

Question and answer in general topic

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During my journey to Myanmar I met a certain foreigner, open-minded Christian, with a wide range of reading who might be interested in Buddhism. He put many questions to me out of which a special type of question I am now presenting here in this page. His question is that: 'can our universe one day be totally destroyed or reduced into a worst one?' "I came across", said he, "in my reading some words such as *asankhyeyya*, meaning uncountable period of time but they say again there are four *asankhyeyyas*. I was confused; I could not understand how this innumerable age is divided into fours'.

My answer went like that: the word *asankhyeyya* roughly rendering, being uncountable but these are only the names given to limits of ages. There are four kinds of ages, namely:

1) a given span of life, say, a span of hundred years, that of one thousand years etc. It is called *Ayukappa*.

2) an intermediary time limit, that is, a couple of ascending period of age and descending period of age, both of which constitute an *Antrakappa* (an intermediary age).

3) a long duration of time, equivalent to sixty-four *Antrakappas* which form altogether an *Asankhyeyya* and

4) a longest period of time, equivalent to four *Asankhyeyyas*, which constitute a *Mahakappa*

Then you may query what space of time is called *Asankhyeyya*. First of all, regarding the destruction of the universe two main parts of period in the forming of Universe should be noticed, that is, building-up process consisting of incalculable aeons, no to mention years, months and days and process of deteriorating or degenerating and endless process of breaking-down of every animate and inanimate state and thing until it has reached its total destruction. Then let us go to four kinds of *Asankhyeyyas*:

a) A long, long duration in which the whole universe is being gradually destroyed, which is called "*Samvatta*",

b) A long time limit of remaining as It has been destroyed, which is called "*Samvattatthaya* ",

c) A long duration of commencing to evolve, increasing the rate of progress and keeping on uplifting the new universe, which is called *Vivatta* and

d) A long time limit of remaining as it has been completed in evolution which is called *Vivattatthayii*.

Out of the aforesaid *Asankhyeyyas* one cannot be counted by billions and billions of years and so it is called *Asankhyeyya*. In this respect you may raise a question "How the universe come into existence? Is it due to any agent's creation power? Buddhism answers that sentient beings' consciousness is the primary cause of creation of Universe or World Systems while temperature is a supporting or co-operating cause. To begin with, when all sentient beings are well conducting to one another and maintaining righteousness, righteousness, justice, loving kindness and consideration upon one another then the universe comes to existence and continue to grow and develop. It is called *Vivatta* which cannot be counted by span of ages.

Again you may ask "How the universe comes into destruction". When they (the sentient beings) are no longer observing humanity such as love, compassion, and consideration then the universe is going to decrease or degenerate or contract until it has gone total disappearance or nothingness. It is called "*Samvatta*". It also cannot be calculated by measurement of aeons. It might be lasting for billions and billions of years.

When the universe is going to be totally destroyed, according to Buddhist scriptures, dreadful fire, wind and water come to occur without natural process of happening. It is gradually losing its normal climatic system, namely, being too severely hot, too severely blowing and too severely flooding so that any living creatures can no longer retain their lives and also natural features of earth, oceans and mountains can no longer remain in existence. This situation is standing for long, long period of time. At such a time ten thousand world systems are said to get altogether degenerated and destroyed simultaneously. It is called "*Samvattatthayi*". Similarly at the time of evolving of the universe, ten thousand world systems come altogether to be increasing and evolving. It is called "*Vivvatthayi*".

Meanwhile, a Chinese young lady, who had been enthusiastic in our conversation and listened to our questions and answers, intervened like that: "Your subject is very interesting to me but I would like to say something that the subject of evolution and destruction of the world can be incredible in our scientific age. I, as for me, do not like to think about so abstract subject that is unfathomable by and beyond the reach of lay persons' knowledge. It is for this reason the best way to tread upon the path uncovered and led by the All-Enlightened One, that is, eightfold noble path, to be happy in the present life and coming existences if there any".

The questioner said: "Yes, it is undeniable fact but Christianity, Hinduism and Buddhism are alike interested in this subject in spite of different approach to the point in question. I am very glad to hear the Reverend's explanation. Thank you very much for your dexterity in handling the question with vast knowledge and language".