

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.

Continued on page 2

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

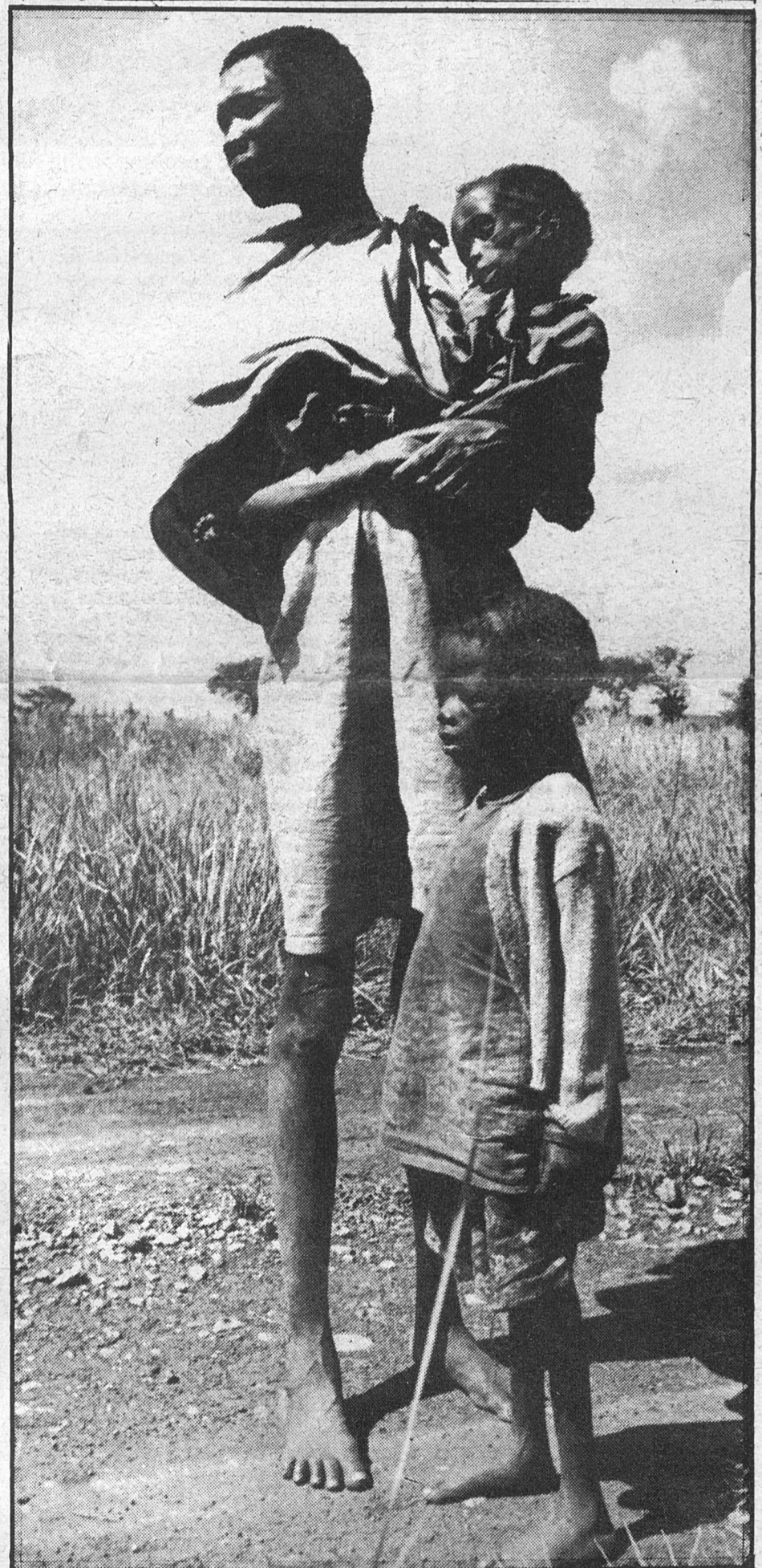
have the benefit of the great knowledge I've gained from all these disasters in my life. Without me, that valuable experience would be wasted."

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,

Continued on page 3



IN THIS ISSUE

Soen Sa Nim,
World Traveler ... 2

The Art of Zen Sword ... 4

Famed
Korean
Carver

... 3

Famed Korean Woodcarver at Providence Zen Center

On a late September morning in Korea during 1982, the leaves were turning gold in the crisp mountain air. The centuries-old temple complex of Sudoksah, the monastery where Soen Sa Nim did his early training, hummed with activity. Busloads of Korean school children milled about in the courtyards, gawking at the ancient buildings and the handful of Western Zen students accompanying Soen Sa Nim on his biannual tour of Korean temples.

Alerted by the unmistakable sound of wooden mallet on chisel, the then Abbot of Providence Zen Center, Lincoln Rhodes followed the sound to a small underbuilding in the temple complex. He was greeted by an incredible sight. There a Korean man wearing a short grey bowing robe was carving a massive mural in wood, twenty feet by six feet high and filled with intricate designs of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. The man was Sang In Kim, a master carver of such unusual talent that he is on Korea's Registry of National Treasures at the age of thirty-nine. The mural, destined to grace the Buddha hall at Sudoksah's new nun's temple, was three years in the making, and Mr. Kim's most accomplished work.

Linc took some pictures and then hurried out to find stonecarver and fellow Providence Zen Center resident, Ellen Sidor to share his discovery. They were so impressed by Mr. Kim's skill that they became deter-

mined to bring him to America some day to share his mastery with American artisans. After two and a half years their efforts were successful and Mr. Kim arrived at Providence Zen Center in late March.

Mr. Kim was accompanied from Korea by Hae An Sunim, the Vice Abbot of Jung Hae Sah, a small temple up the mountain from Sudoksah that was built by Zen Master Mang Gong, Soen Sa Nim's grandteacher. Hae An Sunim, a longtime Dharma friend of Soen Sa Nim's, is eager to help Western students. He has now returned to Korea to help Soen Sa Nim make preparations for an international sangha ninety-day retreat at Jung Hae Sah sometime next year.

Mr. Kim will be in residence at Providence Zen Center until midsummer, working on a large altar and side panels for the new Diamond Hill Zen Monastery. Soen Sa Nim, who has known Mr. Kim for some years, explained that Mr. Kim wants to create a "great treasure" for the School and its American sangha.

Mr. Kim estimates the project will take about five months to complete. Assisting him are apprentices Bodhisattva Monk David Klinger, a woodcarver, who will be working with him full time, and Primary Point editor Ellen Sidor, a stonecarver, who will be working part time. The wood has already been purchased, planed,

Continued on page 6



photo by Diana Clark

INTEGRITY AND FAMILY LIFE

Continued from page 1

and there's one thing he does that's clearly his specialty. He'll be sitting at the table not particularly paying attention and he'll knock over his milk. As soon as it happens he says, "It's not my fault. The cup just went and fell over and I didn't do it. Mommy, I didn't do that!"

It's like a tape that comes on. You see something like that in a kid and you laugh. He's seven years old, learning how to get by in this world, how to please people, how not to spill milk, and he's trying his best. We all have adopted things from our growing up that are ways of dealing with messes or with things we don't like. These ways have a certain exaggerated quality to them.

But we also each have our own integrity. "Oh gee, I spilled the milk," we say and laugh about it, that's all. If the little kid in that situation says, "Oh gee, I spilled the milk," and we say "Get a sponge and clean it up," that's all that's called for with anyone at any age or time. But somehow we've learned other procedures, so we don't have that integrity.

Integrity comes and goes. We have it in some areas of our lives and not in others, at some times and not others. It has the quality though, just like you can't be half pregnant, that either you have it or you don't.

I used to be very good at the parts that people saw me doing at the Zen Center. I was on time. I went to sitting. I chanted without looking out the window. I did the forms correctly. But there were a lot of times when I was on my own, when no one was around, and I goofed off. I didn't pay attention. In fact I did the opposite. Over the years it slowly dawned on me that I kept having this opposite mind and kept suffering from it.

It doesn't matter whether you're in the Dharma room or in your own room. Integrity is anywhere, whether people see you or not, whether they know what you're doing or not. Then if you say you're sick and someone else says, "Hey, why are you going back to bed?" you can say "I'm sick" and the rest of it is their problem.

But you can't pull that off if you're not sure of yourself, or if there are parts of your life where you're not paying attention. It just doesn't work. We all have at least one backseat driver. It's alive and well and is going to be there all the time, in interviews, everywhere. If we're really working



photo by Mike Olak

"Integrity is when your speech and actions are not two, but one."

on integrity, we can tell the backseat driver to shut up.

Soen Sa Nim talks about having our speech and actions be the same. One, not two. That really strikes home for me. We can speak about many kinds of things, understand and agree and even believe in them, and still have our actions not be the same. Integrity or sincerity is when speech and action are not two, but one. There are several ways to attain that. You can try to make your actions agree with your speech, or you can decide your actions are fine and you'll have to make your speech fit them. Just seeing where we're at, a lot of the problems go away. When we see what we're holding onto, we don't have to hold. I haven't been at this very long, but I think maybe if you do this practice for 30 years, you'll see enough of this "mind" and will know yourself clearly.

People come to practice with a lot of likes and dislikes, and then they try to put

them down. There's a period during which you try to figure out that the river's a mountain and the mountain's a river. You don't know what's yours and what isn't. You don't know which is your backseat driver and which is your frontseat driver. You don't know what is integrity and what is not.

That period was very difficult for me. But one thing that comes out of it is a joy in what is real, *for you*. Everyone is different. For me, joy is a bird feeder and pruning the trees in the orchard. You have to find that and nourish it, whatever it is. Find out what you can do that helps others, and is also fun and joyous.

It's interesting that Soen Sa Nim has been doing this for so long that it's very matter of fact for him. I've been getting a little taste of what it's like for him because I've been doing interviews often. People come to him with every manner of problem or confusion and he acknowledges that. He doesn't say, "Oh, that's insane!" but rather, "That's a wonderful letter." Then he tries to give people a question to stop their confusion. "Yes, you have all these problems, but when you die, where will you go?" That is the most important thing to help people stop the whole cycle they're in. Then they think, "Oh, maybe my opinion isn't the whole story," and then there's a little space for having a question that helps them find out what's really going on.

Soen Sa Nim is in a hurry. He's flying around the world giving everybody he sees a question. He says, "The wall is white, the rug is brown," so matter of factly that it may not seem exciting or interesting to us. It's so real to him, so simple and matter of fact. He doesn't make anything of it at all. Unbelievable!

He says things like, "It's so not special that it's special." For him that is true. He sits there and hits the floor with his stick. "Hear the sound, your mind and the sound become one," he says over and over. I don't know how he repeats it with such energy and enthusiasm. The only way someone can do that is for it to be real and important and not boring. He does it so effortlessly and simply that we sleep through his Dharma talks or go to the movies, thinking we've heard it all before because he talks like that all the time.

A lot of things are happening right now in my life, in my house, that are a tremendous upheaval. It boils down to the question, what should we do with the Zen

Center? What should we do with families and practicing? We don't know yet how it's going to work in some long term way, trying to practice with kids. It's something we have to work on together, just doing it.

Another interesting thing that's happening is that Soen Sa Nim is spending much less time here. When new students come, they want to learn about Zen. They want to be at the Zen Center, so they just follow directions and go to interviews and find out. Older students came here because of Soen Sa Nim, because they consider him to be their teacher and they wanted his teaching. Now Soen Sa Nim has said, "These Master Dharma Teachers are going to do more of the teaching and I'm going to travel a lot more."

None of you asked us to be your teacher. I didn't even ask myself to be in this situation. It just happened to us together. It takes time for people to want that and be able to use that. Maybe they'll decide they don't want to, and that's okay too.

It also takes time for the people who are put in the position of being teachers to be able to do it. Just because Soen Sa Nim gives someone permission to teach, it doesn't mean all of a sudden you're a great teacher. By analogy, maybe you can fix your own car, but you've never done Toyotas, and now it's interesting because you *have* to work on all kinds of cars. Soen Sa Nim has been teaching for 30 years in 17 countries and in five languages, so he has lots of experience with many different models.

That's where I am, working on Toyotas. It's hard because I don't have enough time to do it. Last weekend, for example, I had a wonderful experience. On Friday I moved myself, my wife, and two children from one set of rooms to another in the same house. I was finished at 6 o'clock and drove to Cambridge Zen Center to lead a two day retreat. There were 27 people and I gave interviews twice a day. I had a bad cold. It was a wonderful retreat and a wonderful experience, but one of the things it taught me was that I was at the limit of my endurance.

It's fantastic to get pushed to your limit and find out where that is. If we never come up against these limits, it's difficult to grow, to expand them, to move on past them. Sometimes we are afraid to approach our limits, but we also don't grow. Everyone must find that balance point that is not too much or too little, that place which is our integrity.