



彌勒菩薩何時出世成佛？

When Will Maitreya Bodhisattva Become the Next Buddha?

沙彌釋果昌 文/譯 WRITTEN & TRANSLATED BY SHRAMANERA SHIH GWO CHANG

佛學辭典及百科全書多云：五十六或五十七億年後，彌勒菩薩將下生娑婆世界成佛。然而，這答案極可能不正確！為什麼呢？

Most, if not all, Buddhist dictionaries and encyclopedias indicate that Maitreya Bodhisattva will be born and become the next Buddha in the Saha World 5.6 or 5.7 billion years later. However, this answer is most likely incorrect. Why is that?



如眾所周知的，彌勒佛將是此娑婆世界的下一尊佛。然而，彌勒菩薩究竟將於何時出世成佛呢？

《佛祖統紀》卷三十及宣公上人《妙法蓮華經淺釋》上冊129頁提到：人壽一百歲時，釋迦牟尼佛出世。人壽由百歲減至十歲，由十歲增至八萬四千歲，再由八萬四千減至八萬歲時，彌勒佛將出世。以每百年人壽增、減一歲計算，吾人可估計釋迦牟尼及彌勒二佛出世相距年數如下：

人壽由100減至10歲：

$$(100-10) \times 100 = 9,000 \text{年}$$

由10增至84,000歲：

$$(84,000-10) \times 100 = 8,399,000 \text{年}$$

由84,000減至80,000歲：

$$(84,000-80,000) \times 100 = 400,000 \text{年}$$

合計：8,808,000年

故二佛出世相距八百八十萬八千年。此估算

It is well known that Maitreya Bodhisattva will be the next Buddha in this Saha World. However, the question is, when will this happen?

A Chronicle of the Buddhas and the Patriarchs (Fasc. 30) and Venerable Master Hsuan Hua's Commentary on the *Lotus Sutra* (Vol. 2, p.156) say that Shakyamuni Buddha was born when the average human life span was 100 years. The human life span will decrease from 100 years to 10 years, then increase from 10 years to 84,000 years, and then decrease from 84,000 years to 80,000 years. At that time Maitreya Bodhisattva will be born and become the next Buddha in the Saha World. As the average human life span decreases/increases by 1 year every 100 years, one can calculate how many years separate the births of Shakyamuni Buddha and Maitreya Buddha.

Life span from 100 to 10 years: $(100-10) \times 100 = 9,000$
 From 10 to 84,000 years: $(84,000-10) \times 100 = 8,399,000$
 From 84,000 to 80,000 years: $(84,000-80,000) \times 100 = 400,000$
 Total: 8,808,000

Therefore, the births of the two Buddhas are separated by 8,808,000 years. This number differs by only 1,000 years from TL Zhuang's estimate of 8,809,000 years (*A Chronicle of the Buddhas and the Patriarchs*, Fasc. 30).

While the *Long Agama Sutra* (Fasc. 6), the *Intermediate Agama Sutra* (Fasc. 13) and the *Abhidharma-vibhāṣā-sāstra* (Fasc 178) also say that Maitreya Bodhisattva will be born when the average human life span is 80,000 years, at least five other Sutras and one Shastra (*Bhadrakalpa Sutra* (Fasc. 7), *The Sutra of the Bodhisattva's Descent from Tushita Heaven*

與莊椿錄之八百八十萬九千年只相差一千年(《佛祖統紀》卷三十)。

雖然《長阿含經》卷六、《中阿含經》卷十三、及《阿毘達磨大毘婆沙論》卷一七八亦云：人壽八萬歲彌勒出興，《賢劫經》卷七、《菩薩從兜術天降神母胎說廣普經》(亦名《菩薩處胎經》)卷二、《大彌勒成佛經》、《佛說彌勒下生經》、《佛說彌勒來時經》，及《大智度論》卷三皆云：人壽八萬四千歲，彌勒出興；若此則釋迦牟尼及彌勒二佛出世相距將減四十萬年成爲八百四十萬八千年。

《佛說處處經》云，彌勒五億七千六百萬歲後當下作佛，當以兜率天壽計算：閻浮提四百歲相當兜率天一日



一夜(《俱舍論》卷十一)，以三十日爲一月、十二月爲一歲，彼天壽四千歲(《長阿含經》卷二十、《起世經》卷七、《俱舍論》卷十一)，合此娑婆世界五億七千六百萬歲。

《佛說觀彌勒菩薩上生兜率天經》、《一切智光明仙人慈心因緣不食肉經》、《菩薩從兜術天降神母胎說廣普經》卷二，及《賢愚經》卷四等，皆云彌勒菩薩將於五十六億歲後出世。《丁福保佛學辭典》、《佛光佛學辭典》、《數位佛學辭典》及《中華佛教百科全書》等，亦云五十六或五十七億歲。《大毘婆沙論》卷一七八，則云五十七俱胝歲，故億應爲俱胝之譯；然俱胝爲千萬(《俱舍論》卷九、《丁福保佛學辭典》)。〈《大智度論》卷四及窺基大師之觀彌勒上生兜率天經贊〉卷下亦云千萬爲億。今人以萬萬爲億，則五億七千六百萬歲方爲正確(〈觀彌勒上生兜率天經贊〉、《彌勒上生經宗要》、《三彌勒經疏》)卷一)。

然而菩薩不一定窮兜率天壽方下生，恰似人壽長短不一；釋迦牟尼佛雖在人壽百歲下生，卻在八十歲時入滅即爲一例。《彌勒經遊意》及〈觀彌勒上生兜率天經贊〉卷上云：人壽千二百歲，

into his Mother's Womb (Fasc. 2), *The Sutra on Maitreya's Achieving Buddhahood*, *The Sutra on the Descent of Maitreya*, *Sutra on the Coming of Maitreya*, and *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sāstra* (Fasc. 3)) all say that Maitreya Bodhisattva will be born when the average human life span is 84,000 years. Should this be the case, Maitreya Bodhisattva will be born 400,000 years earlier, i.e., 8,408,000 years after Shakyamuni Buddha.

However, at least one Sutra (*Foshuo chuchu jing*) says that Maitreya Bodhisattva will be born 570 million years later. This calculation must have been based on the life span of the gods in the Tushita Heaven.

The gods in the Tushita Heaven have a life span of 4,000 years (*Long Agama Sutra* (Fasc. 20), *Qishi jing* (Fasc. 7), *Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya* (Fasc. 11)). However, one day there is equivalent to 400 years on earth (*Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya*, Fasc. 11)! So, 100 Tushita days equals to 40,000 earth years, and 1 Tushita year is 144,000 earth years (assuming 360 days in a year.) The gods' life span of 4,000 Tushita years is thus equivalent to 576 million earth years.

However, *The Sutra of the Contemplation of Maitreya Bodhisattva's Ascent to Tushita Heaven Spoken by the Buddha*, *The Sutra of the Immortal of All-Wisdom's Light Who Abstained from Eating Meat for Reasons of Kindness*, *The Sutra of the Bodhisattva's Descent from Tushita Heaven into his Mother's Womb* (Fasc. 2), *The Sutra on the Wise and the Foolish* (Fasc. 4), the Ding Fubao¹ and Foguang Buddhist Dictionaries, Charles Muller's Digital Dictionary of Buddhism and the Chinese Buddhist Encyclopedia all say that Maitreya Bodhisattva will be born 5.6 or 5.7 billion (56 or 57 *yi* (億)) years later. The *Abhidharma-vibhāṣā-sāstra* (Fasc.178), nevertheless, gives 57 *koti* years; so *yi* (億) must be the Chinese translation of *koti*. One *koti* is 10 million (*Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya* Fasc.9, Ding Fubao Buddhist Dictionary). Nagarjuna Bodhisattva (*Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sāstra* (Fasc. 4)) and Great Master Kui Ji (*Praise to the Sutra of the Contemplation of Maitreya Bodhisattva's Ascent and Birth in the Tushita Heaven* (Fasc. 2)) also interprets *yi* (億) as 10 million. Nowadays, however, *yi* (億) means 100 million. So it should be 5.76 *yi* (億) or 576 million earth years before the birth of Maitreya Bodhisattva (*Praise to the Sutra of the Contemplation of Maitreya Bodhisattva's Ascent to Tushita Heaven*, *Summary of the Sutra on the Ascent of Maitreya*, *Prologue on Three Sutras on Maitreya*, (Fasc. 1)).

It is not for sure that all Bodhisattvas will live for 4,000 years in the Tushita Heaven, just as humans have different life spans on earth. For example, Shakyamuni Buddha entered nirvana at an age of 80 when the average human life span was supposed to be 100 years. In fact, Shakyamuni and Maitreya live different lengths of time in Tushita Heaven. Shakyamuni Buddha was born in Tushita Heaven when the average human life span was 1,200 years and was then born in the Saha World to become a Buddha when the average human life span was 100 years. Maitreya, on the other hand, was born in the Tushita Heaven when



釋迦始生兜率，人壽一百歲下生作佛。人壽百歲彌勒生天，人壽八萬四千歲下生成佛。可見二佛天壽不同。又《佛祖統紀》卷三十云：釋迦牟尼佛出世本在人壽一萬歲時，為觀眾生無機可度，至百歲劫末苦逼，始出乎世。因此菩薩不必窮天壽方下生。

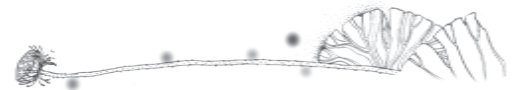
故彌勒菩薩當於八百萬或五億七千萬年後下生成佛，而八百萬年之說似較合理。

《丁福保佛學辭典》〈兜率〉一條，正確的指出兜率天一年為人間十四萬四千年。然兜率天壽四千歲，卻錯誤的計算為人間五十七億六百萬年。

the average human life span was 100 years and will be born in the Saha World to become a Buddha when the average human lifespan is 84,000 years (*Mile jing youyi* 彌勒經遊意, *Praise to the Sutra of the Contemplation of Maitreya Bodhisattva's Ascent to Tushita Heaven*, Fasc. 1). Besides, Shakyamuni Buddha was originally scheduled to be born on earth when the average human life span was 10,000 years. However, the conditions weren't right, so he waited until the human life span decreased to 100 years (*A Chronicle of the Buddhas and the Patriarchs*, Fasc. 30). Obviously, Bodhisattvas need not to live up to 4,000 years in the Tushita Heaven.

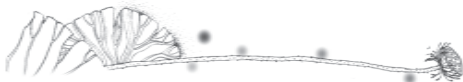
To conclude, Maitreya Bodhisattva will be born in the Saha World to become the next Buddha either 8 or 570 million years later. The former seems to be more plausible.

¹Ding Fubao Buddhist Dictionary rightly gives 144,000 earth years for one Tushita year; however, it erroneously calculates 4000 Tushita years to be 5.76 billion years!



在《阿含經》中，彌勒是繼釋迦牟尼之後出世的未來佛，彌勒佛出世時，土地平整，七寶充滿，花香濃郁，果味甘美，國土豐樂，人民善良，人的壽命達到八萬四千歲，女子五百歲才出嫁。彌勒下生之後，在龍華樹下坐禪成道，又設三會度脫眾生，初會度九十六億人，第二會度九十四億人，第三會度九十二億人。

According to the *Agama Sutra*, Maitreya will be the successor of Shakyamuni Buddha. When he comes to the world, the land will be level, full of the seven jewels, and permeated with the strong fragrance of flowers. The fruit will taste deliciously sweet. The land will be prosperous and joyful, and the people kind-hearted. Their life span will be 84,000 years and the women will marry at the age of 500. After Maitreya comes to the world, he will meditate under the Dragon Flower Tree and realize the Way. He will conduct three assemblies: in the first one 960 million people will be liberated, in the second 940 million people will be liberated, and in the third 920 million people will be liberated.



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