



"Vesak", the Day of the Full Moon in the month of May, is the most sacred day to millions of Buddhists around the world. It was on the Day of Vesak two and a half millennia ago, in the year 623 B.C., that the Buddha was born. It was also on the Day of Vesak that the Buddha attained enlightenment, and it was on the Day of Vesak that the Buddha in his eightieth year passed away.

The General Assembly, by its [resolution 54/115](#) of 1999, recognized [internationally the Day of Vesak](#)

to acknowledge the contribution that Buddhism, one of the oldest religions in the world, has made for over two and a half millennia and continues to make to the spirituality of humanity. This day is commemorated annually at the UN Headquarters and other UN offices, in consultation with the relevant UN offices and with permanent missions, which also wish to be consulted.

### **Secretary General's Message on Day of Vesak**

Vesak Day is a celebration for Buddhists worldwide and an opportunity for all members of the

international community to benefit from their rich traditions.

This year's observance, falling at a time of widespread strife and misery, is an occasion to examine how Buddhist teachings can inform our response to prevailing challenges.

Confronting the troubling problems facing our world is consonant with Buddhism. The Buddha himself, as a young prince, left the safety of his palace to discover the four sufferings of birth, sickness, old age and death.

While such painful realities cannot be avoided, Buddhism offers insights into how to cope with them. Its history is replete with inspiring examples of the transformative power of Buddhist philosophy.

The legendary King Ashoka, a conqueror who presided over a brutal reign in India some three centuries after the Buddha's passing, ultimately converted to Buddhism, renounced violence and embraced peace.

The values that King Ashoka espoused, including human rights, democratic governance and respect for the dignity of life, are common to all great religions. The fact that he was able to embrace them after years of brutal war offers proof that the goodwill of individuals can end widespread suffering.

Now more than ever, we need the spirit of non-violence to help inspire peace and quell conflict.

I offer my best wishes to believers celebrating Vesak Day, and my sincerest hopes that we may all draw on spiritual ideals to strengthen our resolve to improve our world.

**Source:** [Day of Vesak](#)

