

Vaishakh Adhik Maas Begins - 15th April 2010

Written by Ashutosh
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This year the Adhik Maas will be in this ongoing month of Vaishakh. It will begin on 15th April 2010 and will end on 16th April 2010. You must be thinking what is an Adhik Maas and why is it called so. 'Adhik' means 'Additional' and 'Maas' means 'Month'. Its literal meaning is 'An additional month'.

Now, why is it an additional month and why is it added? To explain that we will give a brief description of the two calendar systems which are used concurrently in India. One is a Lunar Calendar which is based on the Lunar cycle and the second one is a Solar Calendar which is based on Sun's cycle. But, the Lunar calendar is mostly used for calculating festivals and religious ceremonies.

A Lunar year is of 354.327 days while a Solar year is of 365.2422 days. This way every year there develops a difference of 10.87 days between these two calendar years. This difference adds up to become one full month every three years and this additional month is added to balance the difference between the Lunar and Solar calendars. This additional month is called an Adhik Maas.

This year this Adhik Maas has been added to the month of Vaishakh which began on 30th March 2010. Tomorrow, 14th of April 2010 will be the Amavasya of the actual Vaishakh. The day after, 15th April 2010, will mark the beginning of the Adhik Maas of Vaishakh. Interestingly, tomorrow is also the Surya Sankranti, the change in sign of Sun's transit. Sun enters Aries tomorrow.

The Adhik Maas is so adjusted that there is no Surya Sankranti in it. This Adhik Maas will end on 16th May 2010. But, the actual Vaishakh month will end only on 30th May 2010. You must have observed that the festival of Holi was way too early this year, on 28th February 2010. So was Diwali last year, on 18th October 2009. But, this year Diwali will be on 5th November 2010. Quite a difference made by the Adhik Maas.

This Adhik Maas is a wise and sensible way of balancing the Lunar and Solar calendars so that the festivals keep falling in proper seasons. Such usage of two calendars has also been practiced in other cultures too. The Mayan civilization used a calendar based on the cycle of Venus and they too had a system of adding an extra month to every few years to adjust it with Solar calendar.

In Hinduism, Adhik Maas is considered good for performing poojas, havans, giving alms and donations and reading or listening to holy scriptures. This month had no ruling deity and due to this absence of a deity all ceremonies like marriages, house warming, house or temple construction, installation of statues in temples, etc are prohibited. As per Hindu Mythology, the Adhik Maas approached Lord Vishnu and requested to be granted a ruling deity. Vishnu fulfilled this wish by making himself the ruling deity of Adhik Maas. This is why an Adhik Maas is also called a 'Purushottam Maas'.