**Guru Purnima** ([IAST](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/IAST): Guru Pūrṇimā, [sanskrit](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sanskrit" \o "Sanskrit): गुरु पूर्णिमा) is a Hindu festival dedicated to spiritual and academic teachers. This festival traditionally celebrated by [Hindus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hindus) and [Buddhists](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddhists), to thank their teachers. It is marked by ritualistic respect to the [Guru](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guru), *Guru Puja*. The Guru Principle is a thousand times more active on the day of Gurupournima than on any other day.[[2]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guru_Purnima#cite_note-Guruprinciple-2) The word Guru is derived from two words, 'Gu' and 'Ru'. The Sanskrit root "Gu" means darkness or ignorance. "Ru" denotes the remover of that darkness. Therefore one who removes darkness of our ignorance is a [Guru](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guru). Gurus are believed by many to be the most necessary part of lives. On this day, disciples offer [puja](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Puja_(Hinduism)) (worship) or pay respect to their [Guru](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guru) (Spiritual Guide). It falls on the day of [full moon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Full_moon),[*Purnima*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Full_moon), in the month of *[Ashadh](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aashaadha" \o "Aashaadha)* (June–July) of the [Shaka Samvat](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shaka_Samvat" \o "Shaka Samvat), [Indian national calendar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_national_calendar) and [Hindu calendar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hindu_calendar).[[3]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guru_Purnima#cite_note-Sanatan-3)

In addition to having religious importance, this festival has great importance for Indian academics and scholars. Indian academics celebrate this day by thanking their teachers as well as remembering past teachers and scholars.

Traditionally the festival is celebrated by Buddhists in honor of the lord Buddha who gave His first sermon on this day at [Sarnath](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sarnath" \o "Sarnath),[Uttar Pradesh](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uttar_Pradesh" \o "Uttar Pradesh), [India](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India). In the yogic tradition, the day is celebrated as the occasion when [Shiva](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shiva) became the first Guru, as he began the transmission of [yoga](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yoga) to the [Saptarishis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saptarishi" \o "Saptarishi).[[4]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guru_Purnima#cite_note-4) Many Hindus celebrate the day in honor of the great sage [Vyasa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vyasa" \o "Vyasa), who is seen as one of the greatest gurus in ancient Hindu traditions and a symbol of the [Guru-shishya tradition](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guru-shishya_tradition). Vyasa was not only believed to have been born on this day, but also to have started writing the [Brahma Sutras](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brahma_Sutra) on ashadha sudha padyami, which ends on this day. Their recitations are a dedication to him, and are organised on this day, which is also known as *Vyasa Purnima*.[[5]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guru_Purnima#cite_note-5)[[6]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guru_Purnima#cite_note-ci-6)[[7]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guru_Purnima#cite_note-7) The festival is common to all spiritual traditions in [Hinduism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hinduism), where it is an expression of gratitude toward the teacher by his/her disciple.[[8]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guru_Purnima#cite_note-8) Hindu [ascetics](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ascetics) and wandering monks ([sanyasis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sanyasi" \o "Sanyasi)), observe this day by offering puja to the Guru, during the [Chaturmas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chaturmas" \o "Chaturmas), a four-month period during the rainy season, when they choose seclusion and stay at one chosen place; some also give discourses to the local public.[[9]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guru_Purnima#cite_note-9) Students of [Indian classical music](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_classical_music), which also follows the *Guru shishya parampara*, celebrate this holy festival around the world.

Hindu Legend[[edit](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Guru_Purnima&action=edit&section=1)]

This was the day, when [Krishna-Dwaipayana Vyasa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vyasa) – author of the [Mahabharata](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mahabharata) – was born to sage [Parashara](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parashara" \o "Parashara) and a fisherman's daughter [Satyavati](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Satyavati" \o "Satyavati), thus this day is also celebrated as *Vyasa Purnima*.[[6]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guru_Purnima#cite_note-ci-6)[Veda Vyasa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Veda_Vyasa), did yeoman service to the cause of [Vedic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vedic_period) studies by gathering all the [Vedic hymns](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vedas) extant during his times, dividing them into four parts based on their use in the sacrificial rites, and teaching them to his four chief disciples – Paila, [Vaisampayana](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vaisampayana" \o "Vaisampayana), [Jaimini](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jaimini" \o "Jaimini) and Sumantu. It was this dividing and editing that earned him the [honorific](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Honorific) "Vyasa" (vyas = to edit, to divide). "He divided the Veda into four, namely Rig, Yajur, Sama and Atharva. The histories and the Puranas are said to be the fifth Veda."

Buddhist History[[edit](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Guru_Purnima&action=edit&section=2" \o "Edit section: Buddhist History)]

The Buddha went from [Bodhgaya](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bodhgaya) to [Sarnath](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sarnath" \o "Sarnath) about 5 weeks after his enlightenment. Before Gautama (the Buddha-to-be) attained enlightenment, he gave up his austere penances and his friends, the Pañcavaggiya monks, left him and went to [Isipatana](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isipatana" \o "Isipatana) (Sarnath). After attaining Enlightenment the Buddha, leaving Uruvela, travelled to the Isipatana to join and teach them. He went to them because, using his spiritual powers, he had seen that his five former companions would be able to understand Dharma quickly. While travelling to Sarnath, Gautama Buddha had to cross the Ganges. Having no money with which to pay the ferryman, he crossed the Ganges through the air. When King [Bimbisara](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bimbisara" \o "Bimbisara)heard of this, he abolished the toll for ascetics. When Gautama Buddha found his five former companions, he taught them, they understood and as a result they also became enlightened. At that time the Sangha, the community of the enlightened ones, was founded. The sermon Buddha gave to the five monks was his first sermon, called the[Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dhammacakkappavattana_Sutta). It was given on the full-moon day of [Asadha](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asadha" \o "Asadha). Buddha subsequently also spent his first [rainy season](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rainy_season) i.e. Varsha [vassa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vassa" \o "Vassa) at Sarnath at the Mulagandhakuti. The Sangha had grown to 60 in number (after Yasa and his friends had become monks), and Buddha sent them out in all directions to travel alone and teach the Dharma. All 60 monks were [Arahants](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arahants" \o "Arahants).

Observances by Buddhists and Hindus[[edit](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Guru_Purnima&action=edit&section=3" \o "Edit section: Observances by Buddhists and Hindus)]

Buddhists observe on this day [uposatha](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uposatha" \o "Uposatha) i.e. to observe eight precepts. [Vipassana](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vipassana" \o "Vipassana) meditators practice meditation on this day under the guidance of their teachers. [Rainy season](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rainy_season)i.e. varsha [vassa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vassa" \o "Vassa) also starts with this day. During the rainy season lasting for three lunar months from July to October. During this time Buddhist monks remain in a single place, generally in their temples. In some monasteries, monks dedicate the Vassa to intensive meditation. During Vassa, many Buddhist lay people reinvigorate their spiritual training and adopt more ascetic practices, such as giving up meat, alcohol, or smoking.

[](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Chaturmas.jpg)

[http://bits.wikimedia.org/static-1.24wmf11/skins/common/images/magnify-clip.png](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Chaturmas.jpg)

A [sanyasi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sanyasi" \o "Sanyasi) performing *Vyasa puja*traditionally held on Guru Purnima day, as a part of [Chaturmas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chaturmas" \o "Chaturmas) rituals

The Hindu spiritual Gurus are [revered](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reverence) on this day by a remembering their life and teachings. *[Vyasa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vyasa" \o "Vyasa)*[*Puja*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Puja_(Hinduism)) is held at various temples, where floral offerings and symbolic gifts are given away in his honour and that of the cosmic [satguru](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Satguru" \o "Satguru). The festivities are usually followed by feast for the disciples, *[shishya](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shishya" \o "Shishya)*, where the *[prasad](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prasad" \o "Prasad)* and *charnamrita* literally nectar of the feet, the symbolic wash of Guru's feet, which represents his grace, [kripa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kripa_(philosophy)" \o "Kripa (philosophy)) is distributed.[[10]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guru_Purnima#cite_note-ed-10) As a day of remembrance towards all gurus, through whom God grants the grace of knowledge ([Jnana](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jnana" \o "Jnana)) to the disciples,[[10]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guru_Purnima#cite_note-ed-10) special recitations of the [Hindu scriptures](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hindu_scriptures) especially, the [Guru Gita](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guru_Gita), a 216 verse ode to Guru, authored by the sage, Vyasa himself, are held all day; apart from singing of [bhajans](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bhajan" \o "Bhajan), hymns and organising of special [kirtan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kirtan" \o "Kirtan) session and [havan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Havan" \o "Havan) at many places, where devotees from all over gather at the [ashrams](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ashram), [matha](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matha" \o "Matha) or place where the seat of Guru, *Guru Gaddi* exists.[[11]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guru_Purnima#cite_note-11) This day also sees the ritual of *padapuja*, the worships of Guru's sandals, which represent his holy feet and is seen a way of rededicating to all that a Guru stands for.[[12]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guru_Purnima#cite_note-12) Disciples also recommit themselves on this day, towards following their teacher's guidance and teachings, for the coming year.[[10]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guru_Purnima#cite_note-ed-10) A mantra that is particularly used on this day is "Gurur Brahma, Gurur Vishnu, Gurur Devo Maheshwara, Guru Sakshat Parabrahmah Tasmai Shree Guru Veh Namah". This day is also seen as an occasion when fellow devotees, *Guru Bhai* (disciple-brother), express their solidarity to one another in their spiritual journey.[[13]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guru_Purnima#cite_note-13)