

Humanity, Earth and the Universe: A Viewpoint of Mahayana Buddhism

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THIS past March, we had the pleasure of welcoming Dr. Tu Weiming in an academic seminar held at our institute. The theme of his lecture was creating a dialogical civilization, in which he mentioned the Axial Age as proposed by Karl Jaspers (1883–1969). He suggested that we are now in the Second Axial Age with globalization progressing rapidly.

Jaspers himself refers to the coming of the Second Axial Age, as a time when “Mankind as a whole breathes together as one.”¹ Professor Tu calls this new era “A Dialogical Civilization.”

Those of us here today from Japan are representatives from that seminar in March, and are overjoyed to have this chance for further exchange with Dr. Tu.

During the professor’s recent visit to Japan, he was interviewed by *Chugai Nippoh* newspaper, and in that article, he speaks on the topics of “Confucian humanism” and “the unity of man and heaven.” He states,

“Confucian humanism’s most lofty goal is the unification of man and nature.”² This includes the integration of the four components of “self, community, nature, and heaven.” He refers to this traditional Chinese concept as an anthropocosmic worldview.

The Chinese concept of “heaven and humankind as one (*tennin gōitsu*),” the Indian concept of “*Brahma* and the self are one (*bonga ichinyo*)” and the Buddhist concept of “the oneness of life and its environment (*eshō-funi*)” are highlighted as the representative philosophies that make up the foundation for the Eastern worldview in a recently published book entitled, *Dialogues on Eastern Wisdom*.³ The participants in the dialogue include Dr. Ji Xianlin of Peking University, the late Dr. Jiang Zhongxin of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, and Soka Gakkai International President Daisaku Ikeda.

Allow me for a moment to take the four components mentioned earlier by Dr. Tu, and put them in the context of oneness of life and its environment.

This concept of non-duality was put forth by Miao-lo (711–782), which states that a living being and its environment, may appear to be two separate entities, but in fact are two aspects of a single reality. In Buddhism, there is another non-duality when viewing an individual human being which is the “oneness of body and mind (*shikishin-funi*).” It states that the mind and body are two components of a single life, and cannot exist independently of each other. This relationship is identical to the oneness of life and its environment.

So to continue the analogy using Confucianist terms, “life” corresponds with man, and “its environment” can be divided into society, community, and nature. Also, it is within the context of nature that individuals and society carry out life activities.

Nature provides individuals and societies a base from which to carry out life activities in space and time on a variety of scales from this planet and its ecosystems, to our solar system, our galaxy, and the greater universe. The non-dual relationship between life and the environment is itself an expression of “universal life.”

Stated a different way, the non-duality of the universal life gives rise to the two components of life and the environment, and as they interact through the relationship of mutual dependency (*engi*), all phenomena in the universe result. In the greater universe, human beings embody this aspect of life for the purpose of relating with the environment, which possesses a dynamic ability for creation. This is the role the concept of the oneness of life and its environment plays in the anthropocosmic view.

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The Buddhist view of human life in the universe originates from insights from Shakyamuni’s enlightenment. He sat in meditation under the Bodhi tree and explored the “universe within.” He was able to recognize in the depths of his own life, the inseparability of the source of life and the universe in which it was conceived. This inner journey led him beyond the realm of the individual to the transpersonal. This allows one to feel ties beyond relationships of family or community, beyond ties of race or nationality, even beyond that of humanity, outward to the ties with nature and the biosphere, beyond the planet Earth, and the revolving solar system to finally become one with the universe itself.

Shakyamuni discerned the most fundamental life of the universe and his oneness with it in the depths of his own life.

According to the *Udāna*, Shakyamuni names this fundamental life, *Dhamma*.⁴ His enlightenment reveals that inside his life, in his “inner cosmos,” there exists a vast universal life—*Dhamma*, which is the brilliant sun-like force that eradicates all earthly desires and fundamental darkness. This inner cosmos and the greater universe are the one and the same.

The late Professor Kōshiro Tamaki, a Buddhist scholar from Japan, commented on the concept of *Dhamma* by saying, “*Dhamma* has no shape or form. It is life within life. In other words, it is life in its most basic form.”⁵

Dhamma is also sometimes called, “Thus Come One,” which is one of the basic tenets of Mahayana Buddhism—laying the foundation for the concept that all people have the potential to become a Buddha. The Second President of the Soka Gakkai, Josei Toda, who was imprisoned for opposing the militaristic government of Japan during World War II, came to a deep awareness about life and the universe while reading the *Lotus Sutra*, a text of Mahayana Buddhism. He comments on the workings of universal life and the purpose of humanity’s existence by saying,

“This universe is the entity of the Buddha and all phenomena are manifestations of the Buddha’s compassion. Or it may be more apt to say that compassion is the original nature of the universe. The existence of the sun, the moon’s light, the mutual pulling together and relating of stars, the wind and storms, the growth of grasses and trees—are all manifestations of compassion, and it is simply we who have arbitrarily decided that there is no heart or mind in nature.”⁶

In other words, everything in the universe is connected by a thread of dependent origination (*engi*). The universal life force, which carries out actions of compassion, exists in a complex network of causes and effects. Through the process of evolution of life and the physical world, including the workings of nature’s ecosystems, an intelligent form of life called humanity came into existence.

In Mahayana Buddhism, it is taught that in this vast universe, there exist other intelligent forms of life active throughout its expanse. This is the concept of “the Buddha lands” in the past, present, and the future and the ten directions.

For example, in the Introduction chapter of the *Lotus Sutra*, the Buddha emits a ray of light from between his eyebrows and lights up eigh-

teen thousand worlds in the eastern direction, showing the existence of countless Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and other beings carrying out religious practices. And in the Emergence of the Treasure Tower chapter of the *Lotus Sutra*, there is a description of hundreds of thousands of Buddhas and bodhisattvas with their followers who come to listen to Shakyamuni Buddha preach the *Dhamma*. There, the universal life, which shines like the sun and eradicates the darkness, appears as a massive “treasure tower.” By explaining that such a treasure tower exists in each individual, and that through Buddhist practice one can actually manifest this state of life, the respect for the life of human beings is established.

So what is the significance of the existence of human beings, who possess this treasure tower within the depths of their lives? Toda states,

“Since the universe itself is compassion, we should live our daily lives in accord with nature’s compassion. Compared to those of regular plants and animals, our awareness is of a higher order. Therefore, we should continually strive to take actions which befit this higher awareness, and act to serve the Buddha’s will.”⁷

The universe embodies compassion. All things move as compassion of the universe, constantly relating to each other. On Earth, nature’s ecological systems seek to creatively develop themselves. Humanity exists as one member of this ecological community. Taking this view, Buddhism establishes its stance of “biospherical egalitarianism” and a “life-centered” approach. While using this as a starting point, it goes without saying that man, with his higher intelligence, has a special purpose for existence, what Toda calls “special life” with which we can take actions of higher value.

The ability to take higher action endows human beings with a special mission within the order of the universe. We are presented with the opportunity to deepen our awareness and choose how we want to contribute to the cause of compassion in the universe. Instead of working against the universal force for compassion, humanity must find ways to creatively expand upon it. This is where the practice of being a Bodhisattva in Mahayana Buddhism carries great significance.

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The current developments in the “deep ecology” movement reflect certain influences of Buddhist thinking, such as the concept of the oneness of life and its environment, as mentioned earlier, as well as its view of humanity and its relationship with the universe. I would first like to

summarize some of the main tenets of deep ecology, and after that, I would like to share my thoughts concerning these points as a Buddhist.

The term deep ecology was coined by Arne Naess, a Norwegian philosopher.⁸ He outlines “self-realization” and “biospherical egalitarianism” as basic canons of deep ecology. The term “self” used in self-realization here does not mean “ego,” but rather a “self” that aims toward becoming a “Self” with a capital “S”—a self armed with an awareness of its relation to the organic whole.

Next, biospherical egalitarianism can be broken down into a view of nature and environment in the following ways.

First, each form of life is viewed as a knot in a net of an interdependent field that ties all things together. In other words, it is a worldview based on inter-relatedness.

Second, in principle, all life has an equal right to exist. This axiom of biospherical egalitarianism is a basic guideline to be used to view life. The partial killing, development, or suppression of some species in sustaining human life is regarded as a necessity.

Thirdly, diversity and symbiosis are major tenets of this philosophy. Diversity contributes to the richness of life, increases the chance for new forms of life to develop, and helps manifest more fully life’s hidden potential. Symbiosis aims to strike harmony between all living things.

Based on Naess’s proposed tenets, Bill Devall and George Sessions characterize deep ecology as “a comprehensive religious and philosophical worldview,” in their book *Deep Ecology*.⁹ In the tradition of Naess, they support the goals of self-realization and “biocentric equality.” The “self” of self-realization again utilizes the Self with a capital “S,” which incorporates not only human beings, but includes the non-human world as well—a greater Self which develops from the ego or self (with a small “s”). Biocentric equality refers to the universal right of all living things to self-realize to their fullest potential. In this worldview, where all living things are strictly interconnected, injury to another form of life results in injury to oneself.

In order to fully realize the Self, Devall and Sessions recommend meditation as a way of developing one’s consciousness. Here, another instance of Buddhist and Hindi influence can be observed, but the person who definitively aligned deep ecology with Buddhism was Joanna Macy. She expresses her basic ideology in the book *World As Lover, World As Self*.¹⁰

Her first point is that human beings are endowed with the ability to empathize with those in pain, or in other words, are bodhisattvas. Secondly, she adheres to a worldview that all things are interconnected through dependent co-arising (*engi*).

She also advocates meditation as a means to experience compassion as a bodhisattva.

She proposes self-realization that involves becoming one with nature, to develop one's "ecological self." Developing the ecological self is a means to transcend the past, present and future.

In his book, *The Dream of the Earth*, Thomas Berry interweaves ecofeminism, Gaia theory, Native American research, and localism from the standpoint of Christian mysticism, into a worldview that proposes a way to develop one's spiritual aspect to commune with psychic energy present in nature. He writes,

"Ecology requires a mystic foundation, and Carl Jung's archetypes of the great mother, the *mandala*, and the cosmic tree provide some bases."

Berry believes in the need for the creation of a "new story" that more fully explores these psychological and spiritual aspects, and uses the Native American lifestyle as a practical example. He explains,

"We are supported by the ultimate powers of the universe as they make themselves present to us through the spontaneities within our own beings. We need only become sensitized to these spontaneities."¹¹ In this way, he advocates rediscovering our ability to spiritually commune with nature and the archetypes of our deeper consciousness.

From Jungian psychology to Abraham Maslow to Stanislav Grof and then on to Ken Wilber, exploration of the subconscious has led to developments in transpersonal psychology, but the bond that ties together deep ecology is Warwick Fox's "transpersonal ecology."¹²

Deep ecology aims to develop a Self, and in doing so invariably converges with transpersonal psychology.

In transpersonal ecology, the self ceases to become an individual, autobiographical entity, and takes on a deeper ontological, cosmological aspect.

Cosmological experience leads to the conclusion that,

"We and all other entities are aspects of a single unfolding reality." From this position, Fox argues that ecology truly transcends anthropocentrism.

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In recent years, the deep ecology movement has strengthened its presence by taking on features of religions such as Buddhism and other Eastern philosophies, as well as mystical Christianity and the religions of native peoples. Here, I would like to talk about how Buddhists view self-actualization and biospherical egalitarianism.

First, going back to the framework of the oneness of life and its environment, biospherical egalitarianism correlates to the environment, and self-actualization correlates to life or living things.

In Mahayana Buddhism, dependent origination is described in the *Flower Garland Sutra* as a network of relationships with an infinite number of layers. In the sutras, Indra is described as possessing a large spectacular net,¹³ which serves as a metaphor for this network of relationships.

This huge net covers Indra's palace. There are an infinite number of cross-points or knots in the net, and at each one, a jewel is tied into it. Each jewel catches the light of the other jewels in the net, and reflects it back out to all the other jewels, symbolizing the complex interrelated nature of dependent origination.

This concept of one jewel reflecting the light of all the others is conveyed by the principle "one in many" and "many in one," representing the relationship of one life (a jeweled knot) in the universe (Indra's Net). In other words, the phenomenal world in which we live is the net of dependent origination itself, and all life is represented as a jeweled knot. This again reinforces the idea of egalitarianism by showing that human beings are but one type of life among all other types, intricately connected in this expansive network of relationships.

As it relates with Naess's deep ecology movement, the above concept is analogous to his concept of a worldview based in mutual relations, and is one expression of biospherical egalitarianism. To explore this analogy further, suppose that one jewel from the net is made the point of reference. Then, all the other jewels in the net become relative to this. If another jewel is picked to be the point of reference, all the other jewels become relative to the new point of reference. In this way, by shifting the main point of reference across the net, each jewel alters in status as the main or the relative, and this condition expresses coexistence.

As each jewel is unique, diversity increases as the spotlight is shone from one jewel to the next, introducing a new variation with each shift. If focus is centered on the way the main and relative jewels interact with

one another, the features of coexistence become apparent. Also, in this model, each jewel has an equal right to become the main within the overall pattern, which is in line with Devall and Sessions' biocentric equality.

One more imperative of deep ecology is self-actualization. This refers to the transformation of the consciousness of the ego, or self with a small "s," to one of a broader capacity or Self, with a large "S." Going back to the oneness of life and its environment, the larger Self that is mentioned in deep ecology is talking about the realm of life. In Jung's terminology, this larger Self would be an archetype of self in a deeper consciousness, perhaps in a transpersonal dimension, calling on a need for man's spiritual energy to dialogue with the spiritual energy of the universe.

As I have mentioned before, the Buddhist view of self-actualization, i.e. the discovery of our greater Self, was achieved by Shakyamuni when he became enlightened to the *Dharma* of life in the universe within his own being. In the *Lotus Sutra*, this is represented as the appearance of the treasure tower.

Shakyamuni's search of his "inner cosmos" was later categorized by Mahayana Buddhists of the Consciousness-Only school in a theory called the "eight-consciousnesses." The *ālaya*-consciousness, which is the deepest level, indicates the place where the network of relationships resides. Although there may be differences in approach, this deepest level of consciousness is comparable to the deepest layer of the unconscious as proposed by Jung, Grof, and Wilber. T'ien-T'ai Buddhism and Nichiren Buddhism take the *Dharma* one step further by making it the ninth consciousness.

When investigating the connections between Mahayana Buddhism and deep ecology, humanity's place in the universe becomes more lucid. By coming to a deeper understanding of our place, attention can be focused on our mission as human beings, and behave in line with biospherical egalitarianism, as people on the road to self-actualization. Armed with this knowledge, we can extrapolate some working definitions.

First, it can generally be agreed upon that humanity and its environment are tied together to the same destiny. All sentient and non-sentient beings on this earth share the same fate, as we are all interlinked together. Like in the metaphor of Indra's Net, if one jeweled-knot were to be cut off, it would affect the entire intricate system of reflection.

Second, on the most basic level, it is important for human beings to maintain harmony of ecological systems. Without a correct balance with nature, our own existence will become precarious.

Thirdly, our cultures, societies and civilizations should be built on top of a stable ecological system, thereby, reinforcing the need to dynamically maintain nature.

The fourth point includes the notion that human beings act as protectors and maintainers of the earth's environment. Toda observes that the universe and all living things within it, which are forever evolving, act on compassion. If aiming for self-actualization and seeking to realize a greater Self, humanity must be enlightened to its mission in this universe and live a lifestyle that reflects an understanding of the interdependent nature of existence.

According to Toda, the mission of humanity is to participate in the way of compassion of the universe. As mentioned earlier, the compassion of the universe is a highly creative force, and by taking part in this endeavor, humanity can become a co-creator.

That is to say, the purpose for mankind's existence can be summed up as both a regulator of the earth's ecology, as well as a force for creative evolution.

In the *Sutta-Nipata*, Shakyamuni states,

“Whichever are seen or unseen, whichever live far or near, whether they already exist or are going to be, let all creatures be happy-minded.”¹⁴ This expression contains the basis for humanity's mission in the universe and biospherical egalitarianism, as well as a basis for intergenerational ethics.

In Buddhism, those that pursue a lifestyle of trying to establish a greater Self, and promote compassion in the universe are called “bodhisattvas.”

In order for bodhisattvas to fulfill their missions for the universe, they follow a code of action called the “six *pāramitās*.” In the next section, I would like to discuss these practices in light of global ethics, and ponder their contemporary significance.

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The six *pāramitās* are: 1) almsgiving, 2) keeping the precepts, 3) forbearance, 4) assiduousness, 5) meditation, and 6) the obtaining of wisdom.

When interpreted for the modern era, these six practices can be grouped into three pairs.

The first pair is almsgiving and keeping the precepts. These two practices refer to the way we interact with others, specifically, in terms of ethics and morality. This pair deals most directly with global ethics and provides the most concrete direction for correct behavior.

Secondly, meditation and obtaining of wisdom are a pair. Meditation here refers to Buddhist practice. This includes the many types of practice that lead to the *Dharma* of the universe, such as Shakyamuni's meditation under the Bodhi tree. In Mahayana Buddhism, various forms of practice have been established, such as seated meditation, reading and reciting the sutras, repeating the name of the Buddha, and chanting.

Obtaining of wisdom specifically refers to obtaining the wisdom of Buddhism, or the "wisdom of dependent origination." This wisdom, based in compassion, is an integral part of universal life, and is the source for the Buddhist view of nature and the world that has been presented earlier.

Forbearance and assiduousness make up the third pair. These practices are the spiritual driving force for overcoming all obstacles preventing bodhisattvas from reaching enlightenment. Consequently, both the specific actions prescribed in the first pair as well as the spiritual aspects of the third pair are essential in carrying out a successful bodhisattva practice.

When divided in this way, the second pair, concerned with the formats for Buddhist practice, share certain aspects which are similar to other religions, such as methods of prayer, as well as ways of thinking about fundamental truths of the universe, but at the same time, the unique identities as separate religions is preserved. This area of comparative research is rich for further exploration, but a more pressing matter for the current global situation is whether the various religions can offer specific contributions toward a solution based on their respective ethical backgrounds in the real world—on the creative canvas called Earth.

Inter-religious cooperation and furthering mutual understanding to invent solutions to ensure the continuance and development of the human race is the most important task set before us. If focus is placed on this task, the two practices of almsgiving and keeping the precepts would rise up as concrete ways Buddhism can provide an invaluable service in society. What then, are the modern interpretations of these two practices?

Almsgiving is an action that helps control the feeling of wanting. It includes three different types, including material and spiritual almsgiving and the almsgiving of fearlessness, and it is this last type that is the most fundamental. In other words, almsgiving of fearlessness means to

provide others with steadfast courage and hope to face any circumstance, especially when facing physical or psychological difficulty.

The conditions necessary for a fearless life in contemporary terms are a life in which the basic needs for survival are provided for while balancing conservation of rich natural surroundings with local customs and cultures. Basic needs means water, food, access to medical care and welfare, basic education, and a sense of security.

Buddhists, as bodhisattvas, can contribute to local areas, communities, or even nations by giving material and spiritual alms to help others live without fear.

An example of material almsgiving on the governmental or corporate level is the assistance developed countries give to developing countries, and an example of spiritual almsgiving is the offering of cutting-edge technology or education. Other contemporary examples of almsgiving include volunteer work through NGOs and NPOs to deliver goods, expertise, and skills, especially in the fields of medicine and education. The transmitting of the spiritual legacy of a particular community through culture and religion also comes to mind.

The next practice of keeping the precepts, involves fostering ethical and moral behavior. In the Mahayana tradition of Buddhism, there exists a text called the *Brahma Net Sutra*, which prescribes numerous precepts, of which I would like to introduce four that pertain to lay believers. These four precepts are very fundamental to human ethics, and thus are shared by the Eastern teachings of Confucianism, Taoism and Hinduism, as well as the Western religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. These four precepts may serve as a basis for global ethics.

The first is the precept not to kill. This is an expression of the spirit of non-violence. The *Brahma Net Sutra* states,

“A disciple of the Buddha ... shall not *intentionally* kill any living creature.”¹⁵ And according to the *Dhammapada*,

“All tremble at violence; all fear death. Comparing (others) with oneself, one should not kill or cause to kill.”¹⁶

This precept applies to all life and all living things. As Buddhism supports the principle of biospherical egalitarianism, it promotes a respect for all living things. Human beings are equals with all other living things as regulators and protectors of the environment, but are also creators that can manifest the compassion of the greater universe. So as stated in the *Brahma Net Sutra* about the intent to kill living things, unnecessary killing is prohibited, especially if the killing is motivated by one’s own greed, anger or ignorance, but stays in line with what Naess proposes in

regard to killing living things in order to alleviate human hunger, and killing in order to maintain balance in the ecosystem, which are both permissible.

Next, this precept prohibits all forms of war, and leads to the reduction of military arms and eventually to the complete abolishment of all weapons. This is the basis for the right not to wage war—the right of peace. Not only should bodhisattvas contribute to the cause of non-violence, but within their activism, they should continue to advance the cause of the right for peace. The *Brahma Net Sutra* states,

“A disciple of the Buddha should not store weapons such as knives, clubs, bows, arrows, spears, axes or any other weapons.”¹⁷ And the *Sutta-Nipata* states,

“Fear comes from the (one who has) embraced violence. Look at people quarreling.”¹⁸ The precept of not to kill even prohibits the storage of weapons. It provides a basis for not only abolishing weapons of mass destruction, but also conventional weapons as well, thereby creating a path to a world without war.

The second precept is not to steal. This precept comes from the spirit to know fulfillment. In Buddhism, there is a spirit of “little desire and contentment with a little gain (*shōyoku-chisoku*).” This is considered essential for becoming a person of wealth and happiness. Therefore, it is prohibited to exploit others for the purpose of fulfilling one’s greedy desires. Today, the expansion of the appetite for material goods in industrialized nations is running rampant, promoting materialism and contributing negatively to the global condition.

Buddhism regards those who lead lives ruled by materialism, authority, or fame as poor, or unsatisfied. Conversely, those that are able to control their desires, anger and egoism, are regarded as rich, or fulfilled, and it is the Buddhist way to lead others away from a life centered only on material goods to that of cooperation of spirit and a life of ethics.

The wisdom of dependent origination allows for coexistence among all living creatures, and allows one to feel happiness when developing oneself to become able to commune with the spiritual energy in nature and the universe. Poor and unsatisfied people who are at the mercy of base cravings ultimately exploit others for their own gain. Two other passages in the *Brahma Net Sutra* refer to this, saying,

“A disciple of the Buddha must not himself steal or encourage others to steal, steal by expedient means, steal by means of incantation or deviant mantras. He should not create the causes, conditions, methods, or karma of stealing,”¹⁹ and,

“No valuables or possessions ... be they as small as a needle or blade of grass, may be stolen.”²⁰

That is to say, to own more than is absolutely necessary for one’s survival is to be in violation of this precept. Mahatma Gandhi and the Jains both carried out the precepts “not to steal” and “not to own.” This precept forms the basis for all people of the earth to live equally as wealthy or fulfilled individuals—the right of equality. When applied to companies, states, nations, or individuals, this precept prohibits stealing as it goes against the principle of equality and equal gain.

In addition, this principle applies not only to the present inhabitants of the earth, but also prohibits exploitation of resources of the future generations of humanity.

The precept of not to steal reinforces a pattern of consumption where stealing from others is reduced to the point where a proper economic balance to bring all people out of extreme poverty can be reached. Therefore, when people turn a blind eye to the fact that the majority of people throughout the world are in the state of poverty, that in itself is a violation of this precept. It is exactly because globalization is advancing, that everyone of us, especially political and business leaders, need to take action based on an ethical code of behavior that endorses no stealing.

The third precept is not to engage in sexual misconduct, which expresses Buddhist morals regarding gender equality. However, from a deeper viewpoint of this precept, it can be seen that the equality being discussed is not limited just to those of gender, but encompasses equality of race, ethnicity, and cultures. All forms of discrimination, such as patriarchy, sexism, racism, discrimination based on ethnicity, culture, or religion, are prohibited under this precept. From the Buddhist viewpoint of the law of dependent origination, men and women should love and respect each other as equals.

This precept directs us to respect and learn from all of the various cultures, religions, and spiritual legacies, of each community, race, and ethnicity, and to help them develop.

And the significance of this precept is that it helps us overcome discrimination which arises from ignorance of the law of dependent origination within the individual, the community, and greater society.

The fourth and final precept is not to lie, which prohibits lying, deceiving, and talking ill of others, as these actions destroy trust between people. In the *Brahma Net Sutra*, it states,

“As a Buddha’s disciple, he ought to maintain Right Speech and Right Views always.”²¹ By speaking the truth in sincerity, a solid foundation for trust can be fostered in relationships. On a larger scale, this trust is essential between nations in forming the basis for solving armed conflicts as well as environmental issues. To foster such a deep sense of mutual trust, truthful dialogue is necessary. The process of self realization in a Buddhist sense starts out with gaining the trust of others, then overcoming one’s ego (the lesser self). Only then can one begin to face the *Dharma* of universal life.

Gandhi took this idea of “truthful speech” and employed it in his movement of *Satyagraha*.

In order to overcome today’s problems of ethnic conflict and religious discrimination, a foundation of trust must be established, and a deepening of the practice of right speech and right views is required.

In the final part of this paper, I would like to touch on a concept called the “four methods of winning people (*shi-shōji*)” which is an idea from early Buddhism that was carried over to Mahayana Buddhism. The four methods are: 1) expounding the Buddha’s teachings and/or giving material things, 2) speaking in a kindly manner, 3) acting to benefit others, and 4) sharing others’ hardships and cooperating with them.

The first method is the same as the first of the six *pāramitās*, almsgiving.

The second, speaking in a kindly manner, advises how to select words and act in a way that expresses thoughtfulness in our dialogues and exchanges with others.

The third, acting to benefit others, arises from a compassionate heart. This includes taking action to serve others, using our bodies, speaking words of kindness, and being thoughtful. These actions contribute to relieving others’ suffering.

The fourth method of sharing others’ hardships and cooperating with them is an exercise in placing oneself in others’ shoes and making efforts aligned with their goals. This is an action of participation and involvement.

Through increasing opportunities for dialogue and exchange, sharing time with others and doing things to benefit them, individuals, communities, and NGOs can deepen their understanding of and gain insights into customs, cultures and religions.

Bodhisattva practices such as the six *pāramitās*, and the four methods of winning people on the individual or communal level aid Buddhists in establishing a lifestyle that leads to discovering their unique mission as

a human being in this universe.

In various fields such as politics, economics, culture, and education, as well as through public organizations such as NGOs belonging to the United Nations, Buddhists work in contemporary society to exert a positive influence in the world as modern bodhisattvas.

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- ¹⁵ “First Major Precept on Killing” of the Brahma Net Sutra [*Bonmo-kyo*], <http://www.ymba.org/bns/bnstext.htm> (accessed 7 September 2006), Sutra Translation Committee of the United States and Canada.
- ¹⁶ Norman, K. R., tr. *The Word of the Doctrine (Dammapada)* (Oxford: The Pali Text Society, 2000), p. 20.
- ¹⁷ “The Forty-eight Secondary Precepts, On Storing Deadly Weapons” of the Brahma Net Sutra, *op. cit.*
- ¹⁸ *The Group of Discourses (Sutta-Nipata)*, vol. 2, *op. cit.*, p. 117.
- ¹⁹ “Second Major Precept on Stealing” of the Brahma Net Sutra, *op. cit.*
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*
- ²¹ “Fourth Major Precept on Lying and False Speech” of the Brahma Net Sutra, *op. cit.*