

The Ullambana Festival

The Buddhists celebrate the Ullambana Festival in the 7th lunar month. It is a **month of joy** and not a month of hungry ghosts.

The 15th day of the 7th lunar month is often known as the Buddha's joyful day and a day of rejoice for Sangha community. The origin of this joyful day can be found in various Buddhists' scriptures.

When the Buddha was alive, his disciples meditated in the forests of India during the rainy season of summer. Three months later, on the 15th day of the 7th month, they emerged from the forests to celebrate the completion of their meditation and reported their progress to the Buddha. Hence on this day, Buddhists make offering to the Sangha community.

The Buddhists also observe this festival based on the story of Maudgalyayana and his mother. Maudgalyayana discovered through his meditative power that his mother was reborn in the realm of pain and suffering and sought the Buddha's advice to help his mother gain a human rebirth. The Buddha then instructed him on how to obtain liberation for his mother including making food offerings to the Sangha community on the 15th day of the 7th month. Through the merits created, Maudgalyayana's mother finally gained a **human rebirth**. This is expounded in the **Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva Sutra**.

The **Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva Sutra** is fundamentally a teaching on 'karmic retribution' and it describes the consequences one creates for oneself by committing undesirable actions. This is especially beneficial for future beings in this dharma ending age, to help them to perform **more good deeds** and avoid being reborn in the lower realm.

It was spoken by the Buddha to beings of Trayastrimsa Heaven as a mark of **gratitude** and remembrance for his **beloved mother**. Hence this sutra is also known as the canon of filial piety, dealing with not only the filial responsibility between oneself and his parents but a **universal code of responsibility for all living beings**, all of whom the Buddha regards with same kindness, compassion and respect as one should accord to his parents.

We commemorate this festival by chanting the **Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva Sutra daily from 11 August to 8 September 2018 (except on Sundays where we continue with our regular prayers)**, giving all an opportunity to dedicate merits. The closing ceremony and the celebration of Ksitigarbha birthday will be on 9 September 2018.



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