

2). *What the names of the months indicate.*

1). *Malayālam months.* The months are named based on certain beliefs. It takes twelve months for the earth to go round the Sun once. When the earth passes through the twelve divisions, it faces a separate set of constellations in the universe in each of these divisions. In the month of Ciñnam the earth faces a cluster of constellations in the shape of a lion and so the month is called Simha (lion) or Ciñnam. In the next division the earth faces the constellations in the shape of a Kanyakā and so the month was called Kanni. The earth faces next the constellations in the shape of a balance and so the month was called Tulām (Tulā = balance). In the next division the earth faces the constellations in the shape of a scorpion and so the month was called Vṛścikam (scorpion). The set of constellations which faces the earth in the next division is shaped like a bow (dhanus) and so the month got the name Dhanu. In the next division the earth faces a set of constellations in the shape of a Makaramatsya (makara-fish) and so the month was called Makaram. Kumbha means a jar and Minam means a fish and Meḍam (Meṣa) means a goat and Iḍavam (Rṣabha) means an ox. The shapes of the constellations in those divisions are like the things mentioned and the months were so named after them. In the next two divisions the constellations appear as twins and a crab respectively and the months were so called Mithunam (twins) and Karkaṭakam (crab).

2). *English months.*

i) January has come from the word Janus, the name of a Roman devatā. Janus is twofaced, one facing the front and the other back.

ii) February means 'to purify' and the festival of purification of the Romans is conducted in that month.

iii) March is Mars, a devatā of War. Rome was built by the brave warrior Romulus. In his time there were only ten months in a year and the number of days in a month varied considerably. There were months with twenty days and thirtyfive days. It was in the year 700 B.C. that the then King of Rome, Numa, divided the year into twelve months and added January and February to it. Till then March was the first month of the year.

iv) April—Aperio means 'blossoming' and since the trees and plants blossom in that month it got the name of April.

v) May is named after Maia daughter of the demigod (devatā) Atlas. There is an opinion that it is named after Maius, another name of Jupiter.

vi) June gets its name after the devatā Juno though there is a version that it is named after a Roman tribe called Junius.

vii) July was formerly known as Quintilis meaning the fifth counting from March which was the first month of the year till the time of Numa. It was to commemorate the name of Julius Caesar that the name was changed to July.

viii) August. This month was formerly known as Sextilis meaning the sixth month. But it was renamed August in honour of Augustus Caesar. But it still lacked the importance of July as it contained thirtyone days and August only thirty days. So Augustus took one day from February and made the number of days in August thirtyone.

ix) September means the seventh month from March.

x) October means the eighth month.

xi) November means the ninth month.

xii) December means the tenth month.

MĀŚAKA (M). A place in the ancient island of Śāka. Mahābhārata, Bhīṣma Parva, Chapter 11 says that in ancient times, Kings used to live there for the fulfilment of their desires.

MĀŚARŚĀRA. A king of the R̥gveda period. R̥gveda, 1st Maṇḍala, 18th Anuvāka, 122nd Sūkta says that this king used to persecute the Aryans.

MĀSAVRATOPAVĀSA. Purāṇas mention about the months in which Vratas are to be observed with efficacy and the details are given below :

(1) He who fasts for half a day in the month of Tulām will get children and vehicles in plenty and would become pure. (Śloka 29, Chapter 106, Anuśāsana Parva).

(2) He who fasts the whole day of the Dvādaśī in Tulām and worships Viṣṇu will get the benefit of making a Sahasragodāna (giving away thousand cows as gift). (Śloka 3, Chapter 106, Anuśāsana Parva).

(3) He who fasts for one time of the day in Vṛścikam will become a very brave and valorous man and acquire many wives and fame. (Śloka 30, Chapter 106, Anuśāsana Parva).

(4) All men and women who worship Viṣṇu on the dvādaśī day in Vṛścikam fasting for the whole day will get the benefit of a Godānayañña. (Śloka 14, Chapter 109, Anuśāsana Parva).

(5) He who fasts for one time a day during the month of Meṣa will get gold, diamonds and pearls in plenty and will be born in a high family in his next birth. (Śloka 23, Chapter 106, Anuśāsana Parva).

(6) If one fasts the whole of the Dvādaśī day in the month of Meṣa one would get the benefit of conducting a Puṇḍarīka. (Śloka 7 Chapter 109, Anuśāsana Parva).

(7) He who fasts for one time in a day in the month of Mithuna will become very prosperous. (Śloka 25, Chapter 106, Anuśāsana Parva).

(8) If one fasts the whole day and night of the Dvādaśī in Mithuna and does Trivikrama pūjā one would not only get the benefit of conducting a Gomedayañña but will be able to enjoy sexual pleasures with celestial maidens. (Śloka 9, Chapter 109, Anuśāsana Parva).

MĀSĪRAM. A place of habitation in ancient India. There is a reference to this region in Mahābhārata, Bhīṣma Parva, Chapter 9, Verse 53.

MATAṄGA I. An ancient sage. The Rāmāyaṇa in Araṇya Kāṇḍa describes the āśrama of Mataṅga. Rāmalaṅkaśmaṇas after crossing the forest of Krauñca came to the āśrama of Mataṅga. Kabandha was slain at this place. After abandoning his demoniac body Kabandha extolled the greatness of Mataṅgaśārama to Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa. "The flowers of this āśrama are never plucked and worn on heads. Even if they are not plucked they never fade. They remain fresh always. There is a reason for this. The disciples of Mataṅga once brought a heavy load of fruits for their guru and when they reached the āśrama they were tired and drops of perspiration fell on the plants and they became flowers. Śabarī is performing penance in this āśrama." Mataṅga once cursed Bāli. It happened that while the sage was living on the mountain of R̥ṣyamūka Bāli and the aṣura Dundubhi fought against each other and blood flowing from the body of Dundubhi by a blow of Bāli spurted out and fell on the hands of the sage.