

Will the world end in 2012?

Here we go again, in every century, in every generation, there is a prediction that the world will end.

Buddhaghosa's Visuddhi,magga (translated at "The Path of Purification") gives an interesting and positive account of the world's end. It is said that we will know when the world is really going to end. "Heavenly messengers" called Loka,byuha (World Marshalls) will appear and warn us.

Having described how it would occur, they the World Marshalls advise us: "Cultivate lovingkindness, good sirs, cultivate compassion, altruistic joy, equanimity, good sirs! Care for your mothers; care for your fathers; honour the elders of the clans!"

Hearing this, it is said, we will be filled with spiritual urgency (samvega), and become kind to one another, and make merit with lovingkindness, etc. In cultivating such good works, we will be able to attain dhyana (jhana), and be reborn in the higher Brahma worlds. (Only the physical sense-world is destroyed.)

If you have a sort of scientific mind, you can say that when we realize the impending end of our world, there is a massive evacuation of earth space-ships, etc, to another safe universe! This is still a long way ahead. So there is a lot of time for scientific development in this area. Either way, this is clearly a more happy account of the world's end than that found in other religions.

Buddhas do not as a rule arise in every world-cycle. But our present world-cycle is a fortunate one, because we have five Buddhas. Three Buddhas—Kakusandha, Konagamana and Kassapa—have arisen. We are now in the dispensation of Gotama Buddha. The next (and last) Buddha of our world-cycle, Metteyya, has yet to come. This will take a very long time, at least some thousand years, maybe longer. (See the Cakkavatti Sihanada Sutta, D 26).

[For information on Metteyya, see Dictionary of Pali Proper Names:
http://www.palikanon.com/english/pali_names/me_mu/metteyya.htm.]

What are the Buddhist teachings here in terms of mental cultivation? Now, the five mental hindrances are sense-desires (addictive desires), ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and remorse, and doubt. Thinking too much about our past often causes remorse, guilt and worry. Thinking about the end of the world causes "restlessness," feeling unease about things. This slows down, even stop, our mental cultivation. As such, it is unhealthy (as it is based on delusion and ignorance.)

Over the centuries, major predictions of the end of the world have been made, but you are still reading this. Over 60 of such failed predictions are listed here, if you are interested:
http://www.religioustolerance.org/end_wrl2.htm

For those who are worried whether the world will really end or not: don't worry. At the rate people are predicting the world's end, it will surely come one day!

Meantime, let us get back to what we do best, and to be kind to others.

Live now; the past is gone; the future has yet to come.

Live this day as if it is your last, you will discover the true priorities of your life.