

# How Long is the Period between Two Buddhas?

(Gotama Buddha and Metreyya Buddha)

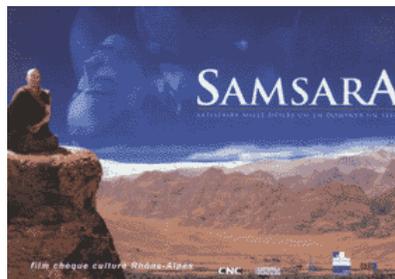
*Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahatto Sammasambuddhassa*



*Gotama Buddha*



*Metreyye Buddha*



***Introduction:*** - As Dhamma friends aspired to meet with Metreyya Buddha to receive a definite prophecy (Byardeik Taw) from Buddha in person, not many have an idea how long is that period between Gotama Buddha and the next Metreyya Buddha. In short, according to many texts in Pali Canon, that period is some where - **ten million years. (vassa-kotiye)**, but the commentary says **after many hundreds of thousands times ten million years. (Asankheyya)** – Indefinite and incalculable time period. That period between the end of Gotama Sasana and the beginning of Metreyya Buddha sasana is accepted as - **Asankheyya** – incalculable – some where in the twenty Antara Kappas.

A good pragmatic question is to examine and choose the path that one could attain enlightenment in the shortest possible time. The Pali canon has already stated the name of the Metreyya Buddha's disciples. It is also said that the city in which Metreyya Buddha will arise is – **Ketumati** in India and that Metreyya Buddha will come from Brahmin family.

*To meet Metreyya in person, there is one option that we can do; is to strive hard in **Samadha** practice to take rebirth in **Tusita heaven** and live there with Bodhisatta Metreyya, known in Mahayana as – **Mi-Lo Foo**, the Laughing Buddha. There you can closely follow him and be with him when he descend to earth to take on the life of Metreyya Buddha in the city of Ketumati, India.*

*If there are any other options, we need to explore those options. The period to wait for Metreyya to appear according to Buddhist reckoning, that period is incalculable (**Asankheyya**). We can also look into the option of meeting with – **Miracle Buddha Image** – popularly known in Burma as – **Ne Mi Tha Myat Swar Pha Ya** or **Yaung Daw Pyan Pha Ya**.,an event specially planned for the Devas and Brahmas world. This exploration could be a very worth while effort, for all practical purposes.*

## **1. Buddhist Belief**

The Gotama Buddha said in one of his discourse that when the morality among human being grows stronger and stronger and as a result, their life span grows longer until it reaches one hundred thousand years, and at on the decline to 80, 000 years, **Buddha Metreyya will appear**. **Ashin Buddhaghosa** explains that the life span increases to an incalculable number of years (**Asankheyya**) and then begins to decrease again until it reaches 80,000 years, for Buddhas arise only when the life span is decreasing. When Buddha Metreyya arise on earth in India at the Kingdom of **Ketumati**, the life span of human would be almost as long as those in Deva's world.

A tradition in Burma says that Buddha Metreyya will live for 80,000 years in the period when the human life span will be at 100,000 years, just as Buddha Gotama lived for eighty years when the human life span was one hundred years. \

*No definite number of years is given for the period between **Buddha Gotama** and **Buddha Metteyya**. The **Anagatavamsa** (verse 5) says Buddha Metteyya will arise some time in the future in **ten million years**. (**vassa-kotiye**), but the commentary says this means **after many hundreds of thousands times ten million years**.*

## **2. Buddhist ERA Calculation:**

There are three kinds of **kappas** - namely, **antara kappa**, **asankheyya kappa**, and **maha kappa**. Each of these terms is defined as noted:

**Definitions** : -

**a. Kappa** – endless long period.

**b. Antara Kappa** --The interim period when the age limit of human being arises from ten to an indefinite time and then falls to ten again, is known as an antara kappa.

**c. Asankheyya Kappa** -- Twenty such antara kappa equal one asankheyya kappa, literally - an incalculable cycle. The time period is incalculable. The time is infinite and incalculable.

**d. Maha Kappa** -- Four asankheyya kappas equal one maha kappa. A world cycle (otherwise also known as Maha Buddha Kappa)

**Maha kappa** (kappa) or *world cycle* One world cycle is the period between two destructive rainfalls. It is explained in this way - Many, many years from the present time a *destructive rainfall will take place*, as a result of which the world system will come to an end. Then, after a long time, *the world will re-evolve*. And Again, after a long period, another destructive rainfall will take place, destroying the world system

A world cycle (also known as Maha Buddha Kappa) is divided into four periods as follows.

- ? **Samvatta-kappa** - each is subdivided into twenty *anto-kappa*.
- ? **Samvattatthayi-kappa** - each is subdivided into twenty *anto-kappa*
- ? **Vivatta-kappa** - each is subdivided into twenty *anto-kappa*
- ? **Vivattatthayi-kappa** - each is subdivided into twenty *anto-kappa* – *we are now in this era.*

**Samvatta-kappa** - The first period of a world cycle known as Samvatta-kappa is the very long period between the *destructive rainfall* and *the appearance of seven suns*, at which time *the world system is entirely burnt up*. This period is known as the period of chaos or the dissolved state.

**Samvattatthayi kappa** - The second period, which is known as Samvattatthayi, is when the sky and heavens (firmament) both over and under the world are covered with thick dust and darkness. This long period is known as the period of continuation of chaos or continuation of the dissolved state.

**Vivatta-kappa** - The third period, known as Vivatta-kappa, starts with a productive rainfall and goes on evolving until the sun and moon begin to appear. This period is known as the long evolving period.

**Vivattatthayi kappa**- The fourth period, which starts when the sun and moon appear, is known as the *Vivattatthayi*, the continuation of evolution, and goes on until the next destructive rainfall.

We are now in *one of the twenty anto-kappa* in the period known as *Vivattatthayi*, the continuation of evolution. In each anto-kappa the lifespan of man rises to a very long span and again decreases to about ten years. We are according to *Anagatavamsa Desana* – our life span is in the decline as we approached Sasana year 5,000. There was no literature that said we are at which of the *twenty antara kappa*. According to the Anagatavamsa Desana, we are now in the decreasing time

period or in the declining period of our human morality. The life span is therefore on the decline. It will decrease to a life span of ten and at which time the world will be consumed by Volcanic destruction. There are twenty antara kappa and we do not know at which *antara kappa* we are in? Gotama Buddha appeared when the life span was 100 years in the human life span decreasing period of human life span.

Based on one explanation given by *Ashin Buddhaghosa – Mettreyya Buddha* will appear when the life span increases to an incalculable number of years (*Asankheyya*) and then begins to decrease again until it reaches 80,000 years, for Buddhas arise only when the life span is decreasing. So the popular belief was that Metreyya Buddha will live for 80,000 years in the period when the life span is 100,000 years.

We are in the Bhaddha Kappa where Five Buddhas will be born in this world cycle (hence known as Maha Bhadda Kappa). Four have already reigned. The era of the Metreyya Buddha is yet to come.

### 3. Duration of Gotama Buddha Sasana

Many speculated that Buddha sasana will last for a thousand years, based on some earlier texts. During the period, from the time of Buddha Gotama until the minimum life span declined to ten years, the Buddha's Dispensation (*Buddha-sasana*) will disappear. When the Buddha agreed to create the *Bhikkhuni Sangha*, he told *Ven. Ananda* that the *Sasana* would last only half as long because of the establishment of *Bhikkhuni Sangha*. Buddha said that his *Sasana* will last only 500 years instead of 1,000 years as stated earlier. However, in the first Buddhist councils, all the participants Arahats agreed that Buddha Sasana will last for five thousand years. The commentary on the Abhidhamma text, *Dhammasangani*, says that when the *First Buddhist Council* convened by *Ven. Maha-Kassapa* rehearsed the Pali Canon, this made it possible for the *Sasana* to endure for five thousand years.

The commentaries on the *Vinaya Pitaka* and the *Anguttara-nikaya* say that the eight important rules which the Buddha gave to the *Bhikkhuni Sangha* will make his Teachings last for five thousand years rather than five hundred. The distributions of the five periods are :

- a. One thousand years for *Arahats who attain analytical insight*,
- b. One thousand years for *Arahats without those analytical insight attainments*,
- c. One thousand years for *Non-returners*,
- d. One thousand years for *Once-returners*, and
- e. One thousand years for *Stream-winners*.

After these five thousand years of penetration of the true Doctrine (pativedha-sadhamma), the accomplishment in the texts (pariyatti-dhamma) will remain. After the accomplishment in the texts disappears, the signs (linga) will continue for a long time.

In the commentary to the *Theragatha* the *Sasana* is said to consist of five periods:

- ? the age of deliverance (*vimutti-yuga*),
- ? the age of concentration (*samadhi-yuga*),
- ? the age of morality (*sila-yuga*),
- ? the age of learning [the texts] (*suta-yuga*), and
- ? the age of generosity (*dana-yuga*).

Ven. Dhammapala says, concerning the disappearance of learning, "In a region where there is no purity of morality, accomplishment (in the texts) remains through taking up great learning, through the desire to acquire, etc. But when accomplishment in the summary [i.e., the *Patimokkha*] is completely ended, it disappears. From that time on, only the mere sign (*linga*) remains. Then, having accumulated riches in various ways, they give away gifts (*dana*); this, truly, is the last right practice.

Then, [the period starting] after the disappearance of learning is the last time (*pacchima-kala*). Others say that it is from the time of the disappearance of morality."

According to the tradition in Burma, the *Sasana* will last five thousand years. The five periods will occur twice. The first half of the *Sasana* has just passed, with each of the five periods lasting five hundred years.

#### 4. The Current Popular Belief

There is a popular belief among the Buddhists that we should strive hard through Vipassana to attain the first stage of holiness =- Sotapanna – Stream winner, just to secure the future enlightenment. This belief could be attributed to the popularity of Western laities seeking peace of mind through Vipassana meditation. In fact, what Western Laities seeking for is not for enlightenment, but to know how to attain peace of mind in this complex rat-race material life style. With teacher monks becoming popular in teaching foreign laities the Vipassana meditation, many intellectuals in Theravada countries took it as the right way to attain Nibbana.

*This Vipassana practice is for Buddhist who truly embraced the five precepts; it is not for those outside the Buddhist religion. It is the practice to lead one on the path leading to one's liberation from the Samsara; and is not a mere physical exercise. It is a noble mindfulness exercise to perceive the Universal law of Anecca, Dukha and Anatta*

If we look closely of the five era's that Buddha has given to his followers, he had it prophesied that the attainment is only possible if done in that period. Let us look at the five periods:

- ? One thousand years for *Arahats who attain analytical insight*,
- ? One thousand years for *Arahats without those analytical insight attainments*,
- ? One thousand years for *Non-returners*,
- ? One thousand years for *Once-returners*, and
- ? One thousand years for *Stream-winners*.

### The first 1,000 years –

When Buddha attained self enlightenment, after his discourse: *Turning the Wheel of Dhamma*; and *Anatta Lakkhana suttas*, millions of Devas and Brahmans attained their arahatships<sup>1</sup>, Only five attained arahatships in the human world. Later, many of the Buddha's disciples attained their arahatship after listening to short discourses. Both male and female Arahats were flying all over in the *Rajagaha* Monastery.

### The second 1,000 years –

In the third period; a period in which only those Monks who really work hard could attain enlightenment to the stage of *Arahatship*. It is very hard for laities to attain this stage of holiness in this second era. In this era, we saw very little attained the Arahatship. Only those who work hard by following the old noble tradition did achieved their aspiration.

### The Third 1,000 years –

We are now in this third period. Those who work really hard could possibly attain the non-returner – Anagami stage, not even arahatship. Those with high aspiration for enlightenment and are working very hard could attain *Anagamai*<sup>2</sup>. Compare to Monks, we have less chance to attain Anagami stage. We could possibly hope for either Sakadagami<sup>3</sup> (once returner) or Sotapanna (stream-winner) only, if we give up sensual pleasure – given up the house holder life and become a Monk.

### The Fourth 1,000 years:

As long we are within the Buddha dispensation, for those with high aspiration, we could still have a good chance to attain either – *Sedagami* or *Sotapanna* stage. Many will be disappointed because condition to pay dedicated attention to the Buddha Dhamma would be very hard because of the degrading morality in human.

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<sup>1</sup> **arahant**: A "worthy one" or "pure one"; a person whose mind is free of defilement (see *kilesa*), who has abandoned all ten of the fetters that bind the mind to the cycle of rebirth (see *samyojana*), whose heart is free of mental effluents (see *asava*), and who is thus not destined for further rebirth. A title for the Buddha and the highest level of his noble disciples

<sup>2</sup>

<sup>3</sup> **sakadagami**: Once-returner. A person who has abandoned the first three of the fetters that bind the mind to the cycle of rebirth (see *samyojana*), has weakened the fetters of sensual passion and resistance, and who after death is destined to be reborn in this world only once more.

## The Fifth 1,000 years –

We then come to the last chance of achieving the *Sotapanna*<sup>4</sup> stage. Many cannot even have the good sense of paying reverence to the Buddha any more. Paying reverence to the Buddha Relics will be far, far away from their thought, because their morality had been so degraded in this era.

### 4 The Buddha Prophecy said?

In the *Anagatavamsa commentary*, the Buddha is said to preface the account of the future Buddha Ariya Metteyya by saying his own dispensation will disappear in five stages:

- ? the disappearance of analytical insight (*patisambhida*),
- ? the disappearance of the Paths and *Fruition States*,
- ? the disappearance of the practice (*patipatti*),
- ? the disappearance of the texts (*pariyatti*), and
- ? the disappearance of the *Sangha*.

Other commentaries also speak in terms of five stages of disappearance (*antaradhana*) of the *Sasana*:<sup>[53]</sup>

- ? First, there will be the disappearance of attainment (*adhigama*), which would correspond to the age of deliverance.
- ? The second disappearance is of the practice (*patipatti*), which corresponds to the ages of concentration and morality.
- ? The disappearance of accomplishment in the texts (*pariyatti*) is third and corresponds to the age of learning.
- ? The fourth disappearance is of the signs (*linga*). During this period, the only good action left is making gifts to those who wear a yellow strip of cloth around their necks, so this would correspond to the age of generosity. When this disappearance occurs, five thousand years will have passed. After this period there occurs

the disappearance of the relics (*dhatu*). When the relics no longer receive honour, they will assemble at the seat where the Buddha attained Awakening under the Great Bodhi tree. There, they will make an effigy of the Buddha and perform a marvel similar to the Twin Marvel and will teach the Doctrine. No human being will be present, only Devas from the ten thousand world systems will listen, and many of them will attain release. After that, the relics will be burned up without remainder.

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<sup>4</sup> *sotapanna*: Stream winner. A person who has abandoned the first three of the fetters that bind the mind to the cycle of rebirth (see *samyojana*) and has thus entered the "stream" flowing inexorably to *nibbana*, ensuring that one will be reborn at most only seven more times, and only into human or higher realms.

## 5. The Old World of Gotama Sasana

Coming to the end of Sasana year 5,000, the life span of human will slowly degraded to 10 ten years because of their de meritorious moral behavior. At that time people will be like animals. They will not observe the difference between themselves and their parents, nor will they observe a difference between a sister or a sister-in-law, a brother or nephew or even one's own daughter. They will only love themselves. Five months old boys will marry another five months old girls. All tastes will disappear. Rice cooked with inferior grain will be considered fit for the king. The world will be devoid of all luxuries. As a result of hatred in the minds of people the world will be destroyed

So the destruction of the old world will begin to start a new world. How will it begin? Seven days before the destruction of the Kappa, some *kamavacara deities* dressed as if bereaving, will go round all over the human world and warn the people.

*“ O men, seven days from today, a dangerous and destructive rain will called the **mrgasamvansa** will fall for seven days and those who get wet will perceive each other as game and try to kill each other. Those who hope to save themselves must collect provisions such as rice, salt, fire woods repair protective places like caves.” .*

So when the rain falls, during those seven days, people will turn this world into one big heap of meat and the ocean will be filled with blood. When the rain ceases after seven days, people who are in hiding will come out of hiding will see the dead bodies all over the places. Those who survived will now change their behaviors and slowly accepting the morality and the life span will then increase from 10 years to 20, and then to 30 and on and on infinitely. This *Jambhuvipa* will be full of people rich and prosperous. The *kusala dhamma* will prevail and their life span will grow to ninety thousand and then to 100,000 years. The city of *Banares* will be changed to *Uppala*. There the Kingdom of Ketumati will be established.

### The Kingdom of Ketumati

In the kingdom of *Ketumati*, where King *Sankha* reigned, will have broad and narrow roads decorated with gold and silvers. Shops will sell anything that you can imagine. There will be many rich people living in luxuries. The city will look like a heavenly city. They say, *Jambudvipa* will be a wonderland. Here people in this kingdom will wear heavenly scent and enjoy the heavenly scented rice and sleep and lie on heavenly soft bedspread. While listening to music's and watch the dancing of artists resemble the artists in heaven. These are the happy people who will live free from ninety nine kinds of illness.

The people living in the *Jambudvipa* will be rich and prosperous. They will always be happy and gay peaceful in mind enjoying the five types of comforts, adorning

their bodies with various ornaments devoid of all ailments and will shine like the bodies of God.

The King Sankha who reins the Kingdom, because of his Sila, will enjoy eighty four thousand of Queens, the chief queen will be the woman who cooked rice for the alms giving with a pious mind. At that time, the Devas and Brahmas will gather together to request the Bodhisatta Metreyya in Tusita heaven to descend. The time is right and the people have a life span of 100,000 years on earth.

### **Summarizing**

The period between Gotama Buddha and the next Metreyya Buddha, according to many texts in Pali Canon, said that period is some where - **ten million years.** (*vassakotiye*), but the commentary says **after many hundreds of thousands times ten million years.** (*Asankheyya*) – indefinite and incalculable time period.

*The question here for us to analyze is what are our options to reach for our liberation? We have several goals that we could project to attain:*

- a. Arahatship – this is almost impossible to attain in this Era for Laities.*
- b. Anagami – non-returner – it is almost impossible to attain as Laities. Possibly if you are a forest Monk.*
- c. Sadakagamai – once returner –still possible in this era, if we give up the sensual pleasure and be an ascetic monk living by the noble tradition.*
- d. Sotapanna – possible in this era, and the best bet are to work hard and live in the Deva world and continue practicing the Dhamma there.*

*In examining the fourth option; there are still seven more rebirths to go through before we attain our liberation. We should either exhaust all the seven existence within this sasana or we will be stranded in the interim period until we see the next Buddha sasana – Metreyya Sasana. The seven human rebirths will take 700 years the most, in the time span of over 2,000 years to stay within the Sasana.*

*We are really in a dilemma as to what we should do and which option to choose and work at it? In the Anagatavamsa Kyan Sar, we read that there is an event that will take place in the Deva world that is called – Yaung Daw Pyan Phaya Pwe. We need to go to the Deva world and with the help of our relatives in the Deva world to participate in this event. There is a Burmese tradition in Burma people to work hard to be either like Deva with the same life span as Deva or be a Deva to pay homage to the “Ne Me Tha Myat Swa Pahya” at the event – Yaung Daw Pyan Phaya Pwe. This will take place in some where in the Sasana year, 5,000. This is a viable option. For those who have link with the Devas already received messages about this event. That was why, many have received Deva visitation to alert them of the coming event.*

*In Burma, we called it – Deva possession – Deities came down to guide their relatives on to the right path. It is the best we can do as normal human being. We just have not*

*accrued enough parami to attain our liberation in the first or the second era, and we are now in the third era, not many options to choose from, except to accept the Deities guidance...*

*Appendix – A is to give a measure of what other options we have in the 31 planes of existence.*

**References:**

1. **Anagatavamsa Desana – translated from Singhala by Udaysa Meddegama**
2. **Anagatavamsa Desana Mula Kyan Sar – in Burmese (available at request) published in Burmese 100 Years old.**
3. **Practising the Dhamma with a View to Nibbana by Radhika Abeysekera**
4. **<http://www.kmspks.org/activities/bbc/bbc7.htm> for Appendix - A**

## Appendix - A

### 31 Realms of Existence

#### Formless Spheres (Arupavacara)

31.	The realm of Neither Perception nor Non-Perception (N'evasanna Nasannayatanabhumi)	84,000MK
30.	The realm of Nothingness (Akincanayatanabhumi)	60,000MK
29.	The realm of Infinite Consciousness (Vinnanacayatanabhumi)	40,000MK
28.	The realm of Infinite Space (Akasanacayatanabhumi)	20,000MK

MK - Maya Kappa

#### Form Spheres (Rupavacara)

27.	The Highest realm (Akanittha)	16,000MK	Pure Abodes	4th Jhana
26.	The Clear-sighted realm (Suddassa)	8,000MK		
25.	The Beautiful realm (Sudassi)	4,000MK		
24.	The Serene realm (Atappa)	2,000MK		
23.	The Durable realm (Aviha)	1,000MK		
22.	The realm mindless beings (Asannasatta)	500MK		
21.	The realm of Great Reward (Vehapphala)	500MK		
20.	The realm of Steady Aura (Subhakinna)	64MK	3rd Jhana	
19.	The realm of Infinite Aura (Appamanasubha)	32MK		
18.	The realm of Minor Aura (Parittasubha)	16MK		
17.	The realm of Radiant Lustre	8MK	2nd Jhana	

	(Abhassara)		
16.	The realm of Infinite Lustre (Appamanabha)	4MK	1st Jhana
15.	The realm of Minor Lustre (Parittabha)	2MK	
14.	The Maha Brahma realm (Mahabrahma)	1AK	
13.	The realm of Brahma's Ministers (Brahmapurohita)	0.5AK	
12.	The realm of Brahma's retinue (Brahmaparisajja)	0.3AK	

AK - Asankheyya Kappa

## Sensual Spheres (Kamavacara)

11.	The realm of the gods who lord over the creation of others (Paranimmitavasavatti)	16,000CY
10.	The realm of the gods who rejoice in (their own) creations (Nimmanarati)	8,000CY
9.	The Delightful realm (Tusita)	4,000CY
8.	The realm of Yama gods (Yama)	2,000CY
7.	The realm of the 33 gods (Tavatimsa)	1,000CY
6.	The realm of the 4 Kings (Catummaharajika)	500CY
5.	The Human realm (Manussa)	No limit
4.	The host of Asuras (Asura)	No limit
3.	Peta sphere (Peta)	No limit
2.	Animal kingdom (Tiracchana)	No limit
1.	Woeful state (Niraya)	No limit

CY - Celestial Year

MK = Maha Kappa, AK = Asankheyya Kappa, CY = Celestial Year

There are 3 kinds of kappas - namely, antara kappa, asankheyya kappa, and maha kappa.

**The interim period when the age limit of human beings arises from ten to an indefinite time and then falls to ten again, is known as an antara kappa.**

**Twenty such antara kappa equal one asankheyya kappa, literally - an incalculable cycle.**

**Four asankheyya kappas equal one maha kappa.**

**Books state that 50 human years equal one celestial day.  
The age-limit of gods of the realm of Four Kings is 500 celestial years,  
that is, according to human cycle reckoning 9,000,000.**