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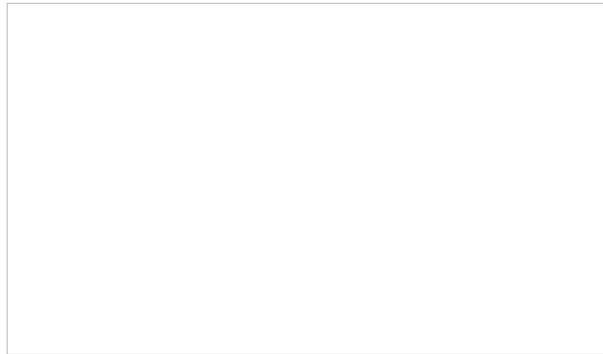


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The Use and Symbolism of candles in Buddhist worship and devotion. **HIDDEN**

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The Use of Candles in Buddhism



Candles in Buddhism

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Where is the World's Biggest Candle?



"Thousands of candles can be lit from a single candle, and the life of the candle will not be shortened. Happiness never decreases by being shared."
The Buddha

Candles in Buddhism

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CANDLES | INCENSE | BURNERS



There is not enough darkness in all the world to put out the light of even one small candle"

Robert Arden

Candles are an age old traditional part of Buddhist rituals. In conjunction with incense and flowers, candles are placed in front of Buddhist shrines or statues and images of the Buddha as a mark of respect. They are often accompanied by offerings of food and drink. The light of the burning candle flame represents the light of the Buddha's teachings.

Candles and incense also evoke the state of impermanence and change .The light from a candle can also be said to symbolize the enlightenment of the Buddha.

Thailand Buddhist Candle Festival



"Just as a candle cannot burn without fire, men cannot live without a spiritual life."
The Buddha

Buddhist Lent Day in Thailand, an overwhelmingly Buddhist country is in July every year and is mainly practiced by established monks. The day before the start of Lent the Candle Festival is celebrated by Thai people. The Candle Festival is celebrated right across the country, but the most particularly celebrations take place in Ubon Rachathani north-eastern Thailand (Isaan).

According to tradition, Buddhist Lent Day started as a result of villagers complaining to the Buddha. It is said that a group of ordained monks were making merit (tamboon) and had walked through wet rice fields. At this time the rice fields were at the peak of their growth and by walking in them they had ruined the crop. As a consequence the legend has it that the Buddha told all monks to practice making merit whilst only staying inside the confines of their temples. Nowadays Buddhist Lent stipulates that all monks must remain confined to their temples for a period of 3 months during the rainy season, beginning on the first day of the eighth waning moon.

Thai people offer a range of basic goods to their monks and this offering also includes candles and this of course includes the famous Candle Festival. In previous times most temples had no electricity and so candles had an important symbolic significance for ceremonies but also more practically for illumination in daily use. Furthermore the candle represents wisdom as divine light: during the Candle Festival the Buddhist laity practice

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their beliefs by offering large and often extravagantly decorated candles to the monks.

Candle Festival Celebrations

"There are two ways of spreading light: to be the candle or the mirror that reflects it."

Edith Wharton



On the day before Lent, large groups of people gather with their beautifully decorated candles and march with them on elaborate and beautiful parades. The rich, luxuriously sculpted decorations on these beautiful candles portray willpower, unity, and the beliefs of that community. The candle parade procession contains the broadest cross section of the community all in their finest clothes. In Ubon Ratchathani this also includes many groups of local Isaan performers, musicians and dancers who accompany the candles as they make their way through the city. There is also a popular beauty contest to select Miss Candle (who is regarded as the most beautiful lady of that community).

Throughout the country, there are celebrations of the Candle Festival. Whatever the weather in Thailand the people have fun and expressing their faith on July 8, the beginning of Buddhist lent.

"How far that little candle throws its beams! So shines a good deed in a naughty world."

William Shakespeare

Candle Meditation



Sit a quiet peaceful room and light a candle. It could be of any colour but some prefer a blue or a white one.

Now stare deep into the burning flame of the candle and focus on it. Don't let your vision of the candle flame become blurred. As you stare at the candle your mind will become filled with the noise of everyday thinking, worries and trivial concerns.

These should just start to drift away and after a short while, you may begin to receive images and thoughts that don't seem to come from you. Take these as your spiritual guides and try to interpret them.

Keep staring at the candle's burning flame do not be distracted and try to interpret the visions you are receiving. One common example is that of 'seeing' a peeled onion. At first this may seem senseless but in this example it could signify that as you travel further along on your life's path, the layers are being peeled away allowing you to see and experience the ultimate core of you existence.

As you progress further with your candle meditation try to learn to trust your own analysis and understanding of these thoughts that the candle brings to your mind. Candle meditation thus acts as a powerful way of focusing your concentration.

Try to build up your experience of candle meditation from 5 minutes a day to 20 minutes and

do this over several months. Your eyes will need to adapt to the candle's light and over time, you will be able distinguish between which thoughts are your own and which can act as your spiritual guides.

"Better to light a candle than curse the darkness"

Chinese proverb

"As a white candle in a holy place, So is the beauty of an aged face"

Joseph Campbell

Where is the World's Biggest Candle ?

"We say God and the imagination are one... How high that highest candle lights the dark."

Wallace Stevens

Digressing slightly from the use of Candles in Buddhism in my research I diverted to see what human imagination could bring to the world of candles - this is what I found.

"A good teacher is like a candle - it consumes itself to light the way for others."

Anon

There are many contenders and a long history of the search for the world's biggest candle. The first contender for the world's biggest candle is the USA - the Warm Glow Candle Outlet in Centreville, Indiana where they claim to have the world's biggest candle.



However At the Stockholm Exhibition of 1897 what has been described as the world's largest candle on record went on display. This massive candle is said to have been eighty feet high and measuring eight and a half feet in diameter.

The long established firm of Ajello Candles is another contender for the historic title of the world's biggest candle. In 1921 it created the Enrico Caruso Memorial Candle. This candle measured five feet in circumference and tapered at the top to 18 inches. This candle stood an impressive 18 feet tall and once the candle was burning the company claimed it could continue for 1800 years, burning one day each year on the anniversary of Enrico Caruso's death.

In 2005 in Jerusalem they made the world's largest Hannukha candle. This massive candle was over eight and a half metres in height and 85cm wide. It was located in the Pisga mall in the city.

These are just some examples of what claim to be or were the world's largest candles.

"Nirvana is not the blowing out of the candle. It is the extinguishing of the candle's flame because day is come."

Rabindranath Tagore



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