



မဟာစည်ဆရာတော်ဘုရားကြီးဦးသောဘန့် နှင့် နတ်သား အမေးအဖြေ -  
အင်္ဂလိပ်ဘာသာပြန်

Questions and Answers Between Mahāsi Sayādaw Phayargyi U Sobhana and a  
Devā with English Translation

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*namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa*

## Participants:

Ven. Mahāsi Sayādaw:	The Abbot of Mahāsi Meditation Center and founder of renown Mahāsi mediation tradition.
Mahānidassita Bharinī:	The Ven. Mahāsi Sayādaw is known by this name in <i>Nimmānarati</i> Heaven.
Kocantara Katindriya:	The devā from <i>Nimmānarati</i> Heaven (name spelling is approximate)
Ma Zin Mar Yi:	The young woman hermit participated as the medium of communication between heaven and earth
U San Thein:	Chairman, <i>Buddha Sāsana Nuggaha</i> Organization, Mahāsi Meditation Center, Yangon, Myanmar and Pāḷi translator
U Yu Saing:	The narrator who gives the background history about this audio recording.
Event Date:	Jan 2, 1951 (evening)

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## PART ONE

### Background History by U Yu Saing

*(This audio was added about 40 years after the actual meeting)*

The audio recording was made in the early part of 1951. Before that time there was a young female hermit from Pathein, a city in the Ayeyawaddy Division, (south-western tip of Myanmar) who observed 10 precepts strictly for many years. She was brought to Yangon Mahāsi Yeikthā to practice *vipassanā* meditation. One day her fellow yogis started to notice her saying some strange words which they did not understand at all. The fellow yogis with the concern that the young hermit might be having some mental issue, they informed the Buddha Sāsana Nuggaha Organization which is the administrative body at the Mahāsi Meditation Center in Yangon. The Chairman of the board, U San Thein, who spoke *Pāli* fluently, met with the young hermit and learned that she was speaking in Sanskrit language, which is a very similar language to *Pāli* (will refer to as *Pāli* from now on). In her speech she was requesting to meet with Mahāsi Sayādaw to discuss about dhamma. Mahāsi Sayādaw was then informed about this and Sayādaw agreed to have a talk with the young hermit. Since this being a very unusual event, the whole meeting was recorded in its entirety.

Later it was learned that, the young female hermit was actually had observed 10 precepts not just in this life but since the past numerous existences and had developed noble attributes (the word used not clear in the audio) which deities admire. The voice from the human plane can be heard by the devā in the high planes through her as medium. Likewise, the voice from the high planes can be heard by the humans through her. This was learned from the statements made by the devā. The young hermit didn't know any of *Pāli* language. Her original voice can be heard at the end of the meeting. You can see how different the two voices were. The monks, who attended the *Chaṭṭhasaṅgāyanā* Conference (the Sixth Buddhist Council Conference held from 1954-56 in Yangon), from Nepal, India and Sri Lanka heard about this audio tape and came to me separately asked if they could listen to the tape. After listening to the audio tape, they all admitted that there is no one in their country who can speak *Pāli* as fluently as Mahāsi Sayādaw.

## PART TWO

At first the high authorities of Burmese Government including, then, the Prime Minister U Nu, planned to broadcast this audio over the radio for the benefit of all devotees. After hearing this, Mahāsi Sayādaw requested not to broadcast saying although it would benefit the devotees it could not to others who might find it undesirable and could get negative impact. There could be people who would say this is a made-up fake audio. For this reason, it was never broadcast.

(Thanks to those who archived and saved this audio tape. According to U Yu Saing, the copies of the tape became worn out and unusable but luckily because of the multiple copies saved they found a good one and hence converted into this digital form. Without this evidence the new and future generations will never know about what the noble people existed in the past possessed. -Translator)

## Introduction

[0:19:00.000]

U San Thein: After the young hermit named Ma Zin Mar Yi started to practice Mahāsi *vipassanā*, she reached to the satisfactory level of *vipassanā* within one and half months, and she was allowed to listen to the Mahāsi Sayādaw's *Ñāṣin tayar*, a discourse explaining about the stages of insight *ñāṇa vipassanā ñāṇa* dhamma (knowledge). After hearing the discourse, the young hermit started to prepare to go back to her hometown. At this time the *devā*, who normally is in communication with the young hermit, requested that he wanted to pay respect to the Mahāsi Sayādaw. Since her meditation retreat already ended Mahāsi Sayādaw allowed her to meet. This is also to find out if the young hermit can truly talk to the *devā*. Mahāsi Sayādaw agreed to meet on the night of Jan 2 (1951). Actually, what we found out was that the young hermit was not really able to talk to the *devā* but the *devā* were actually using her as a medium (the word 'microphone' is used in the dialog) to communicate. It was like turning on the power switch of a radio, it made a heavy thud sound as the sudden power surge blow into the speaker, appeared first and then some sounds started to appear. The sounds were coming in and out as if one is turning the tuning knob back and forth of a radio to get to the right station. Then, in Pāḷi "*Bhante, Kocantara devā Buddho \*\*ahaṃ??\*\* saṅgho*" words appeared (\*\* -- ??\*\* means the word in this transcript is approximate spelling). Pāḷi spoken in the audio was more like Sanskrit rather like Myanmar Pāḷi. The name of the *devā* appeared to be "\*\*\*Kosansara??\*\*". In words, the *devā* said, the many *devā* from *Nimmānaratti* heaven (realm) are now listening in. The *devā* appear to be using the young hermit as a medium to communicate. We investigated the level of education of her and found out that she only has basic reading and writing skill of Myanmar language and also, she does not understand the words spoken by *devā*. When

uttering words spoken by *devā* she is in the state of unconsciousness. The night before (the meeting), the *devā* and *devī* requested that they wanted to venerate (*pūjā*) the Mahāsi Sayādaw. Since Sayādaw didn't give any reply, the *devā* wanted to allow them to venerate for one hour and the *devī* wanted another one hour for their veneration to the Sayādaw. The Sayādaw then allowed only half an hour each to pay their respect. Then, the *devā* asked the time schedule of the meeting for the next day. Then Sayādaw said 1) allow the *devā* to venerate, 2) ask about any issues they have, 3) allow the *devī* to venerate, 4) ask about any issues they have, and 5) allow time for questions from *bikkhū* and lay people. Then the *devā* said *sādhū*, 3 times and then left.

The next day: Now today is the day and time for the meeting.

[22:14.008]

The *devā* from *Nimmānaratti* heaven asked the following questions.

Devā: Is there "Is there a sayādaw named *Mahanidasitha Barinnī* here?"

Mahāsi: Yes, that sayādaw is here.

Devā: Is it now the time to start the dhamma holy conference?

Mahāsi: Yes, it is now the time for the dhamma holy conference.

Devā: Firstly, all the *devī* would like to utter the supreme noble qualities of the Sayādaw to venerate *pūjā* the Sayādaw. Also, we like to know how Sayādaw wishes to do with the *devā* and *devī*. We also do not have a lot of time as we have to keep in mind the well-being of the young woman whom we are using as the medium.

Mahāsi: I'd like to give just one hour for the veneration. Could you all do within that time?

Devā: Why do we get such a short time for the veneration? Now, how do you like us to do the veneration?

Mahāsi: Like I said the other day, firstly, I would like to hear the *devā's* veneration.

Devā: Firstly, do we devas do the veneration? First there will be one deva will venerate and when he is done two devīs will venerate. One of *devī* will venerate in Pāḷi. After her, the next *devī* will utter in Myanmar gāthā words about Sayādaw noble qualities.

Mahāsi: *Sādhū, Sādhū, Sādhū.*

Devā: Please begin to listen. Sayādaw, do you really like to listen to us?

Mahāsi: I would very much like to listen.

Devā: A *devā* named\*\* Soma Konsalī??\*\* will start the veneration. Sayādaw (*Bhante*) please listen to his utterance. We will begin our veneration with upmost respect to the Sayādaw.

27:35.475

Devā: *Bhante*, you are the lord of the three *lokas* (1. Okāsa loka, 2. Satta Loka, 3. Saṅkhāra loka). Therefore, many beings (*sattavā*) many *devā*, and many *devī* are now venerating you, Sayādaw.

Bhante, I put forward my utmost respect to the supreme qualities of the Lord Buddha before you, and here I am with respect I do the prostration.

Bhante, I put forward my utmost respect to the supreme qualities of Dhamma before you, and here I am with respect I do the prostration.

Bhante, I put forward my utmost respect to the supreme qualities of *Saṅgha* before you, and here I am with respect I do the prostration.

Bhante, I put forward my utmost respect toward the gratitude of my parents before you, and here I am with respect I do the prostration.

Bhante, I put forward my utmost respect to you, the lord of dhamma and here I am with respect I do the prostration.

Mahāsi: *Sādhu devā*, be happy and be well.

Devā:

I have full of *sadhā* belief in the supreme attributes of Buddha.

I have full of *sadhā* belief in the supreme attributes of Dhamma.

I have full of *sadhā* belief in the supreme attributes of *Saṅgha*.

I have full of *sadhā* belief in the noble attributes of my parents.

I have full of *sadhā* belief in the noble attributes of my teachers.

## PART THREE

[31:03.494] Devā:

*Bhante, namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa x 3*

*Bhante, Buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi*

*Bhante, Dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi*

*Bhante, Saṅghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi*

*Bhante*, in recognizing all the *sīla* virtues, *samādhi* virtues and the gratitude in you, I put forward my utmost faith *sadhā*, I put forward my great respect, and I hereby pay homage to you three times.

Mahāsi: *Sādhu, Sādhu, Sādhu*

[32:36.878] Devā: *Bhante*, I wish to all those *saṅghā* and noble people who are practicing the noble dhamma be free from danger as if no one can endanger (challenge/free from danger) (the statue of) Lord Buddha's *sabbaññutā ñāṇa*.

[33:14.533] *Bhante*, like no one can endanger (challenge/free from danger) Lord Buddha's *sabbaññutā ñāṇa*, may you become Mahanidasitha Barinnī, the name used in devā loka (this may be referring to Maitreya Buddha.)

[33:45.363] *Bhante*, like no one can endanger (challenge/free from danger) Lord Buddha's *sabbaññutā ñāṇa*, I wish the same to all devā who are practicing noble dhamma to be free from danger.

[34:10.897] *Bhante*, like no one can endanger (challenge/free from danger) Lord Buddha's *sabbaññutā ñāṇa*, I wish all people who are practicing noble dhamma to be free from danger.

[34:37.442] *Bhante*, like no one can endanger (challenge/free from danger) Lord Buddha's *sabbaññutā ñāṇa*, I wish all beings to be free from danger.

[35:17.955] *Bhante*, with the virtues and supreme power of your noble *sīla*, *samādhi*, *magga* dhamma, *phala* dhamma, we wish you could guide make all beings in the 3 lokas to land onto the noble *magga-phala* path, and we wish you could do that for a long period of time.

Mahāsi: *Sādhu, Sādhu, Sādhu*

Devā:

[36:38.553] *Bhante*, may my utmost respect to all gratitude of the supreme qualities of the Lord Buddha be rest on the crown of my head.

Bhante, may my upmost respect and to all gratitude of the supreme qualities of dhamma be rest on the crown of my head.

Bhante, may my upmost respect and to all gratitude of the supreme qualities of the saṅghā be rest on the crown of my head.

[36:54.056] May the spirit of the supreme qualities of sīla, samādhi and magga-phala be in us for a long long time.

[37:24.597] Now, I don't get a whole lot time left to venerate you, venerable sir, as there still are young devī who are going to do their veneration.

[37:37.051] In addition, I need to consider the well-being of the puggalī (a female person) young woman whom we use as a medium, and therefore, I should not be talking through her for a long time.

[37:54.883] After my veneration, the young devī will be venerating and praising the virtues of Bhante with their beautiful voices.

[38:12.976] We also give our karuṇā compassion toward the young hermit.

[39:14.298] Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa x 3.

Bhante, I pay respect to all the gratitude of the virtues of your noble sīla, samādhi, magga dhamma, phala dhamma, I, hereby, raise my hands, put my palms together in obeisance, adoration with humbled pride and prostrate 3 times.

[39:50.735] At our heaven because of your virtues, the devā are all uproar with excitement, expressing their vehement admiration and regarding you as the Lord of the Three Lokas.

[40:32.747] Bhante, firstly, there will be a devī named \*\*\* Kocansara ...??\*\* will pay tribute to you in Pāḷi and will be followed by a Myanmar devī and will be giving a tribute made up with beautiful Myanmar words honoring your highest noble attributes.

Devā recites some gāthā.

[41:26.613] The meaning of this gāthā is "Right now in the Ākāsa loka (in the space), in a place called Nimmānarati heaven, your dhamma is shining, like the moon shining brightly high with all its grace."

[41:47.817] The above tribute was delivered by the devī named \*\*Kocansara Katinnarī??\*\* in Pāḷi. Now a Myanmar devī will pay tribute to the virtues of you Venerable Sir (Sayādaw Phayar) in Myanmar language.

A devī recites in Myanmar language.

(The excerpts from her tribute. The translation is not exact. Some parts of speech are assumed. Devī gives the tribute by singing.)

[42:06.103] ... In Ākāsa loka, dhamma is flourishing. To close the doors of apāya realms for all beings (sattavā), the door to nibbāna is now open. Your dhamma will tell you about this. ...

.... \*\*Kocantara Katinnarī??\*\* deva ...

(These summarized words are directly from the devī's speech in Myanmar. Words are in poetic form. Some words are hard to understand. She calls herself 'sayama' meaning teacher.) In Ākāsa loka, the rays of Buddha are now glowing in bursting radiation. The rays of dhamma are now glowing in bursting radiation. The rays of vipassanā are now glowing in bursting radiation. The rays of (word not clear) are now glowing in bursting radiation. All the devā are now \*\*serving or listening??\*\*.

To all beings, the door to nibbāna is now open.

[45:45.806] Now, the young devī are going to pay tribute.

Mahāsi: Short gīta (song) will be more appropriate. (Sayādaw is implying that long tribute by singing is not necessary.)

[46:30.575] Sayādaw has the Buddha's eyes, has very fine palms and soles, has knees like the knees (\*\*and elbows??\*\*) of Brahmā's, has the power and capability to bring all beings in the three lokas to nibbāna. To the Buddha who possesses all these qualities, I hereby, put my two hands together and pay homage, adoration and venerate by prostrating 3 times.

[47:23.396] For the virtues of your sīla, samādhi and paññā, I hereby, prostrate to you with respect and adoration.

[48:00.967] To the virtues of the supreme qualities of Buddha, dhamma and saṅgha, parents and teachers, I, with a deep faith and adoration, do the prostration.

[48:19.937] After this tribute, there is a devā chief who is going to discuss with you about the noble dhamma.

[48:41.176] It is now the time to end our tribute and we will shorten our veneration. We will now discuss about dhamma with the Sayādaw.

[49:09.047] Venerable Sir, Ashin Phayar, what are the topics or matters do you wish to discuss about? I, \*\* Kosansara Katindriya??\*\* [49:18.188] am ready to discuss with Sayādaw and please go ahead ask me the questions you have.

[49:43.991] Mahāsi: Devā, like I said the other day, I will ask you questions now. We will now start the questions and answers. I will ask you questions on what I already know and also on what I don't know. Please answer just what you know.

[50:13.692] Mahāsi: What name do you have? Which heaven are you from?

[50:30.888] Devā: I am a devā with the name \*\*Kosansara Katindriya??\*\*.

[50:39.450] Mahāsi: Which heaven do you reside in?

[50:46.958] Devā: Now, I am in Nimmānaratti heaven.

[50:56.502] I am very much wish to talk to you about my past. Please may I talk to you?

[51:10.297] Mahāsi: In the past when your existence was on human plane, in which country and city were you at?

[51:25.643] Devā: I was a human during the time of Kakusandha Buddha (the first Buddha of the current bhadrakalpa -*Translator*).

[51:37.360] It was during the time when Kakusandha became the Buddha.

[51:49.355] Mahāsi: During that time of Kakusandha Buddha, which country and city were you from?

[52:00.730] Devā: During the time of Kakusandha Buddha I was from a country called Europa (*u-ro-pa*). It is not the same as the current Europe. The Europe you now know is the place where macchā diṭṭhi live.

[52:32.440] During that time because the people were complete with sīla and samādhi, they lived for a long period of time (human life span during that era was 40,000 years -*Translator*) and that's why I lived a long life then.

[53:01.334] Mahāsi: The Europa country you said is now what city?

Devā: It is not the same as the current Europe.

Mahāsi: What is the Europa, you were at, now called?

[53:41.640] Devā: Since my passing from that life, I have been in this devā life. I think it is not the right time to talk about the names of the country and town I was from. I think we should talk about the noble dhamma.

[54:07.470] Mahāsi: At that time what good deeds (kusala) did you do to arrive at this devā heaven?

[54:57.110] Devā: I, myself, like to talk about my past. So, I will talk about it. During that *Kakusandha* Buddha era, I was also a man and did a lot of donations and meritorious deeds in grand scale. My mind very clear (pure) when doing dāna. I built and donated big monasteries. Those were during Kakusandha Buddha time. Not during the current era. These are the high points of my past. I build grand monasteries, did huge dāna while I maintained very pure sīla. I also practiced some bhāvanā dhamma a little at a time under Kakusandha Buddha. Because of all the good deeds I did, I became a devā.

[56:19.018] Devā: Even though I became devā I didn't get to Nimmānarati heaven straight. I first arrived at Yāmā heaven (the third heaven). During that time, Gotama Buddha was born and

under *Gotama* Buddha, I attained one (an) enlightenment and then I got to *Nimmānarati* heaven.

[56:46.698] Mahāsī: During *Gotama* Buddha, what dhamma did you get to listen, to attain magga-phala ñāṇa (wisdom)?

[56:58.285] Devā: The dhamma I listened was the discourse on magga-phala.

[57:05.919] Mahāsī: Who gave the sermon? At which place and who gave the sermon? Where did the Buddha preached you this dhamma?

[57:18.444] Devā: The Buddha gave the sermon as follows:

[57:28.367] Mahāsī: Did the Buddha give the sermon on the human plane or on the devā plane?

[57:36.044] Devā: The sermon was given on the devā plane.

[57:53.001] At first, I arrived at *Yāmā* heaven. There, after listening to the Buddha's magga-phala discourse, I got to *Nimmānarati* plane.

[58:25.145] The Buddha gave this discourse to me. *Saṅghā*, humans, non-humans, men, devā, or *Brahmī*, if any of these beings practice *kāyakaṭā sati* (I believe it is *kāyānupassanā* - *Translator*) and they will be able to transcend to attain the peace and happiness of the nibbāna. That particular gāthā was what the Buddha preached to me.

[59:10.120] Devā: According to what the Buddha said saṅghā, humans, non-humans, men, monks, devā or *Brahmī*, need to practice sati paṭṭhāna by continuously noting while moving, eating, awake, unawake or sleeping, during daytime or nighttime, and I practiced and meditated accordingly. Because of that effort, I attained magga-phala enlightenment.

[59:48.007] The Buddha gave his sermon very elaborately.

[59:58.908] I am not able to bring up all the details.

[1:00:09.432] This is because a lot of sensual senses are overwhelmed everywhere (in the devā plane).

[1:00:26.969] Bhante, you also know about the world of devā. Devā loka is the world of desirable senses, where a lot of rūpā (form, figure) senses, sadda (sound) senses, gandha (smell) senses are everywhere.

[1:00:49.379] Mahāsī: In your heaven can you tell me your approximate age? Do you know?

[1:01:03.548] Devā: It has been too long time. It is extremely long that I can't even tell you that.

[1:01:16.525] Bhante, you already know how long we live here. Even then you asked me. It is really not good to live in a life that is too long.

[1:01:33.415] It is best to practice dhamma and achieve the santi sukha (peace and happiness) and transcend to the other shore (nibbāna), while one is in the human world.

[1:01:53.520] Mahāsi: Like I stated at the beginning, I will ask questions that I already know and the ones I don't know.

Where are you now talking from? Are you talking from Nimmānarati heaven or are you at another heaven and talking to us?

[1:03:01.113] Devā: Bhante, you really want to know about these things. When I arrived at Nimmānarati heaven, our most venerable Lord Buddha attained parinibbāna passing. After that, our Buddha *sāsanā* started to dwindle slowly. Since it started dwindling, we felt saddened and we started to look for any human, *saṅgha* or woman in *manussa loka* (human world) who can communicate between human world and *devā* world. The person must be able to bring the voice from the human world to the *devā* world, and listen the voice from the *devā* world and deliver to the humans. Through that person we can hear the noble dhamma from the human world and bring the dhamma to us. So, we looked for anyone who can receive the *devā's dibba tejo* power (the divine celestial power) with ease and peace. That's why we searched for someone who has these capabilities.

[1:04:29.577] When we looked around, we found this *puggalī* (a female person) and the young woman was from *\*\*kosanti??\*\** region in the past.

[1:04:51.977] This young woman had observed *\*\*komahācāriya brāhmacariya??\*\** monastic rule obediently in every past existence.

[1:05:11.379] That's why this young woman possesses all the noble attributes such as pure mind, pure *sīla* and pure *samādhi*, all of which are what *devā* admire. That's what *devā* see in her.

[1:05:44.521] That's why we know that this young *puggalī* woman is capable of speaking for the human *loka* and *devā loka*. We believe that with *dibba sota* (divine sound hearing) power, we can talk to you and that's why we are using that power to talk to you and that's why we are able to send our voices to the human world to her and talk to you.

## PART FOUR

[1:06:34.459] When we send our voices down to the *puggalī* woman with our *dibba sota devā* power, in her upper body, between the bones of her chest area is connected with *devā dibba sota raju* chord, which can receive *devā* voices.

[1:07:21.846] Bhante, my teacher, the Lord Buddha, gave me a *gāthā*. That *gāthā* says “*sattā sattā bhikkhave bhikkhu ...* “. Once after I heard that *gāthā*, I attained one *magga* (I believe that was his first enlightenment. -*Translator*) I attained the enlightenment because of the power of that *gāthā*.

[1:08:04.500] There is one good thing about people from ancient times when they reached the *devā* planes. That is, they possess a very fast wisdom (they comprehend very quickly). But nothing else (in *devā loka*) is good.

[1:08:39.137] Mahāsi: During Buddha’s time the *devā* from the all six planes came down to the human plane to listen to Buddha’s sermons. Now, I don’t see any *devā* coming down to the human plane.

[1:09:21.126] Bhante, the reason why *devā* can visit the human planes in the past is none other than this reason. It is because the people then had very pure *sīla*, *sacca* (the truth), *samādhi*, *adiṭṭhāna* (determination). They all had clear and pure minds and people took care of each other well. They know each other’s *sacca* and *adiṭṭhāna*. In your world today, let alone men or women, there are very few, even in the monks, who are good. That’s the reason it is not appropriate for the humans to see the *devā*. They don’t deserve to see them. They don’t see them.

[1:10:48.836] Even the reason you are able to hear my voice is because of this *puggalī* woman as she was fully purified all along in her past existences, and for that reason, I am able to send my voices through her with *dibba sota* power.

[1:11:22.006] Buddha *sāsanā* gradually opens up and spread out. Even then some people are not good. (hard to make out what it really means -*Translator*)

[1:11:59.744] Mahāsi: Now, if the people see the *devā* coming down to the human plane, they will be very happy and will believe more in the *sāsanā*, I think.

[1:12:20.389] Devā: If any of the men or women in the human plane, sees any *devā* or *devī*, the person will die. (From my knowledge, the beauty of the *devā/devī* is so incomparable, so unbelievable by humans that whoever sees them will get a shock and perhaps die. -*Translator*)

[1:12:53.170] That’s why the *devā* don’t have the power (will) to show themselves. They don’t show. Between *Catummahārājika* heaven (the first out of six *devā* heavens) and the human

plane, because of the ill behaviors of the humans, the foul smell (from the human plane) is spreading throughout.

[1:13:31.135] Mahāsī: When the Lord Buddha delivered the *Dhammacakkappavattana sutta*, were you able to listen to that or not?

[1:14:07.665] Devā: Are you going to deliver that dhamma *sutta* to us?

[1:14:38.346] No, I did not hear that *sutta* when Buddha delivered. I was already a *devo* (singular form of *devā*) in *Nimmānarati* heaven. The Buddha delivered that in *Tāvatiṃsā* heaven.

[1:15:01.440] The *devā* or *devī* from *Nimmānarati* heaven cannot go to the lower heavens.

[1:15:22.507] We have to transform into a *\*\*o|ārika??\*\** physical form to go down to the lower heavens. That's why for us to come down to the human plane to listen to dhamma sermons is not possible.

[1:15:58.696] When Lord Buddha preached in *Tāvatiṃsā* heaven, I transformed into a *\*\*o|ārika??\*\** form and came down to listen to the Buddha briefly and as soon as I attained a *maggā-phala* I rushed back to my upper plane.

[1:16:31.063] Mahāsī: In *Tusitā* heaven, we understand that, the Buddha's mother Queen *Mayā Devī* exists there. Do you know the queen?

[Elaboration from Mahāsī] *Bodhisatta's* mother died 7 days after giving birth. I am asking about that mother of Gotama Buddha.

[1:17:56.330] Devā: Now I understand. You are asking about the mother of Gotama Buddha, is that correct? Yes, she is there. In *Tusitā* heaven, she is designated as the mother of Gotama Buddha.

[1:18:30.922] Mahāsī: Is *Māyā Devī* in *Tusitā* Heaven, a *devā* or a *devī*?

[1:18:58.569] Devā: *Māyā Devī* is a *devo* (male deity in singular form -*Translator*) in *Tusitā* Heaven. Since you asked me, I just took a look at her with the *dibba cakkhu* power and found out that she is now a male deity. Our *dibba cakkhu* power can see things from far away. I just took a look only when you asked me.

[1:19:29.075] Mahāsī: At your *devā* heaven do you have any Buddha's dhamma books?

[1:19:46.864] Devā: Are you asking about books? Books are very far away from our heaven.

[1:20:16.219] Bhante, in the human plane, there are a lot of Buddha dhamma books. That's why please put forward (have) *mettā* and *karuṇā*, and give us dhamma sermons (he is requesting Mahāsī Sayādaw to give a dhamma talk). That's why dhamma discourses are flourishing in the human plane. In the human plane Buddha's sermons, discourses in books and are plentiful.

[1:21:21.632] That's why the *devā* and the *brahmā* are willing to hear those dhamma sermons. Since the *devā* and the *brahmā* cannot come down to the human plane they have no means of hearing those dhamma discourses. They cannot bring the sound and voices from the human plane to their planes.

[1:22:12.658] Mahāsi: At your heaven do you have any dhamma holy conferences?

Devā: If you are asking about *devā* Episcopal conferences then yes, we do have conferences frequently (Episcopal conference is a conference of bishops and the name is used here.)

Mahāsi: In *Tavatīṃsa*, there is a *devā* Episcopal conference and *devā* and *brahmā* come and attend the conference. In your heaven do you have the same Episcopal conferences?

[1:22:55.546] Devā: *Tavatīṃsa* heaven is too far away from our *Nimmānarati* heaven.

[1:23:11.478] Mahāsi: I know *Tavatīṃsa* heaven is very far away from your *Nimmānarati* heaven. My question was if you had any Episcopal conferences in your heaven?

[1:23:25.290] Devā: Yes, we do have conferences.

[1:23:31.936] Yes, we do have conferences and whoever can give dhamma talk does as much as he can. But we cannot talk about *nāma* and *rūpa* (mind and matter). We are not good at it; we are not good at it (emphasized twice.)

[1:23:52.462] In *Nimmānarati* heaven, we only have just a few *devā* who have attained *magga-phala* enlightenment.

[1:24:08.147] Devā: Bhante, you know about *Tusitā* heaven, you are a wise person and yet you still ask me about *Tusitā*.

[1:24:30.399] Devā: In *devā* heavens, even there are many *devā* lords and kings and yet, they do not know completely about *magga phala*. They only know very little about it.

[1:25:20.143] Mahāsi: In the year of Lord Buddha's *parinibbāna* passing, there were 500 monks led by Venerable *Mahākapassapha*, convened and started the *Paṭhama Saṅghāyanā*, the First Buddhist Council Conference. After that followed by second, third, fourth and fifth Buddhist Council Conferences. Right now, in Myanmar, the Myanmar Government is planning to hold another Buddhist Council Conference. In that *Chaṭṭhasaṅgāyanā* (the Sixth) Conference what kind of support are your *devā*, from your heaven, going to provide? What kind of gratitude will you be expressing? I believe it will be appropriate if all your *devā* can show their beautiful physical forms and rally with slogans to support and honor the *Chaṭṭhasaṅgāyanā* Conference. Oh *devā*! Is this kind of support appropriate or not? What do you think?

[1:26:27.917] Devā: Are you talking about the Lord Buddha? (U San Thein: He doesn't seem to know about the *Chaṭṭhasaṅgāyanā* Conference.)

[1:27:08.133] U San Thein: He still doesn't seem to know about the *Chaṭṭhasaṅgāyanā* Conference. Devā: Are you asking about the *Saṅgha Sāsanā*?

Mahāsi: I am asking about the *Saṅghāyanā*, the holy noble conference. Myanmar is already planning to hold the *Saṅghāyanā* Conference. (The conference was from 1954-56. -Translator)

Devā: Are you doing that in the human world?

Mahāsi: Yes.

Devā: Are you doing it now?

Mahāsi: Now, people are planning to do it. It is not going to be immediate. It will happen in 2-3 years.

Devā: That is excellent.

[1:28:15.570] (Translator: Devā still seems to be confused at this point. He doesn't know about *Saṅghāyanā* and he doesn't know what Mahāsi Sayādaw is asking about. Mahāsi Sayādaw is asking if the devā will show up in visible physical forms to humans and participate in rallying to support the conference. Mahāsi Sayādaw thinks they should. That's why Sayādaw asks if they are going to participate.) Devā: Isn't that conference going to be in the human world? Venerable Sir, are you asking if this conference is appropriate to be held in the human plane or not appropriate?

[1:29:53.605] Mahāsi: No, the conference will be held in the human loka. Therefore, the devā should support and participate in veneration of this conference. I think you should all participate and say *sādhū* in paying respect. This way, in human world, the humans will have more *saddhā* (when they see you all). That's why I ask you if you could all participate in supporting this event. That's why I ask you again, can you participate or not?

[1:30:46.890] Devā: Are you asking if the devā should come down to human loka and participate in supporting and venerating this *Saṅghāyanā* conference?

[1:31:21.704] Mahāsi: In the near future, Myanmar will be holding the *Chaṭṭhasaṅghāyanā* Conference. When that happens, from the *devā loka*, how can the noble *devā*, who are practicing the noble dhamma, participate in venerating this event?

[1:32:05.700] Devā: In *devā loka*, during the time when Buddha became the Lord Buddha, are you asking me if I knew when *saṅgha sāsana* happened?

[1:32:47.779] Mahāsi: What you are saying is not correct. What I am asking is, in a few years, *Chaṭṭhasaṅghāyanā* Conference will happen in Myanmar, in human *loka*. Do you know about this noble conference?

Devā: Yes, I do know about it. We have been talking a lot. Can you ask me again?

[1:33:48.882] In human *loka*, when the *saṅgha sāsana* conference happens, are you asking how the devā can participate in the *Saṅghāyanā* Conference?

Mahāsi: Yes. We will be grateful if you can say *sādhū* at the conference ceremony.

[1:34:20.305] Devā: Yes, *sādhū* is just about all we can say. We don't have the ability to show our physical forms. All we can say is *sādhū*.

[1:35:02.692] Devā: The human *loka* is very advancing and we are happy about it. We will be very delighted to say *sādhū* and that's what we'd like to do.

[1:35:30.393] Devā: Venerable Sir, the human *loka* is very advancing and we are delighted to say *sādhū* and that's what we'd like to do. The *devā* in the *devā* plane now see the Buddha's *sāsana*, dhamma and *saṅghā* are rising and flourishing in the human plane and we are delighted about this and we will all say *sādhū* and we can do only from the *devā* plane. We don't have the power to come down to the human *loka*.

## PART FIVE

[1:36:25.572] Mahāsi: I am going to ask you a question on an issue. In your heaven, is the number of new devā, arriving at this time, less than the number arrived during Buddha's time?

[1:36:44.284] Devā: Are you asking about the number of issues, matters? (U San Thein: Devā is not clear with the question.)

[1:37:01.330] Mahāsi: I am asking about the number of devā born in your heaven at this time.

Devā: When you said *nibbata devatā*, what *nibbata devatā* are you asking about?

[1:37:24.531] Mahāsi: What I am asking is the number of devā born at this time in heaven, equally a lot like during the Buddha's time or less than that.

[1:37:43.625] I am asking if the number of new devā is the same as during the Buddha's time where many beings became devā or is the number less now?

[1:38:03.165] There are only a few who become devā now. Only a few out of a thousand people who die in human plane arrive at devā plane. The reason is only those people who practice nāma and rūpa dhamma, those who donate a lot with pure sīla can only come to devā heaven. If you look into human world, you can see too many people are bad. That's why the human world now has bad foul smell.

[1:39:16.526] Mahāsi: From which country mostly are those devā arrived at your heaven?

[1:39:28.411] Mahāsi: Are mostly coming from Myanmar or some other countries?

[1:40:10.072] Devā: Most of the human beings arrive at *Catumahārājika*, *Tāvatiṃsā*, *Yāmā* heavens. Only very few arrive at the higher *Tusitā*, *Nimmānarati*, *Paranimmitavasavattī* heavens. Those men, women who arrive at the heavens are so overwhelmed with the sensual pleasures that they don't even know about the law of cause and effect. Because of that, most of the devā are just enjoying the pleasure among the plenty of *devī*, and only very few are good. Some arrive at *Yāmā*.

[1:41:48.914] Among those who arrive at *Yāmā* heaven, very few realize dhamma after listening to a little bit of dhamma, seeing *rūpa* (physical form) and hearing *saddā* (sound) from dhamma perspective, and very few attain enlightenment. Because of the enlightenment they attained, they positioned themselves away from falling to apāya, the woeful planes (I think he is referring to someone like him who attained enlightenment after listening to Gotama Buddha's dhamma on magga-phala discourse. According to his own admission earlier, there are no knowledgeable devā on dhamma in devā world. -Translator) The *devā* loka is a very scary place, because most of the *devā* fall to the woeful planes when they die.

[1:42:45.980] Mahāsi: “Buddhi Buddha”, *bodhisatta* of the future of Maitreya Buddha is known to be in *Tusitā* heaven. Do you know that *bodhisatta*? (*Buddhi* (Hinduism) = higher mind; *Buddha* = enlightened one)

[1:43:00.711] Devā: Yes, Venerable Sir, he is in *Tusitā*. What is it that you want to know?

[1:43:13.147] Venerable Sir, the *bodhisatta*, the future Buddha, is like who is *bodhipaksha* (Sanskrit: assistant to enlightenment) one who preaches dhamma to ripen *sabbaññutā* dhamma. Is this what you want to know about?

[1:43:37.798] The *rūpa-nāma* dhamma is not for *bodhisattas*. They shouldn't be given those talks. They don't need to hear that kind of dhamma. What matters for *bodhisatta* are the quality of *sila*, *samādhi* and *pāramī* to the *bodhisattas*. (The reason for *rūpa-nāma* dhamma is not for *bodhisattas* is that *bodhisattas* cannot attain enlightenment and get onto the *magga* path until the time they become buddha.)

[1:44:34.528] Venerable Sir, do you want to stay longer? Are there any other matters you want to ask?

[1:45:00.524] Mahāsi: Are there any *devā* that come from Myanmar?

[] Devā: Yes, there are *devā* from Myanmar. They are in *Tāvatiṃsā*, *Yāmā*, and a few in *Tusitā* heavens.

[1:45:22.998] Mahāsi: Are there any in *Nimmānarati* heaven?

Devā: Yes, there are a few.

[] Mahāsi: If you could, can you name one or two of those *devā* from Myanmar in *Nimmānarati* heaven?

[1:46:02.280] Devā: Venerable Sir, that will be difficult. Even for me I am from the region called Europa near Kosala country. All I know is my name, *Kocantara Katindriya*. For other names, please ask whenever you see them. (The *devā* doesn't seem to know any Myanmar *devā* in person. -Translator)

[1:46:28.620] Mahāsi: In that case, I will not ask you any further.

[] Devā: Venerable Sir, do you have any other questions?

[1:47:10.265] Mahāsi: We should not be talking about any things that are not beneficial. Now, I would like to give you two *gāthās*. Do you want to listen?

[] Devā: Venerable Sir, are you yourself going to give us the talk?

Mahāsi: Yes, I will personally give those *gāthās* verbally.

Devā: That will be great if you personally give us the talk. *Sādhu, Sādhu, Sādhu*.

[1:47:45.128] Mahāsi: When I recite those *gāthās*, I will also give the explanation in Myanmar. In that case, will you be able to understand Myanmar?

Devā: Yes, I can very much understand it. Please deliver the dhamma talk in any language you wish.

Mahāsi: *Sādhu, Sādhu, Sādhu.*

Mahāsi Sayādaw delivers dhamma *gāthās*.

... reciting *gāthā* ...

Mahāsi: It's has been too long now.

[1:50:37.428] Devā: Venerable Sir, I, *Kocantara Katindriya* having pure mind after hearing the dhamma from *Mahindasittha Barinnī* the Mahāsi Sayādaw, I, with utmost respect, obeisance, humbleness, prostrate to you.

With much delight and joy the devā utters a *gāthā*.

... *devā* reciting *gāthā* ...

[1:51:39.396] Devā: Venerable Sir, after hearing your dhamma sermon, I, *Kocantara Katindriya*, very much appreciate with delight for your talk about the abstruse *rūpa* and *nāma* dhamma, I wish you a long life in working and guarding the three aspects of *sāsanā* (*Pariyatti, Patipatti, Pativedha*) for a long period of time.

[1:52:39.878] Devā: Venerable Sir, now I, *Kocantara Katindriya*, am very much pleased, appreciated and delighted and I say *Sādhu, Sādhu, Sādhu.*

[1:52:55.532] The audience and *devā* from *Nimmānarati* say *sādhu* simultaneously. (U San Thein: Please note the two voices of *sadhu* one from the audience in the room and the other which is not so clear is from the heaven.)

[1:53:31.426] Venerable Sir, is it now the end of this meeting?

[1:53:59.436] Venerable Sir, now, the *devā* named *Kocantara Katindriya* from *Nimmānarati* heaven and the lord of Dhamma, named *Mahindasittha Barinnī*, the Venerable *Bikkhū* (referring to the Mahāsi Sayādawgyi; Sayādawgyi's is known or pronounced differently in devā loka. -Translator) from *manussa ṭhāna* human *loka*, have exchanged noble words and heard noble dhamma. The voices of dhamma words from *manussa loka* you delivered, by means of *dibba sota* celestial power, are heard by all *devā*. We are now concluding this meeting.

Audience: *Sādhu, Sādhu, Sādhu.*

[1:55:01.715] The young woman hermit is now venerating Buddha, dhamma and saṅgha, parents, *acariya* (teachers) *pujemi* in her original voice. *Samḅuddhe gāthā* follows. (The young hermit's original voice is very much different from the *devā*'s voice. -Translator) – The END.

## PART SIX

### Commentary

In this section I will be writing about what I learned from the dialog and also will introduce to Buddhist cosmology and some relevant facts that every Buddhist devotee should know. This is to give some sense to the readers how important it is to learn and practice dhamma now in this existence.

#### Some Facts of Buddhism

##### Thirty-One Planes of Existence

According to Buddhist cosmology there are 31 planes of existence where beings are born and die and transmigrated from one plane to the same or another plane. This is the never-ending cycle of death and rebirth called *samsāra*. We are on the human plane which is the 5<sup>th</sup> from the bottom. The 31 planes can be generally divided into the following groups. (ref: 1)

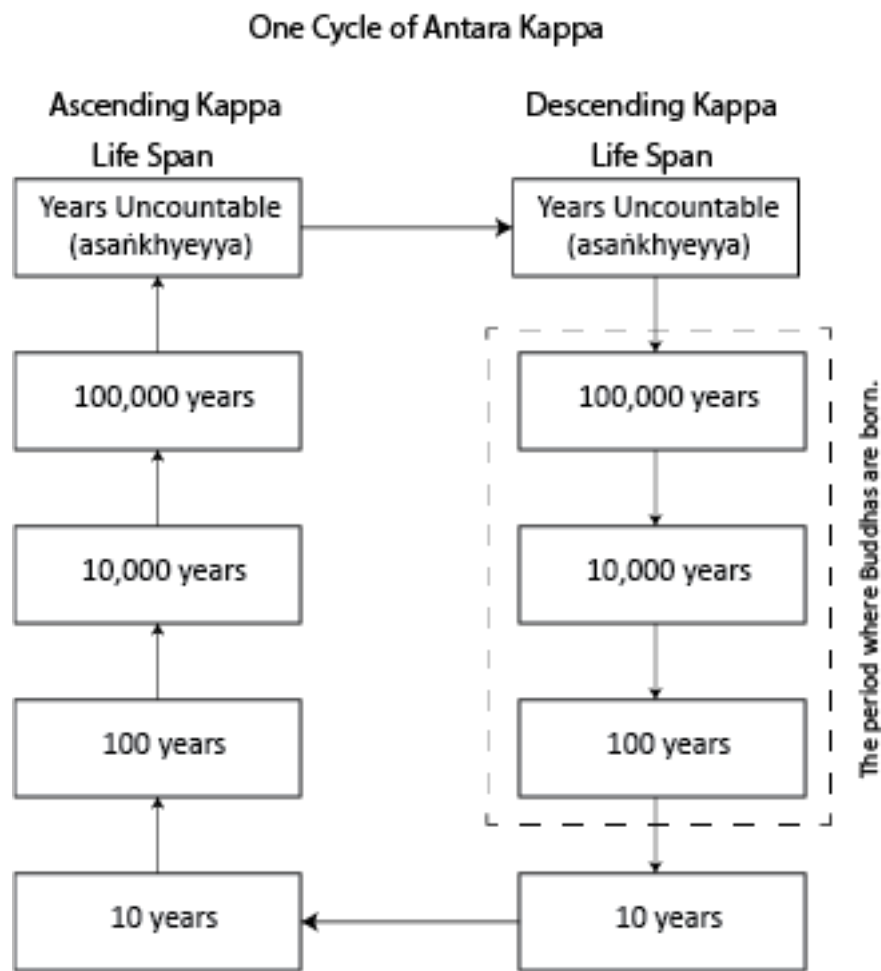
- 1) Brahma planes 20 (12-31)
- 2) Devā planes (heaven), 6 (6-11)
- 3) Human plane, 1 (5)
- 4) Woeful planes, 4 (1-4)

##### Ascending and Descending Life Span of Humans

According to a Buddha's discourse, life span of human depends on the morality of human beings. As morality grows stronger with purer *sīla* and *samādhi*, the life span grows longer. According to it, human life span can range from *asaṅkhyeyya*, innumerable number (Childers' *Pāḷi* Dictionary defines *asaṅkhyeyya* as the number  $10^{140}$  or 1 followed by 140 zeros) of years down to 10 years according to the commentaries on *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*, ref: 20. The word *kappa* in *Pāḷi* means a measure of time of the age of the world (aeon). The period when people make a lot of wrong evil doings, where morality declines, and as a result the life span decreases, is called the Descending *Kappa* (*Hāyana kappa*). The period, when people have more and more strong morality and thus life span becomes longer and longer, is called the Ascending *Kappa* (*Vaḍhuna kappa*). One complete cycle of Descending and Ascending *Kappa* is called *Antara Kappa*. Details of these two periods of increasing and decreasing in the human life span are found in the *Cakkavati-Sihananda Sutta* of the *Digha Nikaya* (ref: 20). According to the literatures in *Pāḷi* Canon, that period is somewhere between 10 million years but the commentary says it is about many hundreds of thousand times 10 million years.

Buddhas are born in the Descending *Kappa* only. Thus, the *kappa* is also known as Buddha *Kappa*. The reason for that is, in the Ascending *Kappa*, all the people have more and more morality and pure *sīla*, and thus they are all full of *sukha* (happiness) and will not understand anything about *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*. No one will understand about dhamma as they are

never in the situation with suffering. It will be very hard to tell them that nothing is permanent and that life is suffering. Only during the Descending *Kappa*, where people face a lot of suffering and are willing to look for the path for liberation. This is the *kappa* where Buddhas are born. Buddhas are born between 100 to 100,000-year human life span, and they are born only in the human plane. According to *Anagatavaṃsa Desanā*, currently we are in the descending time period and in the 100-year life span. According to learned teachers, it is estimated that the human life span is decreasing by one year every 100 years. According to it, since it has been about 2,600 years since the Lord Buddha’s *parinibbāna* passing, the life span has already decreased by about 26 years out of 100 years. Thus, accordingly we are now at around 74-year life span. See the figure below showing an *Antara Kappa*.



**Buddhist Era Calculation**

There are four kinds of *kappas* (aeons).

- 1) *Ayu Kappa* – Duration of life span. When life span is 100 years then the *ayu kappa* is one century. If the life span is 1000 years, the *ayu kappa* is one millennium.
- 2) *Antara Kappa* – An included aeon. The time period when human life span grows from 10 to *asañkhyeyya* years and then falls back to 10 again.
- 3) *Asañkhyeyya Kappa* – An incalculable aeon. Sixty four *antara kappas* is equal to one *asañkhyeyya kappa*. The time period is incalculable.
- 4) *Mahā Kappa* – A great aeon. Four *asañkhyeyya kappas* is equal to one *mahā kappa*, one world cycle. Also known as *Mahā Buddha Kappa*.

There is an analogy to show how long a *mahā kappa* is. Imagine a huge empty cube at the beginning of a *kappa*, approximately 1 *yojana* (\*) in each side. Once every 100 years, you insert a tiny mustard seed into the cube. According to the Buddha, the huge cube will be filled even before the *kappa* ends. (ref: 15, 18)

(\*) One *yojana* is mentioned in literatures as 8 miles and sometimes as 13 miles.

### Gotama Buddha's Sāsana

The Buddha's dispensation for this *sāsana* is 5000 years and 2600 years have already passed. One can liberate oneself during a *sāsana* period only. *Sāsana* period is just a very short time span considering how long and how many existences you have gone through and will continue to go through. We will discuss about how rare the Buddha *sāsana* appears on the human plane. The 5000 years of Buddha *sāsana* can be divided into 5 time periods.

- 1) **First 1000 years** – The period where Buddha's disciples attained arahantship after listening to short discourses. Many attained enlightened and some fully enlightened reaching all four stages of enlightenments.
- 2) **Second 1000 years** – The period where only those monks who work hard could attain non-returner *anāgāmi* ship.
- 3) **Third 1000 years** – This is where we are now. Those who work really hard can attain possibly *sakadāgāmi* (once returner) or *sotāpanna* (stream winner).
- 4) **Fourth 1000 years** – Those with high inspiration could have a chance to attain *sakadāgāmi* or *sotāpanna*.
- 5) **Fifth 1000 years** – This is the last chance to attain *sotāpanna* enlightenment. Morality has degraded quite a bit in this era and many won't even pay reverence to the Buddha anymore.

Note: The descriptions do not mean that no one can achieve higher enlightenment than mentioned in there. The enlightenments mentioned are what majority of the devotees will attain if they work hard. Some with supporting *pāramīs* can attain higher.

### What are the chances to have a good rebirth?

The Buddha once gave an example of the number of beings reborn in *sugati* planes (realms above *apayas*) compared to the number reborn in *dugati* planes (*apayas* - the lowest 4 planes) as follows: There are incalculable amount of sand grains in the Ganges River and when you pick up the sand grains, only the number equal to the amount of grains that stay on your finger nail will be reborn in *sugati* world and the number equal to the rest of the sand grains in the Ganges River will be reborn in the *dugati* world. Only a handful of beings are reborn in *sugati* world and incalculable number of beings are reborn in *dugati* world. (ref: 9)

### What are the chances of escaping from *dugati* world?

The Buddha once gave a story about a blind turtle (*Balapaṇḍita Sutta, Majjhima Nikāya 129*). A blind turtle who dwells on the ocean bed and surfaces just once every one hundred years. A wooden cattle-yoke floats on the vast ocean surface moving in different directions by the winds and currents. The Buddha said the odds of a sentient being to be reborn in a *sugati* plane (one of the planes above the four lowest woeful planes) is less than the odds of this blind turtle's head getting through the yoke as it appears to the ocean surface. For most of our lives we have been in bad rebirths and it happens only very rarely that we emerge from these into a good rebirth. Our chances of gaining a life of freedom and fortune from woeful planes are just as improbable. (ref: 5, 6) There are a few sayādaws who attained the power of looking back the past existences and according to them most of their past existences were in the animal world.

### Numeration of Buddhas in each Kappa

Here, *kappa* means world or world-period, named according to the numeration of Buddhas born in it. The following are the six types of worlds.

- 1) *Suñña-kappa* - the world in which no Buddha is born
- 2) *Sara-kappa* - the world in which only one Buddha is born
- 3) *Maṇḍa-kappa* - the world in which two Buddhas are born
- 4) *Vara-kappa* - the world in which three Buddhas are born
- 5) *Saramaṇḍa-kappa* - the world in which four Buddhas are born
- 6) *Bhadda-kappa* - the world in which five Buddhas are born (current world)

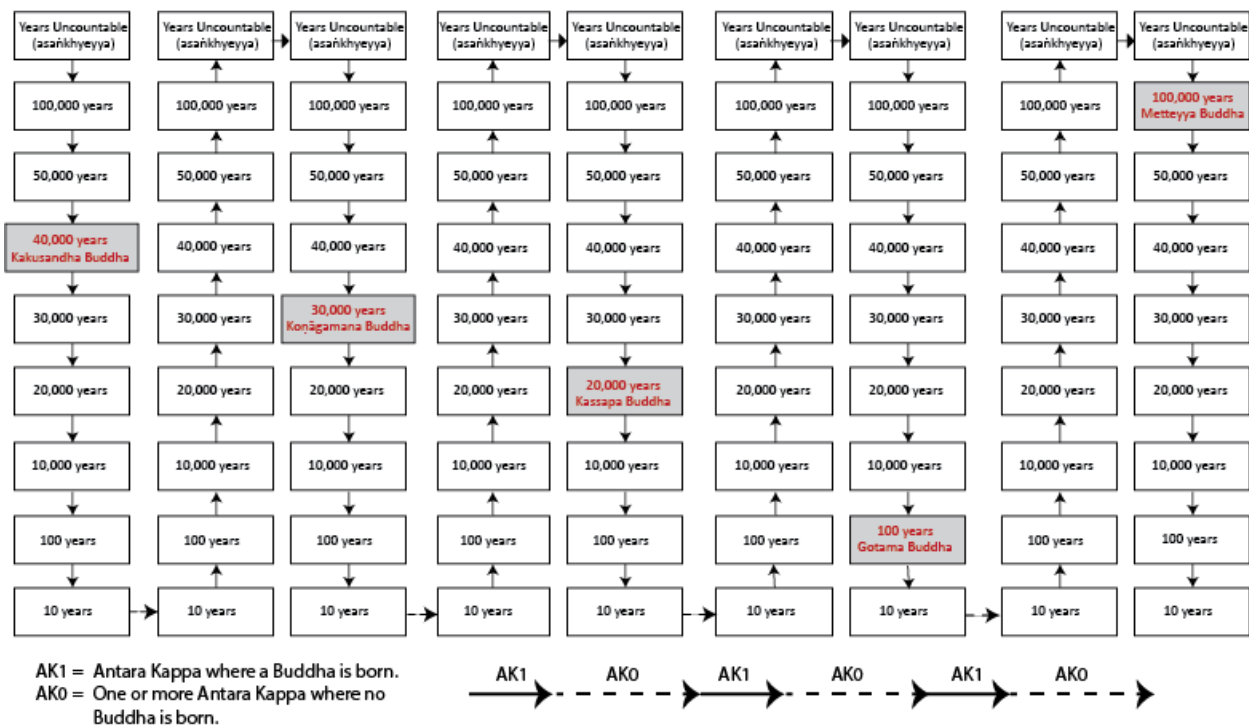
The following table shows the five Buddhas of the current *Bhaddakappa* shown in five successive *antara kappas* for easy understanding. *Antara kappa* is the time period of the completion of the ascending and descending *kappa*. The world cycle, a *mahā kappa*, is equal to four *asaṅkhyeyya kappas* and one *asaṅkhyeyya kappa* is equal to 64 *antara kappas*. Thus, in a *mahā kappa*, one world cycle, there are 256 *antara kappas* (ref: 3, 18, 20). Hence, the five

Buddhas cannot be born in successive *antara kappas*. There will be one, most likely more, empty *antara kappas*, the cycles where no Buddha is born, in between two Buddhas. The time a Buddha is born depends upon several factors and does not happen at a set interval. Currently we don't know which *antara kappa* we are in.

### Why wait until Metteyya Buddha's sāsana?

There are some devotees who really wish to see the last Buddha, *Metteyya Buddha*, of this *Bhaddakappa* world cycle, in person and pay respect to him before they attain enlightenment. As you know from the chart above, you can't even imagine how long it will take for the next Buddha to appear on the human plane. Before that time, a being's *kammic* result can change anytime due to unforeseeable circumstances and he may not be born again as human being during the next Buddha's *sāsana*. He may be in the state where he cannot understand or hear dhamma. So, taking that chance is too risky and can get unpredictable results. When one misses the next Buddha *sāsana*, there will be no dhamma for the next 100,000 world cycles. Why not do now, while you are already in a Buddha *sāsana*?

Diagram Showing the Five Buddhas of the Current Bhaddakappa World



After the current *Bhaddakappa*, there will be 100,000 *Suññakappa* world cycles, where no Buddha will be born. Buddha *Sāsana* will disappear for unimaginable length of time.

### Sa-le U *Puñña* (1812-1867)

Sa-le U *Puñña* (ref: 14) was a renown Myanmar poet (some call him Myanmar's Shakespeare) who served for King Mindon of Mandalay, wrote these remarkable lines in "Rabbit *Jataka*" to warn the people (ref: 8). In fact, this poem was my first eye opener and it really woke me up.

*"In these noble days, teachers are not lacking to give guidance of noble conduct of life, leading to nibbānic peace, at every available opportunity.*

*Today the Buddha's Noble Teaching (Sāsanā) shines like the sun in midday sky and the way to the Deathlessness (Amata=deathless state, Nibbāna) can be obtained in many contexts of instruction.*

*Yet, if once dislikes and negates the Dhamma by following the path of evil, one becomes the greatest fool on earth, the weakest and the most useless.*

*Moreover, such a heedless person will fall into the four woeful states (apāya), sinking deeper and deeper in the ocean of saṃsāra, the rounds of existence.*

*Hence, many human beings lower their human status by following the way of foolishness. Be careful."*

Sa-le U *Puñña* warned the people to achieve the living of good lives by doing good deeds and liberate from the *saṃsāra* by means of the noble dhamma while *sāsanā* is still shining and there is no shortage of noble teachers. Otherwise, a person becomes as good as a useless fool.

### Rarities (Dullabho) of the World

The following points will give you some sense of how rare it is to actually get a chance to get the Buddha's teachings. These are some of the rarities.

- Birth of a Buddha is very rare. (see the world cycle explanation)
- To be born as a human being is rare.
- To be born during Buddha *sāsanā* is very rare.
- To have faith in Buddhism is very rare.
- Learned dhamma teachers are very rare.
- A chance to listen and practice dhamma is very rare.

As you can see it is extremely rare chance to be born a human being during a Buddha *sāsanā* and become a dhamma devotee. Against all odds, if you become a human being and a dhamma devotee, the next wise thing to do is to practice and to become a worthy person (ref: 2). After having all the opportunities and missing all, hoping to get another chance is unthinkable.

## Magga Path to Liberation

The basic fundamental of Theravāda Buddhism is to realize all things are impermanent and everything a person goes through in life results in suffering. All beings continue endlessly with these sufferings in the cycle of *samsāra*, the cycle of birth, death and rebirth. To liberate from all these miseries is to end by understanding the four noble truths and practicing the noble eightfold *magga* path which will lead you to reach *nibbāna*. Only means to put you on the *magga* path is to practice *vipassanā* insight meditation until you attain the following enlightenments.

- 1) *Sotāpanna* – The first stage of enlightenment, also known as stream-enterer, meaning the person has seen dhamma and has entered the *magga* path which will eventually lead to reach *nibbāna*. Once one has attained this enlightenment, all doors to the woeful planes are closed, meaning one will no longer fall to *apāya*. It is believed that a person who reaches this stage will be reborn in at most 7 existences before he attains the complete liberation, the *nibbāna*. That is why once one attains this enlightenment one is secured for the future enlightenments.
- 2) *Sakadāgāmi* – The second stage of enlightenment, also known as once-returner. Once one reaches this stage he will be reborn in the realm of the senses at most once more.
- 3) *Anāgāmi* – The third stage of enlightenment, also known as non-returner. Once one reaches this stage he will not be reborn in the human world but in the realms of the Pure Abodes, where only *anāgāmins* reside.
- 4) *Arahant* – The fourth stage of enlightenment. This is the last stage of enlightenment and the person has gained insight into the true nature of existence and will only enter to *nibbāna* when he dies.

Of all the 31 planes of existence, only beings in human plane have the chance to do both good deeds, learn and practice dhamma. But this can happen only during *sāsanā* dispensation. This is when the practitioners can find noble teachers, learn about the four noble truths and eightfold path, and reach to the *magga* path for full liberation.

## Numerous Number of Buddhas Had Already Appeared

Most people think there have been four Buddhas already born until this time. Some people also say a total of 28 Buddhas have already gone by. According to *Jataka*, Buddhas as numerous as the sands of the Ganges River have had appeared. Think about how long we have been in the *samsāra* and how many Buddhas have already passed by and yet, we are still not understanding the importance of life, sitting idle and not trying to liberate ourselves.

## Characteristics of Devā

The physical looks of both *devā* and *devī* are both inexplicable as they look extremely beautiful compare to human looks. Their beauty is so exquisite, stunning and shocking that when a human sees a *devī*, the person will go crazy and insane. That's what we heard from elders in Myanmar. In the dialog, *devā* stated that they would rather not show the physical look to humans as humans could die after seeing them.

Most of the people think when they become *devā*, they would be with very high noble moral and have spotless manners. That is not true. *Devā* are just like humans in terms of mental characteristics. Not all *devā* observe the basic 5 precepts. *Devā*'s characteristics are very much the same as they were in the human plane. One who did not observe the 5 moral precepts in the human plane will most likely not observe the 5 precepts in *devā* plane. One who is fond of singing will have the same talent when he becomes a *devā*. One who favors drinking will most likely will drink in *devā* world. You probably notice that in some cultures, where people worship deities (they call them god), there is a tradition where people offer various things in religious ceremonies. In some cases, alcohol is offered. Those are the deities who are fond of alcohol because of their past appetite. Characteristics of a being are passed on to the next existence as explained by Chanmyay Sayādaw (ref: 21).

## What we learned from the dialog.

### Background of the Devā

The *devā* was born on the human plane during the time of *Kakusandha* Buddha who was the first Buddha in this current *Bhaddakappa* world cycle (see the chart given earlier.) After his passing from that existence, because of his grand donations with good moral and pure *sīla*, he was born again in *Yāmā* heaven. He resided there until the time of *Gotama* Buddha. *Gotama* Buddha is the fourth Buddha in this *Bhaddakappa*. There are one or more *antara kappas* between any two successive Buddhas. As you remember from the earlier chart, an *antara kappa* is unmeasurable amount of time. You can imagine how long the *devā* lived in *Yāmā* heaven, from the time of *Kakusandha* Buddha to *Gotama* Buddha. Only after listening to *maggā* discourse delivered to him by *Gotama* Buddha, he attained enlightenment and after his passing from *Yāmā* heaven, he was reborn in *Nimmānarati* heaven and have been residing there ever since. That means he has been there for about 2,600 years. Now you can see why the *devā* said in the dialog that it is too long to live in heaven. We will explain later why he said that. It took him unmeasurable amount of time from *Kakusandha* to *Gotama* Buddha to attain the first enlightenment. In the human plane, if a person tries hard enough and has the right *pāramīs* he can attain enlightenment in a short time because of the supporting nature of life aided by well written dhamma materials that can exist only there.

### Is this a verification in one way?

Before the meeting started Mahāsi Sayādawgyi said he would be asking questions that he did not know the answers to and also questions which he already knew the answers. In my opinion, asking those questions served two purposes. Firstly, to check the answers he knew were actually true or not, and secondly if the *devā* actually knew the answers. By doing this also verifies if the *devā* was actually the person who he claimed to be. In the *para* world (the world outside of human world where beings are not seen or heard by humans), there are a lot of powerful beings who can impersonate to be another being. One question was asked if *Gotama* Buddha's mother was actually in *Tusitā* heaven or not. The *devā* said he heard about Queen *Māyā* and that she existed in that heaven but did not see her in person. Another question was that if he knew if Queen *Māyā* was a *devā* (male deity) or a *devī* (female deity). Most Buddhist devotees know these answers. When asked that question, the *devā* checked with *dibba cakkhu* power right then and found out that she was now a *devā*. These answers gave us some level of confidence that the *devā* was indeed telling the truth.

### Devā World

These are the heavens where the beings who did good deeds are born to enjoy the merits they gained from the good deeds they did in the past existences. Heavens are so full of sensuous pleasures and happiness that whoever arrives there forget about everything else. There are some stories I have heard that some *devā* died prematurely in heaven because they were all enjoying with utter bliss with the pleasures in the sensual world. *Devā* cannot do any *dāna* good deeds. *Devā* come with different backgrounds. Most of them arrive there because of their *dāna* they did in the human plane. Most *devā* do not know about dhamma, *nāma* and *rūpa*, especially the ones who did not study dhamma during the life in human plane. Even for those who studied dhamma, still forget about it when they arrive in *devā* plane because of the sensual pleasures surrounding them. There, they don't have teachers who can teach dhamma. For those who are still adhere to dhamma are because of what they learned in the human plane. Even *devā* in very high positions have little experience with dhamma. They don't know thoroughly about *maggā-phala* enlightenment. All *devā* are enjoying the pleasures the heavens offer. In *devā* planes, there are no teachers, literatures and materials on dhamma. They have no means of studying or practicing it. There is no one preaching dhamma. They can't hear any dhamma discourses delivered in the human plane because there is no medium to relay the sounds and they don't have the power and will, to come down to the human plane. There are still *devā* with dhamma background (because of they studied it when in the human plane) who want to listen to dhamma discourses but they have no means to get it. These facts are noted from the statements given by the *devā*. When Mahāsi Sayādaw was talking, many *devā* in *Nimmānarati* heaven were listening in, looking forward to hear some dhamma sermon from the Sayādaw. This is the state of dhamma in the *devā* heavens. In addition, life in a *devā* heaven is extremely long and most *devā* spent their time just by enjoying and not studying dhamma.

Living an extremely long life without able to do good deeds and study dhamma is not really a good thing. That will be just using up all the merits without accruing. That's why the *devā* complained that living for extremely long without able to do good deeds and dhamma work is not desirable.

Heavens are where beings come to enjoy the benefits of their good deeds as explained earlier. When their good kammic merits wear out and the time to live expires most *devā* fall to the woeful planes as their bad kammic results come into effect. This fact is stated by the *devā*.

Brahma planes are located above *devā* planes. *Brahmas* are very peaceful beings who just enjoy the tranquility of *jhāna kusala* they had conducted in the past existence. They live a very pure life, free from all thoughts of sensual pleasures. The chances of a human being transmigrated to a Brahma plane after death is almost impossible. Even rebirthing in the top three *devā* planes is rare.

### Human Plane is Better than Heaven

Really? How so? The answers to this question can be concluded from the basic facts on Buddhism and also from the dialog made by the *devā*. In Buddhist cosmology there are six heavens which are situated between *Brahma* worlds and the human world. One's next existence after death is very much determined by the state of mind at the final moments before one's passing. If the person is in a virtuous state of mind in the moments before death, a better rebirth will result and otherwise will result in a bad rebirth. Generally, all planes above the human plane are places where beings enjoy the benefits of the good deeds (*sukha*) they did in the past. All planes below the human plane, *apāya*, are places where beings suffer (*dukkha*) because of their evil deeds they did in the past. Both happiness and suffering (*sukha* and *dukkha*) exist on the human plane. The following are the good points where you can find only in the human plane.

- It is the only plane among the 31 planes of existence where beings can do meritorious deeds. Beings in all other planes are not able to do this.
- It is the only plane where Buddhas are born.
- It is the only plane where Dhamma literatures can be found. This is only during Buddha Sāsana.
- It is the only plane where people can experience *anicca, dukkha, anatta*.
- It is the only plane where people have the ability to understand and practice dhamma. In *devā* heavens, although they like to hear dhamma there is no one exists to preach.

Note: Humans are able to study the four noble truths and practice, only during Buddha dispensation periods.

### Devā's testimony of why now and why in the human plane

The dialog between Mahāsi Sayādaw and the *devā* took place in 1951. Even at the time, the *devā* mentioned that there are lot of advancements in the human world. I believe what he meant was the technology was advancing rapidly. It was the time where radio broadcasting, television, tape recorders, record players started to appear. All dhamma related materials can be found or heard on these medias. Dhamma was flourishing due in part because of these advancements. Dhamma literatures were everywhere. Those advancements were from 70 years ago. And now, the technology has advanced in leaps and bounds. Tape recorders are now replaced by digital audio. Computer PCs, audio MP3, video MP4, YouTube, live streaming via internet, etc. have become household items that devotees do not even have to go to the locations to listen to the dhamma discourses. We are now in the world where a dhamma discourse, delivered in one end of the world can be heard live from the other end of the world, in real time. It delivers to you where you are at any time, even while you are on the road. Nothing like this exist in heavens. We learned that when Mahāsi Sayādaw asked if any dhamma books or materials were available in *Nimmānarati* heaven and *devā* said they had nothing and those exist only in the human plane.

As mentioned earlier when you are in heaven, it is almost impossible to practice dhamma. Unless one has already practiced dhamma in the human world, there is probable chance that one continues to practice in *devā* heaven on its own. There will be no teachers to give guidance. Then look at the scenario when life ends there. As stated by the *devā*, most *devā* fall to the woeful plains. Once a being has exhausted all the merits of the good deeds, the next thing is the time to pay back for the bad deeds he did. The woeful plains are places where beings have no knowledge of dhamma and what good deeds mean. They cannot do *dāna*, donations and contributions. They cannot do *kusala* good deeds. Whatever they do, result most of the time in *akusala* demerits.

Only beings in human plane have a chance to do good deeds and practice dhamma, but only during *sāsanā* dispensation period. So you can now see clearly why, the *devā* said practice dhamma now in the human plane. I will summarize the following points again.

- Dhamma appears only during Buddha's dispensation which is now in the human plane.
- Waiting or hoping to go it in the next Buddha's dispensation is meaningless as you don't know where and what state you will be in at that time.
- It took the *devā* the time from *Kakusandha* Buddha to *Gotama* Buddha to attain the first enlightenment. A dedicated hard working person with past *pāramī* can attain enlightenment in a reasonable short time.
- Only in the human plane where the dhamma literatures and materials are available. No other planes have anything equal to this.
- Devā and Brahma planes are to enjoy the merits they achieved in the past existences and woeful planes where they pay back for the *akusala* deeds they did.

- There are some *devā* who want to study and listen to dhamma discourses and they have no means to do so. When an opportunity arises, like the moment when they got a chance to communicate with Mahāsi Sayādaw, many of them listened in, hoping to hear a dhamma discourse. This kind of chance is so rare for them.
- In the woeful planes, the beings there do not have knowledge to understand what dhamma is. Even if they do they cannot hear dhamma discourses. If they can hear, they do not understand it. For some beings, especially in the animal world, all they do are evil deeds, *akusala*. They have to kill other animals for their living. You can imagine how long a being cycling in the woeful planes.
- Only in the human plane, people can have the knowledge to study dhamma and only here where dhamma teachers and materials are readily available (only during Buddha *sāsanā*).
- We are in the third 1,000-year period out of 5,000-year Buddha's dispensation where devotees who strive hard through *vipassanā* have a good chance to attain the three stages of enlightenment.

### Never too late

As mentioned above one can study dhamma and practice *vipassanā* only in the human plane. For those who never realized how rare and lucky to be born a human being in Buddha's dispensation should realize now and start practicing *vipassanā*. Some are discouraged thinking we won't be able to achieve anything in this life. We don't have the *pāramī*. We have done a lot of bad deeds and that we won't be able to recover from it. That is not totally true. One who practices dhamma observes the very current moment only. One doesn't look back the past or think about the future. As he practices *vipassanā*, doing good deeds, minor offences are washed away. At the same time, he gradually grows the insight wisdom in him. Because of his good deeds, he will be reborn in a *sugati* plane, except in some rare cases. His meditation will power continues on to the next existence and grow the insight wisdom further and eventually he will be liberated. Never think I am too old and won't achieve anything. It is like filling up a bottle with water one drop at a time. It will eventually become full. Now, it's time to plant your dhamma seed.

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