



Vesak Celebration

Why in News

The Prime Minister addressed “**Virtual Vesak Global Celebrations**” on **Buddha Purnima**.

- The event is being organised by the **Ministry of Culture** in collaboration with the **International Buddhist Confederation** (IBC) and will witness the participation of all the **supreme heads** of the **Buddhist Sanghas** from **around the world**.

Key Points

▪ **Buddha Purnima:**

- It is celebrated to mark the **birth of Gautam Buddha**, the founder of **Buddhism**.
 - It is also **known as Vesak**. In **1999**, it became a **UN-designated day**, to acknowledge the contribution of Buddhism to society.
- It is considered a '**triple-blessed day**' - as **Tathagata Gautam Buddha's birth, enlightenment, and Maha Parnirvana**.
- Buddha Purnima **falls on a full moon night**, usually between April and May, and it is a gazetted holiday in India.
- Many devotees visit **Mahabodhi Temple**, a [UNESCO World Heritage Site](#), located in **Bodh Gaya, Bihar**, on this occasion.
 - Bodhi Temple is the location **where Lord Buddha is said to have attained enlightenment**.

▪ **International Buddhist Confederation (IBC):**

- IBC is the **biggest religious Buddhist confederation**.
- The **purpose** of this body is to create a role for Buddhism on the global stage so as to help to preserve heritage, share knowledge, and promote values and to represent a united front for Buddhism to enjoy meaningful participation in the global discourse.
- In **November 2011, New Delhi was host to Global Buddhist Congregation (GBC)**, where the attendees unanimously adopted a resolution to form an international umbrella body - the **International Buddhist Confederation (IBC)**.
- **HQ: Delhi, India**.

▪ **About Gautam Buddha:**

- He was **born as Siddhartha Gautama in circa 563 BCE, in Lumbini** and belonged to the **Sakya clan**.
- Gautam **attained Bodhi (enlightenment) under a pipal tree** at Bodhgaya, Bihar.
- Buddha gave his **first sermon in the village of Sarnath**, near Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh. This event is known as **Dharma Chakra Pravartana** (turning of the wheel of law).
- He **died at the age of 80 in 483 BCE at Kushinagara**, Uttar Pradesh. The event is known as **Mahaparinibban or Mahaparinirvana**.
- He is **believed to be the eighth of the ten incarnations of Lord Vishnu (Dashavatar)**.

Buddhism

▪ About:

- **Buddhism** started in India over 2,600 years ago.
- The **main teachings of Buddhism** are encapsulated in the basic concept of four **noble truths or ariya-sachchani** and **eight-fold path or ashtangika marg**.
 - **Dukkha (Sufferings) and its extinction** are **central to the Buddha's doctrine**.
- The essence of Buddhism is the **attainment of enlightenment or nirvana** which was not a place but an experience and could be attained in this life.
- There is **no supreme god or deity** in Buddhism.

▪ Buddhist Councils:

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Buddhist Council	Patron	Venue	Chairman	Year
First	Ajatashatru	Rajgriha	Mahakashyapa	483 BC
Second	Kalashoka	Vaishali	Sabbakami	383 BC
Third	Ashoka	Patliputra	Mogaliputra	250 BC
Fourth	Kanishka	Kundalban (Kashmir)	Vasumitra	72 AD

▪ Schools of Buddhism:

- Mahayana (Idol Worship), Hinayana, Theravada, Vajrayana (Tantric buddhism), Zen.

▪ Buddhism Texts (Tipitaka):

- **Vinaya Pitaka** (rules applicable to monastic life), **Sutta Pitaka** (main teaching or Dhamma of Buddha), **Abhidhamma Pitaka** (a philosophical analysis and systematization of the teaching).

▪ Contribution of Buddhism to Indian Culture:

- The **concept of ahimsa** was its chief contribution. Later, it became one of the cherished values of our nation.
- Its **contribution to the art and architecture of India** was notable. The **stupas at Sanchi, Bharhut, and Gaya** are wonderful pieces of architecture.
- It **promoted education through residential universities** like those at **Taxila, Nalanda, and Vikramasila**.
- The **language of Pali and other local languages** developed through the teachings of Buddhism.
- It had also **promoted the spread of Indian culture to other parts of Asia**.

▪ UNESCO's Heritage Sites Related to Buddhism:

- Archaeological Site of Nalanda Mahavihara at Nalanda, Bihar
- Buddhist Monuments at **Sanchi**, MP
- Mahabodhi Temple Complex at Bodh Gaya, Bihar
- **Ajanta Caves** Aurangabad, Maharashtra.

Source: IE

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