

# Buddha Purnima, 2022

May 17, 2022

**In news-** Every year Buddha Purnima is celebrated on the full moon day of the Baisakh month (April/May) to mark the birth anniversary of Gautam Buddha. This year, Buddha Purnima will be celebrated on May 16, 2022.

## **India's initiatives on Buddha Purnima –**

- Prime Minister of India has laid the foundation stone for the construction of a unique centre for Buddhist Culture and Heritage within the Lumbini Monastic Zone during his official visit to Nepal's Lumbini (May 16, 2022) on the occasion of Vaishakha Buddha Purnima.
- On the same occasion Union Minister for Tourism, Culture has inaugurated a group of tourist amenities at Kanheri Caves in Maharashtra.

## **About Buddha Purnima-**

- Buddha Purnima is also known as Buddha Jayanti, Vesak, Vaishaka and Buddha's Birthday.
- This is believed to be the 2584th Birth Anniversary of Gautama Buddha.
- The full moon in May is a more auspicious day for Buddhists because three major events (his Birth, Enlightenment and Death) in the life of the Buddha took place on this day.
- In Theravada Buddhism, Buddha Purnima is observed as the day when Buddha, born as Prince Siddhartha Gautama (c. 563-483 BCE) attained Nirvana (salvation) under the Mahabodhi tree at Bodh Gaya, Bihar, as well as his death anniversary.
- The UN General Assembly, by its **resolution 54/115 of 1999** recognized internationally the '**Day of Vesak**' to acknowledge the contribution of Buddhism to humanity.

## A brief history of Gautam Buddha-

- **Gautam Buddha also called Siddhartha Gautama** was a philosopher who achieved enlightenment after 49 days of uninterrupted meditation under the Bodhi (banyan) tree in Bodhgaya, discovering the key to ending 'suffering'.
- It is believed that Buddha was born in Lumbini, Nepal in the clan of the Shakya **between 563 and 483 B.C**, and died in Kushinagar, Uttar Pradesh, at the age of 80.
- He left his worldly possessions and princedom at the age of 30 to lead a life searching for the truth, seeking penance in the hopes of liberating himself from suffering (dukkha).
- He preached his first sermon on the Four Noble Truths in Sarnath, where the Buddhist *sangha* or community also came to life.
- In Buddhism, the **Four Noble Truths** ("The four Arya satyas") are the truths or realities for the "spiritually worthy ones". They are:
  - The truth of suffering (**Dukkha**)
  - The truth of the origin of suffering (**Samudāya**)
  - The truth of the cessation of suffering (**Nirodha**)
  - The truth of the path to the cessation of suffering (**Magga**)
- His teachings were compiled by the Buddhist community in the **Vinaya**, his codes for monastic practice, and the **Suttas**, texts based on his discourses.

## Some of the important Buddhist Caves in India-

### Kanheri caves-

- Kanheri Caves are located deep inside the Sanjay Gandhi National Park and are one of the major tourist attractions on the outskirts of Mumbai.
- Chiselled out of a massive basalt rock outcrop, the cave complex demonstrates Buddhist style of art and

architecture.

- The caves contain Buddhist sculptures and relief carvings, paintings and inscriptions dating from 1st century CE up to 10th century CE.
- Chinese Buddhist monk and traveller Xuanzang is said to have briefly stayed at Kanheri.

### **Karle caves-**

- Located in the town of Karli near Lonavala, the Karla/Karle Caves were built between the 2nd century BC and 5th century CE.
- The Karla Caves are associated with the Mahasamghika Buddhist sect, and consist of a monastery with two grand pillars, although only one of the pillars are present now.

### **Ajanta Caves-**

- Located in Aurangabad district of Maharashtra, Ajanta Caves (around 30) date back to the 2nd century BC.
- Most of the caves here belong to Buddhism.
- These caves are hollowed out of granite cliffs on the inner side of a 70-foot (20-metre) ravine in the Wagurna River valley.

### **Ellora Caves-**

- The Ellora Caves in Aurangabad District are a UNESCO recognized World Heritage sites.
- The caves are home to among the largest monastery temple complexes in the world.
- The caves here belong to Buddhism as well as Jain and Hindu artwork.

### **The Bedse Caves-**

- These caves lie in the district of Pune and date back to the 1st century BC.
- There are two caves here, with a few smaller caves

around.

- The Chaitya cave consists of a large Stupa, while the other cave is a monastery and residential part of the structure.

### **Bhaja Caves-**

- The Bhaja Caves located in Maharashtra were carved out as early as in the 2nd century BC.
- Located near the popular hill station of Lonavala, there are 22 caves in this group and parts of the cave temple are a protected National Monument.

### **Pitalkhora Caves-**

The 14 Pitalkhora Caves lie along the Satmala hills of the Western Ghats in Maharashtra, with many of them dating to the 3rd century BC.

### **Pandavleni Caves-**

- With a history dating to the 2nd century BC, the Pandavleni Caves are an example of Hinayana Buddhist architecture.
- They are also called the Trirashmi Cave, with the name derived from the inscription 'Tiranhu' seen in the caves.