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# Buddha Purnima 2026 – Vaishakha Full Moon, Triple Holiday, Buddhist Circuit India

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# Buddha Purnima 2026 — Vaishakha Full Moon, Triple Holiday, Buddhist Circuit India

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## WHY IN NEWS

**Buddha Purnima 2026** falls on **May 1, 2026** (Vaishakha Purnima) — the same day as **International Workers' Day (Labour Day)** and **Maharashtra and Gujarat State Formation Day**, making it a triple public holiday for central and state government employees, bank staff, and students across most of India. PM Modi had highlighted Buddha Purnima in his Mann Ki Baat 133rd episode (April 26, 2026). India's Buddhist circuit — Bodh Gaya, Sarnath, Kushinagar, Lumbini (Nepal) — expects several lakh pilgrims from South and Southeast Asia.

## WHAT BUDDHA PURNIMA COMMEMORATES

**Buddha Purnima** (also Vesak or Vaishakha Purnima) is the most sacred day in the Buddhist calendar, commemorating three events in Gautama Buddha's life — all traditionally said to have occurred on the same lunar date (the full moon of Vaishakha):

EVENT	SIGNIFICANCE
<b>Birth (Janma)</b>	Born Siddhartha Gautama in Lumbini (present-day Nepal), c. 563 BCE
<b>Enlightenment (Bodhi)</b>	Attained nirvana under the Bodhi tree in Bodh Gaya, Bihar
<b>Parinirvana (Mahaparinirvana)</b>	Death and final liberation at Kushinagar, Uttar Pradesh

The Buddha's birth is also celebrated in some traditions on a different date — but Theravada Buddhism (practiced in Sri Lanka, Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia) holds Vesak as the triple celebration.

## INDIA'S BUDDHIST HERITAGE — KEY SITES

SITE	LOCATION	SIGNIFICANCE
<b>Bodh Gaya</b>	Bihar	Site of enlightenment; Mahabodhi Temple (UNESCO World Heritage Site)
<b>Sarnath</b>	Uttar Pradesh (near Varanasi)	First sermon (Dhammachakra Pravartana Sutta) delivered here after enlightenment
<b>Kushinagar</b>	Uttar Pradesh	Site of Buddha's Parinirvana; Parinirvana Temple
<b>Lumbini</b>	Nepal	Birthplace of Siddhartha Gautama; shared with India's cultural circuit
<b>Rajgir</b>	Bihar	Major teaching site; Nalanda (nearby) — great Buddhist university
<b>Sanchi</b>	Madhya Pradesh	Great Stupa built by Emperor Ashoka; UNESCO World Heritage Site
<b>Ajanta Caves</b>	Maharashtra	Buddhist rock-cut monasteries (2nd century BCE-6th century CE); UNESCO WHS

## WHY BUDDHA PURNIMA MATTERS FOR INDIA INTERNATIONALLY

India's Buddhist heritage is a significant element of its **soft power diplomacy**, particularly with South and Southeast Asian nations:

DIMENSION	DETAIL
<b>Buddhist circuit tourism</b>	India has invested heavily in Bodh Gaya-Sarnath-Kushinagar connectivity — major inbound tourism from Sri Lanka, Japan, Thailand, South Korea, Myanmar
<b>India-Japan</b>	Japan is a major funder of Buddhist heritage preservation in India; Nalanda University revival was partly Japan-funded
<b>India-Sri Lanka</b>	Sri Lanka's Theravada Buddhism traces to India (Emperor Ashoka sent Mahinda to Sri Lanka); strong cultural tie
<b>India-Myanmar</b>	Buddhist solidarity bridges geopolitical tensions; India-Myanmar border is a Buddhism corridor
<b>India-Vietnam/Cambodia</b>	Buddhist cultural connections support ASEAN engagement
<b>UNESCO recognition</b>	Nalanda (2016), Ajanta (1983), Sanchi (1989), Mahabodhi Temple (2002) are all UNESCO WHS

## THE TRIPLE HOLIDAY — MAY 1, 2026

OBSERVANCE	WHAT IT COMMEMORATES
<b>Buddha Purnima</b>	Birth, Enlightenment, Parinirvana of Gautama Buddha
<b>International Workers' Day (Labour Day)</b>	Global solidarity of workers; traced to 1886 Haymarket affair, Chicago
<b>Maharashtra Day</b>	May 1, 1960 — Maharashtra state formed from Bombay Reorganisation Act
<b>Gujarat Day</b>	May 1, 1960 — Gujarat state formed from Bombay Reorganisation Act

The Bombay Reorganisation Act, 1960 split the bilingual Bombay State into two separate states — **Maharashtra** (Marathi-speaking) and **Gujarat** (Gujarati-speaking) — completing the linguistic reorganisation of India's western states that had been deferred after the States Reorganisation Act, 1956.

## UPSC RELEVANCE

PAPER	ANGLE
GS1 — Art & Culture	Buddhist philosophy; Vesak; India's Buddhist heritage; UNESCO WHS
GS1 — History	Gautama Buddha; Ashoka's Buddhism; Nalanda; Buddhist circuit
GS2 — IR	Buddhist soft power; India-Sri Lanka, India-Japan, India-ASEAN Buddhist ties
GS2 — Polity	States Reorganisation; Bombay Reorganisation Act 1960; Maharashtra-Gujarat formation

**Mains Keywords:** Buddha Purnima, Vaishakha Purnima, Bodh Gaya, Sarnath, Kushinagar, Buddhist circuit, Mahabodhi Temple, Nalanda, Ashoka, soft power, Bombay Reorganisation Act 1960, Maharashtra-Gujarat Day, Labour Day

### Facts Corner

ITEM	FACT
Buddha Purnima 2026	May 1, 2026 (Vaishakha Purnima)
Three events commemorated	Birth, Enlightenment (Bodhi), Parinirvana
Bodh Gaya	UNESCO World Heritage Site; Bihar
Sarnath	Near Varanasi; first sermon site
Kushinagar	Uttar Pradesh; Parinirvana site
Lumbini	Nepal; birthplace
Mahabodhi Temple	UNESCO WHS (2002)
Nalanda	UNESCO WHS (2016); ancient Buddhist university
Sanchi Stupa	UNESCO WHS (1989); Ashoka's stupa
Maharashtra/Gujarat Day	May 1, 1960 — Bombay Reorganisation Act
Bombay Reorganisation Act	1960 — split Bombay State on linguistic basis

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