



Vedanta Letters

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Adhik Mas

अधिक मास



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अधिक Month

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At present the Vikram calendar is having *Sravana adhik-mas*. We all know the existence of *adhik-mas* in our calendar system but know little about this strange concept. The concept of *adhik-mas* is not hard to understand if you know the hindu astronomy. In this article I will present a general discussion on *adhik-mas*. If want to know beyond the scope of this article, please send me an e-mail.

Definition: *Adhik* means extra and *mas* means month, hence the term means 'extra month'. *Adhik-mas* is also known as '*mal*' month. Here the term '*mal*' means waste. Astronomically *adhik-mas* is known as Intercalary month. As you all know that hindu calendar system is based on Lunar motions through the space as opposed to the Gregorian calendar systems which is based on Sun motions through the space. The lunar months for religious purposes would commence from the moment of new-moon and would be named after the saura masa in which the new-moon falls. If there be two new-moons during the period of a saura masa, the lunar month beginning from the first new-moon is the adhika or mala and the lunar month beginning from the moment of the second new-moon is the suddha or nija.

The concept of Why and When adhik-mas: Calendar "date" that we are so familiar with in our daily life is based on solar calendar. English (Gregorian) calendar is a solar calendar. The basis for solar calendar is the rotation of the Earth around the Sun. It takes earth approximately 365 1/4 days to complete its rotation around the Sun. The English calendar that most of us use today divides the 365 days of earth's period of rotation around the Sun in twelve months. The leap year, which occurs once every four years, accounts for 1/4 day per year.

The lunar calendar (believed to have originated in India, has been around for a very long time, even long before the solar calendar) is based on the moon's rotation around the Earth. The lunar month corresponds to one complete rotation of Moon around the Earth. Since this period of rotation of moon around the earth varies, the duration of lunar month also varies. On average, the lunar month has about 29 1/2 days. In addition to moon's rotation around the earth, the lunar year is based on earth's rotation around the Sun. In general, the lunar year has twelve lunar months of approximately 354 days, thus making it shorter by about 11 days than the solar year. However, the lunar calendar accounts for this difference by adding an extra lunar month about once every 2 1/2 years. This extra lunar month is known as the "*Adhik-mas*" in India.

According to sidereal zodiac system, Sun enters the first zodiac sign Aries (*Mesh*) on about April 15 of every year. And about 15th of every month Sun enters the next sidereal zodiac sign. For example, as we know, every year on *MakarSankranti* the Sun enters the sidereal zodiac sign Capricorn on about January 14. While

Sun remains in a zodiac sign for approximately one month, the Moon travels through all twelve zodiac signs in about 27 1/2 days. As a result, on average, once about every two and half years, the entry of the Moon in the same zodiac sign occurs twice while the Sun remains in the same sign. In other words, when the Sun is traveling through the same zodiac sign, the month during which two new moons occur, happens once about every 2 1/2 years. The lunar month corresponding to the period between these two new moons is treated as the extra month or the *adhik-mas*. Thus, if the *adhik-mas* occurs at the beginning of the lunar month *Chaitra*, then it's called as *Adhik Chaitra*, and the following lunar month would be then the regular or *Neej* lunar month *Chaitra*.

The addition of *adhik-mas* corrects the number of days needed to bring the solar and lunar years in agreement and help keep the seasonal cycle in order. As this additional month was added at various times of the year to achieve this, that it could not be given a specific name associated with a season or a stellar system, it was termed as "Adhik-mas" i.e. "Extra-month". To give it some identification, Adhik-mas is always named after the month it precedes - so for example - the Adhik-mas before Jeth-mas will be called Adhik-Jeth-mas.

As you may have noticed over a period of number years, the placement of *adhik-mas* is quite irregular and it is based on complex calculations of Lunar and Sun motions through different constellations. The Calendar Reform Committee laid out the rules for including the *adhik-mas*. Most of the time, *adhik-mas* is placed before Jeth, Ashada, Sravana, Bhadara or Aso. According to the astronomical rules, *adhik-mas* cannot be placed before the month of '*pose*'.

Adhik-mas and Blue Moon: The concept of the *adhik-mas* (the extra month) is similar to the "Blue Moon" in the West, which occurs almost with the same frequency of 2 1/2 years. Blue moon (remember the famous saying, "once in a blue moon...") is the second full moon when two full moons occur in the same month. Naturally the blue moon must occur towards the end of month (some where between 29th,30th,or 31st of the month). The occurrence of the blue moon usually precedes the *adhik-mas* (*If you noticed, the month of July 2004 has two Full Moon*).

Stories and Legends behind Adhik-mas: There are several stories and legends associated with adhik-mas. There are many stories in the *Padma Puran* extolling *adhik-mas's* glory. The following are the important one:

1. Each of the months has a presiding astral deity to signify which stellar system is associated with the Sun during that month. As *adhik-mas* has no such association with a particular stellar system, it was associated with the universal deity - Lord Shri

Purushottam. As with everything, the ancient sages understood the need of the masses for a convincing “story” to make this astrological point stick in the mind of the ordinary person.

They created a beautiful legend in which **adhik-mas** was disowned by all the stellar deities and no one thought it auspicious. Feeling orphaned, it went to Lord Shri Vishnu for advise. Being the preserver of the universe, he was keen to make sure everyone worked happily in the overall scheme of things. Concerned that the correct revolution of months, seasons and years - central to the successful working of things - was maintained, He decided to resolve the matter and took the dis-satisfied month to Golok and requested Lord Shri Purushottamji to find a resolution.

The Lord is forever compassionate. Being omnipresent and omnipotent, He permeates all and every thing in the universe. How can anyone feel orphaned when the universal spirit resided in that person ? To dispel the inferiority complex of the Adhik-mas, the Lord smiled, sat him upon His lap and said, “You are mine ! How can you possibly feel orphaned ? I declare that from hence, any good work carried out during your term will bear enduring fruit and will be of greater value than all works performed at other times of the year.”

Overwhelmed by the Lord’s kindness, **adhik-mas** bowed before the Lord and said, “This is a boon beyond my reckoning ! I am forever grateful for your compassion. But, my Lord, the great men of learning have declared that during my term on the Earth, no formal ritual work may bear fruit and so no one will perform great sacrifices or commence on great penances during my term on the earth. What am I to do ? Though yours, am I to remain as the only month when all auspicious actions will cease ?”

The Lord is forever full of understanding and could empathise with **adhik-mas**. The Lord of the universe than said, “I bless you as my own month. Whatever good deeds are done during your reign will outshine all other works done during all other months. Great works done with devotion during **adhik-mas** will amass such great fruits that even the doors to Golok will open for the devotee. Have no fear, amongst all the months, you shall reign as the supreme and shall be known by my own name as Purushottam-mas (month of Lord Shri Purushottam).”

Adhik-mas bowed low before the Lord and returned to the realm of the mortals with great joy. From that day onwards, everyone looks forward to the time when **adhik-mas** comes around again and people can worship the Lord with great devotion, hoping to achieve that which would otherwise take several life times to achieve.

2. Prior to this name, the month was known as **mal-mas** (meaning waste). Since the sun did not enter any rashis during **adhik-mas**, people considered it inauspicious and hence referred to it as waste.

Grieved by this blot, **adhik-mas** took the form of a human and travelled to Vishnu in Vaikunth. With heartfelt prayers he requested to be delivered from this ignominy and attain honor. Merciful Vishnu blessed him, gracing him Shri Krishna’s *darshan* in Golok. In turn Shri Krishna blessed him with the boon, “Henceforth I have accepted **mal-mas**! From today, I will uplift him to a status similar to mine.”

*Atanmasadhipashchaham mayaivayam pratishthitaha,
Purushottameti mannama tadapyasmai samarpitam.*

i.e. “All the virtues that have rendered me fame as Purushottam in this world, and my name Purushottam, I gift both to this month!” Shri Krishna then added, “Whoever performs *satkarmas* - good deeds in this month, their misery will be eradicated by these *satkarmas*. Those who perform penance in this month will conquer their *indriyas* - senses. Whereas by performing *satkarmas* in other months one attains *Swarg*, and also returns (to earth) after their depletion, performing them in Purushottam Mas will totally eradicate *punarjanma* - cycle of rebirth. He then added that, “I will forgive all the sins of those who perform penance in Purushottam Mas.

3. Another story relates how Draupadi, in her past birth as Medhavati suffered spinsterhood. Durvasa rishi instructed her to perform penance in Purushottam Mas, which she hotly refused. Therefore she suffered Durvasa’s curse. To be delivered from his curse she prayed to Mahadevji. When this pleased him, she blurted out a request for a husband five times! This resulted in her being married to the five Pandavas in her next birth, as Draupadi.

Additionally, for insulting Purushottam Mas, she suffered humiliation at the hands of Duhshasan in a packed assembly. Later, after hearing Purushottam Mas’s *katha* from Shri Krishna, the Pandavas and Draupadi performed penance in this month and attained peace.

Adhik-mas Rituals: The ancient sages declared that when the moon is in the sun’s aura (*mandal*), and if at this time, the sun transmigrates from one zodiac (sign) to another, it destroys the merit of the yagna, or other rituals. Therefore auspicious rituals should not be performed during this period. Instead holy acts and deeds such as bathing (in sacred rivers), donation, listening to *kathas*, etc., for propitiating God, should be performed, rather than idling away time.

In this month, devotees awaken at Brahma *Muhurt* - around 4.30 a.m. After the ritual ablutions, they perform puja. They do pranayam for physical and mental purity. If circumstances are favorable devotees should offer *Shodshopchar puja* - worship with 16 different types of materials. If physically healthy, devotees should fast; either on water only for the whole month, or do *farar*, or *ektana* - one meal a day. The days should be devoted to listening to *katha*. The merit of this *vrat* is greater than that of performing a hundred *yagnas*, since this leads to attainment of Paramatma’s abode.

Hindus worldwide celebrate this sacred month, which arrives every thirty-two months, by performing extra *malas*, *pradakshinas*, pilgrimages, scriptural reading and *parayans* - holding a *katha* series of a sacred text.

Sources:

1. Report of the Calendar Reform Committee, Government of India, New Delhi, 1955, pp. 250-280.

2. Padma Purana, Gita Press, Gorakhpur, India.
3. <http://www.swaminarayan.org/festivals/prushottammas/>
4. <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/2425/adhik-mas1.htm>
5. <http://www.boloji.com/astro/00321.htm>

Measurement of Time

The current era is called Kali Yuga. According to tradition, this era began with the death of Krishna, about 5,000 years ago. According to the ancient sages of India, Kali Yuga will last for 4,32,000 years.

Immediately prior to Kali Yuga was a stretch of time called Dwapar Yuga; it was twice as long as Kali Yuga, or $2 \times 4,32,000$ years. Prior to that was Treta Yuga of $3 \times 4,32,000$ years. Before that, it was Krita Yuga with duration of $4 \times 4,32,000$ years. All these four yugas together is a Maha Yuga, the Great Era. So a Maha Yuga is 4.32 million years, ten times as long as Kali Yuga. Incidentally, the beginning of the latest Maha Yuga coincides roughly with, what modern science calls, the emergence of humanoids.

In Dwapara Yuga, human beings lived upto 400 years. There are four stages in life - Balya, Youvana, Koumara and Vriddhapyam. In Dwaparyug, Balya stage was upto 40 years, Youvana stage upto 120 years, and later Koumara and Vriddhapyam stages. But now in the Kaliyuga, Balya stage is upto 15 years, Youvana upto 45 years, Koumara upto 60 years and Vriddhapyam beyond 60 years.

Twenty seven Maha Yugas is one Pralaya. Seven Pralayas is one Manvantara. Finally, six Manvantaras is a Kalpa. That is, one Kalpa is $27 \times 7 \times 6 = 1,134$ Maha Yugas. This works out to 1134×4.3 million = 4.876 billion years. And, according to some modern scientists, that is the approximate age of the planet Earth.