

Watch the clip titled Monsoon in Asia.

Buddha asked all Buddhist monks to stay in their monasteries during the three-month rainy season.

What do you think Buddhists monks would do for three months during the rainy season?’

Vassa/the Rains Retreat

Retreats are important for many Buddhists as they provide a chance to spend periods of time with other Buddhists away from everyday life. Retreats involve various aspects of Buddhism, such as meditation and studying the Buddha's teachings.

One important retreat is called **Vassa**, or **Rains Retreat**. This is an annual retreat that takes place over a three-month period during the rainy season from July to October. During this time, monks gather and devote a lot of time to study. They do this to remember the Buddha, who is said to have spent time in a forest near the city of Varanasi in India taking shelter from the rain. The monks also remember their commitment to the Buddha's teachings during this time.

There is a very good reason why Buddha asked the monks to stay in one place during the rainy season. Staying put ensured that the monks didn't squash any creatures brought out of the soil by the rain so they didn't break the first precept, which is 'Do not harm living things'.

Task: Explore a Buddhist retreat centre website to find out what a retreat is like.

Plan your own retreat for your own beliefs and interests.