Why do they always have to be either entertained or entertaining?

~Other Speakers S-Z: K.P. Yohannan:

Why do they always have to be either entertained or entertaining? I wondered. It was as if they were trying to escape from a guilt they had not yet defined or even identified.

I was constantly aware of how largeÂ—and overweightÂ—most Americans seemed to be. Americans need big cars, big homes and large furniture, because they are big people.

I was amazed at how important eating, drinking, smoking and even drug use were in the Western lifestyle. Even among Christians, food was a major part of fellowship events.

This, of course, is not bad in itself. Â"Love feastsÂ" were an important part of the New Testament church life. But eating can be taken to extremes. One of the ironies of this is the relatively small price North Americans pay for food. In 1998, personal expenditures in the United States averaged $19,049 per person, of which $1,276 (6.7 percent) went for food, leaving a comfortable $17,773 for other expenses. In India, the average person had only $276 to spend, of which $134 (48.4 percent) went for food, leaving a scant $142 for other needs for the entire year. I had lived with this reality every day, but Americans have real trouble thinking in these terms.

Often when I spoke at a church, the people would appear moved as I told of the suffering and needs of the national evangelists. They usually took an offering and presented me with a check for what seemed like a great amount of money. Then with their usual hospitality, they invited me to eat with the leaders following the meeting. To my horror, the food and Â"fellowshipÂ" frequently cost more than the money they had just given to missions. And I was amazed to find that American families routinely eat enough meat at one meal to feed an Asian family for a week. No one ever seemed to notice this but me, and slowly I realized they just had not heard the meaning of my message. They were simply incapable of understanding the enormous needs overseas.