

EDITORIAL: Maximum Foresight

By JEFF FARR

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How do we gain the foresight to move ourselves in the right direction? Buddhism says that we first have to know the law of cause and effect.

I owe a big thanks to all the great people of foresight I've encountered: the writers of books that changed my life, teachers that set me on my way with advice, singers, moviemakers, SGI-USA leaders, parents, friends, SGI President Ikeda — lots of people. All of them, whether they knew me personally or not, seemed to have a general sense of the best direction in which things could go for me. They pointed me this way and that, always the right way.

How do we gain the foresight to help others? To point them in the right direction? I always wanted it, so that I could help others the same way that I was helped.

Nichiren Daishonin says that “a sage is one who fully understands the three existences of life — past, present and future” (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 2 [2nd ed.], p. 222). The greatest foresight to help others comes from deeply understanding these three existences, the Daishonin teaches: how the past leads to the present, the present to the future; how there's a causal chain that goes on forever through time; how all human beings are part of this chain.

If you can gain what I call maximum foresight, based on the maximum understanding of this principle, think then what you can do to alleviate human suffering. You can know exactly how an oppressed people can fight off enslavement, say. Or how a confused people can get their answers to life's mysteries. You can know how to defeat all sorrows and regrets that all people face. And what could be better than that?

The Daishonin had maximum foresight in the “Rissho Ankoku Ron,” predicting the exact, terrible consequences to follow if Japan continued to pursue false doctrines. He wasn't just making these predictions up — he was seeing the coming effects as plain as day, based on his complete comprehension of the three existences.

He says elsewhere that “the Buddha is called worthy of respect because he discerns the past and knows the future. In his perception of the three existences, no wisdom surpasses his” (MW-5, 180).

But trying to gain this wisdom, this foresight, even little bits and pieces of it, has never been easy for me. It's been like wandering in an immense maze, trying to find the exit!

There is a kind of fun, though, in finding your way out of mazes, out of the confusion of not knowing which way to go because you are sure you cannot possibly see what's going to happen. The journey always leads you to insights about how things work, how you work, how people work — and to foresight.

Practical experience with the three existences, then — experience with how the causal law works on the everyday level — is the bedrock of Buddhist foresight.

And Buddhist foresight must also encompass this broad understanding: how being born naturally leads to dying, how dying leads to being born again — what Buddhism calls the cycle of birth and death. Since the cycle is eternal and applies to everything, Buddhism posits an eternal universe; stars and planets will be born and die, but the universe will always be here.

The imagined death of the universe, albeit predicted for billions and even trillions of years from now, makes some despair: At that time, all that the human race has learned will supposedly die, and so will all our history. All our efforts will have been for what? It's a

Title: Editorial: Maximum Foresight

Subject: World Tribune 09/18/98 n.3209 p.14 WT980918p14

Author: Jeff Farr

Keywords: Editorials Foresight Maximum Opinion Practice Tribune World

philosophic dead-end: If *everything* is to die, including the cycle of birth and death itself, why do *anything*? Why strive for any progress, when it will all come to nothing?

So Buddhism's answer to this is that no, this cycle will not die. Our universe will not die. And the causes that we make now will have an eternal influence on our universe's future. Forever is born from right now — from what each of us does now. When Pablo Neruda wrote, "It so happens that I'm bound to live on," he could have been speaking for the whole universe and all humanity in this Buddhist world view.

We will live on. And so will what we create at this moment.

My point being that in Buddhist foresight, we need a profound understanding of the three existences *plus* the greatest hope for our unending future. Buddhist foresight is really sharing this hope with all people: that nothing can stop life, and that because we are all part of the living causal chain, nothing can stop us.

"Life cannot be stopped," President Ikeda writes in this issue (see p. 4). "It never looks back. It always moves forward. Whatever dark force may try to block its endless flow, life always overcomes it with an even greater force. Life knows no despair, even in the face of death's taunting dance. Life triumphs even over death, it pushes on. Life is hope, life is progress."

We need to convince our friends that they will win in the end — that *their lives* are hope, that *their lives* are progress. That what they do today does matter, that it will change their lives and the whole universe.

When we accomplish this, we become people of maximum foresight.

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