

ZEN MASTER SEUNG SAHN

Not Just a Human World

By Zen Master Seung Sahn

This world is changing very fast. Recently, I went to Moscow to take part in a large conference called the Global Forum. The idea of this conference was very interesting — “how can we save this world?” Soviet President Gorbachev had invited over six hundred people — prominent religious, political, scientific and business figures — from many countries. Gorbachev perceives that this world is in danger. His mind is very wide. He isn't attached to the Communist idea.

Human beings have proven themselves to be very stupid animals. We have broken nature — broken the air, mountains, rivers; killed animals; fought each other. We don't understand our own correct situation or the correct way. In human life, keeping the correct way is very difficult. People get money, become famous, have this possession or that, but when old age and death approach, there is much suffering. In a way, if you have much money, there is more suffering; if you have no money, there is no suffering. Also, if you have too much thinking, too much understanding, there is more suffering; if your mind is simple, there is no suffering; it is possible to accept old age and death as a natural process. This simple mind is don't know mind. The don't know mind does not check, does not hold, does not want, is not attached to anything. It only keeps a one-pointed, simple direction.

But if you are holding your opinion, your condition, your situation, then this world attacks you. First, your mind attacks

you; then your family, your friends, all the people you meet attack you; your society, your culture, time and space, everything attacks you. If you put it all down, this world and time and space cannot touch you. Then you can control this world, you can control time and space.

Human beings always want something; this wanting mind never ends, so our life is always complicated, always suffering. Putting it all down means making life very simple, like a clear mirror. The name for this mirror-mind is Great Love, Great Compassion and the Great Bodhisattva Way. Originally everything is very simple, very harmonious. Only when “I” appears do things get complicated and suffering begins. When “I” disappears, this whole world is yours. When “I” appears, you lose this world.

For instance, in West Germany some people are wary of unification. Why? Because East Germany is very poor. So “I don't like” appears. That's animal mind, not human being's mind. East Germany has had much suffering; West Germany is prosperous. We must put down our prejudices and live in the world with the sky, the trees, the air, and other people.

At this conference in Moscow, the religious and political leaders of the world got together and talked about how to save this world. Now they are all concerned about ecology, about the environment, about pollution in the air and in the water. They talked about how to fix the problems of the world, how to raise enough money, things like that. In my talk to them, I explained that this is not just the human beings' world; our universe includes animals, birds, plants, air, sky, everything. When there is harmony in all these things, the world is harmonious. When there is no harmony, there is a problem. So the problems of this world are only a result; this result is from primary cause. If you don't understand primary cause, you cannot fix the results. What kind of primary cause?

Today there are five billion people in the world. In 1945, at the end of the war, there were only two and a half billion people. So since the second world war, human population has grown very fast. Also there has been an economic revolution. Now many people in the West are comfortable: good house, good car, good situation. But how many people have happiness? Every day twenty-five thousand people die of hunger in poor countries of the world. But in rich countries of the world, there is much leftover food thrown into the garbage. So there is unbalance in this world. Who made this unbalance? Human



Zen Master Seung Sahn with Moscow children.

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beings holding on to their opinion, condition, and situation have made this unbalance, this suffering in the world.

Only a short time ago, everyone was afraid of nuclear war. Now everyone is afraid of AIDS. Always everyone is afraid of dying. But if you keep your correct function, correct situation, correct relationship moment to moment, you can never die. Then you make harmony and balance in this world; that's how you help this world — not only human beings but the entire universe. That's a very wide mind.

Western history always talks about change from the outside, so Western societies have many revolutions. Eastern mind means inside revolution, not outside. It means sharing our world with the sun, animals, trees, all of life. Many Western people have been attracted to meditation because of these ideas. When your life becomes correct, you become harmonious with the rest of the universe.

Eastern mind means inside revolution, not outside.

The Buddha always talked about this idea: love and compassion, harmony with everything in the universe. He talked about equality and love. Everything in the universe has its job: tree has tree's job, bird has bird's job, human being has human being's job. Only human beings don't understand their correct job.

So any kind of Zen practice means making your mind very simple, means don't know mind. Don't know mind means understanding human beings' original job. The Buddha practiced unceasingly for six years. Bodhidharma sat for nine years. Why? He already had enlightenment, so why did he sit for nine years in the cave at Sorim? He realized that the time was not ripe for his teaching, so these nine years were a time of waiting for him. This waiting was not for himself but for all beings. So his waiting was his practice.

Bodhidharma's waiting mind is also your mind. Putting down your opinion, your condition, your situation, and keeping correct function, correct situation, correct relationship is also Bodhidharma's waiting mind. This is the Bodhisattva mind; this mind's job is never finished, because this mind is only for all beings.

I hope you continue to keep this Bodhisattva Way. Don't make anything. Moment to moment, just do it.

Zen Master Seung Sahn is the 78th Patriarch in his line of succession in the Chogye Order of Korean Buddhism, and is the founding teacher of the Kwan Um School of Zen. □

DHARMA TALK

Ecology of Mind

By Jacob Perl, Ji Do Poep Sa Nim

Adapted from a Dharma Talk given at the Buddha's Birthday Ceremony at Providence Zen Center on April 9, 1990. The term "HIT" refers to the hitting of the podium with the teacher's Zen stick; "KATZ" refers to the Zen belly shout. Both are traditional Zen teaching techniques.

HIT!

Long ago a great man came, saved all beings, and left. His coming and his going continues to teach us to this day.

HIT!

Long ago, a great man said, "The True Way has no coming, and no going." To this day, this teaching is saving us.

HIT!

We too, have come into this world, have gathered here today, and will soon depart. Then, in our coming and going, how do we attain the great man's way of coming and going? How do we attain the great man's way of not coming and not going?

KATZ!

Winter has gone North. Spring has come in from the South.

Recently, Zen Master Seung Sahn attended an important meeting in Moscow, and I had the good fortune of joining him for this trip. The meeting was called the Global Forum of Parliamentary and Spiritual Leaders for Human Survival. Its primary subject was our relationship with this world, how we are destroying this world, and how we, human beings, can survive.

The key issue of this meeting was ecology. According to Webster's, ecology is that branch of biology which deals with the relationship of living things and the environment.

What is our relationship to our environment? That is a question which the Buddha's teaching addresses very clearly. In Buddha's time there were not the same kind of problems with the pollution of air, water, and ground. The Buddha, for that reason, did not talk very specifically about those kinds of pollution. He taught us a slightly different kind of ecology, a more basic and more comprehensive kind of ecology.

This teaching is so fundamental that not only is biological ecology a natural consequence of this teaching, but so is ethical ecology, spiritual ecology, and finally through the teaching of the Patriarchs the ecology of moment-to-moment correct situation, correct relationship, correct function. If we