

SGI President Ikeda's Essay Universal Perspective

This autumn, we've been hearing a great deal about events in outerspace. On Oct. 8 and 9, the Giacobini-Zinner meteor shower was visible over Japan, and before dawn on Nov. 18, the anniversary of the founding of the Soka Gakkai, a major Leonid meteor shower was seen for the first time in 33 years.

Further, on Oct. 30, Japan's first woman astronaut, Chiaki Mukai, climbed aboard the U.S. space shuttle *Discovery* and make her second trip into space. With all the gloomy news recently, including Japan's economic problems, Dr. Mukai's trip seemed a bright ray of hope.



After returning from her first shuttle mission in 1994, Dr. Mukai was featured in the Sunday edition of the *Seikyo Shimbun*. She described her reaction to the experience of space flight: "I felt that the entire universe, including the Earth, is a single living entity."

She then said something that left a deep impression on me: "We only live, at most, for 80 or perhaps a hundred years. It seems a terrible waste to spend that brief time pursuing selfish interests or fighting wars over petty differences."

When I met ex-Soviet cosmonaut Valentina Tereshkova, the first woman to go into outerspace, she said much the same thing, as did Gerald Carr, former U.S. astronaut and commander of America's Skylab 4 mission.

When people adopt a cosmic outlook, their way of thinking is transformed.



Astronomy was among the subjects that I studied under Mr. Toda. As he introduced many different theories to me, he often used to say: "Our present research indicates that there are an infinite number of solar systems like ours throughout the cosmos. This is precisely what Buddhism teaches when it talks of 'major world systems' (Jpn *sanzen daisen sekai*). As science continues to advance, the truth of the Buddhist teachings is gradually being verified, and people will no doubt come to understand just how great Buddhism truly is."

He would also say: "I want to undergo another persecution for the sake of Buddhism and be imprisoned again. My cell was cramped, it's true, but I didn't perceive it so. Each of us is identical to the entire cosmos. In my life in my tiny cell, I was embraced in the vast entirety of the universe."



Mr. Toda had grasped the essence of Buddhism, the fundamental law of the universe. He always thought from a cosmic, universal perspective. In February 1952, as the rift between the Eastern and Western blocs was deepening, he spoke out, advocating global citizenship. He firmly believed that humanity must transcend its ethnic, national and ideological differences and, as a global family sharing one, unified world, blaze a new path of peaceful coexistence. What a pioneering vision he had!

Buddhism teaches that all things, all human beings, possess the Buddha nature. It regards

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the universe as a single living entity and expounds that each individual exists in an inseparable unity with the environment.

The Buddhist worldview is not anthropocentric; it does not regard humankind as the center and ruler of the Earth. Instead, it teaches harmony and fusion, a cosmic humanism.



For the last several years, the Earth Charter Committee has been at work preparing a draft for an Earth Charter. Mikhail Gorbachev, former Soviet president, and Maurice Strong, former U.N. under-secretary-general, cochair the committee. The idea behind the charter is to create a set of guidelines that every nation and people should observe to protect the Earth's environment and all living things, including people, on it.

The peace institute that I founded, the Boston Research Center for the 21st Century, is cooperating with the committee, conducting seminars to awaken interest in this topic and educate the public about it. As part of that effort, in November last year the center published a booklet titled *Buddhist Perspectives on the Earth Charter*.

I was asked to contribute a preface to that booklet, and in it I introduced the Buddhist ideas of dependent origination and the oneness of life and its environment. The booklet was adopted by four U.S. universities as curriculum material and was also used in a class on Buddhism and social change at Harvard University.



People the world over are looking to Buddhism today and gradually moving toward the global citizenship that Mr. Toda advocated. The world is thirsting for the wisdom that Buddhism has to offer.

The dawning of the space age is also the dawning of the great age of Buddhism. Our mission is to communicate this philosophy of life from friend to friend and to link the world.

As we look up at the star-filled heavens and embrace the vast universe in our hearts, we continue to carry on vibrant dialogue — dialogue dedicated to transforming this precious planet into an oasis without borders, a true Buddha land.

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