

## Faith Festivals October 2018

### **1<sup>st</sup> October Monday 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>

### **2<sup>nd</sup> October (Tuesday) is SIMCHAT TORAH Jewish 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](http://www.chabad.org/holidays/JewishNewYear/template_cdo/aid/4689/jewish/Simchat-Torah.htm)

### **2<sup>nd</sup> 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/>

### **9<sup>th</sup> October (Tuesday) to 17<sup>th</sup> October (Wednesday) is NAVARATI Tradition: Hindu**

Sharad Navaratri (winter Navaratri) also Known as Maha Navaratri (The Great Navaratri) or simply Navaratri for our Hindu friends. It is the most important of the five Navaratri periods celebrated in the Hindu year and lasts 9 days (Navaratri means nine nights). Navaratri is divided into sets of three days to adore different aspects of the supreme goddess. Hindus from different areas celebrate in different ways. During the nine days of Navaratri, the Mother Goddess is honoured in all her manifestations, including Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswati. It's a festival full of worship and dance. The festival culminates with Dussera, the victory of good over evil, on the tenth day. The festival is celebrated all over India but in different ways. The most flamboyant and renowned Navaratri celebrations can be seen in western India, throughout the state of Gujarat and in Mumbai. In West Bengal, Navaratri and Dussera are celebrated as Durga Puja. In western India, Navaratri is celebrated with nine nights of dancing. The traditional dances of Gujarat, known as garba and dandiya raas, are performed in circles with dancers dressed up in colourful clothes. Small, decorated sticks called dandiya are used in the dandiya raas". Source <http://goindia.about.com/od/festivalsevents/p/navaratri.htm>.

In north India the Ram Lila is performed each night, in celebration of Lord Rama's victory over Ravana, the demon king of Sri Lanka. Families from Gujarat gather, wherever they are in the world, to participate in

circle dances associated with the Goddess and Lord Krishna. Many Punjabis worship the Goddess daily during Navaratri, and observe a strictly vegetarian diet. On the eighth day, Durga Ashtami, Punjabi Hindus fast before conducting worship of the Goddess that involves honouring young girls as the embodiment of her power. Source <http://www.when-is.com/navaratri-2014.asp> ” On the first three days, the Mother is invoked as powerful force called Durga in order to destroy all our impurities, vices and defects. The next three days, the Mother is adored as a giver of spiritual wealth, Lakshmi, who is considered to have the power of bestowing on her devotees the inexhaustible wealth. The final set of three days is spent in worshipping the mother as the goddess of wisdom, Saraswati. In order have all-round success in life, we need the blessings of all three aspects of the divine mother; hence, the worship for nine nights.” Source <http://hinduism.about.com/od/festivalsholidays/a/navaratri.htm> For more, see <http://www.rudraksha-ratna.com/navratri.htm>.

#### **14<sup>th</sup> October (Sunday) to 18 October (Thursday) is DURGA PUJA Hindu Tradition: Hindu**

Durga Puja is the ceremonial worship of the mother goddess, is one of the most important festivals of India. Apart from being a religious festival for the Hindus, it is also an occasion for reunion and rejuvenation, and a celebration of traditional culture and customs. While the rituals entails ten days of fast, feast and worship, the last four days - Saptami, Ashtami, Navami and Dashami - are celebrated with much gaiety and grandeur in India and abroad, especially in Bengal, where the ten-armed goddess riding the lion is worshipped with great passion and devotion. Durga Puja is celebrated every year in the Hindu month of Ashwin (September-October) and commemorates Prince Rama's invocation of the goddess before going to war with the demon king Ravana. In Nepal, Bangladesh and (in India) West Bengal and other north eastern areas, Durga Puja is the biggest annual festival and lasts several days. In Kolkata hundreds of pandals (decorated temporary shrines) are put up. The Goddess's slaying of the demon, Mahishasura, is celebrated, and in Nepal the celebration involves animal sacrifices. The festival ends with the immersion of figures of Durga in rivers and sea. For more see [http://hinduism.about.com/od/durgapuja/a/durga\\_puja\\_history.htm](http://hinduism.about.com/od/durgapuja/a/durga_puja_history.htm)

#### **19<sup>th</sup> October (Friday) DUSSEHRA / VIJAYA DASHAMI PUJA Tradition: Hindu**

Dussehra is the culmination of the Navaratri festival. In north India the day after Navaratri is celebrated as the 'victorious tenth' (Vijaya Dashami) and huge figures of Ravana are filled with fireworks and burned on Ram Lila grounds (public areas). Many people of the Hindu faith observe Dussehra through special prayer meetings and food offerings to the gods at home or in temples throughout India. They also hold outdoor fairs (melas) and large parades with effigies of Ravana (a mythical king of ancient Sri Lanka). The effigies are burnt on bonfires in the evening. Many Hindus also believe that it is lucky to start a new venture, project or journey on Dussehra. They may also exchange gifts of leaves from the Shami tree (*Prosopis spicigera*) as a symbol of the story of the Pandavas brothers' exile in the Mahabharata stories. In the UK some temple congregations carry this out on a smaller scale. For more see <http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/india/dussehra>

#### **16<sup>th</sup> October Tuesday to 23<sup>rd</sup> October Tuesday 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/>

#### **20<sup>th</sup> October Saturday 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>

**24<sup>th</sup> October Wednesday to 25<sup>th</sup> October Thursday 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>

**31<sup>st</sup> October Wednesday 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](http://www.sharefaith.com/guide/Christian-Holidays/all_hallows_eve.html)

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