

Tell-tale of *Honey in Buddhism*

Honey is known to have a long history and is being used as a sweetener for thousands of years. The inherent properties of raw honey even popularized it as natural medicine. As such it was popularly used as a cure for various ailments during ancient times. BuddhaHome Honey brings back the essence of the ancient sweetener.

Honey is essentially associated with Buddhism which closely connects to nature. Gautam Buddha, the preacher of simple living believed in the power of nature. For him, all sentient beings are obliged to follow the rules of nature. As such, many of his teachings were taken from the animals, leaves, fruits, and even the seasons. Of the many nature's blessings, honey, the sweet produce of the bees holds a significant place in Buddhism. Lord Buddha mentioned honey as one of the five vital medicines. Legend says that honey gave nourishment to Gautam Buddha preceding and following his enlightenment. Thus, Buddhist followers believe honey to be auspicious food. In this blog, we will delve into the significance of honey in Buddhism and what BuddhaHome honey brings to the table.

The Story of Honey in Buddhism

Legend says that after his enlightenment, Buddha traveled all through ancient India spreading his word to his disciples. On his visit to Kaushambi, a prosperous city during ancient times, a dispute arose among monastic followers. Buddha made

several attempts to resolve the quarrel but was unsuccessful as the people were adamant. To show his dissatisfaction with their conduct, Buddha left and retired to Parileyya Forest.

During Buddha's retreat in the forest, an elephant named Palilayaka came to him. He looked after Buddha, protected the Lord from wild animals, and brought him fruits and water. Seeing him, a monkey brought a honeycomb for Buddha to eat. Buddha took the offering, however, he did not eat it. The monkey on realizing it took back the honeycomb wherein he found bee larvae. It cleaned the honey of the larvae and brought back pure honey to Buddha which he accepted. When Buddha ate the honey, the monkey was overjoyed. In his excitement, the monkey began to jump from tree to tree. While doing so, he suffered a fall and died. However, because of his devotion to Buddha, the monkey found a place in Heaven.

On the very same day, the monks ended their discord. They took a vow of unity and cooperation which is one of the major principles of the Buddhist sangha. When the monastic community found Buddha, the Lord preached some sacred lessons. Buddha thereafter went back to the city and the elephant tried to follow him. However, Buddha stopped him and said he belonged to the forest, not the city where humans are cruel and heartless. The elephant was heartbroken and died in grief. Like the monkey, he also found a place in the Tavatimsa Heaven. These events are believed to have taken place on the day of the full moon which is considered auspicious and celebrated by many Buddhist followers.

Buddhist Teachings arising from the event

The playful monkey shared his gift to the needy and found great pleasure in doing so. Buddha preached that his followers should be like the monkey, playful and helpful. He also took the example of the elephant and stated that though the majestic elephant is very powerful and can cause great destruction, it lives peacefully in the serenity of jungles. He further stated that in case of discord between communities, one can cultivate wisdom and consideration for others but if that is not possible, he should retreat to solitude as the foolish association will only increase suffering. The most important lesson he gave was about bees and honey gathering. Lord Buddha said that Buddhist followers should earn their livelihood similar to the bees collecting honey. Like bees put relentless hard work without harming the flower, Buddhists need to work tirelessly to follow their dharma.

The tale of the monkey gifting honey to the Buddha is an important chapter of Buddha's life. As such, the concept has been used immensely in Buddhist art several times. The simple tale is a take on life and the simple concepts of Buddhism.

Thus, the honey gifting occasion became one of the significant episodes in the life of the Lord Buddha. The day is commemorated as Madhu Purnima, or "honey full moon." Buddhists, especially of Theravada sect, observe the Honey Festival on the full moon of the 10th lunar month.

The Buddhist Honey Festival

The Honey offering Festival is one of the traditional Buddhist festivals. As the tradition goes, Buddhist followers visit the temple dressed in white. The

devotees pay their respect to the Buddha, his teachings, and monastics. The ceremony includes paying homage to Buddha via Chanting and engaging in Dhamma talks. Followers may also decide to meditate and offer flowers, incense sticks, etc. The blessings are shared with friends, family, relatives, and in fact all living beings with acts of charity, donation, and gifts. The festival is also significant as it marks an event that underlines the importance of harmony within the sangha.

-Buddha Home

