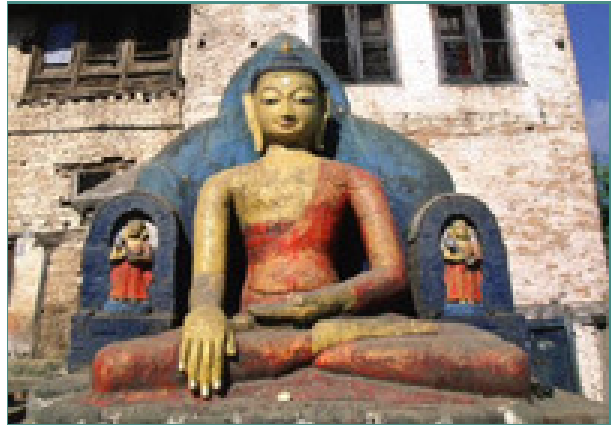


## ***Wesak - First Full Moon in May***

**Wesak** is the most important of the Buddhist festivals and is celebrated on the full moon in May. It celebrates the Buddha's birthday, and, for some Buddhists, also marks his enlightenment and death.



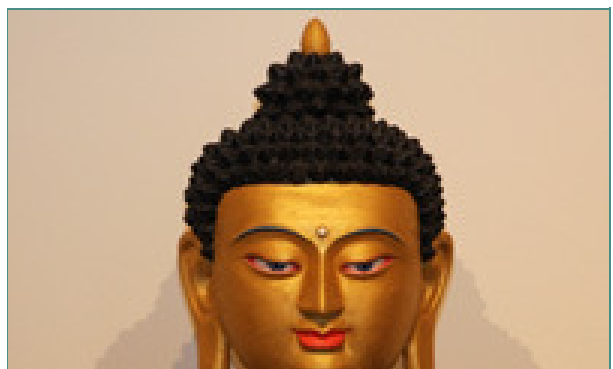
### **Celebrations**

Wesak is celebrated with much colour and gaiety. Homes may be cleaned and decorated. In many countries during the festival, Buddhists will visit their local temple for services and teaching, and will give offerings to the monks of food, candles and flowers. Chanting and praying are an important part of Wesak.

The '**Bathing the Buddha**' ceremony is also often included. Water is poured over the shoulders of the Buddha as a reminder to purify their own minds from greed, hatred and ignorance. Gifts are taken to an altar to be offered to the Buddha statues. This shows respect and gratitude to the Buddha for his life and teachings.

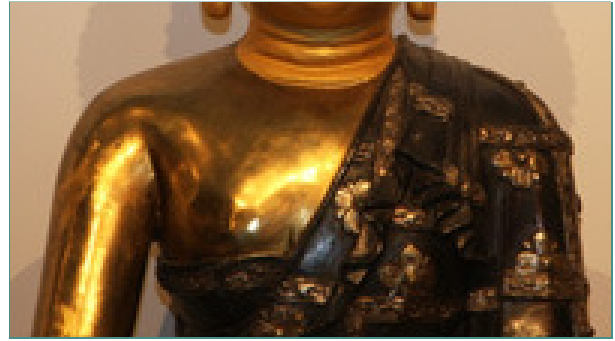
### **Variations**

Celebrations vary from one country to another. In Thailand, for example, special Wesak lanterns are made of paper and wood, and often there are large ceremonial releases of caged birds.



In China, traditional elements from Chinese culture, such as dancing dragons, are incorporated into the religious celebrations.

In Indonesia, Wesak lanterns are made from paper and wood.



Another popular custom in some countries is the release of caged birds, symbolising letting go of troubles and wishing that all beings be well and happy.