

Faith Festivals October 2017

1st October is Jashn-E Mehergan (Or Mihr Jashan) -Tradition: Iranian Zoroastrian

Jashn-e Mehergan is an early autumn festival, and like NoRuz its origins have been lost in antiquity. Mehergan is dedicated to the divinity Meher or Mithra, who is associated with the sun and with justice. The ripening of the crops and fruits at this time of the year is seen as symbolic of the ripening of the world into fullness, before the moment of the ultimate victory over evil. It evokes the physical resurrection of the body along with its immortal soul, as promised by Ahura Mazda. It is customary to visit the Fire Temple to offer thanks to the Creator God, to participate in a jashan or thanksgiving ceremony, to listen to stories of King Faridoon's triumphant capture of the evil Zohak and to share in a community meal that includes dry fruits and nuts, along with a drink, dancing and merrymaking. More Information: <http://www.cais-soas.com/CAIS/Celebrations/mehregan.htm>; <https://www.interfaith.org.uk/resources/religious-festivals>

1st October is Ashura (10th Muharram) -Tradition: Muslim

For Sunni Muslims this is one of the two days of a minor fast that the Prophet kept in his lifetime. The second day of the fast may be observed either on the day preceding or the day following the 10th of Muharram. For Shi'a Muslims this is a day when they recall a great tragedy that took place on Muharram 10, AH 61 (680 CE). The Imam Husayn (son of Ali and Fatimah and therefore grandson of the Prophet) travelling with his family and many followers was attacked by the troops of the Caliph Yazid. After eight days without water Husayn was killed and his family and followers massacred at Karbala (now in Iraq). Shi'a Muslims remember the events in the days leading up to Ashura when they fast and recall these terrible events. The importance of this holy day can be judged from a popular Shi'a saying which some attribute to a Muslim poet and some to the sixth Imam, Jafar al-Saadiq: "Live as if every day is Ashura, every land Karbala!" For more: <http://www.ashura.com/>

2nd October is Gandhi Jayanti -Tradition: Hindu

Although not a religious ceremony as such, Gandhi's contribution to the philosophy of non-violence and to world wisdom has become enshrined into the world's psyche. This is a national holiday but a holiday many people around the world would be willing to embrace. Gandhi Jayanti is an Indian national holiday that celebrates the birthday of Mahatma Gandhi, who is referred to as the 'Father of the Nation'. He was the driving force behind the foundation of the state of India. His birthday is celebrated with services, prayers and painting and essay contests with topics that glorify peace and non-violence, and the singing of Gandhi's favourite devotional song entitled 'Raghupati Raghav Raja Ram' (Ram Dhun for short). The distribution of alcohol is banned on Gandhi Jayanti, as on other national holidays. For more: <http://www.indiacelebrating.com/events/gandhi-jayanti/>

5th October – 12th October SUKKOT – Tradition: Jewish. A seven day harvest festival also known as the Feast of Tabernacles, which commemorates the 40 years that the Jews spent in the wilderness on the way from slavery in Egypt to freedom in the Promised Land. A temporary hut or booth – called a sukkah – is used during this time for eating meals and for visits and socialising. In hot countries families may live in their sukkah during the festival. The roof, which has to be open in part to the elements, is covered with branches and decorated with fruit. Four species of plant, the lulav (palm branch), the etrog (a yellow citrus fruit), the hadas (myrtle) and the aravah (willow) are used at the festival. For more see: <http://www.interfaith.org.uk/resources/2016-religious-festivals/october>

13th October is Simchat Torah -Tradition: - **Jewish**. One of the most joyous celebrations of the Jewish calendar, It is a day to celebrate the reading of the Law (this festival, which means 'Rejoicing in the Torah', marks the completion of the annual cycle of reading from the Torah). As the reading should be continuous, a second scroll is begun again as soon as the final portion of the Torah has been read from the first scroll; so, as the reading from Deuteronomy ends, with the next breath, Genesis begins without a break – the Torah is a circle that never ends. All the Torah scrolls are paraded around the synagogue, with children dancing and singing, as do many of the adults, giving as many people as possible the honour of carrying a Torah scroll. Most progressive Jews celebrate this one day earlier, combining it with the eighth day of Sukkot, Shemini Atzeret. Synagogue services involve readings, processions and blessing of the children. For more, see http://www.chabad.org/holidays/JewishNewYear/template_cdo/aid/4689/jewish/Simchat-Torah.htm

16th October to 23rd October is Inter Faith Week of Prayer for World Peace-Tradition: **Christian/ interfaith**

At its inception, a Christian initiative, it has now been adopted by many faiths communities. It is a week that encourages those of different faiths who normally pray under the same sky, to come together to pray under the same roof in a stand of solidarity and peaceful cohabitation. It does not mean agreement for or conversion to the views expressed and the prayers said by fellow attendants, it means respect for their right to the peaceful expression of their own views and faith. Prayers from the literature of several different world religions are published each year in a special leaflet for use in this week. This custom receives the support of members from many different religious communities. For more, see <http://www.weekofprayerforworldpeace.com/>

19th October Thursday to 23rd October Monday DIVALI/DEEPAVALI – Tradition: **Hindu**

For Hindus this is a New Year festival lasting from one to five days, during which fireworks are set off and lights are hung out. It is a festival of light, coinciding with the darkest night of the lunar month. Various interpretations are given to the festival in different parts of India, but it is generally associated with Lakshmi, goddess of wealth and prosperity, or with the victorious return of Rama and Sita to the kingdom of Ayodhya after their exile. Divali marks the beginning of the Indian financial year. For more, see: <http://www.divalifestival.org/>

Sikh: (Bandi Chhor Divas)

Sikhs also celebrate Divali since Guru Hargobind, the sixth Guru, was released from Gwalior prison on this day. The Guru refused to accept release when it was offered him by the Emperor Jehangir unless 52 imprisoned Hindu princes were also given their freedom. To meet the Emperor's condition that only those who hold on to his cloak could leave the prison, the Guru had a coat with long tassels made. The Golden Temple in Amritsar is illuminated at this time and firework displays take place there. It is a time for new clothes, presents and sweets. For more <http://www.sikhnet.com/news/bandi-chhor-divas>

Jain: Divali has a special significance for Jains, as on this day in 527 BCE Mahavira gave his last teachings and attained ultimate liberation. Today lamps are lit and children are given sweets by their parents. Some devout Jains fast for the two days of Divali, following the example of Mahavira. Jain business people traditionally start their accounting year from Divali. For more see: <http://www.jainuniversity.org/jain-festival/Divali-Festival>

20th October is the Installation of Scriptures as Guru Granth -Tradition: **Sikh**

On this day in 1708, the ninth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, announced that he would be the

last human Sikh Guru. On the same day the sacred collection known as the Adi Granth was officially installed as the 10th and everlasting Guru, named Guru Granth Sahib. Uniquely among Scriptures, it is the Guru Granth Sahib that is considered the Supreme Spiritual Authority and Head of the Sikh religion, rather than any living person. It is also the only scripture of its kind which not only contains the works of its own religious founders but also writings of people from other faiths. As their living Guru, the book is held in great reverence by Sikhs who treat it with the utmost respect. Sikhism rejects idol worship, so the Guru Granth Sahib is not worshipped; emphasis is placed on respect for the writings which appear within. Learn more at <http://www.sikhs.org/granth.htm>

21st October is **Anniversary of the Birth of the Bab –1819 Shiraz**, - Tradition: **Persia Baha’i** The Bab (the title means ‘Gate’) called people to religious renewal and to await the coming of a messenger from God, believed to be Baha’u’llah (his title means ‘Glory of God’). Source: <https://www.interfaith.org.uk/resources/religious-festivals>

22nd October is **ANNIVERSARY OF THE BIRTH OF BAHU’ULLAH** - Tradition: **Baha’i** Founder of the Baha’i faith, he was born the eldest son of a Persian nobleman in Tehran, Persia, in 1817. <https://www.interfaith.org.uk/resources/religious-festivals>

24th October to 25th October is **Pavarana** -Tradition: **Buddhist**
The last day of the Rains Retreat (the Vassa) is known as Pavarana Day or ‘Leaving the Vassa’. Pavarana means ‘to invite’ and on this day monks who have completed the Retreat invite their fellows to admonish them for any failings. "The three month period (vassa) is often used by lay and monastic folk alike to make a variety of determinations; to take up a particular devotional or meditation practice, to challenge or renounce some old habit - like eating sugar or smoking or drinking coffee (or worse). In Asia this may even be taken to the extent of lay folk taking temporary ordination for all or part of this time. The full moon of Pavarana marks the end of this period and is a time of celebration. For those who have maintained a strict practice it means they can relax a bit; hopefully having learnt something about the particular thing they had been investigating and not falling back into old habits". It is also known as ‘Sangha Day’. For more see <http://www.buddhamind.info/leftside/lifesty-2/pavarana.htm>

31st October is **All Hallow Eve** -Tradition: **Christian**
For our Christian friends, All Hallows Eve falls on 31st October each year, and is the day before All Hallows' Day, also known as All Saints' Day in the Christian calendar. The Church traditionally held a vigil on All Hallows' Eve when worshippers would prepare themselves with prayers and fasting prior to the feast day itself. The name derives from the Old English 'hallowed' meaning holy or sanctified and is now usually contracted to the more familiar word Hallowe'en or Halloween. For more: http://www.sharefaith.com/guide/Christian-Holidays/all_hallows_eve.html

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