

Infos on **Asalha Puja Day**

Vassa or Rains Retreat (Buddhist Lent)

Vassa is the three-month annual retreat observed by Theravada practitioners. Taking place during the rainy season, Vassa lasts for three lunar months, from July to October.

In English, Vassa is often glossed as **Rains Retreat** or **Buddhist Lent**.

For the duration of Vassa, monastics remain in one place, typically a monastery or temple grounds. In some monasteries, monks dedicate the Vassa to intensive meditation. Some Buddhist lay people choose to observe Vassa by adopting more ascetic practices, such as giving up meat, alcohol, or smoking. Commonly, the number of years a monk has spent in monastic life is expressed by counting the number of vassas (or *rains*) since ordination.

Vassa begins on the first day of the waning moon of the eighth lunar month, which is the day after Asalha Puja ("Dhamma day"). It ends on Pavarana, when all monastics come before the Sangha and atone for any offense that might have been committed during Vassa.

Vassa is followed by Kathina, a festival in which the laypeople express gratitude to monks. Lay Buddhists bring donations to temples, especially new robes for the monks.