

WESAK

Wesak is known as 'Buddha Day' as it celebrates the Buddha's birthday, enlightenment and death. It is the most important day in the Buddhist calendar. During Wesak, Buddhists celebrate the life of the Buddha and his teachings. They remember the night of his enlightenment as well as his revelations about the nature of death, karma and rebirth, suffering and desire.

Wesak is celebrated with great joy and vivid colours. Homes are cleaned and decorated in preparation. Celebrations begin before dawn, when followers fill the temple early in the morning to meditate and recommit to living by the Five Precepts. Celebrations of Wesak vary from one country to another. 'The Bathing of the Buddha' often takes place. Water is poured over the shoulders of statues of the Buddha as a reminder of the need to purify the heart and mind. Offerings are made to the Sangha and the temples, and may be laid on the altar as a sign of respect for the Buddha and his teachings.

Many Buddhist temples serve vegetarian food (as many Buddhists avoid eating meat). Special talks about the teachings of the Buddha are given, and candle lit processions take place through the streets.

Giving to others is an important part of Buddhist tradition at Wesak. People often give cards to family and friends to help celebrate this festival. There is also an emphasis on giving to the needy. Followers may visit orphanages, welfare homes, homes for the aged or charitable institutions, distributing cash donations and gifts. Donations of food and drink are made to the Sangha. Some youth organisations organise mass blood donation to hospitals.

Please answer the following questions:

1. What does Wesak remind Buddhists of?
2. How does a Buddhist prepare their home for Wesak?
3. Why do people bathe statues of the Buddha in water at Wesak?
4. What may Buddhists give to the Sangha at Wesak?
5. Who else may be given things at Wesak?