Does the 29th of February have any significance in Hinduism?

We, at DIPIKA, have received numerous emails and messages, requesting an article with regard to the 29th of February and Hindu prayers - especially weddings, etc. . We pray to the Divine Mother Saraswati so that Devi blesses us, such that we can compile such an article. Jai Mata Di.

February 29th is also known as a leap day in the Gregorian calendar. Years that contain a leap day are called LEAP YEARS. February 29th is the 60th day of the Gregorian calendar in such a year, with 306 days remaining until the end of the current year. Although most "modern" calender years consists of 365 days, a complete revolution around the sun (one solar year) takes approximately 365 days and 5 hours. Approximately 24 extra hours thus accumulates every four years, requiring that extra calendar day to be added to align the calendar with the sun's apparent position. Without the added day, the seasons would move back in the Gregorian calendar leading to much confusion as to when to undertake activities dependent on weather, ecology or hours of daylight.

Many Hindus seem to have been incorrectly advised to not perform a wedding in a leap year. Does this advice follow Vedic (Hindu/Sanatan Dharma) scriptures? Absolutely NOT. The 29th of February, or leap day, is NOT mentioned at any point by our learned and esteemed gurus and rishis of yore. These rishis were directly in contact with the higher powers that be, mainly the Supreme Lord - Shree Krishna.

Below is an explanation pertaining to what our holy scriptures mention about an extra month in the vedic calendar, viz. Adhik Maas.

Vedic days vs Gregorian days

There seems to be much confusion about fasting days and times according to the Vedic/Sanatan/eastern almanacs (Panchang/calendar). We will attempt to clear any such confusion with the explanation given below.

The Vedic/Hindu Calendar (Panchang) differs from the western (Julian and mainly Gregorian) calendars in many respects. The Vedic/Hindu Calendar is based on Vedic astronomy (Hindu Vedanga Jyotisha). The Rig Veda (1.154.48) and Atharva Veda (X, 8)

both mention the lunar calendar system. The Vedic/Hindu calendar system measures time with the use of the tropical zodiac arc and the four Cardinal Poles of Equinoxes and Solstices. The Vedic texts, such as the Brihad Samhita, contain the lunar calendar system and may thus be used to calculate particularly accurate timing for Equinoxes and Solstices, etc. .

In the west the Gregorian calendar is used and is based on the solar (Sun) movements. But the Eastern (Vedic) calendars contain calculations based on the lunar (Moon) movements. While each will have their followers, the calculations based on the Moon generally allow for far more accurate calculations than those based on the Sun.

In the Gregorian calendars, a day commences at 00h00 (midnight), and ends the following night 23h59 (and 59 seconds, etc.) (midnight) – hence, the duration of a day is 24 exact hours. But in the Vedic calenders a tithi (name for a Vedic day) can start at any time and is thus named accordingly.

THE VEDIC MONTH:- Generally, there are twelve months in a year. Each month on the Vedic calendar contains thirty days on average. Due to the loss of days accumulated through each lunar year, an extra thirteenth month is added to make up for this missing year. It is known as the "adhika" month. This is equivalent to the Western Leap Year held on February 29th. The last Adhika Maas was in 2015 (17th June – 15th July 2015). The next Adhika Maas will be in 2018. Each Vedic month is divided into two approximate halves. The first approximate fifteen day period of a month is known as the krsna-paksa, or the phase of the waning moon. The other half of the month is known as the shukla/gaura-paksa, or the phase of the waxing moon. The full moon (purnima) marks the end of the shukla-paksa, while the new moon (amavasya) ends the krsna-paksa. Each day is named for its ordinal placement with respect to the start of its paksa. This name is known as the Tithi. Here is a table to assist the naming of the days.

Pratipat Tithi   (1st day of the dark/bright Moon)
Dvitiya Tithi   (2nd day of the dark/bright Moon)
Tritiya Tithi   (3rd day of the dark/bright Moon)
Caturthi Tithi   (4th day of the dark/bright Moon)
Pancami Tithi   (5th day of the dark/bright Moon)
Sashti Tithi   (6th day of the dark/bright Moon)
Saptami Tithi   (7th day of the dark/bright Moon)
Ashtami Tithi   (8th day of the dark/bright Moon)
Navami Tithi   (9th day of the dark/bright Moon)
Dashami Tithi   (10th day of the dark/bright Moon)
Ekadashi Tithi   (11th day of the dark/bright Moon)
Dvadashi Tithi   (12th day of the dark/bright Moon)
Trayodashi Tithi   (13th day of the dark/bright Moon)

Caturdashi Tithi   (14th day of the dark/bright Moon)
Amavasya Tithi   (15th day of the dark Moon)
Purnima Tithi   (15th day of the bright Moon)

Very often two Vedic tithi's merge and thus become one day. For example Pratipat tithi and Dvitiya Tithi may merge and thus becoming one day. So in a two-day period you often find three Tithi's in one Gregorian day. This is rather common. We are going to explain the above using the 14th February 2014 as an example. On the 13th February at 23h39 Purnima (Full Moon) Tithi {Vedic day} commences. And when the Sun rises on the 14th (sunrise in Durban is at 05h39), Purnima Tithi is transiting, hence the day becomes Purnima Tithi (the 15th day of the bright moon). On Saturday morning, at 01h51 Purnima Tithi ends. So from the information given it is deduced that Purnima is over three days, but actually it's just one day the 14th. Many times in a month a tithi ends a few minutes after sunrise. For example the 14th of February is Purnima and say if Purnima ends at 06h00, now according to Vedic calculations the day of the 14th of February is Purnima although Purnima ends at 06h00, some 21 minutes after sunrise in Durban. So although Purnima ends at 06h00 the day of the 14th Feb it becomes Full Moon despite it ending at 06h00 and Pratipat Tithi commences at 06h01. This is how Vedic calculations are worked out. (In other words, even if a certain vedic day/tithi falls even a few minutes into the new vedic day (after sunrise), the whole day becomes that tithi).
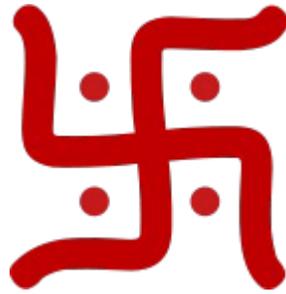
The Western Months vs the Vedic Months

In both calendars 12 months are stipulated. In Gregorian calendars it's January to December consisting of between 28 days to 31 days. But in the Vedic calendars a Vedic month starts around mid of a Gregorian month like for example from the 17th January 2014 to 14th February 2014 is called Maagha Maas (the month of Maagha) making this a 29 day month. Vedic months may vary from 28 days to 32 days.

Mid January – Mid February	Magha Maas
Mid February – Mid March	Phalguna Maas
Mid March – Mid April	Caitra Maas
Mid April - Mid May	Vaisakha Maas
Mid May – Mid June	Jyeshtha Maas
Mid June – Mid July	Aashaadh Maas
Mid July – Mid August	Shravana Maas
Mid August – Mid September	Bhadra Maas
Mid September – Mid October	Ashvina Maas
Mid October – Mid November	Kartika Maas
Mid November – Mid December	Margashirsha
Mid December – Mid January	Pausha Maas
*** (Leap Month)	Adhika Maas

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Compiled for the upliftment of Sanatan Dharma
Narottam das & Arjun Nandlal
Email info@dipika.org.za

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