



Buddhism

There are many special or holy days held throughout the year by the Buddhist community. Many of these days celebrate the birthdays of Bodhisattvas in the Mahayana tradition or other significant dates in the Buddhist calendar. The most significant celebration happens every May on the night of the full moon, when Buddhists all over the world celebrate the birth, enlightenment and death of the Buddha over 2,500 years ago.

Asalha Puja Day ("Dhamma Day"): a day to pay homage to the Buddha. It takes place on the full moon day of the 8th lunar month (approximately July) and commemorates the Buddha's first teaching: the turning of the wheel of the Dhamma (Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta) to the five ascetics at the Deer Park (Sarnath) near Benares city, India.

Bodhi Day: Buddhist celebration of the time when Prince Gautama took his place under the Bodhi tree, vowing to remain there until he attained supreme enlightenment.

Buddha Day: Another name for Vesak when Buddhists celebrate the birthday of Buddha.

Dalai Lama's birthday: Tibetan Buddhist celebration with traditional dances, picnics, and singing.

Dharma Day: celebrated on the full moon of July, this day recalls the Buddha's first teaching following his enlightenment in the deer park in Sarnath. It is marked by readings from Buddhist scriptures and reflection.

Kathina: Friends and family join to celebrate harmony. Buddhist monks and nuns in the Theravada tradition celebrate the end of the three month rain retreat and are given new robes. <http://www.dhammadakaya.or.th/events/kathina2003.htm>

Nirvana Day: regional observance of the death of Buddha. It is also known as Parinirvana day and is celebrated by some Buddhists on February 15th. Nirvana Day is the celebration of Buddha's death when he reached total Nirvana, at the age of 80.

Obon Festival: Japanese Buddhist festival to honour the dead. Involves lighting bonfires, traditional meals, paper lanterns, folk dances. <http://www.geocities.com/Tokyo/Island/6653/obon1.htm>

Parinirvana day: see Nirvana Day.

Pavarana Day: this day marks the conclusion of the Rains retreat (Vassa). In the following month, the kathina ceremony is held, during which the laity gather to make formal offerings of robe cloth and other requisites to the Sangha.

Rohatsu: Japanese Buddhist celebration of the morning after the enlightenment of Buddha.

Spring Ohigon: a special time for Jodo Shinshu Buddhists. They listen to the teaching of the Buddha and meditate on the perfection of enlightenment.

Wesak / Vesak: holiest of Buddhist Holy Days, it celebrates Buddha's birth, enlightenment, and death. It is a public holiday in some countries.