Adhik Maas significance: All you need to know about the thirteenth month in the Hindu calendar

There are usually twelve months in a year, but an additional month is added once in about three years to align the lunar and the solar calendars. Know the significance of Adhik Maas and the dates in 2020.

Hindus follow the Lunar calendar for ascertaining the dates of the festivals and the solar calendar for determining the position of the Sun and the occurrences related to it.

Purushottam Maas (translit. puruśottama māsa) or Adhik Maas (translit. adhika = 'extra', māsa = 'month') is an extra month in the Hindu calendar that is inserted to keep the lunar and solar calendars aligned. Purushottam is an epithet of Vishnu, to whom the month is dedicated.

The position of Adhik Maas amongst the other months is variable, re-occurring about every 32.5 months. This is in contrast to some other common lunisolar calendars that insert an intercalary lunar month at a fixed point of the year. For example, in the Jewish calendar, the extra month is added before Adar; in the Buddhist calendar, it is added after Ashadha / Waso.

The other names for Purushottam Maas are Adhik Maas. Spellings in the Latin alphabet vary,
including purshottam, purushottam, purushottama; adhik, adhika; maal, māla; maas, maas a, mās, māsa, mas, mass. This is the thirteenth month of the lunar calendar.[2] Adhik Maas adopts the name of the month that follows. It is a time for prayer, fasting, charity, and self-improvement

According to Vasishtha Siddhantha (the treatise of Vasishtha), Purushottam Maas or the extra lunar month occurs after every 32 months, 16 days and 8 ghati. (A ghati is $\frac{1}{60}$th of a sidereal day, approximately 24 minutes, so 8 ghati is about 3 hours.) In this reference the concept of Adhik Maas is unique to the traditional Hindu lunar calendars. It is one of the most accurate methods to adjust the gap between Solar and Lunar Year.

When the Sun does not at all transit into a new rāshi (30° sidereal zodiac) but simply keeps moving within a rāshi in a lunar month (i.e. before a new moon), then that lunar month will be named according to the first upcoming transit. It will also take the epithet adhik or "extra". The transition of the sun from one rāśi to the next is called sankranti. For example, if a lunar month elapsed without a sankranti and the next transit is into Mesha (Aries), then this month without transit is labelled Adhik Chaitra.

The next month will be labeled according to its transit as usual and will get the epithet nija ("original") or shuddha ("clean"), in this case Nija Chaitra. The terms Pratham (first) Chaitra and Dwitiya (second) Chaitra may also be used.[4] Adhika māsa (month) is the first of two whereas an adhika tithi is the second of two.

Extra Month, or Adhika Māsa falls every 32.5 months on an average. It is also known as Puruśottama Māsa, it is said that the name was given by Lord Vishnu as his name to this month. The solar year is made up of 365 days and about 6 hours, and the lunar year is made up of 354 days.
Thus there is a gap of 11 days, 1 hour, 31 minutes and 12 seconds between the lunar and the solar years. As this gap accumulates each year, it approximates in three years to one month. No adhik mas falls during Margsheersh to Magh. A case of Adhik Karttik is extremely rare, but in the 250-year span (1901-2150 AD) it would occur once, in 1964 AD.

Significance of Adhik Maas

There are usually twelve months in a year, but an additional month is added once in about three years to align the lunar and the solar calendars. 2020 is one such year that will have an extra month, and this addition is called Adhik Maas. It is also referred to as Purushottam Maas, Mal Maas, or Lond Maas. Adhik Maas is different from the regular months because it does not have a Sankranti (the movement of the Sun from one Rashi/Zodiac to the other).

Every typical Lunar month has one Sankranti, but the Adhik Maas doesn't have any. Though the Adhik Maas is significant for balancing the difference between the Lunar and the Solar cycle, it is deemed inauspicious for carrying out functions like vivah (marriages), mundan (head tonsuring ceremony of a child), griha pravesh (house warming ceremony) or other auspicious ceremonies.
How will Adhik Maas be incorporated in the Hindu Lunar calendar this year?

The month of Ashwin will be an extended one this year, and Adhik Maas days will be added to it after the first half. According to the drikpanchang, the Ashwina month will begin with Pitru Paksha on September 3, Krishna Paksha (waning phase of the Moon). The first half of Ashwin will continue until Pitru Paksha ends on the Amavasya Day on September 17. Subsequently, the Adhik Maas will begin and shall continue till October 16. And after the Adhik Maas concludes, the Ashwin month will continue and shall culminate on October 31. In the second half of the Ashwin month, Shukla Paksha will mark the commencement of Shardiya Navratri, a nine-day long festival dedicated to Mother Goddess Durga.