



## Wesak

This most important Buddhist festival is known as either Vesak, Wesak or Buddha Day, and is celebrated annually on the full moon of the ancient lunar month of Vesakha, which usually falls in May, or in early June.

At Vesak Buddhists commemorate the birth of the Buddha-to-be, Siddhattha Gotama, his Enlightenment at the age of 35 when he became the Buddha and his final 'passing' into Nirvana at the age of 80, no more to be reborn. Buddhist scriptures relate that each of these three significant events occurred on a full moon of the Indian lunar month of Vesakha.

Traditionally, his birth is supposed to have been in 623 BC but the Buddhist calendar is counted from his final passing, eighty years later. The tradition of Vesak is to celebrate all three even

'The Buddha' is not a personal name but a title, and can be translated as 'the Enlightened One' or 'the One Who Knows'. He was not born the Buddha but became the Buddha through his realisation of full and perfect Enlightenment. This state is also known as Nirvana (Sanskrit) or Nibbana (Pali) and occurs when a person sees and understands the true nature of all things.

As a result, all their greed, hatred and delusion is extinguished, which in turn means that there will be no more re-birth. The Buddha achieved the state of nirvana and this is celebrated on Vesak.

There are some cultural and local differences in how the various Buddhist groups and nations celebrate Vesak, but broadly speaking devout Buddhists will try to attend their local temple for at least

part of the day, while some remain there throughout the day and night of the full moon. The celebration will include the practices of Giving, Virtue and Cultivation and the doing of good and meritorious deeds.

Giving usually involves bringing food to offer and share, as well as supplies for the temple and symbolic offerings for the shrine. Virtue is observed by reaffirming commitment to the moral precepts. Cultivation can include chanting, meditation and listening to sermons.



Blue - Compassion

Yellow - The Middle Path

Red - Blessings

White - Purity

Orange - Wisdom

The design of the Buddhist flag is based on six colours of the aura that are believed to have shone around the head of the Buddha

The first five stripes of the flag are in five colours. The sixth colour is a conglomeration of the other five, but for the design, it has been separated into its constituent colours.

The Buddhist flag is a modern creation but it has come to symbolize the unity of Buddhists. It is now used worldwide in nearly sixty countries during Buddhist festivals, particularly during the Vesak celebrations.