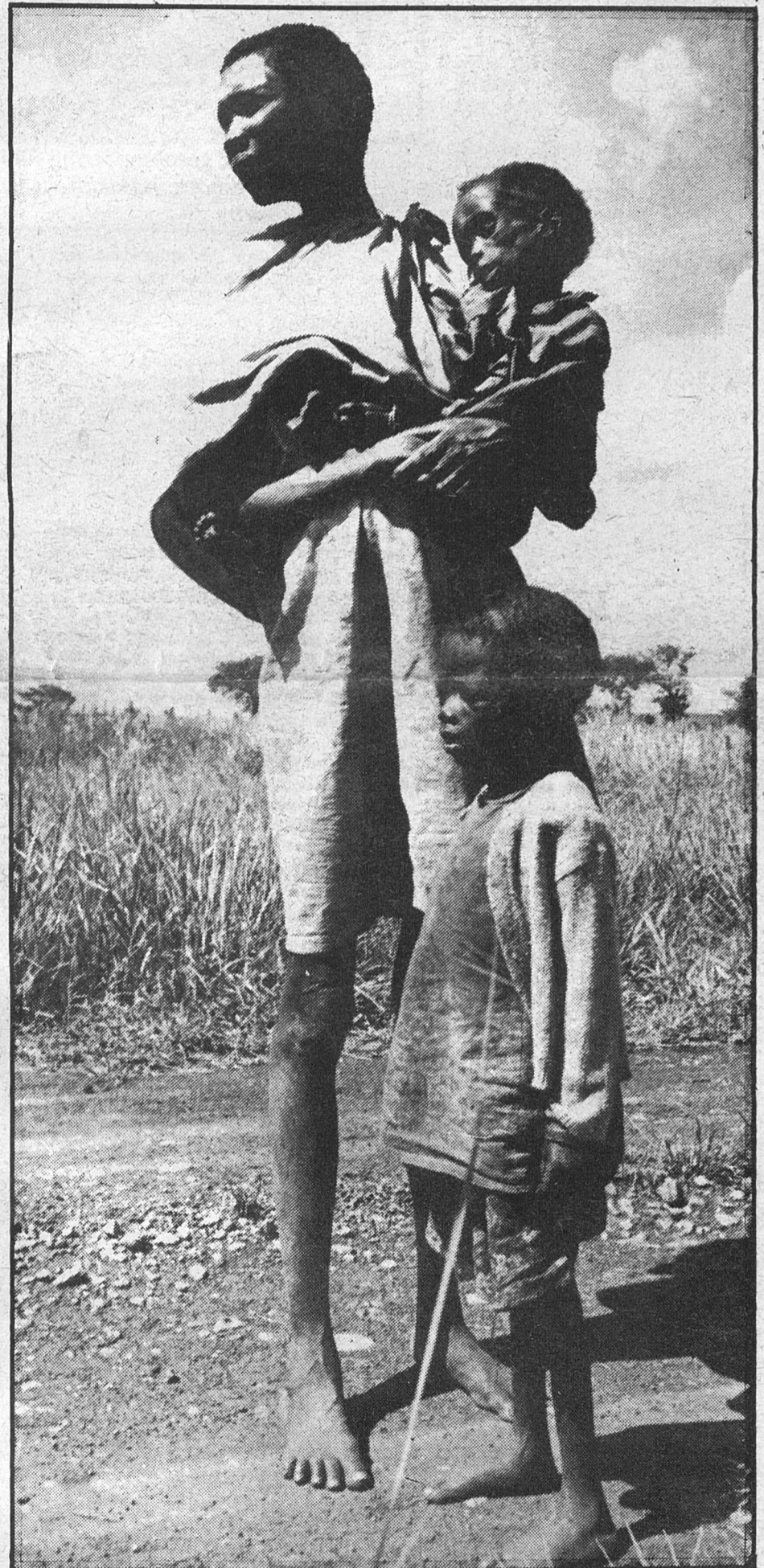
have the benefit of the great knowledge I've gained from all these disasters in my life. Without me, that valuable experience would be wasted."

So he decided not to kill himself, and he made a vow to make use of his experiences. He decided that he wasn't going to take anything for granted, or believe anything that anybody said. He was going to try an experiment and see what worked and what didn't.

At the time he wrote the article, he was 87 years old. For all those years he had been doing this experiment. He concluded that all people need to do is to find some integrity within themselves. We're all trying to do that too, but one of the problems is that we're in a hurry. We always want it to happen faster than it's happening, or to happen in some other way. Whatever is happening in our lives (whether we like it or not) is just what we need to work on at this moment.

For example, kids are a fantastic experiment. They don't have a lot of the opinions about good and bad that we have. They do the same things we do, but they let it all hang out. In my house there's one kid who's really different from the other kids,

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The American idea is not to fight, but to break down the economies of Communist countries. When economies break down, hungry people appear. Now many people are hungry. This mind set is very bad. Do you understand? Perceive this world clearly, and you will understand where hunger comes from.

Everything happens by natural process. In Africa and India (and America as well), there is much killing of animals for food. There is not so much eating of rice and vegetables, as there is in the Orient. It takes more land to raise animals for meat than it does for raising grains and vegetables. Why are many people starving? This is the result not just of this life, but of causes begun many lifetimes ago.

Buddha said, if you want to understand what happened before this life, look at what you are getting now. Being very hungry means that in a previous life, one gave much suffering to other people and animals, and also took food. Today's suffering is the result of those actions.

There is great imbalance now between hungry people and people with a lot of



photo by Bill Evans

food. At meal times we make a great deal of food, then throw away what we don't eat, into the garbage. There are many thousands of restaurants in America that throw away food. If we were able to send all the wasted food to Africa and India, those people would not be hungry.



photo by Kate Barba

This particular great suffering has taken hundreds of years to appear. So perhaps in this life it will not be possible to solve it. But we must try.

Also, if you want to understand the future, you must look at what is occurring now. Our mind set at this moment is the primary cause of what will happen in the future: tomorrow, the next life, generations after that. Right now your mind is making the future. Right now people are killing animals for food, people are wasting food, people are spending money on weapons instead of food. Thus we make the future with our current actions.

There are many articles appearing in the news about Africa. Many people are talking about the suffering and having feelings about it, so a "how can we help them?" mind is appearing. If this helping mind gets wide enough, it will find and remove the primary causes of the world's suffering. Many people getting this helping mind means they will get energy together and will be able to solve the world's problems.

There is a famous American who has created many groups to raise money for Africa. I thought this was wonderful until I read that when he gets money, 30% of it goes into his own pocket, and only 70% of it goes abroad. He has this idea, "I am

wonderful because I do this." He has become much admired, but it's not correct. He only looks wonderful from the outside, not the inside.

Because of the publicity about Africa, many such groups have been formed in America that are concerned with helping. They raise money and send it abroad, but it's like putting cosmetics on the face. If you are hungry, you don't need cosmetics. This kind of action is like cosmetics; it creates a sense of "I am good, I am helping," but this "I" does not really help other people. It doesn't address the primary cause of world hunger.

It's like a room in which many little insects appear. After cleaning the room, it's o.k. for a day or two, then soon the insects appear again. Cleaning once in a while doesn't help. Why do these insects appear? We must look for the primary cause. In this case, we find the room is very damp. If it were dry, no insects would appear. So we must make it dry by using a heater or building a fire, and making the room very hot and dry. Then the insects will not appear again.

It's the same with the problem of hungry people.

Q: Does our sitting in meditation take away the primary cause for Africa's hunger?

SSN: When I came to this country 14 years ago, I was alone. There were no Zen Centers in our style. Now there are 28 of them around the world, just in our school alone, with many people practicing. Many people in these Zen Centers are beginning to understand the correct way and the truth. Maybe in the future, our Zen Centers and the many others around the world will grow and be able to teach all the people with hungry minds. Take away mind hunger, and body hunger will soon disappear. Then world peace will be possible.

You want results quickly. You want to send something to the hungry people and have the problem solved tomorrow. That's not possible. In this world, cause and effect appear sometimes slowly, sometimes quickly. This particular great suffering has taken hundreds of years to appear. So perhaps in this life it will not be possible to solve it, nor in the next one or the one after that. But we must try, life after life.

That is our great vow—"Sentient beings are numberless, we vow to save them all." For that we must each develop a strong personal center, not just in this lifetime, but life after life. Try, try, try for 10,000 years nonstop!

This is a time of complete change in the world. We are at the end of an old cycle, and the beginning of a new one. As a result, there are many imbalances, and great suffering. Hunger appears because of these imbalances. Now there are entire countries with lots of food, and countries with very little. Imbalance is our world's sickness: how can we cure it?

Balance means understanding the truth. If you have no wisdom, you cannot become balanced. It is very important for everyone to find their human nature. That is why we sit Zen, to find our true human nature. So we are in a very important position, sitting in meditation. We must find our human nature, then together help each other become world peace.

As human beings, we are all equal. We all have the same love mind, so why must hungry people appear? We must find the primary cause of this world's sickness, and remove it. If we don't, we can never help the hungry people. □

A CAPSULE VIEW: One year in the current travels of Zen Master Seung Sahn



Soen Sa Nim in Poland

itinerary, for those who are considering joining Soen Sa Nim for any part of his travels, is available at the School office.

After focusing intensely for the past 14 years on the development of Zen Centers and teachers in North America, Soen Sa Nim is increasingly turning his attention abroad, to Europe (Poland in particular) and Asia. Predictably, his North American students have been asking him why he travels so much and why he doesn't settle down in one or two places and let the students come to him. Two of his most recent answers: "This world gives me a job. Many people ask me to come, so I travel around and around."

"I travel because then I can use a big net, in order to catch a big fish. If you only use a small net, in just one place, you cannot catch a big fish."

Soen Sa Nim traveled more extensively than ever this past year, including an around-the-world trip last fall. Starting from the East Coast in late August, he touched base in Los Angeles, Seattle, Seoul, Tokyo, Hong Kong, Bangkok, New Delhi, Frankfurt, Warsaw, Paris, Palma de Mallorca, London and New York, over a three month period. In cities where he has groups, he led retreats, presided over Precepts ceremonies, and gave talks and workshops. In places new to him he became

the complete tourist, enjoying sightseeing and the local hospitality.

In early December he returned to the United States and stayed at the head temple, Providence Zen Center, for several weeks, opening the first Kyol Che (90 day meditation retreat) to be held in the newly-completed Diamond Hill Zen Monastery. In mid-December he flew to the West Coast, Hawaii and Korea, returning to Los Angeles to celebrate New Year's at Empty Gate and Tahl Mah Sah, lead West Coast retreats, and preside over the Dharma Teacher's retreat at Empty Gate.

After stopping in early March at Providence Zen Center to greet the seven participants finishing the monks' Kyol Che, he swept through the Midwest to lead retreats, and preside over Precepts ceremonies at Kansas and Lexington, Kentucky. He returned to Providence Zen Center in April to join Festivities on Buddha's Birthday, greet the participants finishing Providence Zen Center's 90 day retreat, and lead Precepts ceremonies which included four new Bodhisattva monks.

In April he flew to Paris to open the new Zen Center, and then proceeded back to the United States for a brief stop en route to Korea, where he is furthering the establishment of the new Seoul International Zen Center. Plans for a 90 day retreat at the small mountain temple of Jung Hae Sah, which Soen Sa Nim's grand teacher, Zen Master Mang Gong built for his senior students, are also underway.

(In a future issue of Primary Point we will print a collection of anecdotes and recollections about Soen Sa Nim's travels from some of the senior students who have accompanied him. Readers who have had or seen interesting or vivid contacts with Soen Sa Nim during his travels are invited to send a brief, written account to the editor, for inclusion in the article.) □

Soen Sa Nim's upcoming schedule (subject to change) will include a return to the East Coast in early June, leading East Coast retreats through July and presiding over the Third Annual Kwan Um Zen School Congress July 27-28. He is leaving for mainland China on September 2 until the 22nd, to visit major Buddhist sites. He will continue on to Japan and Korea through early October. On October 10 he will go to Europe: Paris, Germany, Poland, England and Spain. He will return to Korea November 22 to open the first International 90 Day Kyol Che (Meditation Retreat) at Jeung Hye Sah on November 26. A more detailed